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SERMON TITLE: To Whom Do We Dedicate Ourselves?

SCRIPTURE: John 4:6-26

DATE: May 12, 2019 Mother's Day

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read John 4:6-26.

We are reading this story for a baby dedication which may seem strange. Perhaps we should hear the story of Hannah, who became a mother after sincere prayer and out of gratitude, dedicated her son to God, even giving him up to live in the temple with priest Eli.

Or perhaps we should read the story of Samson's mother, whom the Angel of the Lord visited to inform her that she would bear a son and she and he must not drink anything alcoholic. She was not to cut his hair. Rather, she was to dedicate Samson to the Lord's service as a judge for Israel.

This was God's decision. The mother obeyed.

There are other stories of babies dedicated—John the Baptist and Jesus and Moses. You might think of even more, like Isaac, who was offered to God. People brought children to Jesus to be blessed. This blessing is baptism without water.

All these parents were stewards of children for God.

Bearing babies and giving them back to God is an important theme in Scripture. Parents brought their children according to law or custom, without the child's consent. Their obedience shows understanding that their child belongs to God.

Jewish baby boys were circumcised. This is a covenant identity, marking the entire family as belonging to God. In churches of the Reformed tradition, parents baptize their babies to show their identity as Christians and their commitment to give their child to God.

Today, Nyadia and Jeff are dedicating their son, Caius Lewis, to God. This shows their intent to raise Caius in the faith and then to be baptized when he grows into a personal relationship with Jesus.

The center of these commitments is Jesus Christ. These are all expressions of faith in Jesus Christ. Parents are publically dedicating themselves and the entire congregation is involved. You and I have an obligation to teach him in the fullness of the faith. Christianity takes place in community.

Since it is all our responsibility, it behooves us to ask, to whom are we dedicating ourselves? What is the nature of our

teaching at FPCD? What is Sunday School, youth group, and worship service all about?

Jesus describes the best answer to those questions in a conversation he had with a woman who does not know what faith is all about. She only knows religion. You heard her story.

The Samaritan woman was loosely connected to faith.

Jews looked down on Samaritans, but Jesus does not look down on her. He doesn't care that she's a Samaritan and a woman or doesn't know anything about faith. He treats her just like he treats everyone. We are all God's children.

She was shocked.

He talks to her, regardless of her background, beliefs, qualifications or ethnicity.

The disciples were shocked!

She's a Samaritan. She's a woman. She does not know the Jewish law or go to our church! (see Jn 4:27) So there's a barrier between her and Jesus. But Jesus is so passionate about the Father; Jesus sees the need for all people from the entire world to know God so deeply that he crosses the barrier to reach them.

Jesus wants the woman to know he's the Messiah. There's no barrier too great to prevent anyone from coming to him.

Thus we must dedicate ourselves to talk to all others about the Messiah because all people—*regardless of their religion*—are God's children and the harvest is ripe!

We talk to our children and to all people. We don't just take them to church and expect others will tell them for us. Our entire family is dedicated to this task because the need to know God is vast. You are their hope!

How do we do it? Talk to the ones right in front of you, like Jesus. Offer something that's more than religion—something that is life-giving: *water welling up inside that quenches your thirst*.

Do you have that water inside you? The choir sang about it. During TGIF, Rev. Lee Rickaway explained it like this:

It is the water in our body that determines the vitality, strength, and energy associated with daily living. After all, the human body is $\frac{2}{3}$ water. If your body has a 10% decrease in water, you will be unable to walk, and a 20% decrease – you're dead. And what is true of the physical is also true of the spiritual. . . . If we fail to satisfy that thirst, our spirit, soul, and body become dehydrated. Thirsty also means "to crave urgently, to have a deep longing." Jesus craved to be with God, his being surged with a deep longing for his Father. He thirsted! And so we should crave Christ passionately. Thirst for him, as the thirsty deer seeks out water!

Think about a time you have been really thirsty. It's a hot dry day and you have been outside working. You've sweated and you are dying of thirst. A cool drink of water refreshes you. We were in Denver recently, a very dry place and I constantly felt the need for water and it felt so good to drink water.

Spiritual thirst is the same. This "stream of living water" flows eternally and fills our longings. It is given, not worked for.

But why would Jesus give it to this woman? She's obviously had a rather varied marital history. She did not deserve it.

Do any of us? Can we also point to problematic issues in our lives? Every single person has problems. Two great sources of our problems are: trying to fill the spiritual thirst with temporal desires and also wanting control of our own lives.

Jesus knows this about us. He knows all about our efforts at fulfillment on the outside, when what we need is peace on the inside. God knows us on the inside, and God desires worshipers who come in truth. Truth means coming honestly.

Jesus was standing right in front of Ms. Samaritan in the midst of her daily grind—the work, the burdens. Like her, we have burdens of not living entirely as we should. We desire things like money, success, entertainment, and love in all the wrong places—all short-lived things. And he's offering the spiritual water that fills our longings and helps us see the spiritual world. It also cleanses our sin.

He sits at the well and talks to her first. Jesus seeks us. You and I are chosen by God, regardless of our faults and downfalls. And Jesus knows us inside out. He does not hide our sin. He exposed hers. We must acknowledge the truth about ourselves to Jesus. Hypocrisy is when we hide ourselves behind a façade in order to look good or justify our sin. That's religion but it is not faith.

To refuse hypocrisy and be honest instead is a humbling experience. Let's face it: we are not going to deceive Jesus.

To be honest is "bowing the knee." The Bible says one day every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and proclaim Jesus is Lord. (Phil 2:10)

Do you want to be first to bow, or forced to bow?

The woman had nothing without being honest with him. She would have had to say, "That's not true," and then walk away. There is no salvation without honesty.

The woman then pointed out the longtime religious fight between the Jews and the Samaritans over where to worship, which divided them and prevented their embracing God's desire that they worship him.

But Jesus says, "The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. We must worship Jesus in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23). This is salvation according to Jesus, the Messiah. (Jn 4:26)

The woman believed Jesus and all the burdens were lifted off her. Forgiveness and eternal life were hers from that moment on.

To whom do we dedicate ourselves and what do we teach our children? We are stewards of God.

- We offer the gift the Samaritan woman received: living water from Jesus.
- We teach them to seek God in spirit and in truth because God is Spirit, and those whom he seeks worship in spirit and in truth.
- We seek others of all cultures and joyfully, relentlessly share the Good News because it is truth.

AMEN