

JESUS CAN GIVE US LIVING WATER

John 4:1-26 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Being thirsty is far more than wanting a drink of water. Being thirsty is a condition that makes it nearly impossible to think about anything else besides water. This God-given desire for water corresponds with the fact that none of us can live long without drinking water. To think of never thirsting again sounds dangerous to our health, which it would be if we never drank again. To have water so continually available to us, and to have that water in us, so we never thirst again, that's miraculous. Jesus offered this water to this Samaritan woman. He still offers living water to us, that wells up into eternal life. Jesus' words to this Samaritan woman about drinking His living water, born-again water of life, spoke of Jesus' living water becoming a bubbling spring inside us keeping us from ever spiritually thirsting again. That is our subject today, as Jesus passed through Samaria, about how our spiritual thirst can be quenched forever by Jesus' living water.

Let's set the stage for Jesus' conversation with this Samaritan woman by answering four questions. (1) **Why was Jesus in Samaria?** Israel is only 120 miles long from north to south. In this tiny country of Israel, which could fit inside Sweetwater County, there were three divisions in Jesus' day. Galilee to the north, Judaea to the South, and Samaria was in the middle. The western border of Israel was and still is the Mediterranean Sea, and the eastern boundary was and is the Jordan River. John was baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, north of where Jesus' disciples were baptizing not far from the Jerusalem-Jericho road that followed north along the west bank of the Jordan River. Jesus and His disciples were baptizing due south from John the Baptist and his disciples—at the northern boundary of Judaea. John 3:22 tells us that after Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, “Jesus and His disciples went into the Judaeian countryside, and he remained there with them.” That's where Jesus' disciples were baptizing, about 15 miles north of Jericho. John the Baptist, John 3: 23 was also baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, which was part of a bulge of Decapolis on the western side of the Jordan River, apparently about 15+ miles from Jesus.

After John the Baptist was put in prison, and Jesus' popularity was known to the religious leaders in Jerusalem, Jesus knowing every event in His life was appointed by His Father, knew the time for His death had not come, so He departed on the Jerusalem-Jericho Road that turned west into Samaria from the Jordan River. This road went directly towards Mt. Gerazim and the town of Sychar, where Jacob's well was. When Jesus' hour came, He voluntarily laid down His life for us, but that time had not yet come. So, Jesus took the shortest route from northern Judaea, at the Jordan, to Galilee. It took much longer to go across the Jordan, up through Decapolis to again cross the Jordan River just south of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus said He must pass through Samaria, not because it was the closest way to Galilee, but because His Father sent Him to the woman at the well to accomplish His work.

(2) **Why were Jesus' actions in talking to this Samaritan woman strange?**

We read in John 4:9 that Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Despite their hostility, they still traded, explaining why Jesus send His disciples into the nearby

town of Sychar, a half mile away, to buy food. However, Jews were prohibited from drinking from the same vessel as a Samaritan. (3) **Why were the Jews and the Samaritans on the outs with each other?** It all went back to the split kingdoms in 975 BC when Solomon's son Rehoboam became king of Israel and he angered the 10 northern tribes who made Jereboam their king who led them to worship two golden calves, one in Bethel and one in the land of Dan. The ten northern tribes of Israel fell to the nation of Assyria in 722 BC, and most of them were taken captive into the land of Media. They intermarried and most of them never returned. A few of those northern tribe Jews remained in Israel and they intermarried with strangers, foreigners. These half Jews built up the city of Samaria and worshipped at Mt. Gerazim and were called Samaritans and the only part of the Old Testament they believed is the Pentateuch—the first five books of Moses. When the southern kingdom fell to Babylon in 586 BC, the Israelites from Judah were in captivity for 70 years until they returned to Jerusalem. Tobiah, Sanballat, and Gesham the Arab, Samaritans tried to stop the restored Jews from rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem. The Jew-Samaritan feud was of long standing.

(4) Why did the Samaritan woman come alone to the well when Jesus was resting at Jacob's well? John 4:6 tells us it was about the 6th hour—which is 12 noon—the hottest time of the day. Women traveled for safety in companies to draw water from Jacob's well. This woman coming alone, in the heat of the day, shows she was a social outcast. Other women in Sychar refused to tolerate this woman's company knowing she had had five husbands and her current live-in man was not her husband. That sets the stage for our message at Jacob's well. Let's look now for four discoveries Jesus revealed to her as He spoke with this Samaritan woman.

WE NEED TO DISCOVER THE GIFT OF LIVING WATER WE NEED. (I.)

