

Sermon preached at OCC, 8 March 2026

*Send your Spirit among us. Prepare our minds to hear your Word. Move our hearts to accept what we hear. Prepare our hearts and minds to be transformed into the water of life of which the source is Jesus Christ. This we pray through Christ, our Saviour. Amen.*

John 4:5-42

### ***Workers of Jesus***

Last Saturday, I attended the Northern Presbytery Faith and Future Conference. After a keynote speaker's wonderful presentation, we divided into three groups to attend different workshops. I chose to attend the ministry of elders' workshop. The presenter, Rev Dr Ivan Martinez, the dean of Studies at Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership (KCML), led us to explore the history of elders' ministry and what it looks like today. After the workshop, many felt that it was helpful, and our understanding had been renewed. The woman at the well reflects the gist of this workshop that all the elders may have gone through.

#### ***1. The Seeker of Water***

In John 4:11, the Samaritan woman appears to be a water seeker who comes to the well daily to fetch water. It was already noon when she met Jesus, a Jew who asked her for a drink. When she refused his request because of their ethnic and faith differences, Jesus said something enigmatic: Had she known what God's gift was and to whom she was speaking, he would have given her the living water. It was Jesus who asked for a drink, but it was she who needed the living water. Then she said, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"

There are a few things we'd like to think about further. This conversation is happening between the most unlikely people, e.g. a male Jew and a Samaritan woman; at the most unlikely hour to fetch water – it is about noon, and at the most unlikely place – Jacob's well beside the deep well full of water. At the end of the conversation, the woman left her water jar and went back to the city (4:28). The simple spiritual discourse enabled her to realise that she received the water of life that made her forget about her reason to come to the well. By the time she tells about Jesus, the Messiah, to her village people, the living water now begins to flow through her to others.

Jesus crosses boundaries—gender, culture, religion. And he offers the same living water to anyone who will receive it. He also alters the understood direction of the divine relationship. We often think we are the ones seeking God. But in this story, we see something different: God is seeking us. It is no longer a question of worshippers seeking God, but of God seeking people who will worship the Godhead, ‘in spirit and truth.’ This woman has realised not only who Jesus was, but also what she was supposed to do.

## ***2. The Witness of the Living Water***

Something remarkable happens in this story. The woman who came to the well alone now becomes the messenger to the whole town. She leaves her water jar behind – the very reason she came (4:28). When people encounter Christ, their priorities change. What once seemed essential becomes secondary. She runs back to the village and says, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done.” The village people know that she does not have theological training like rabbis, nor does she have authority. She simply tells others what she has experienced. Strangely, through her witness, many Samaritans come to believe. In this sense, the Samaritan woman becomes one of the first workers of Jesus. She was not appointed, trained or ordained. But once she encountered Christ, she could not keep the good news to herself. The woman discovers her purpose.

## ***3. The Workers of the Living Water***

In our story time, we heard about the Doggy Poo and explored a few questions. The Doggy Poo was lonely and felt useless as no one wanted to play with or talk to him. Everything changed when the dandelion began speaking to him. The dandelion not only initiated the talk, but also she knew exactly the purpose of the life of the Doggy Poo. She gently led him in that direction, and that’s when he found out who he was for what. In this sense, she did something similar to what Jesus did to the Samaritan woman. Like her, the Doggy Poo also discovers the purpose. In the church today, God continues to call people to share in Christ’s work. Some serve as ministers, as missionaries, or teachers, or musicians, or as elders who are set apart to serve God's people.

In the Presbyterian Church, ministers and elders share the work of Christ. Ministers preach the Word and administer the sacraments, and elders share in the spiritual leadership and care of the church. During the workshop, Ivan showed us a chart that compared the ministry of ministers and elders in the PCANZ. Put simply, many sections

overlapped with similar duties except for a few sections. Like ministers, elders also have their purpose in serving Christ.

Lent concerns the liturgical, spiritual, and socioeconomic act of leaving the guarantees of the dominant ordering of social power and coming to terms with the commands and promises of God. The Samaritan woman came to the well carrying an empty jar. She left with something far greater — living water that could never run dry. And that water did not stop with her. It flowed into her village. The Doggy Poo left his self-pity and self-degradation behind and embraced the new life that was only possible when he dissolved into particles and absorbed into the new life. Shortly after this, we will ordain a new elder who is called by God to serve God's people according to his call. It is also a symbolic act of leaving something behind to serve the greater good in the church.

When we prefer to challenge God to come on our terms, God gently nudges us in the right direction to see what God sees. Like the Samaritan woman at the well shows, it is God who is always seeking us first, not the other way round. Today Christ still offers that same living water. And those who receive it are invited to share it. That is the calling of every disciple. That is the calling of elders and other leaders, and that is the calling of the church. May we, like the woman at the well, leave our jars behind and follow where Christ leads. Amen.