

*Jesus defied common practice by walking through Samaria. He challenged ceremonial customs in asking a Samaritan woman for a drink of water from her utensils! Why would Jesus even bother with this woman of many failed relationships? He had come for this woman's salvation, too, not because she had lived an exemplary life but only because of grace.*

<sup>5</sup> so he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property<sup>[a]</sup> that Jacob had given his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

"Give me a drink," Jesus said to her, <sup>8</sup> because his disciples had gone into town to buy food.

<sup>9</sup> "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked him. For Jews do not associate with<sup>[c]</sup> Samaritans.<sup>[d]</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."

<sup>11</sup> "Sir," said the woman, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'?" <sup>12</sup> You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

<sup>13</sup> Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. <sup>14</sup> But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well<sup>[e]</sup> of water springing up in him for eternal life."

<sup>15</sup> "Sir," the woman said to him, "give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup> "Go call your husband," he told her, "and come back here."

<sup>17</sup> "I don't have a husband," she answered.

"You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus said. <sup>18</sup> "For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

<sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus told her, "Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.<sup>[f]</sup> Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth."

<sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

<sup>26</sup> Jesus told her, "I, the one speaking to you, am he."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples arrived, and they were amazed that he was talking with a woman. Yet no one said, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

<sup>28</sup> Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people, <sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” <sup>30</sup> They left the town and made their way to him.

<sup>39</sup> Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of what the woman said<sup>[a]</sup> when she testified, “He told me everything I ever did.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> Many more believed because of what he said.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>42</sup> And they told the woman, “We no longer believe because of what you said, since we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world.”

## Living Water

Water – I’d say it’s fairly important. In Arizona it was worth fighting over. It was worth carrying around in the car with you no matter what. But how often (outside of a drought) do we take it for granted? My first realization that water was precious came when there wasn’t any water to drink. I went to Ecuador and couldn’t drink the water that freely flowed from the faucet. It wasn’t safe. One friend washed his toothbrush under the faucet and became ill. The water wasn’t safe especially if you aren’t used to the bacteria and bugs of another country. Water was abundant, but you couldn’t drink it. Water: it’s everywhere. It’s essential to life, and you definitely notice when you don’t have it.

If we take something so serious as water for granted then there are other essential items we take for granted as well... toilet paper, rice, canned goods, healthcare, the air we breathe being free from virus. But would church make a list of essential services necessary for life? It’s always been there. Maybe we have taken it for granted and maybe this is God’s way to remind us that not only is water, life, and health a gift from God but even more so his greater gift of living water.

It’s freely given and even in times like these it can still be found. So whatever may come take time with this water which comes with a promise, “It wells up to eternal life.” It does so much more than quench thirst – it brings life to those who are unworthy of it.

And that’s where it was around noon in Sychar at Jacobs well. Jesus’ disciples went off to go buy food at the nearest town. Jesus hadn’t eaten; he was thirsty and tired from the three day journey to Galilee. As he sat there the reason he had to pass through Samaria came walking up to him. She was coming to draw water alone.

Jesus knew her history. He knew she was a sinner in need of a Savior. So he picked up a one-sided conversation, “*Give me a drink.*” You can almost hear her thinking, “What? Are you kidding me? Does this guy have any idea who I am or where he is?” She questioned, “You, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” Maybe somebody forgot to tell Jesus, but Jews don’t associate with Samaritans. A man in this world wouldn’t even make contact with a woman in public, he would have moved 20 feet from the well allowed her to draw her water and waited at a distance. Instead he has the audacity to demand water. Jesus is breaking every social norm of his time.

Because Jews didn’t associate with Samaritans. The relationship between these two countries is complicated and probably best described as hostile. Samaritans were the half breeds to the North. They were part of the ten tribes to the north that had disappeared. Those that weren’t

carted off into exile intermarried with the Gentiles around them. Because of this they weren't allowed into the temple in Jerusalem. To make matters worse the Jews destroyed their temple at Mt. Gerizim, and in return the Samaritans desecrated the Jewish temple in Jerusalem with bones of the dead on the Eve of Passover... This is worse than the Hatfields and the McCoys. It was a bitter blood feud. There are stories of Samaritans selling Jews into slavery and killing pilgrims on their way to worship in Jerusalem. To be called a Samaritan was one of the worst insults a Jew could give. *For Jews do not associate with Samaritans* seems like an understatement.

It doesn't look like Jesus got that drink but he offers her something better, "*If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.*" She failed to recognize the gift and the giver. The water Jesus offers would allow her to never thirst again. Still thinking about physical water she pleaded, "*Give me this water.*" Let's bottle it and call it Evian – Naïve backwards. But she's still thinking about physical water. She's still thinking about not having to trudge to gather water every single day. But that's not the water Jesus had in mind. The water he was speaking about was the living water, water that brings eternal life.

