

*100 Days in John, Pt. 5*  
***Sir, Give Me This Water!***

**First Presbyterian Church  
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Once, in the region of Samaria, Jesus met a woman by a well at noontime. Their conversation was a steady spiral into the depths of the woman's life and a new understanding of God. In this story, we learn quite a bit about the way Jesus dealt with people. Overhearing this conversation, we even may hear him addressing us.

Jesus passed through Samaria on his way north, and stopped by a well to rest. He saw a woman who had come to draw water. There was no one else around. The hour was noon, and no doubt it was hot in the blazing Middle Eastern sun. It was strange that she had come alone, to a well outside of town, at the hottest time of day.

Usually, the women came in the morning or evening, and they came together for safety and companionship. There was some reason why this particular woman did not want the company of others.

She had come to perform the daily necessity of gathering fresh water. Each new day meant the long walk out with the heavy earthen jar, then the drawing from the well, and the trip back home with the full container weighing her down. Fetching water typified the drudgery of the daily routine. It was arduous, but unavoidable. At the time of this story, the Samaritan woman's labor was made harder by whatever reasons she had for coming alone at such an off-hour.

We, too, know what it is like to be caught in the dailiness of life, and how our routine may be shaped by our own particular pain. There are the repetitive tasks, the constant requirements that can make one day blur into another so that, at the end of a year, we hardly may remember where all the time went. Making coffee. Getting dressed. Cleaning up. Walking dogs. Going to bed. Getting out of bed. Didn't I just do this?

What's more, the pain in our lives may be keeping us out of joint so habitually that we even may forget that it is not normal to draw water in the heat of

the day. We may have lived without kind words for so long that we no longer expect them. The ache of a betrayal may have been with us until hollowness seems like a natural feeling. We may have borne the pain of separation in relationships for enough years that we have grown to rely upon it as part of our daily rhythm. The Samaritan woman just normalized fetching water alone in the heat of the day.

Then, one day, the woman's routine was broken by the presence of a man at the well. Her guard went up – she knew about men. He asked for a drink. She sized him up and replied, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” Jesus had broken the agreed bounds of conversation. Rabbis did not speak to women in public. Contemporary Jews avoided dealings with Samaritans; certainly, sharing a drinking vessel would have made one feel filthy.

Jesus had a habit of entering territory not assigned to him by traditional roles. We may well have feelings similar to the woman's. How can it be, Jesus, that you want something of me? I am not one of your saints. Churchy people may hang on your every word, but not me. It's doubtful that you will find in me something religious that you might need. I thought we agreed long ago that I wouldn't bother you if you wouldn't bother me.

Jesus countered by turning the discussion around. “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.” The conversation switched from what she had to offer to the gift of God. Jesus tantalized her with the implication that what he had to give was highly desirable.

For us, to enter such a conversation with Jesus would open an opportunity we yearn for, if only we could realize it. Here is the possibility that there is a gift of God we may receive. God waits to give us something wonderful and important. We may feel that Jesus need not look to us for something religious, since we are not that type. But he answers that, long before we get spiritual, he has a gift for us, so attractive that if we knew he had it, we would be aching for it.

But the Samaritan woman was not so easily taken in. Perhaps this was another line from yet another man. She looked him over again. “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...” This stranger who broke social customs out in the hot sun had no visible means to give her any gift at all. How could he change her life of routine? Did he have some secret?

We very well might ask Jesus ourselves, “Really now, what do you have to give me? Can you possibly have something that has anything to do with my daily life? You have no bucket and the well is deep. You are not relevant to the complexities of the relationships I am in. I’ve always thought that God wants it done by the book, everything neat and clean. I am far away from that. You do not know about the pressures of my business. You want things straight, but 10 people pull me from every direction. Surely, you are just gentle Jesus from Sunday school, the man with the golden rule, a god of sweet morality that never existed. What do you know of my life in the hot sun making noon runs for water out of fear of being seen by others?”

“Jesus, are you greater than the way of life I have inherited? Are you more than what the church and my parents have told me of you? Are you greater than the urges in me to live life the way I do and seem unable to stop? Honestly, I don't see anything in you that looks like it could be a gift to me. You are just old Jesus, odd and religious with little to say about practical life. I doubt you can pull this off.”

