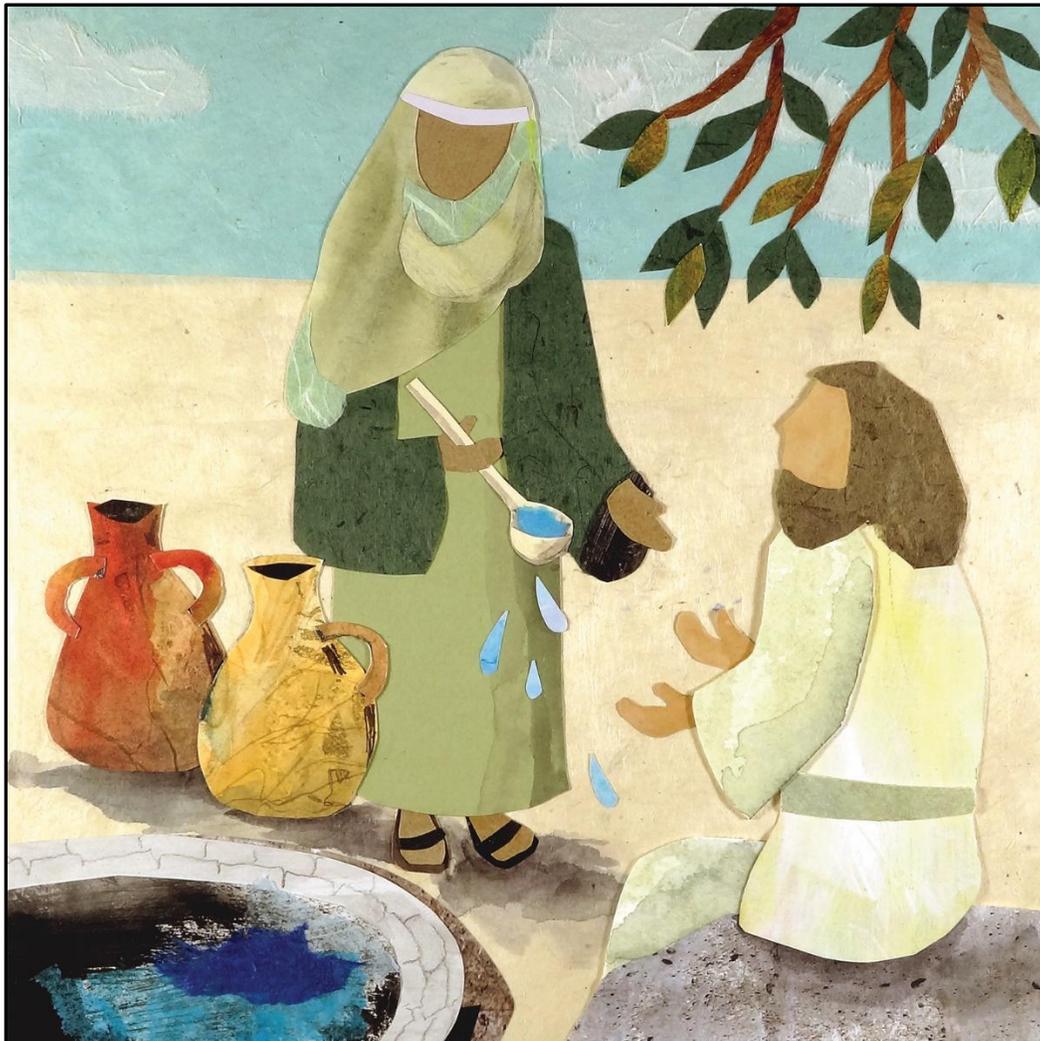


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

**March 8, 2026
Third Sunday in Lent**



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

March 8, 2026

Third Sunday in Lent

10:00 am

Gathering

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today!

- Activity bags are available for children.
- Large print bulletins are available.
- Visitors please stop at the welcome booth.
- Please stand when noted by the *
- Congregation responses are in bold.
- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.

**Our Mission is to Love God and
Serve People.**

**Everyone is Welcome Because
Everyone Matters.**

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Come to the water, all you who thirst.

P: We come to drink deeply from the river of life.

L: Come to the water, all you who are weary.

P: We come to rest in the quiet pools of God's love.

L: Come to the water, all you who long for justice.

P: We come to be renewed in God's ever-flowing stream.

All: For God is here among us, washing away the dust and grime of our lives, and pouring out the Spirit on all who thirst. Come let us worship the God who leads us into abundant life!

