

Liturgy
John 4:1-7
Acts 1:6-11
January 24, 2010

Why do you turn from me? Is my way so hard that you cannot do it?
All I ask is a drink of water. All I ask is that you would love me.
In return you receive blessings above measure.
I loved you first. I didn't even ask you to say it first.

I sat by the well that day knowing *you* would come by. I knew your brokenness and your desire to be alone would not allow *you* to approach *me* – to seek me out. You thought you could never be good enough. But *I* decide who I wish to have around me; and, I want to spend time with *you*.

Surely you weren't surprised to find me there. You knew in your soul that we would meet one day. There was a longing inside you that had led you to other people, other places, and to other activities – some good, some questionable. After engaging those others, you knew they fell short. Yet, you still remained confused, and continued to seek after things and relationships to take the place reserved for me. There were even times when you felt blessed by me – even though you couldn't figure out why I had done so. But even that feeling wore off after a while.

That's how I created you. Your feelings are fickle and short-lived. When you are young you fall in love with one person after another. It is only when you grow up and commit to one person in marriage for the rest of your life that your love grows up and matures.

I created you in such a way that I would be your greatest love – even above the love you may have for another person. That decision to love is not based upon the blessings you have received, for that would make you no more than a consumer who is loyal to their favorite brand of soda. You would have a mature love for me – one that is not based upon blessing. Rather, it is based upon faith and decision. You become devoted to *me*, not to the prospect of receiving blessing.

Some days with a spouse are hard and long, others are easy and blissful. So is life with me. Some days are troublesome because of your decision to love me; other days are blissful in a way that defies description.

I have shown my great love for *you* through the sacrificing of my Son. He loves you, too, and went willingly. It was a God-sized sacrifice that we made. Our act of love was put out there for all to see. I make no secret of my love for you.

All I ask is for you to love me back and to make no secret of it. And just as I have given you a tangible expression of my love for you, it is my desire that you would give a tangible expression of your love for me.

That expression is called worship, for I am God Almighty. Not only can you worship by yourself, you should come together with others whom I love and worship alongside one another. You will find inspiration in one another and strength as you listen to one another. Since I created you in our image, I created you to be in community. You will wither if you keep only to yourself.

I need you to know something about your worship, it is called liturgy. Liturgy means *the work of the people*. It is expressed in singing and other acts of sacred adoration; and, since it is the daily work of you, my people, it encompasses all of life.

My Son reminded you to love me with all your heart, mind and strength. He also called you to love one another as He loved you. He sacrificed himself for each of you. So my expectation is that you will sacrifice yourself for one another – you will sacrifice your time, and you will sacrifice your money and other physical resources. When you honor one another in that way, you honor me. When you show your love for those that I love, you demonstrate your love for me.

When I tell you to go into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth telling people about my love for them, and you obey, then you are expressing your love for me in a liturgical act.

Yes, I also require that you *obey* me as an act of love. Unfortunately, society has decided that the act of obedience is one of weakness. You think to obey someone is to not exercise your autonomy and individual freedom. You have even taken *obey* out of your wedding vows for fear that one spouse may have to submit to the other, and that feels like weakness to you. But, remember, I created you in such a way that you should not always trust your feelings. Trust only me.

The truth is that obedience is based in an attitude of trust and honor. If you trust the object of your love, then you will honor them by obeying what they ask. You can trust me. I have already proven that I am willing even to sacrifice my Son for you. I did this without requiring that you become worthy of such an act. I did it out of love and a desire that you have the best life possible, now and forever.

As I continue to live out my love for you, I invite you to live out your love for me. Make time to voice your love for me through Sabbath worship. Find ways to serve those around you – your brothers and sisters, *and* those who do not yet know me. Serve them in the name of my Son.

Turn toward me and obey my will for you. My Spirit makes my yoke light because It helps you do the things I ask. In fact, there is nothing that I will ever ask you to do that I won't help you accomplish.

All I ask is a drink of water. All I ask is that you would love me, because I love you.