Notice John 4:7-15. Jesus took His disciples, to this sacred ground where Jacob returned after meeting Esau when he returned to Canaan after many years of serving Laban. Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, and he bought from the sons of Hamor there, a piece of land for a hundred pieces of money that He gave to his son, Joseph, and Jacob built an altar there named El-Elohe Israel, meaning God, the God of Israel—Genesis 33:19. It is recorded in Joshua 24:32, that after the Exodus, the bones of Joseph, carried on the Exodus were buried here on this ground given by Jacob to Joseph as part of his inheritance. Jesus sent all his disciples into the town of Sychar just a mile northeast of Jacob's well, and a mile to the northwest, was Shechem, and Mt. Gerizim. Jesus, weary from His journey sat in this sacred place, near Jacob's altar, at Jacob's well. Think of all the memories of Jesus who told the Sadducees, in Matthew 22:32, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Only 18 miles to the southwest, Jesus would have remembered standing at the top of Jacob's ladder as His angels walked up and down that ladder to Jacob at Bethel. Jacob declared, "How awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."- Genesis 28:17, and Jacob called his stone pillow God's house.

Perhaps musing on this sacred place, now part of Samaria, Jesus was here on a mission, waiting for one person, one immoral, outcast woman, a woman living in

sin with a man, after being married and divorced with five other men. This woman Jesus was waiting on, was His main reason for saying, “I must needs go through Samaria.” Jesus didn’t have to wait long. Here she came, alone at noon, when none of the women of Sychar or Shechem would be there. In verse 7 we see that Jesus asked this lovely woman, this broken woman, this woman whose dreams had been shattered, Jesus asked this dejected woman for a drink of water. He said to her, “Give me a drink.” This woman marveled at this Jewish man even speaking to her. She asked Jesus, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? (John adds, “For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.”) How human Jesus was, weary, and thirsty, and this woman responded to Jesus in five ways, ways people still respond towards the Gospel story.

First, **(1) This woman hesitated.** v. 9-10. She hesitated because Jews and Samaritans never drank from the same vessels. It may have startled her, but it also may have pleased her that this Jew was willing to drink from her bucket or pitcher. When she spoke her hesitation, Jesus used it as His opportunity to say, “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.” Living water in Jesus’ day literally meant water from a spring that bubbled up by itself, quite different from well water or rainwater collected in a cistern. Jesus was offering her living water as a gift from God—Jesus was offering her eternal life. Second, **(2) this woman observed.** v. 11, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get this living water? Historians say Jacob’s well was 105 feet deep. This woman observed that the water Jesus was speaking of must be from somewhere else than Jacob’s well. Thirdly, **(3) this woman doubted.** v. 12, Could this weary, thirsty, dusty traveler be greater than her ancestor, Jacob who gave her the well, drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock? Both the Jews and Samaritans called Jacob their father. You can hear her doubts, but you can sense her wonder increasing. Fourthly, **(4) this woman listened.** Notice v. 13-14, as 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 give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Jesus was giving this wondering woman the Gospel story, and using drinking as a metaphor for faith, and living water, a metaphor for eternal life.

Fifthly, **(5) this woman asked for the gift.** Notice verse 15. She told Jesus, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” This woman wanted the gift. She never understood Jesus was speaking spiritually of eternal life. Granted, her immediate concern was to get this living water to avoid getting physically thirsty and having to walk nearly a mile from Sychar to draw water. Though her understanding wasn’t complete, she knew this man who asked her for a drink, had something she yearned for. She longed for living water. Jesus, she knew, had a gift she needed. Secondly, this woman made another discovery.

WE NEED TO DISCOVER WHY WE NEED JESUS’ GIFT OF LIVING WATER. (II.) Notice John 4:16-19. The gift of God’s salvation is never truly sought after until we know why we want it and need it. We must see ourselves and

our sin. Here we see Jesus using the law as a schoolmaster to bring this woman to Himself. God uses the law to make the Gospel amazingly attractive. Many people think Jesus was changing the subject in v.16 when He told her to go call her husband and come here. Some people are so naïve as to think Jesus thought He wasn't getting through to this woman, so He wanted her to get her husband to listen to Him and explain the Gospel to her. Never!! Jesus knew about this woman through and through and He knew her thirst for spiritual living water would never be awakened without her facing her inner guilt and her consciousness of her sin. Satan has been spreading his lies to pastors and leaders and godly folk until we are afraid to speak of sin and shame. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is never good news unless a person has a sense of guilt and shame over their own personal sin.

