

THIRST NO MORE

John 4:1-42

COME AND DRINK

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.

Jesus decides it's time to move his ministry up north to Galilee to avoid the scrutiny of the Pharisees.

From Judea, the most direct and shortest route — goes through the region of Samaria.

Now, every people and place have a history and Samaria's history explains why Jews and Samaritans despised one another.

About 750 years before Jesus arrives at this well — the land known as Samaria was part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But in 722BC — nation of Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Following their military victory, the Assyrians took the prominent Jews — the educated and the wealthy — and deported them to Assyria to better their society.

Then, they brought some of their people into Northern Israel to settle in their newly conquered land. This was a common ancient practice after defeating a geo-political nation.

Over time, the left-behind Jews intermarried with the Assyrians and the result was a racially, culturally, and religiously mixed people group known as the Samaritans.

To the Jews —they weren't Jewish enough — they were racial half-breed sellouts who abandoned the purity and integrity of Judaism. Eventually, they were no longer welcome to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. So they created their own Temple on Mt. Gerizim and wrote their own sacred books — sharing only the 1st five books of the Old Testament with the Jews.

The tension between these two cultures was thick and volatile. They considered Samaritans to be perpetually unclean. To go into their region at all was to be defiled — so many Jews avoided the region altogether.

Now — It's the sixth hour — which means it was noon — and Jesus is sitting at the well when a woman comes to draw water.

John 4:7 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.)

In this culture, it was generally a woman's task to retrieve the water for the day — but it usually happened earlier in the day with other women. This provided safety and a connection point with other women in the town.

But John points out that she comes alone at noon. She doesn't expect to meet Jesus. Jesus crosses social barriers to engage this woman and extend his grace to her.

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.)

Jesus crosses racial, cultural, and gender barriers when he asks her for a drink. Why? Because Jesus came on a mission to seek and save the lost and he’s willing to cross any pain line or social barrier to accomplish his mission.

If we claim to follow Jesus, we must follow him in his mission, his motives, *and* his methodology. Jesus is willing to cross pain lines and social barriers to extend grace to anyone.

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.”

Jesus skips right over her question, and flips the conversation upside down. His request for drinking water has become an offer of living water.

Jesus has this way of taking the simple and making it profound. The conversation started with a simple request for water and now he’s talking about the contentment and satisfaction of the soul.

This woman thought she was just going out for water and her life is about to change.

Notice that Jesus calls this living water — a gift from God. This is not compensation for a life of works. Salvation — eternal life — living water — is a gift you receive from God by His grace.

Remember Jesus said — if you knew who I am and the gift I have to offer, you would have asked me for a drink.

To receive living water from God, you have to come to a place where you see the generosity of the giver, the value and worth of the gift, and then with a posture of humility — ask for it.

It cannot be earned or bartered — But it is free for the asking.

Asking is significant because our pride often keeps us from asking. We’re all set. I can do this on my own. If satisfaction is to be found — I want to go looking for it. I want to achieve it. I want to acquire it — on my own. I’ll do it — my way. Asking and Acquiring represent two different approaches to contentment and satisfaction.

Asking assumes contentment and satisfaction will be received. Acquiring assumes contentment and satisfaction will be achieved. Asking and Receiving puts me in a place of vulnerability and humility. Acquiring and Achieving puts me in a place of control and pride where we look for contentment and satisfaction in all the wrong places. Look at how Jeremiah illustrates the posture of achieving and acquiring...

Jeremiah 2:13...

for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

When we go achieving and acquiring, we forsake God — who is the fountain of living waters. And and we try to hew out cisterns for ourselves. But the problem is that no matter how hard we try — every cistern we build is broken and doesn’t hold water. So we remain thirsty.

Isaiah 55:1...

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

You don't have to dig out cisterns for yourselves because there's an invitation to a table sourced by a never-ending fountain of living water, where the thirsty are satisfied. Do you know what a cistern is? It's a large tank for storing water. Do you see the analogy? Cisterns are for self-sufficiency and independence.

God says — don't build cisterns. Come to the fountain of living water that never runs dry. It's always flowing — always ready — always available and it's free for the asking.

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."

So clearly the woman still thinks Jesus is talking about actual water. She isn't picking up on the metaphor just yet. And the word for living water here actually refers to fresh, running, spring water — which would require digging a different deeper well. She's looking at a man who asked her for a drink — and now he's offering her water? He has nothing to draw water from the well nor anything to dig a new well — so how is he going to get this living water?

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 water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Jesus continues to explain his metaphor. He's compares the physical water in the well to the things of this world. When you drink this water, you'll eventually be thirsty again. Likewise — whatever satisfaction this world has to offer — it will not last — It's temporary, fleeting, and exhausting.

But — There is a satisfaction that lasts and endures.

