

John 4:1-30

“The Living Water”

April 26, 2020

Deuteronomy 27; Joshua 8:30-35

Psalm 147A

God told Moses that when Israel came into the land, they were to renew the covenant at the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal.

And in the days of Joshua they did exactly what God had commanded Moses!
They read the curses from Mt. Ebal –
and they proclaimed the blessing from Mt. Gerizim.

God was establishing Israel as *his people*.
People sometimes wonder what was so special about the Jews?
Why did God choose them?

In reality, there was nothing special about the Jews.
God chose them because that was his choice!
He did not do this for any other nation.

Some might say, “Why couldn’t God reveal himself in different ways to different peoples?”
If it was just a matter of revealing useful ideas to help people live a good life –
well, actually that is exactly what God has done!
All through history God has helped the human race
by sending wise teachers to teach us lessons about being better people!

There’s only one problem.
We are very bad students.
Confucius and Socrates and all the other wise teachers
haven’t actually given us enough wisdom
to figure out how to be right with God.

Because our problem is not primarily an educational problem.
We *know* how to live a good life –
our problem is a primarily ethical.
Our problem is that we don’t *want* to do the right things!

And for that problem, no amount of moral teachers will work.
We need a Redeemer.
We need someone who will pay the price for our sin.
We need someone who deliver us from bondage to sin and death!

And for that, God needed to come in our flesh.
And therefore he chose *one nation* –
and in his great wisdom he chose the smallest of nations –
a people whom he delivered from slavery in Egypt –

and who remained a small, divided people on the fringes of empires.

God likes to use *little people* to do his great works.

Sing Psalm 147A

Read John 4:1-30

Some of you have probably wondered whether God really loves you.

Some of you have probably doubted that God would really forgive you for your sins.

If so, listen to this!

John has just told us that “whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.”

And he really means “*whoever*”!

Even a Samaritan woman of questionable moral background!

All of chapters 3-4 are talking about the importance of water and the Spirit –
and the importance of *faith*.

Jesus told Nicodemus – a leading Pharisee –

that he must be born again – born from above (born of water and Spirit):

"whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16)

John told his disciples that they must follow Jesus--he who comes from heaven

(Jesus baptizes his disciples--they baptize others):

And John says that Jesus gives the Spirit without measure (3:34)

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)

And now Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that she must ask for living water

(drawing water from the well):

"but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.

But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13-14) (and notice the Spirit again in v23)

So let's get a picture of what is going on.

After cleansing the temple in Jerusalem,

Jesus talks with Nicodemus,

and then takes his disciples out to the Jordan river and baptizes them.

Meanwhile, John is baptizing up north,

and some of his disciples get in a dispute with the Jews--

the Pharisees--about purification.

They expect that John will be upset that Jesus is "stealing" his disciples!

But John isn't troubled at all!

John understands his role.

He is the best man--but he is not the bridegroom.

And so John calls both his own disciples and the Pharisees to believe in Jesus.

But the Pharisees do not believe—which means that the wrath of God abides on them;
but Jesus knew that this was not the time to provoke them to action,
so he returns to Galilee.

And on the way he passes through Samaria and meets a woman at Jacob's well.

Let's think about these two:

Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman!

Notice the contrasts!

He is a Jewish man

She is a Samaritan woman

He is a virtuous Pharisee

She is morally questionable!

He is the cream of the crop

She is the scum of the earth

Nicodemus fears that being seen with Jesus might compromise his standing.

His standing needs to be protected!

The Samaritan woman is shocked that Jesus would ask for a drink!

She has no standing to protect!

"Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans" (v9)

Quite frankly Jesus might pollute himself and become unclean
if he drinks from her pitcher.

(remember the dispute between the Pharisees and John's disciples about purification in ch 3?)

Jesus is demolishing the whole question

by welcoming a morally compromised Samaritan woman
into the true worship of God)

Further, remember that Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night?

The Samaritan woman meets Jesus at midday!

Remember John 1?

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not comprehended it"

Nicodemus was confused and doesn't understand the Law and the Prophets

She is intelligent and refers to the Scriptures three times (v12/v19/v25)

This sinful Samaritan woman stands in the light of day,
and as the Light of the World lays bare her sordid past,
she finds hope!

We will look at her response more next week,

but just notice right now that Nicodemus appears to have made no response at first;
but the Samaritan woman believes--and immediately runs off and tells everyone else.

The Samaritan woman is the perfect example of what John told us at the end of chapter 3:

“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.
Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life;
whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life,
but the wrath of God remains on him.” (v35-36)

She believes in the Son--and finds in Him, everlasting life.

Jesus spoke with this Samaritan woman,
and his Words pierced her heart,
what will his word do to you?

Will you hear it?

Will you believe it?

Will you respond with faith and repentance?

Well, let us look for a moment at how she comes to believe in him!

first, she discovers that Jesus is greater than Jacob
second, she perceives that he is a prophet
and third, she learns that he is the Messiah.

1. “He Had to Pass Through Samaria” – Jesus at Jacob’s Well (v1-6)

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.^[a]

Jesus learns that the Pharisees had heard
that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John.

In other words, Jesus is becoming a bigger threat than John.

But as Jesus told us at the wedding at Cana – “My hour has not yet come.”
So Jesus departs again for Galilee.

“And he had to pass through Samaria” –

You can actually go around Samaria – if you just stay in the Jordan Valley!

But no – Jesus had to pass through Samaria!

He had an appointment to keep with one of Jacob’s daughters...

And so he came to town called Sychar – and Jacob’s well was there.

Jacob had dug this well nearly 2000 years before.

Why is this important?