*HYMN

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

With a backbeat G C G Am7 G

1. I'm gon-na live so God can use me
(I'm gon-na live so) (God can

G7 C G7 C Am G C

use me,) an - y time and an - y - where
(yes an - y time) (yes an - y -

G G C G B7

where) I'm gon-na live so God can use me
(I'm gon-na live so)

Em C G A7 D7 G C G

an - y time and an - y - where.
(an - y time,) (yes an - y - where).

2. I'm gonna work...

3. I'm gonna pray...

4. I'm gonna sing...

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Our lives are cluttered, Lord God, by too many things and too much to do.

P: Deliver us, Holy God.

L: We are driven by the need to succeed and distracted from our service to you.

P: Deliver us, Holy God.

L: Like the woman at the well, we resist your call to be holy.

P: Deliver us, Holy God.

All: Heal us, hold us and set us free to be your people. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: God gives us new opportunities each day to start fresh and new.

P: Through God's Spirit, we are empowered to celebrate life fully and to appreciate all of God's good gifts.

L: May God begin a good work in you that you may be freed from the sins of the past.

P: In Christ, we are forgiven and set free with assurance and hope. Amen.

L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

P: And also with you.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

*GLORIA (Sung twice)

*Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah
Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Hallelujah, Hal-le-lu-jah*

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Exodus 17:1-7

PSALM 95 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Response

Let us make a joy - ful noise to God with songs of praise.

Antiphon: Robert Fryson, 1994

L: O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

P: Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

L: For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

P: In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.

L: The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

P: O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

L: For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

P: O that today you would listen to his voice!

L: Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your ancestors tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

P: For forty years I loathed that generation and said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they do not regard my ways.' Therefore in my anger I swore, 'They shall not enter my rest.' R

Celebrating the Meal

All Christians are welcome at the Lord's table. The bread is gluten-free. The cup is alcohol-free. Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.

The Invitation to the Meal

L: Jesus came to seek out the lost and lonely.

P: Come, Lord Jesus, come to us we pray.

L: He came with healing in his hands, love in his heart and peace in his wake.

P: Come, Holy Spirit, come to us we pray.

L: He came proclaiming God's kingdom is coming and yet is also here among us.

P: Come, God, come to us we pray.

All: Come let us be a part of God's Way here and now as we eat and drink at your table.

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them up to the Lord.

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

L: It is right and good always and everywhere to give thanks...

The Words of Institution

L: We praise your name as we proclaim the mystery of faith...

All: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Prayer of Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

Congregation join on refrain:

***Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry;
While on others you are calling,
do not pass me by.***

They'll Know We Are Christians

Blue #595

Gather Your People, O God

Congregation join on refrain:

Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord. Gath-er your peo-ple, O
Lord. One bread, one bod-y, one spir-it of
love. Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

All: We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Proclaiming the Word

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

SONG (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

***This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.***

GOSPEL LESSON

John 4:1-15, 39-42

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

Blue #506

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – United Church of Canada**

L: We are not alone, we live in God's world.

P: We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

COMMISSION OF BACK BAY MISSION TEAM

GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Chancel Choir

If You Love Me

Arr. by Joel Raney



***OFFERTORY**

We Praise You, O God

Blue #726

*We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.
We lay it before you, we kneel and adore you;
We bless your holy name, glad praises we sing.*

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

O Lord, may our lives reflect the praises that we sing. We have received grace upon grace, so may we live in grace with one another. We have received forgiveness, so may we forgive. We have received gifts far beyond our need, so may we give. Bless these gifts given this day and always. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Shall We Gather at the River

Blue #522

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist:
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Traci Hagberg,
Ann Nelson, Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Matt Meyer
Coffee
Fellowship: Knitting Group
Counters: Jean Smith, Vicki Sippel

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
Youth Minister: Alex Plum
Music Coordinator &
Bell Director: Jamie Mills
Choir Director: Sarah Plum
Organists: Terry Mithun,
Marsha Pearson
Building Manager: Timothy Bylander
Church Moderator: Marie Roe
Office Administrator: Missy Luedtke
Nursery Attendant: Kahla Fuller
Custodians: Farnum Fuller,
Troy Zakrzewski

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Feb 22, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,675	\$ 107,206
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 90,464

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

**Offering QR Code**

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
 2. Point your camera at the QR Code
 3. Click the tab 'Give Online'
-

Please join us each Wednesday in Lent for food and worship. Worship will be in the Fellowship Hall with the Prayer Around the Cross Service.

