

A Thirst Only Christ Satisfies

John 4:5–15

God made us with a soul-thirst that can only be satisfied by him. Our very life is found in the One who has the power of life in himself— the one who holds all things together by the word of his power. Our first father, Adam’s fall into sin not only impacted what we do in terms of sinful acts— but our sinful acts are themselves secondary to rebellion against God at the soul-level. Rebellion and treason against God are our first problem. We are made for communion with, and obedience to God, out of which we experience the life of God. But our sinful rebellion drives us to seek anything other than God in an effort to satisfy the soul-thirst he created in us for life. Everything we pursue apart from him is some effort to satiate that God-given thirst— it’s an attempt to fulfill and satisfy the soul apart from God, who alone gives life. Our sinful defiance has us grasping at garbage hoping it will be gold— or as C S Lewis says, “We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us... We are far too easily pleased.” Today we move deeper into this encounter with the Samaritan woman and see how she has been trying to satisfy herself with drink and sex and relationships, and none of it has worked. But the One who has the capacity to satisfy her is intercepting her futile pursuits to ultimately give her living water that wells up to eternal life. Let’s read the encounter again from the beginning of **John 4** through **v 26**. **John 4:1–26** — ¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ 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.” ¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” ¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The

2

water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” ¹⁷ The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” ¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” ²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

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2000 years before this encounter Jacob dug this well in the land he conquered and later gave to Joseph. Genesis does not tell us he dug it, but John 4 establishes it. The well still flows today and can be visited in the West Bank, some 4000 years after Jacob’s work.

As John tends to do, he reveals great truths about Jesus and frames out doctrine as he recounts these encounters that Jesus had with people. Here we have the elements of the hypostatic union of Christ’s two natures seen in this encounter. The hypostatic union sounds like a fancy word, but it simply means the fully divine nature of Christ is joined with the fully human nature of Christ in one person with a reasonable soul. In **v 6** we see the humanity of Christ. He was weary, **exhausted** from his journey from Jerusalem, about 30 miles to the south. Elite Marathoners cover 26 miles in a little over 2 hours. This trip is 4 miles further than a marathon. At an average pace of 5 miles an hour for probably 6 hours, he was spent and had to sit down and take a break. Jesus was fully human. He was not a convincing apparition, or a spiritual being who only presented himself in a physical form. He was flesh and blood, experiencing fatigue, muscle pain, and dehydration. He was fully man.

We see he was fully God in his knowledge of what no man could know in an encounter with a stranger at a well. God is omniscient, and he demonstrates that in **vv 16–18** as he reveals his

knowledge of everything about this woman. Fully God, fully man. John simply drops it into the details of the meeting.

The encounter is striking in that it violates all kinds of social norms and culture.

- First, men did not engage with women who were not their family. Depending on where you are in the middle east, it's same today.
- Typically women drew water for the household in early evening as the work day drew to a close. The first hour of the day was sunrise, around 6 a.m. The sixth hour was around noon, approaching the hot part of the day. The fact that she was there in the middle of the day gives us some insight that she is likely shunned, or a social outcast. No other women would have been there at that time, so it was a great way to avoid scornful looks and comments from others.
- He asks her for a drink. Jews would not even eat from a Samaritan dish.

Consider what we know about the woman herself. She is the opposite of Nicodemus in **Ch 3**.

- Nicodemus sought out Jesus. She was not looking for Jesus and did not know who he was.
- Nicodemus was highly educated. She was ignorant. **v 22** — you worship what you do not know.
- She was a Samaritan — the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, considering them second class humans at best, and racial and religious inferiors to Jews.
- She was a woman, so men would not have spoken with her. A Rabbi particularly would not have spoken with a woman in public.
- The timing of her trip to get water was not part of the typical rhythm of life in 1st Century Israel. It seems she was avoiding scornful looks and encounters from those who knew her background.

And what was her background? She was a sexually immoral woman, which Jesus exposes. Married five times. She has used marriage and she has used men — both things God has given for life and blessing. But God's gifts are no substitute for God. Now, with another effort to satisfy the soul, she skips the marriage ceremony and just tries the man. ***That'll do it.*** There's nothing new under the sun, as the Preacher says in Ecclesiastes. Augustine tried to intervene in this cycle of trying created things to replace the Creator in his opening paragraphs in **Confessions**. Writing of God himself, he says, "Our souls are restless until they find their rest in you."

We will deal with the necessary opening of this deadly sin wound next time, but for now I mention it because it shows up what she has been turning to in order to satisfy her soul. A man. Marriage — sort of. Sex. Despite all of that, Jesus had to go to Samaria to intercept her, because, as Spurgeon calls her, she was “an object of electing love.”