Jesus says...that the water he offers provides enduring satisfaction and contentment that meets all your needs and desires. And that water is offered to you and me.

Jesus is saying — "I've got something for you that is as basic and necessary to you spiritually, as water is to you physically." And what's more — my offer is more than a drink — it's a wellspring.

Only Jesus satisfies the deep needs of the soul because Jesus fills us from the inside out. When we ask for living water from Jesus he digs a well in our soul and from it comes an internal and eternal wellspring, so that we will never be thirsty again.

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."

She's is a great example of faith seeking understanding as she asks for the living water even though she doesn't fully understand.

COME AND WORSHIP

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."

The offer to come and drink is filled with the good news that Jesus offers soul satisfying water so that we will thirst no more. But for good news to be good news — we have to confront the bad news. For the living water to well up inside her soul, Jesus has to drill down deep into her soul. And so he cuts to the chase and gets to the level of her discontentment and dissatisfaction.

We find out that she's had 5 husbands and now she is living and sleeping with a man who is not her husband. We don't get the details of these 5 marriages and how they ended. But it's likely there's a mix of death and divorce — but no matter the details — what know — is her life's been marked by suffering, grief, and brokenness.

She's experienced tragedy, hardship, and pain. Over the course of her life, she's experienced the suffering that comes from being a sinner — from being sinned against — and from living in a sinful and broken world.

Her life hasn't worked out the way she envisioned.

And now — she's living with a man outside of the covenant of marriage. After 5 tries — we don't blame her — but that doesn't excuse her sin or make it right. No matter our circumstances, thriving and flourishing are found as we pursue God's design and order.

Jesus is gentle — but he's also direct. He exposes her history and her sin without shaming her. Jesus confronts her without condemning her. The offer of living water is still on the table. The good news is that her bad news isn't final news. Her story is still being written.

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."

Whether she's trying to change the subject or simply astonished at Jesus's ability to see through her veneer — she acknowledges that Jesus is unlike anyone she's ever met at the well. She knows he's no ordinary man and she concludes that he must be a prophet of some kind.

And then she shifts the conversation from husbands to mountains from her personal story to theology. She says — the big debate between Samaritans and Jews is the place of worship — You guys worship at the Temple in Jerusalem and we have our own temple on Mt. Gerizim.

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."

In other words, Jesus says — there's coming a day when the place of worship — the location — the entire debate between the Jews and the Samaritans will be obsolete.

God the Father is seeking people to worship him in Spirit and in Truth. Praise God that the Father is a God who seeks — that he seeks and saves the lost so that we are transformed out of selfish ambition and vain pursuits into worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth.

Jesus also draws a line in the sand. Worship is not about where you are or what you think. True worship is in spirit and in truth. In Spirit means that true worship goes beyond places, rituals, customs, and ceremonies. Those are important and meaningful — but they become meaningful when they are rooted in a deep, personal and abiding relationship with God. Much of what we call worship is going through the motions of ritual.

And to worship in truth means that our worship aligns with the truth of God as revealed in both his written word and in the Word become flesh — Jesus Christ — who is the way, the truth, and the life. Simply put — worship is on God's terms — not ours.

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."

Then the woman responds — when the Messiah comes — he will sort all of this out and speak definitively on these matters.

26 Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

Jesus says — in no uncertain terms — I am the Messiah. This is one of the clearest and most direct self-declaration’s from the mouth of Jesus himself that He is the Messiah.

In John’s Gospel he will say...

John 6:35 — I am the bread of life

John 8:12 — I am the Light of the world.

John 8:58 — Before Abraham was, I am.

John 10:9 — I am the door

John 10:11 — I am the good shepherd.

John 11:25 — I am the resurrection and the life

John 14:6 — I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.

John 15:1 — I am the true vine.

Jesus is the Son of God who has come to save sinners. He’s the bread of life and the light of the world. He’s the doorway to heaven and He’s the good shepherd. Death will be swallowed up because He is the resurrection and the Life. He didn’t come to point to a way because He is the way. He doesn’t speak about truth — He is the truth and He is the vine and when we’re connected to him, we will bear much fruit. And he is the living water that satisfies the needs of every human heart and soul.

If we are going to be satisfied in Christ and worship God in Spirit and in truth — we need to identify the broken cisterns in our life — the false wellsprings that simply do not satisfy.

Is it Relationships? Career? Politics? Social causes? Money? Kids?

Its the answer to the question - If I have that...If I get there...If they say this about me...then I’ll know I’m important...then I’ll know that I’m significant...then I’ll have security...then I’ll know I’m a somebody.

Tim Keller writes...

