

March 12, 2023

Texts: Exodus 17:1-7; John 4:39-42

Title: "The Power in Testimony"

Businesses have known about it for years. Many people have bought products because of its influence. The church has known about it as well. But while business has continued to take advantage of its effectiveness, the church has somehow let its advantages slide to the wayside. And yet it can profoundly shape and influence the lives of countless people. What is it? - Personal testimony.

We often underestimate the power of it. One person's testimony can have great influence, in particular, when it's inspired by one's genuine encounter with God. The ability to share something of one's faith journey with others is a critical part of Christianity, and I believe the woman at the well has something to teach us when it comes to the sharing of our faith with others.

Now it seems that the art of storytelling is fading away these days. Telling stories, in past centuries, is how people have kept their culture and their histories alive. Much of our old testament was passed down verbally for many generations until it became a written version. We call that an oral tradition. Most of us aren't really practiced at doing that.

And yet for followers of Jesus, being out of practice is really not a good thing because our faith stories are the product of the gratitude we feel, not of a polished delivery. The woman at the well's conversation with Jesus really impacted her life

and because of it, she went back and shared what happened with her community. She couldn't help it. When we're thankful to God, we can't help but want to tell others.

Is it possible to be thankful for anything when there are problems in our world today? You bet it is! God is still alive and working through us to make a difference in our own small corner of the world. God wants to see us do all we can to make this a victory for the cause of love for our neighbors.

I was once at a conference where a woman gave her personal faith testimony as part of a worship service. Her story was no more than five minutes in length and very simple. It was merely her recollection of the previous year, which had been a very difficult one for her family. Her dad died; her mom was diagnosed with cancer; and she lost the baby she'd been carrying late in her term. It became clear to all of us that she was utterly devastated, but at the same time she spoke of how she felt God's comforting and sustaining presence every step of the way.

Everyone in the room was filled with compassion for this young woman and at the end of the service; a number of people were moved to come forward to pray with her. It was a remarkable moment; one that no doubt touched the lives of many – all because of one woman's courage to stand up and speak.

Tell about a friend from seminary singing "His Eye is on the Sparrow" after her mother's death. Incidentally, I had never heard that song before. We were all left both feeling compassion for her but also feeling the joy of our God who never leaves us nor forsakes us.

When the woman at the well met Jesus, she was changed and amazed and she went back and joyfully shared that encounter with others. And people believed because of what she shared. But they then wanted to meet Jesus themselves.

Have you ever thought of a worship service as the well? This is where we come to encounter this Jesus and His “living water.” If your spiritual thirst has been quenched by this water, then what’s standing between you and the story that you can share with someone? I encourage you see where you can share what you know (not a bunch of made-up stuff) just what you know of God’s love with someone today. Amen.