Well, given all the social and religious reasons why these two should never have any interaction at all, it's no wonder that when he asked her for a drink, her response was, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” Is that sarcasm or contempt? Maybe. Or maybe she's genuinely shocked. However she took it, he was bridging from the physical and the natural to the spiritual. He knew everything about her journey and all the idols that she had sought. He was not there for an argument or a debate, but to show her that what she needed for life and satisfaction of her soul was Jesus himself.

Jesus is the gift of God that satisfies the soul. v 10 — 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. God alone gives eternal life because God alone has life in himself. She couldn't yet wrap her mind around what he was offering. At this point she just defaults to the physical: Where do you get that living water. You have nothing to draw with. Perhaps even with contempt or unbelief: “Give me some so I don't have to come back.” He is the patient and kind friend of sinners. He continues to reveal himself and exposes her deadly sin. That is necessary for every soul to come to Christ. We must be awakened to our spiritual bankruptcy. She had the incarnate Word of God; we have the written Word of God. The Law of God exposes. The Gospel of God calls and makes alive.

Jacob's well had already served as an amazing blessing for generations. For something to sustain so many generations for so long made it among the best that man can offer. Yet the best we can produce cannot satiate thirst. Every day she returned there; every evening women came to get more water in order to live. It is a metaphor for whatever the world has to offer — and that means even **the very best** the world has to offer. It cannot provide life eternal. And the overwhelming majority of what the world has to offer does not satisfy at all. It only promises; it presents a lie that leads away from life and satisfaction in God, and leaves us thirstier than before we tried it.

She only understands the physical. Her eyes are blind to the spiritual. You have nothing to draw with. Are you greater than our father Jacob? **He is!** And he introduces the spiritual, the eternal, which is

infinitely greater than the physical, the passing. She doesn't know who he is yet, but she knows that what she has tried before hasn't been satisfying, and what he offers sounds good to her — as far as she understands physically. *Where do you get it? Give it to me so I don't have to keep coming here.*

Her need is deeper than she knows. She does not yet understand what Jesus is offering — and thus does not know the necessity of what he offers. She remains concerned with buckets and physical thirst, carrying a load, social scorn from her immoral life (which we get to next time). Her need is infinite, and unquenchable by anything other than Christ himself. She wants a shorter, shame-free walk, he intends a new heart and absorbs the shame.

Let's wrap up today by thinking through some things. It's easy for us to see her spiritual blindness. But she stands in the place of every human apart from the saving work of Christ. We are made for God, but our sinfulness causes us to deny him, act with ingratitude toward him, and suppress the knowledge of truth about him. Even if we deny him, denial does not fill the God-shaped void that exists in every heart. It just causes us to try and fill it with anything other than God, and it will never work. It will not work for us anymore than it worked for her. But God is gracious and calling us to himself. No doubt there are some here this morning, who are convinced that created things will satisfy them rather than the creator. They won't, because they can't. If you would ask him for living water, he will give it to you and it will well up to eternal life in your soul. But it only comes from him.

There is something else here that I think every Christian feels, and that is that sometimes, even those of us who know Christ battle with the sinful nature and try and go back and drink from broken, filthy cisterns that will not hold water. ***Why do we do that?*** Part of it is rebellion. We will fight the old rebellious, sinful nature all the way to the grave. Part of it is unbelief. If we believed God truly satisfied, we wouldn't pursue something else. We are to continue to be putting unbelief to death in our hearts. God calls us not to a cold, blind faith in him, but one of delight. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good. Come to me all who are weary, and I will give you rest. In **Philippians 3** the Apostle is consumed with experientially knowing Christ in his suffering, his death, and his resurrected eternal life. He doesn't want to miss anything, or chase any substitutes. Let it be for every one of us, that we may live.

Isaiah 55 asks the rhetorical question: Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? *Answer:* Because sin makes you stupid. It promises

6

what it cannot give and leaves you hungrier after the fact than you were before. Has anyone engaged in porn walked away saying, well that finally filled my need? It just stirs greater lust and sinful desire. So it is with every sin. Sin is blinding and stupefying. After the rhetorical question, Isaiah shows us the way from worthless pursuits that kill to our infinitely precious God who gives life: Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.

Jesus is making this same plea to the woman. Hear that your soul may live. Drink the living water that I give that you may have eternal life.

Our souls will be satisfied, and made alive in Jesus Christ, or they will not live at all. Christian, seek him in the morning, at noon, and at night — seek him before and above your phone, human relationships, money, job, gaming, food... All the good things he has made and that he gives for our joy and blessing will not replace him. Let Psalm 63 be the anthem of your soul:

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

³ Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.

⁵ My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,

⁶ when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

⁷ for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

⁸ My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

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