Our Wednesday schedule will be:

Wednesday Schedule

3:45 – 5:15 pm Wednesday School
5:15 – 6:00 pm Family Meals (sign up!)
5:45 – 6:30 pm Bell Practice
6:30 – 7:00 pm Lenten Worship: Prayer Around the Cross
7:00 – 7:30 pm Confirmation/Youth Group
7:00 – 8:15 pm Choir Practice

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Barbara de Souza, Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Glen Corliss (brother of Raelle Jorae), Eric (friend of Liz Swank), Joyce Kampstra, Jim Larson, KayLee (friend of Barb Stephens)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our pastors and musicians gearing up for Lent and the Prayer Around the Cross worship services in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesdays at 6:30pm, may we come together to worship and pray
- For our choir and other local choirs whose It Takes a Village concert on Sunday, February 22nd raised over \$22,000 to support the school, orphanage, homes and clinic in Ganthier, Haiti, wow!
- For housing insecure folks in our community and those who are planning for Wellspring, a community of Tiny Homes to meet housing insecurity needs in our community, may God grace them with vision and courage
- For our own Alex Plum and Peter Rayne who competed in last week's Birkie, way to go!
- For our Back Bay Mission Team headed to Biloxi, MS over Spring Break, may you be the light of Jesus as you work there
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

Prayers for our World:

- For the people of Ukraine now living into the fifth year of conflict there, may this madness end
- For those in our church and community living in fear with recent immigration raids
- For those in treatment and rehab, may you be given strength for the journey
- For stability and peace in Venezuela, Gaza and Ukraine
- For all of us as we work to better care for the gift of God's good creation and reduce the effects of climate change
- For those living with dementia and families trying to care for them, may they all be given strength, grace and help along the way

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For the gift of the season of Lent, a time to return to God and remember our priorities
- For the \$25,000 given by church folks to help refugees in Ukraine, you are angels
- For the gift of winter in all its varieties
- For those who will receive blood from the March 16th blood drive in our Fellowship Hall, may it bring life
- For the return of our full Family Meals each Wednesday during Lent (sign up!)

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Ron (father of Cindy Gandrud) who died peacefully this past week surrounded by his family, may they mourn with hope
- For the family of Kate Wolfe-Jenson (adult daughter of Marion and Wayne Wolfe) who died this past week and who will be welcomed home to the church Memorial Garden this spring
- For the family of Loral Keil (wife of Brian Miller) and one of our deacons, whose Memorial Service will be at Bakken and Young on Easter Saturday, April 4 at 11am with visitation an hour before and a lunch afterward, may her family be comforted
- For the family of Mike Checkalski (friend of Mark Hudnall) who died this past week after a courageous battle with cancer, may his family be comforted as they gather to remember his life in Eau Claire
- For the family of Terry Smith (sister of Tom Smith) who died unexpectedly and peacefully recently, may their family be comforted
- For the families of Jane Webb (Greenwood Teacher), Cody Peterson (RF Fire Department), Wanell Hansen (mother of Jill Paulson), JoAnn Lentz and Jim Filkins, may they be comforted

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

Announcements

Loving God

New to Church: Are you a first-time visitor? Please stop at the welcome table in the gathering area to receive a special welcome gift from us!

Prayer Around the Cross: Our Lenten Prayer Around the Cross worship services resume each Wednesday until Holy Week. Join us in the Fellowship Hall at **6:30 pm** for this brief, meaningful, candle-lit service focused on prayer, simple songs and a brief, focused message.

Holy Week and Easter: Holy Week is the most important week for Christian people. It shows the depth and breadth of God's love. Challenge yourself to join us for all of the Holy Week services this year.

Palm Sunday, March 29 Sunday Worship and Procession of Palms at 10:00 am

Maundy Thursday, April 2 Worship at 6:30 pm

Good Friday, April 3 Choir presents their Good Friday Cantata at 6:30 pm

Holy Saturday, April 4 Youth set tables and prepare for the Easter Breakfast at 10:00 am

Easter Sunday, April 5 Worship at 9:00 and 10:30 am with Breakfast served from 8:00 to 10:15 am

Sunday Morning Bible Study: Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets from **9:00–9:50** in the Youth Room. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study: The group is studying the book of Ruth. The group meets in the Fireplace Room on **Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. To receive a copy of the study book or if you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within the Wider Church Ministries. We need to support this ministry, maybe now more than ever. Envelopes are in the pews and on the sign-up table. Thank you for your generous support. - Mission Education Committee

First Church Companions: Are you interested in being a companion to someone in our church connecting with them at least once a month with a call or visit? Or would you like to have someone for a companion. Please use the sign-up sheet to be a companion or request someone to visit you.

