

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

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WELL

Jacob, inheritance, and family separation

by Drew Downs

The animosity between the hebrews and samaritans was earned. They hated each other and acted like it. They hurt each other. There are two analogies many Americans gravitate to in an attempt to discuss this. One is the infamous Hatfields and McCoys: two family rivals that bedevil the mind like Shakespeare's famous feuding families, the Montagues and the Capulets. Another is the late unpleasantness in Ireland. Violence, hatred, and righteous ideology.

Besides the obvious, what all of these examples reveal is a tendency toward time blindness. A sense that things have always been this way, that it goes back to the beginning, and will never not be. Unless, of course, *they* compromise. Realize *their* mistakes. Except that none of this is true. The people have the same great great grandfather. It's his well. We are all family. Our demand to be right has little to do with making things right.

LENT

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

War is Evil

This week, the US Ambassador to Israel declared our support for Israel to conquer large parts of the Middle East and within days, a joint attack with the United States was launched on Iran's 90 million people. There are many different ways to discuss the geopolitics and the overwhelming unpopularity of these moves both in the United States and throughout the world. But for us, we must begin here: war is not *good*. It is not an expression of God's love.

We can nibble at the borders of church history, theology, and ethics. Massive intellects have composed conditions and philosophies to express some strained justifications for war as just. Few are terribly convincing in the end and none apply in these conditions in the slightest.

This alone causes us great pains to understand the role of individuals who participate. And there are few satisfying responses to this, too. We are perhaps best left with one's conscience and recognize those who are willing to make personal sacrifices for the health, wholeness, justice, peace (Shalom) of others.

The challenge remains for us, however, regardless of our participation or our politics: war itself is evil. Our place is to wage reconciliation by praying and working for peace. Not just for the cessation of conflict, but for the building of unity, the healing of people's bodies and relationships, the economic security that protects the vibrant living of the population, the tearing down of the systems which oppress the population and creating new systems which make equity, not just possible, but the norm. This is our work as people of faith, as followers of Jesus, inheritors of this tradition of peace whose God is love itself. It is fair to assume that none of the dead feel loved by us.

With love,
Drew+

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FOR SUNDAY

Lent 3A

March 8, 2026

Collect

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

from John 4:5-42

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

LENT

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 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."

Reflection

Jesus intentionally goes into Samaritan territory. He hangs out by a well to talk with this woman. None of this is stuff he is *supposed* to do. And the threat isn't only to himself. He is putting the woman at risk, too. This is as important to the story as the woman's confusion and excitement at what he says. And we can plainly see why. Because the story isn't about ascribing sin to the woman, but the vehicle of redemption in Jesus.

I love the dialogue between the woman at the well and Jesus. It is one of my favorite stories. But the second half is almost better. It has the disciples arriving with the protective bluster of students wanting to impress their teacher. They see the transgression and don't know what to do about it. They fall back on care for him in this godforsaken place. He's got to be hungry! Get him to eat!

Then, in a kind of echo of Job's trip to Nineveh, we see the people being transformed by prophetic word and God's invitation. Are the disciples like Job here: disappointed? that they don't get to condemn the bad guys? That their moral superiority doesn't get to win the day?

Or shall we also witness the transformative power of God. That it isn't built on vengeance or violence, but on love. Trust. Sitting with the other person and sharing the good water with them.

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