

**“Into the Darkness, Finding the Light”**  
**“The Gift of Misfits: Challenged and Changed”**

Today we celebrate the third Sunday in Lent. The title of my sermons during this Lenten series will be based on the chapter titles of a book called *Gifts of the Dark Wood*, by Eric Elnes. Lent is a dark time that invites us to confess and look at those parts of ourselves that do not reflect the glory and light and love of God. Lent leads us to the dark of the cross. The darkness does not define our faith or life. The darkness leads to the light and life offered in Christ.

---Pastor Cindy

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **“The Gift of Misfits: Challenged and Changed”**

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**Prayer for the Week**

*A wilderness beckons us: a desert, a barren place, yet a place of blessing and discovery. Jesus, steady companion, accompany us, as we enter the hurtful places, the frightening places, the dark and dangerous places deep within us. Jesus, our wise and well-traveled guide, lead us into this emptiness, where all will fall away, and we will have nothing but you and the living water you offer. Walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death, where we shall be raised and drink of deep springs of life. Amen. (adapted from a poem by Steve Garnass-Holmes)*

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## Study Guide

### **Monday, 03/20/17 John 4: 5-15**

Encountering another human being can be an adventure. When someone is tired, or crabby, having a bad day or just tired of the assumptions or rumors around who she or he might be, people can be infinitely fascinating. Put together one tired and thirsty Jewish man, the noon day sun and a Samaritan woman with the capacity to draw water and it promises to be interesting. Asking for a drink, Jesus is rebuffed. She's surprised he would ask. She is encountering Jesus, who is not interested in stereotypes or prejudices. So he begins a theological dialogue with her. She wants what he is offering without really understanding it. Jesus honors this woman as a daughter of God "for God so loved the world". In some ways, both the Samaritan woman and Jesus are misfits whom many do not understand. Are you thirsty for the living water Jesus offers? Are you willing to dialogue with Jesus in order to discover what God has to offer you?

### **Tuesday, 03/21/17 John 4: 16-26**

Here Jesus invites the Samaritan woman to a deeper dialogue and asks her to bring her husband. By and large, most Christians know this part quite well. She has had five husbands and is living with a man. In proper company, the conversation should have stopped. An unmarried woman, frequently married (and the story does not say whether she was divorced or widowed or both), and an unmarried man, Jewish and Samaritan politics and this conversation SHOULD have been over. There were so many lines crossed, woman and man, Samaritan and Jew, married and unmarried and yet Jesus continued to engage this woman in conversation. Jesus and the woman continue talking, deeply, biblically, and theologically. She knows the Christ is coming and when the Christ comes, all things will be made clear. Jesus reveals himself to her. Isn't it interesting Jesus has not done so with his disciples? To a Samaritan woman, Jesus first shares who he really is. Somehow Jesus believes that his conversation with this woman matters, really matters. How often for many people, is it easier to judge and make assumptions and decide a person is a "misfit" and cut off conversation and dialogue? How often have you done so?

### **Wednesday, 03/22/17 John 4: 27-30**

The disciples are stunned. They don't ask, but they certainly must wonder what Jesus was doing with "that" woman. The woman doesn't give a second thought to the disciples, she is determined to go back to her community to share what she experienced. It took courage to go and tell people about her experience with Christ. Yet she was empowered to face the gossip and rumors and comments and be who she was called to be through her encounter with Christ. Who would people be shocked to see you talking with? Are there people you avoid for fear of what others would say? What community are you being called to share your experience with Christ?

### **Thursday, 03/23/17 John 4: 31-38**

Here Jesus' disciples offer him something to eat. He responds with a cryptic "I have food that you do not know about." Jesus begins to speak of a harvest and uses images of the one who sows and another who harvests. The disciples must have thought, "What is he talking about?" For the disciples would not have been interested in interacting with the Samaritan community. They were following Jesus, Jesus was Jewish rabbi for the Jews. Often Jesus challenged the people to a new community, to view neighbors as beyond a superficial definition. Community included Samaritans, women, gentiles, outcasts, misfits whoever human beings would rather not spend time with. Who would you keep out of community? Who do you NOT want as a neighbor? Who is Christ calling you to be in relationship with and bring into your community?

### **Friday, 03/24/17 John 4: 39-42**

The woman returns with the WHOLE town! And Jesus stayed there for two days. People came to believe not just because of the woman's preaching but because of their own experience of the Divine Spirit in Christ. Each of us is called to live and behave and speak in such a way that others see, hear and experience Christ in us. Who has come to believe because of who you are, what you say and what you do? Who would you wish would come to believe?