

GIVE ME THIS WATER, THAT I THIRST NOT

August 18, 2019

John 4:1-29

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.”

John 4:15

The phrase “publicans and sinners” occurs repeatedly in the life of Christ. Publicans were thieving tax collectors who collected more than was due, enriching themselves. Sinners made no pretense; they were openly sinful. Many publicans and sinners ate with Jesus and His disciples, prompting the Pharisees to ask, “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” (Matthew 9:10, 11). Unwittingly, Jesus’ enemies paid Him high complement when they labeled Him “a friend of publicans and sinners.”

John 4 relates Christ’s interaction with one sinner, a woman well-known among the men of Samaria. As an adulterous woman and a Samaritan, she represented everything the self-righteous religionists despised. Jesus took great interest in her, for Christ did “not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:23).

Jesus engaged the woman by citing a deficit suffered by every human being: soul-thirst. He used the opportunity at hand—his own physical thirst—to bring the focus upon her emptiness. He appealed first to her human compassion: “Give me to drink” (7). Then He appealed to her curiosity: “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee . . .” (10). Next, He appealed to her contentment: “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst” (14). This sequence led to His ultimate appeal—the appeal to her conscience: “Go, call thy husband” (16).

Hereby Jesus confronted her with the law of God which she had broken: “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Her soul-thirst, like that of every other human being, was due to having broken the law of God. That was her deficit, and the deficit of every man and woman, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Her soul-thirst drove her to seek fulfillment in a human relationship, but that relationship failed, for soul-thirst can never be quenched by another mere human. That failure exposed her deficit moreso, which she sought to fill with yet another relationship. Five husbands later, and cohabiting with a man who was not her husband, she was used, was well known among the men of Samaria, and was still thirsting for something she could not define.

The greatest need of every person can be met only in Jesus Christ. That day beside Jacob's well, this adulterous woman met the One who assures us, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:9-11).

By bringing her face-to-face with the law of God, which she had broken, Christ confronted her guilt. He revealed Himself as the One who knows the secrets of the heart; "a man which told me all things that ever I did" (29). It was His law she had broken; against Him she had sinned: only He could pardon that sin. Every sin is against Christ, thus He alone can forgive. That day, by hearing Christ's Word, she believed, confessing "Is not this the Christ?" She drank of the water that Christ gives, which shall be in all who drink of it "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (14).