Therefore, be sure of this. Jesus said, "Go, call your husband and come here." It was a call for this woman to voluntarily confess her sins, Easily this woman could have lied, pretending to have a husband. She might have avoided confessing sin. But this woman made no move to get away from Jesus and his question. Instead she confessed in shame, "I have no husband." Those words were costly words to admit. You might think, "That was only half a confession, for she was living in adultery." Yet, Jesus never faulted her for her half-confession. He accepted her confession and commended her, saying, in v. 18, "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." Instead of wringing the other half of this woman's confession from her, Jesus confessed for her. What a beautiful picture of God's gentleness with us all as sinners! If you remember the story of the prodigal son, the father stopped him half-way through his confession showing the same gentleness. Now this woman never denied what Jesus said, but by her silence about it, she affirmed He hit the mark. Then she said to Jesus in v. 19, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet." Is there any wonder why she said this to Jesus? No, now with her confession completely out, this woman was learning what Paul taught in Romans 8:2, saying, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has set you free from the law of sin and death." She was yet to make a third discovery.

WE NEED TO DISCOVER HOW TO RECEIVE THIS GIFT OF LIVING WATER. (III.)

Notice John 4:20-25. This woman in her fresh admission of sin and shame, knew she needed cleansing. Should she go west a mile to Mt. Gerizim and make a sacrifice or should she go to Jerusalem to make a sacrifice" Jesus knew about the forthcoming fall of Jerusalem and He knew He was the only sufficient sacrifice for sin. Jesus said to her, v. 21-22, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. Jesus was opening this woman's eyes to the truth that her religious practice was false, and that the old Jewish sacrificial system was soon to be replaced. Now in v. 23, Jesus added a beautiful word to this woman in her plight. He looked ahead, beyond his death on the cross, his burial, and resurrection. He said, in v. 23, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him." Jesus was saying to her, "The hour not only is coming but now it is

here for you, that you can be cleansed of your sin and shame, and the place you go to sacrifice will no longer be a factor at all. Jesus never took sides in her question of where to go to sacrifice, in Jerusalem, or talk about the false belief that her sacrifices must be made on Mt. Gerizim.

How to receive this free gift of living water was to come to the Father in spirit and in truth. Jesus knew as we need to know that all true worship centers in the worshipper's own soul and spirit which is moved by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, in v. 24, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him." Many people put their heart and soul into their worship who are self-deceived worshippers. Jesus said worship must not only be in spirit, but also in truth—truth as revealed in the Word of God, truth as is revealed in Jesus. Omit the spirit, and though you have the truth, the worship is formalism and ritualism. Omit the truth, and though your whole soul is thrown into worship, it is an abomination, and a stench in God's nostrils.

Jesus is telling this woman not to wait. He is inviting her not to go to a temple on Mt. Gerizim or a temple in Jerusalem. Right there and right here and now this woman could perform the very highest act of worship is accepting the Father's pardon for her sins, and giving Him back her gratitude—for this is what the Father seeks for. Perhaps this woman knew worship should be in spirit and in truth, but now Jesus was telling her this worship was enough. The ceremonial restrictions of time and place are not essential anymore. God is no longer to be bound to one temple or to one mountain—at Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem. This woman now had something like scales fall off her eyes, like Saul of Tarsus. The words of Jesus and His authority, all she was hearing made her remember what she learned as a child, about what will happen when Messiah comes. So, she told Jesus, v. 25, "I know that Messiah is coming, (He who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things." Oh my, this lost, broken, immoral woman was so close, almost there but not quite. She had to make one last discovery to be for sure. Fourthly,

WE NEED TO DISCOVER WHO IT IS WHO WANTS TO GIVE HIS GIFT OF LIVING WATER TO US. (IV.) Notice John 4:26. This is one of the greatest

"I AM" statements in the Gospel of John. "Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you AM HE!" Glory! The Savior who helped this lost woman with her confession of sin, now helped her in her confession of faith. Point-blank! He revealed to her what had up to now been concealed from others. Often Jesus had told people He healed, "Tell no one who healed you." But now, one surprise at noonday, one surprise after another finally led to the final climactic surprise as Jesus said to her, in essence, "You were right when you thought about Messiah. I who speak to you am He."

That woman at the well is as secure in Jesus today as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are. Why? She discovered Messiah. Floyd Hawkins wrote of this discovery, 1937.

"Mankind is searching every day in quest of something new, But I have found the living way, the path of pleasures true. (Chorus) I've discovered the way of gladness, I've discovered the way of joy, I've discovered relief from sadness, 'Tis a happiness without alloy. I've discovered the fount of blessing, I've discovered the living Word, 'Twas the greatest of all discoveries, When I found Jesus my Lord. I've found the Pearl of greatest price, Eternal life so fair, 'Twas through the Savior's sacrifice, I found this jewel rare. (Chorus)

Have you found what Floyd Hawkins and the woman at the well found? Let's pray.