Basics for Local Kids: There is a bin for donations. Volunteers are also needed. You can help families shop or you can help sort, restock or organize. Shifts are 2 hours. To sign up, go to <https://www.basicsforlocalkids.org/> or call Kim at 715-821-1623. Contact Renee Whipple at 715-307-5074 if you have any questions.

Grace Place is a homeless shelter run by the Salvation Army in New Richmond. It is housed in the old St. Croix County Nursing Home. They operate on a short shoe-string budget and are delighted that we will support them with donations and meals. The shelter has three family rooms, a men's wing and a women's wing. They can house up to 50 people, two or three people to a room. If you have any questions, please see Carole Mottaz.

Grace Place Donations: Needed items: **Sidewalk salt**, shampoo – large or travel size, conditioner – large or travel size, body wash – large or travel size, body lotion – large or travel size, new or like-new wash cloths, new or like-new bath towels, new or like-new hand towels, new or like-new twin and full sheets, new or like-new twin and full size blankets, new pillows, good buys. There is a bin at church for donations.

Empty Pill Bottles (Prescription Only): The River Falls Lions Club is collecting empty pill bottles, only the clear prescription bottles that are filled by our pharmacists, to send to Africa where there is an urgent need. The bottles will be washed, and the labels soaked off before they are shipped. A tub is in the gathering area.

Among Friends is a community-based social respite program serving adults who have memory loss who reside in Pierce & St. Croix Counties. For more information, call (715) 293-2561. Check out the website: amongfriendsrf.com & Facebook. It is held at church **Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am to 3pm.**

Loving Self

Men's Group: Our church men's group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** in the Youth Room. All men are welcome to join us for coffee, donuts & lively conversation. Our next meetings are **Mar 17 & 31.**

Women's Group: Interested in fellowship & community with other women? You are invited to join the group at noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday. Please bring a lunch. The next meetings will be **Mar 10 & 24.**

Let's Knit/Craft Together: Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am. We meet at Sycamore on the first Thursday of each month & the Fellowship Hall the other Thursdays.** We have a great time sharing our projects & enjoying each other's company. For more info, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or firstroe@gmail.com

Church Yoga: The church yoga group meets on **Tuesdays and Thursdays** in the church Fellowship Hall from **9:00-10:00 am** and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.

Game Day Sunday: Game Day Sunday is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Day is **March 15 at 11:45 am.** Join us!

WISE Team: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group meets the 2nd & 4th Thursdays 6:30pm at 113 East Elm St & Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at First Congregational at 6:30pm. The WISE Team meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30pm. For info, call Marg Downing at 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Fused Glass Project: The Christian Education Committee is organizing a project to create a large fused glass piece of art that will hang by the main stairwell. The theme of the piece will be Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Artists will learn to cut and arrange glass pieces to create the design. Once the art is complete, it will be fused in a glass kiln and then hung on the wall.

Wednesday Meals: On Wednesday nights, we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$9 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm.** You can get your meal to go if you go through the line (indicate when you sign up). **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays.** You can sign up at church or online. The menu for Mar 11 is chicken marsala, rice, asparagus, salad.

Relay for Life is April 10 at the River Falls High School beginning at 5:00 pm. Our church's team, 1st Congo, is having their annual Soup Night on Wed, March 18 from 5:15 to 6:00 pm. New this year is a Hot Dish Night on Wed, April 8 to help raise additional funds for the event. Both meals will have a variety of soups/hot dishes, depending on the night, fruit and desserts. Luminaries will also be available both nights to make in honor of or in memory of that someone special. The cost of the bags is \$10 each. Thank you for your support for Relay for Life from the relay team and Deb Hoffman.

Join us for Easter Breakfast – Sunday, April 5: Easter Breakfast will be served from **8:00 am to 10:15 am.** Cost is \$10 per person with a family max of \$40, all of which goes to our Youth Fund for mission trips and opportunities. Please sign up by Wednesday, April 1. Sign up at church or online.

Name Tags: We encourage you to wear your name tags so that everyone can call you by name. It would also help the deacons when you take communion. If you do not have one, please let Missy in the church office know at missy@firstchurchrf.org. In appreciation, the Welcoming Committee.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Exodus 17:1-7

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?' But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?' So Moses cried out to the LORD, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.' The LORD said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.' Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, 'Is the LORD among us or not?'

GOSPEL LESSON: John 4:1-15, 39-42

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John' — although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized — he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.'