### **An Offer of the Source**

Jesus countered with a description of just what his gift could do for the woman. He gave her a knowledge of God, which would lead to a knowledge of herself. “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 forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

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He offered the possibility of never being thirsty at noon in the desert sun again. The dailiness of life revolves around perpetual thirst and we return to the well again and again without any final satisfaction. Jesus offered an inner source that constantly could quench a person's thirst with fresh waters. A symbol of routine, the drawing of water, could become through Jesus' gift an image of refreshment. Receiving the gift of God through Jesus would renew her life.

There is a source that can transform daily life from drudgery and stale water to the gush of living water. Jesus offers living water as a spring that is within us. Its waters well up inside us, gush through us, and give meaning to all of life. The very ordinariness of our days can be enlivened with this splashing, clear, cool water.

Living water brings refreshment. It means continual renewal. Cleansing water flows through, washing us in joy. In living water, we have the hope that we do not always need to be cynical and cranky, to be dry and tired. Rather, love and thankfulness can well up through us. This is the possibility of living from the source, of being connected to the wellspring of our lives. The writer of the 87th Psalm knew that God is the source of living water when he prayed, “All my springs are in you.”

The woman wanted this gift, if only to save her the daily trip to the well. “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” Her response considered living water on a literal level. It was a way to make life easier without any work on her part. We will see next week that Jesus did not let her stay on that practical level. He would not let the woman view her relationship with him as just a way to help her life be a little easier. Christ was after a much deeper transformation. We’ll talk about that.

But to close, we want to claim the importance of a good beginning. Jesus told Nicodemus he needed to be borne from above, made new by the Spirit. Nicodemus could not reach the point of asking for such a gift. All he could do was to keep trying to figure it out first, “How can this be?” is where he left it. But the Samaritan woman wanted change. She didn’t want her life, in this grinding routine, to stay the way it was. She did not know all she was saying. But she was open enough, desperate enough, trusting enough to say, “Sir, give me this water!”

That would not be a bad prayer to say several times a day this week. “Lord, Jesus, give me this living water!” That would not be a bad prayer to make today as you make your way forward for communion. As you anticipate the bread and the wine, say in your heart, say as your prayer, “Lord, give me this water! Please.”

A few chapters later, Jesus will elaborate on this image of living water. He will say (Jn. 7: 37-39) during a great feast in Jerusalem, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes into me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” Jesus promises a source. An internal spring of life. As we press into him through faith, he creates a spring of new life in us. The gospel then explains, “Jesus said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.”

The living water is the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to those who faith into him. Those who propel towards Jesus, asking to be in relationship with him, receive the gift of God, the Holy Spirit within our inmost being. We get

connected to the everlasting source of life that is God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If you have believed into Jesus, giving him your life and asking for his, you have the Holy Spirit. It's a wonderful thing to strike water on property that you own. To know, far from the city, that you have water a plenty to sustain life. You have that well inside you. You as believers can draw from the very life of God.

But, of course, it's not automatic. The refreshment of the living water arises when we pray, "Your will be done." The Spirit flows in a way we can taste as we offer ourselves to be led, shaped and guided by Christ. His agenda replaces ours.

We have to guard this well. To keep it from contamination. To stop listening to so much blather and swill. To stop looking at such distorted images of human flourishing. We have to take the time to draw deep from the well. Reading Scripture. Listening to God in silence. Gathering with his people to worship. Putting his praise on our lips. Learning his Word so we have something to pray. Asking Christ to open our eyes to ways we could love. Accepting his invitation to lay down your will and energy for someone this very day. Aligning your life with Jesus every morning. Filling your mind and words with his words. Drinking deep from him in the Lord's Supper.

The well is already there in every believer. Christ Jesus invites us to press deeply into him. To faith into him, drawing on his promises. Drawing on his love. Relating to him. And going forth to love and serve the Lord by loving and serving others.

So pray it with me, every day, several times a day. "Lord, give me this water to drink!"