

"Water for the Thirsty"

John 4:7-19

Pastor Dan Erickson

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"John chapter 4 is one the most profound, beautiful and grace filled chapters in the Bible." At least that is what Google Ai says, and, in this case, I think Ai is pretty much correct. This morning we will explore the heart of that chapter, verses 7-19. Let's pause and pray the Lord would use this portion of His Word to encourage and challenge us this morning.

In this passage Jesus is traveling through Samaria, a region in Israel between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. He stops to rest by what was called Jacob's well. **John 4 :7-9 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 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 dealing with Samaritans.)**

This is a conversation that should have never taken place, The Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans, because they saw them as ethnically inferior. Hundred of years earlier, exiles from both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel had moved to this region and had inter-married with the Canaanites and others that lived there. They essentially formed a new tribe, the Samaritans, and were not considered true Jews.

The Canaanites also influenced the Israelite religion and Jews in both Judah and Galilee viewed the Samaritan's religion as heretical. A faithful Jew did not have conversations with Samaritans. And there is more. A respectable Jewish man would not have a private conversation with a woman he did not know especially this woman.

It was unusual for a woman to come and get water in the middle of the day. Apparently, this woman did not want to come early in the morning with the other women because she was a social outcast. As we continue reading, we will see *why* she was considered a very *immoral woman*. Verse 27 tells us that when the 12 disciples return, they are shocked Jesus is having a conversation with her. If even one of them had stayed with Jesus, this conversation may never have occurred. But they

are not there, and Jesus is intent on having an unusual conversation, with an unusual woman.

John 4:10 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." Yes, the conversation had started with Jesus asking the woman for something. However, this is not about what Jesus can receive from her, but what He has to give her. "Living water" could describe "running or moving water" from a stream or spring. This is what the woman assumes Jesus is talking about.

John 4:11-12 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? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." But Jesus is not talking about water from a stream or spring. He is using "living water" as a metaphor for the eternal life, the abundant life, that Jesus gives to those who trust in Him.

John 4:13, 14 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman still doesn't understand what that means but know it is a good thing. **John 4:15 (She) said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."** She wants what Jesus is offering, though she doesn't really know what that is.

To help the woman understand, Jesus seems to abruptly change the topic. **John 4:16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."** The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband.'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."

How can Jesus know all this about a woman He just met? He couldn't if He was an ordinary human being. But He is not. He is the Word made flesh, the eternal Son of God, who had become human. In this case, Jesus has supernatural knowledge. And that impresses the woman. She concludes Jesus must be a prophet. That propels the rest of their conversation which culminates with the woman inviting the people she knows to come meet Jesus, "the man who told me every I had ever done."

Yet, notice that the woman kind of misses the point of Jesus' question. He is not trying to impress her with His supernatural knowledge of her past. Nor is He, at this point, trying to help her realize that she is a sinner in need of God's forgiveness, though that is certainly true. Rather, Jesus says what he does, because He wants her to understand that she has a deep thirst *she cannot quench*, no matter how hard she tries. It is a thirst, however, that can be satisfied by Jesus' "living water."

So, what is this "thirst" she has? It is pretty much the same for almost everyone. I suspect she desires a sense of well-being and happiness. She wants to believe there is some purpose and meaning in her life. She wants to experience real love and be free from guilt and shame. She wants to know she is an okay person. That is at least a big part of what she is thirsty for.

How has she been trying to quench that thirst? Through men. Through five husbands and now a sixth man she is living with. I think this woman was convinced the right man would make her happy. And if number six didn't come through, I suspect she would look for a number seven. Unless, unless she found the living water Jesus was talking about. That would truly quench her thirst.

The deeper desires and wants that woman had, happiness, meaning, love, being okay, are really symptoms of a spiritual thirst. As human beings each of us is made in the image of God, the Sovereign creator described in the Bible and can only be truly fulfilled and happy when we are in a right relationship with Him. What Jesus is offering this woman, what He offers to everyone, is to quench that thirst by restoring her to a right relationship with God.

The living water is a metaphor for the work of the Holy Spirit who can give her new life by causing her to be born again and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. When that happens, she will then be in that right relationship where God is her Father, and she is His beloved child. She will then begin to experience the things in life she really desires, whether there is a man in her life or not. She will never experience that deep spiritual thirst again, because that right relationship with God will be continually satisfying.