We take water for granted. In America we flush our toilets with potable water. Tell that to a someone living in a third world country, "We take our water, filter it, make it fit to drink, and flush our waste with it." Tell that to people where water is scarce and they'll look at you like the Samaritan woman looked at Jesus. Just look at what we waste. If fruits are bruised and or unsightly they go into the trash. We throw away so many of the gifts God has given simply because they don't look right. It's not the newest model; it's not the latest and greatest. God has been generous with us in more ways than one.

Not only physically but God has poured over us a living water. It's abundant in America; you can enter almost any hotel room and find a bible. Not only do we take physical water and a never ending supply of food for granted we may even treat God's Word with contempt and assume it will always be there. The church will remain even if I'm not there, even if I don't drink from the living water, the faith that wells up in me leading to eternal life will always be there. That is... until the water is no longer there and then you realize how important it is. It's essential to life. And it's essential that you drink pure water without bugs, additions or subtractions. It's made even more essential when your mortality is standing before you and then everything doesn't seem to matter as much as this water.

But we are unworthy of it. But God doesn't give based on worth. He gives freely to all even those who don't deserve it. Because of recent events, I'm certain you and I are thirsty and fully understanding of what it means to be without water. This water is still flowing.

Jesus took this water everywhere he went. They had to go through Samaria. Sure it was the obvious choice. It was direct, convenient, and only three day travel time as opposed to the other routes, but an orthodox Jew would have traveled around Samaria. Jesus had to pass through because this woman needed living water and it wasn't just her – there was a whole city. But first he helped her see her thirst. He pointed out her sin and wouldn't let her sidetrack the conversation; Jesus used the mirror of the law to create such a thirst. "*Go, call your husband and come back.*" The long responses she had given Jesus came to an abrupt halt and she spoke just four words, "I have no husband." (One word less in Greek) She was ashamed of her sinful past. "*You've had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband...*" Jesus knew her sin and how she had gone

astray and yet that wasn't going to stop him. She persists, *"I know that the Messiah is coming... When he comes, he will explain everything to us."* And Jesus quenched her thirst, *"I, the one speaking to you, am he."* That Savior, the one you need, that's Jesus. This is the living water.

A water not only for those in Jerusalem, the Nicodemuses (John 3) of the world, but also for Samaritans, the sin scarred and straying. It was not on account of her exemplary life but on account of grace. Here is living water. Jesus had to go through Samaria. Not because the mountains demanded he must pass through a narrow corridor but because there was a woman who needed forgiveness. Samaria needed the living water.

What happened next? She went out without water and she shared this living water with others. She was so excited she left her jar the reason she came out in the middle of the day. She forgot who she was, didn't care that people looked down on her and despised her – she simply called to one and all, "Come and see." She told everyone what she had seen and heard.

This precious gift has been given to us. Not because we deserve it, not because we are better than others. We aren't God's chosen people because of our race, gender, nationality, morality, and it certainly wasn't because of our legacy. We are God's chosen people by Grace alone. And this same living water that she received has been given to us as well. We are reminded of our forgiveness freely won for us in our baptism. Just as you didn't do anything in your baptism, so also you don't do anything to earn forgiveness. It's freely given.

Jesus came into this world to bring water to all who thirst. He came to give his life as a ransom for all. He came to bring you this water. And there are still so many people who need hope, people like the Samaritan woman, or maybe even worse. Thank God our sins are put on public display on the pages of scripture. Thank God that he quenches our thirst and sends us out. It isn't always comfortable but I don't think this conversation started at a well was either. Sometimes we have to take the initiative, make people uncomfortable and invite them, "Come and see." We are the ones who get to tell others about Jesus. We carry the living water to others. We get to benefit from it as well.

As we use this living water we hear again how Jesus came into this world because he had to come for you. He went out of his way experienced, hunger and thirst, and exhaustion not just because of this Samaritan woman but because of you. He came for you. Jesus died for you. Jesus rose for you. Jesus rules this world for the good of his church – that's you. We can't always see how. Or of what benefit the problems or pain in the world are. Sometimes it's simply to make us thirsty and remind us to drink up. We can only speculate. But we know God is so gracious that he not only abundantly gives all that we need for this body and life, he also gives eternal blessings.

It's better than water. It's more important than water. It's life eternal. Yes we've taken it for granted, but God keeps giving good and perfect gifts even to those who have gone astray. Amen