Everybody has got to live for something, but Jesus is arguing that, if he is not that thing, it will fail you. First it will enslave you. Whatever that thing is, you will tell yourself that you have to have it or there is no tomorrow. That means that is anything threatens it, you will be come 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 fulfillment you expected.

Jesus is saying I have soul-satisfying water that goes deep down into your soul to fill you up. I have that water because I am that water. I am the water your soul needs to be satisfied. Jesus has invited her to drink living water and to worship God in spirit and in truth. Now, let’s see how she responds.

COME AND SEE

27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” 28 So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” 30 They went out of the town and were coming to him.

The disciples who had gone into town to get some food for Jesus come back. They see Jesus speaking with the woman and they marveled. They're shocked to see Jesus breaking every social barrier to engage this woman.

When they enter the scene, the woman departs and she leaves her jar. The very reason she came to the well has become unimportant. She goes back to town and this conversation has her wondering — could this be the Christ?

Do we get an explicit confession of faith? No. But you can tell that something's started to change inside of her. She goes to people in town and starts to share about her experience with Jesus.

She goes back to her town...the place where her life has not worked out the way she'd hope for — to the people who have likely cast judgment on her and spoken about her behind her back — she goes back not to say look at me — but look at Jesus. Come and see a man who told me everything I had ever done. Could this be the Messiah?

She invites them to — Come and See Jesus. And from her testimony and what they can see changing in her, leads them to drop what they're doing and go to the well to see for themselves.

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33 So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. 35 Do you not say, "There are yet four months, then comes the harvest"? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.

Up until this point — the hungry and thirsty Jesus still hasn't had a drink or a bite to eat. The disciples return with food for Jesus and as usual — Jesus uses it as an object lesson to teach them about what it means to make disciples. Jesus teaches his disciples that there's a greater sustenance and satisfaction in living on mission than any food can offer.

Jesus meets us at the point of our greatest need. For the woman, she needed to hear that there was water that would quench the thirst of her soul. This spoke to her need of satisfaction.

For his disciples — they needed to know what food would fuel their soul. This spoke to their need for purpose.

Jesus tells them that being a disciple entails making disciples. They had tasted the soul satisfying water that Jesus offers. Now they needed to have their priorities aligned with the mission of God. Jesus came with a clear and defined mission and purpose — and those who follow Christ have the same mission and purpose. And just like a good meal fuels your body — living on mission for Christ fuels your life.

If you feel malnourished as a Christian — have you ever considered if it is actually a result of not eating from the same table that Jesus ate? Jesus said — my food is to do the will of Him who sent me?

Is that your food? Are we trying to find direction, meaning, and purpose from the vending machines of the world or from the harvest of the field that Jesus points us to in John 4? Every disciple of Jesus is a sent disciple — sent into the fields to harvest and Jesus said — the fields are ready now. What would it look like Seven Mile — if we lifted up our eyes to see that the fields are white for harvest? Now John finishes out this section by giving us a glimpse of the harvest. Look at verse 39.

39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word.

Don't miss this — while Jesus is giving the disciples a lesson on making disciples — the woman is back in town doing the work of a true disciple. She doesn't have everything figured out.

She herself is a broken vessel and we all know broken vessels can't hold water. It leaks through the cracks. But, in Christ — broken vessels can hold living water and from it other broken vessels can be filled.

All she knows Jesus has offered her living water and something is starting to change inside of her and she invites others to come and see Jesus.

So the Samaritans come out and meet Jesus and get this — Samaritans invited Jesus — a Jew — to stay with him. And John tells us that many came to believe in Jesus because of the woman's testimony.

Jesus promised that the harvest was ready and over the next two days the disciples saw it first hand as many came to faith in Jesus.

42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

This passage ends with a declaration that Jesus is the Savior of the World. If you take a step back and remember Nicodemus from John 3 and take the woman from John 4 — you have two snapshots that prove that Jesus came to save anyone and everyone.

In John 3 we meet Nicodemus — and in addition to knowing his name, we know he is learned, powerful, respected, orthodox, and theologically trained. He's considered by his community as a righteous man.

In John 4, the woman is unnamed and by contrast she is unschooled, without influence, despised, a follower of impure religion. Many in her community would have considered her immoral and unrighteous. He was a man, a Jew, a ruler; she was a woman, a Samaritan, and a moral outcast. And don't miss this — both needed Jesus.

Nicodemus and the woman at the well covers every end of every spectrum.

What's John's point? Everyone needs Jesus.

H.B. Charles says it well —

John 3 teaches us that there is no one beyond the need of grace. And John 4 teaches us that no one is beyond the reach of grace.

Everyone is in need of grace. And the good news of the gospel is that no one is beyond the reach of grace.

The invitation is on the table to come and drink living water and to thirst no more. He invites us to have our lives transformed by true worship and to find meaning and purpose as we invite others to come and see Jesus.