I believe the woman eventually drinks of this living water. Her excitement about Jesus being a prophet, who knows all about her life, leads her to ask Jesus some theological questions about the right type of worship. Then she is telling other people about this man who told her everything she had ever done. Verse 42 implies that not only the woman, but many in her town believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Through that faith, she and others did receive and experience the living water Jesus was talking about.

Okay, let's consider a couple of important lessons from this encounter between Jesus and this Samaritan woman.

#1 Jesus wants anyone and everyone to drink of His living water. Last Sunday Pastor Matt explored an encounter between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was very well respected in the first century Israel.

He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council, one of just 71 men. He was a very devout, well-educated religious leader, a Pharisee. He was one of the elite in Jewish society. And Jesus wanted him to be born again, to drink of the living water, to experience the eternal life He offers.

The Samaritan woman is on the opposite end of the spectrum. She is a social outcast. The Jews despise her because she is a Samaritan. And other Samaritans despise her because she is seen as a promiscuous, immoral woman. As Pastor H.B. Charles says, she is down and out, while Nicodemus is up and in. But Jesus wants both of them to drink of the living water. Christianity, trusting and following Jesus, is for the Samaritan woman just as much as it is for Nicodemus.

Folks, in some ways this is a basic Christian teaching, yet the implications are profound. For one, it means, whoever you are, Jesus wants you to drink of the living water. He wants you to believe the gospel, the great news of Jesus Christ, and to choose, as God enables, to trust and follow Him. No matter how good of a person you are, you need Jesus. No matter how bad of a person you are, Jesus will forgive your sins and embrace you as His own.

Actually, all of us are really in the same boat. Each of us is more deeply flawed than we will ever realize, and more greatly loved than we can ever imagine. The Samaritan woman reminds us, that no matter who you are, your sins are not too many or too bad or too shameful for Jesus. He wants you to come and drink of that living water and find, forgiveness, freedom and eternal life.

Friends, if you have not done that, I urge you to turn to the Lord Jesus today. If you are not sure what that means or how to do that, make sure we chat very soon.

It also means that Jesus wants everyone you know to drink of the living water. Everyone you know needs to do so. No one you know is so good that they don't need the living water, and no one is so bad that the living water will not quench their thirst.

The Samaritan woman reminds us that this living water is for the down and out people you know. It is for those whom you consider immoral. It is for folks whom you think are least likely to be interested in Christianity.

This fall we will likely have another visit from the Minnesota Adult Teen Challenge choir. This is a group of guys, but they have quite a bit in common with the Samaritan woman. They have messed up their lives, sometime big time. Alcohol, drugs, criminal activity, pornography and sexual addictions have harmed their souls, and sometime their bodies. Family members and friends have often given up on these guys.

But Jesus doesn't. He offers them living water. And those who drink it will testify they are no longer thirsty. Friends, you don't know anyone who is beyond the grace and hope Jesus offers. And the fact the living water is for everyone, is a

reminder that all believers in Jesus, no matter what their background or past, are equal members of the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul spells it out clearly in **Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman are two individuals who have almost nothing in common, except they both came to trust and follow Jesus. At that point they became spiritual siblings, a brother and sister in Christ. Friends, you are different than other people in this room. But, if you are a believer in Jesus, this room is full of your brothers and sisters. None of us are better than or inferior to anyone else here.

As Christians, we are each sinners, who have been saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ alone, so that no one may boast. Don't forget that. Jesus wants anyone and everyone to drink of His living water.

#2 Always remember that true satisfaction is found through trusting and following Jesus Christ. That is what the living water is all about. This is easy to forget in our culture, because many voices tell us they can provide satisfaction. The Samaritan woman thought the right man, the right romantic relationship was her key to happiness. Yet it was not working. And her need for men was making her life more and more empty.

Other people think a successful career, accumulating wealth, athletic or academic achievement, success of a political or social cause, attending cool parties, gaining fame or popularity, being surrounded by loving children and grandchildren, are what will quench their thirst. They think "If I had this, I would know I have significance. Then I would be satisfied, then I would be happy." Most people acknowledge they have not really found satisfaction through these things but are convinced they are on the right path. One more promotion or one more championship will lead to the satisfaction that has so far been elusive.

Yet, if you are on the wrong path, traveling further down that path is not going to get you to where you want to be. That truth is illustrated by people

who actually do reach or exceed their dreams and have been shocked to find out that these longed-for circumstances not only *do not* satisfy but actually cause them to feel the emptiness even more.

I think of the example of Lee Iaccoca, the man who led both Ford and Chrysler. Near the end of his life he said, "This fame and fortune stuff is for the birds." Or the actress Terri Garr. "I have learned that money can buy happiness, for about 10 minutes."

Then there is tennis great, Boris Becker. He said, "I had won Wimbledon twice. I was rich. I had all the material possessions I wanted. But I had no inner peace. I thought of movie stars and pop stars who commit suicide. They have everything and yet are so unhappy." One of those unhappy movie stars was Sophia Loren who said in an interview, "I have had everything, but in my life, there is an emptiness that is impossible to fill."

Tim Keller sums it up this way, *"Everybody has got to live for something, but if Jesus is not that thing, it will fail you. First, it will enslave you. Whatever that thing is, you will tell yourself that you must have it or there is no tomorrow. That means that if anything threatens it, you will become inordinately scared; if anyone blocks it, you will become inordinately angry, and if you fail to achieve it, you will never be able to forgive yourself. But second, if you do achieve it, it will fail to deliver the fulfilment you expected."*

So, what does this all mean for us? Well, all of us know folks, sometimes close friends or family members, who are living for something besides Jesus. They are seeking satisfaction apart from the living water He offers. We want these people to turn to Jesus Christ and put their trust in Him. Only then can they find the deep joy He alone can provide.

Our text points us to some questions we can ask people: What do you think makes or will make your life fulfilling and significant? Why? Do you think those feelings will last? Why? How would you cope if you lost what makes you feel fulfilled and significant?

Now, these may seem like kind of weird questions, but they are not really threatening. Asking questions like this is not sharing the gospel, but

they may raise some doubts in the minds of folks who think they are doing fine without Jesus. You are not pointing out their sin directly, but you are pointing out the consequences of sin in their lives.

These folks, who think they are doing fine without Jesus, are on a dead-end road. If, with the help of God's Spirit, they honestly think about your questions, they will realize they are on a dead end. When that happens, it is time to remind them they are not really doing fine without Jesus, and you can tell them about the living water He offers.

Now, you also probably have some friends, and family who, like the Samaritan woman, know they are not doing fine. They know their life is on a dead end. One recent survey found that 1/3 of American adults say they are in an existential crisis. I am not sure what exactly people mean by that, but apparently, they have little sense of purpose or significance in their lives.

They have concluded, like Kansas, 1977, that "All we are is dust in the wind." You need to tell them about the living water Jesus offers. Oh, for some that will seem like "too good to be true" news. But that will be a great time to share how you have drunk of the living water and your life is no longer on a dead end, but full of significance and eternal hope. Friends, people out there who you know, need to know, that true satisfaction is *only* found through trusting and following Jesus Christ.

Friends, ask the Lord to give you opportunities, and help you be creative and courageous in sharing the great news of Jesus Christ with those folks.

But it is not just non-Christians who need to realize and remember that true satisfaction is found through trusting and following Jesus. Christians need to make sure we remember this as well. Even as believers in Jesus, we are all still sinners. Each of us is guilty of wrong actions and bad attitudes.

But one particular sin that is very easy for any of us to fall into is idolatry. That involves worshipping something or someone other than the true God. It means counting on something or someone other than the true God to bring satisfaction to your life. It is trying to quench the

thirst of your soul with anything but “the living water” Jesus provides. That’s idolatry.

That is a sin which is easy to fall into. It is important that we frequently remind ourselves and remind each other that true satisfaction is found through trusting and following Jesus Christ. Because all other paths are ultimately dead ends.

Folks, for about 20 years, during the 1970’s and 80s, for about 20 years one of the top gospel songs was “Fill My Cup.” It was written by Richard Blanchard and reflects how we often have much in common with that Samaritan woman Jesus met at Jacob’s well.