1--remember that we've already heard Jesus quote from Jacob's vision in ch 1
"you will see the angels of heaven ascending and descending ..."

2--Jacob is the father of all Israelites--both Jews and Samaritans

He was the one who gave this well to all his children.

He is the one who gave them WATER.

And now Jesus is going to take the divided children of Israel/of Jacob
and will bring them together.

But in order to do that he must be greater than Jacob.

And so rather than simply provide earthly water,

Jesus offers LIVING water that will spring up into everlasting life.

Water is an extremely important image in the Bible--and especially in John's gospel.

The Middle East is a parched region--and water is very precious.

It is a picture of life and blessedness.

When I was in Eritrea, I had to walk 100 yards to the well to get water.

There were days when one 5-gallon bucket of water would have to do for washing,
cooking, and drinking.

And I had it easy!

Most Eritreans have to walk across town

--maybe even several miles--to get water

It was a common sight to see a donkey walking by

with 50-gallon leather containers on its back.

This woman was in a similar situation.

She comes every day to draw water.

And so when Jesus offers her living water,

he gets her attention!

He is claiming to be greater than Jacob;

He is claiming to be able to give everlasting life!

not simply ordinary water,

but LIVING water!!

2. "Are You Greater Than Our Father Jacob?" The Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well (v7-12)

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.) 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.)

Throughout the Old Testament there are lots of men who meet women at wells.

Jacob himself met Rachel at a well –

just like Abraham's servant had met her aunt Rebekah...

or like Moses met Zipporah...

If you are looking for a wife, it would seem like hanging out at the local watering hole would be a good idea!

But at first, when Jesus asks for a drink,
she is suspicious –

“How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?”

As John points out – Jews have no dealings with Samaritans!

But Jesus has come to break down the walls of division between Jews and Samaritans.
And so he starts with the least likely Samaritan of all!

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.” 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?”

Now, perhaps, you understand why Jesus didn’t get a drink for himself!

The well was deep – and they didn’t just leave ropes and buckets lying around!

You would bring your own with you!

(After all, this is the *community’s* well – it’s not for strangers!)

When she hears the term “living water” she understands that to mean “running water” – that is the phrase, after all, for running water – water that is “alive” – moving!

She is understandably perplexed, because even if he had a rope and bucket,
the water in the well is *not* “running water” – it’s well-water.

And so she asks:

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.”

Nowadays we seem to assume that the son will be greater than his father.

We have this notion of “progress” – that every generation will be better and faster!

That was not the way the ancient world worked.

They tended to extol the greatness of the ancestors!

The founders – the heroes – the legends of the past!

“Are you greater than our father Jacob?”

3. “Never Thirsty Again” – the Gift of Living Water (v13-15)

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.^[b] The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Like Nicodemus, she hears Jesus’ words – and only understands them in part.

We live in a place and a time where we can get drinking water out of a tap.

We can use more water in flushing a toilet than many people use in a whole day!

Somehow, I don't think that we appreciate water
in quite the same way that this Samaritan woman did!
She has to come every day to draw water.
And here is this Jew offering her living water
--and if you drink this water, you will never thirst again!

Hey, that sounds pretty good!

And so she asks for that water!

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.”*

There is a bit of a challenge here!

She says to Jesus – in effect – if you are serious – if you really have such water,
then *show me!*

Give me this water!!

You said that all I had to do was ask – so I’m asking!!

Are you willing to do that with Jesus?

It’s not that you get to ask Jesus for whatever you want –
you do not get to set the terms of the relationship!

Jesus is Lord.

He is the one greater than our father Jacob!

But he *does* give to the one who asks!

If you ask for what *he offers* then he will give you what you ask!

4. Gerizim and Jerusalem – the Reunion of Judah and Samaria (v16-24)

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’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”*

Look at his response:

he tells her to bring her husband!

And she answers honestly! "I have no husband"

Perhaps this is why she has come at the sixth hour.

The sixth hour is noon – when the sun is at its height.

This is not the hour for drawing water.

It's hot!

You generally draw water at the beginning of the day.

But perhaps this woman wishes to avoid the crowds.

If she has had five husbands, and now has a sixth –

who is not her husband –

that means that there are a lot of people in town

who may not like her so much...

She has come to the light—and the light is exposing her deeds.

Jesus knows the hearts of all people (2:24),

and he tells her that she has had 5 husbands,

and that she is currently living with a man who is NOT her husband!

¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

She is astounded, and recognizes that yes, this man IS greater than Jacob:

He is a prophet!

No one else could know what he knows!

²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 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."

And yes, Jesus is a prophet

He demonstrated this when he cleansed the temple.

By kicking out the money changers, and driving the animals out of the temple,

he rebuked the Jews for their abuses of worship.

And he declared at that time,

"destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days"

The Samaritan woman understands that Jesus is a prophet,

and that prophets can explain the will of God.

This prophet is breaking down the wall between Jew and Samaritan:

and so she asks, okay, if Jews and Samaritans are to be unified,

where will we worship?

After all, Jews worship at the temple in Jerusalem,

and Samaritans worship at Mt. Gerizim in Samaria.

In Deuteronomy 27, Moses had commanded that the Israelites renew the covenant on Mt Gerizim and Mt Ebal.

Mt Gerizim was the mountain of blessing; and Mt Ebal was the mountain of cursing. And so the Samaritans worshipped on Mt Gerizim because it was the mountain of blessing!

But God had commanded his people to worship in Jerusalem, and so Jesus says, "well, you were wrong--but all that is changing now" (v21-24)

Interesting isn't it.

Mt Gerizim--the mountain of blessing--was the place that Jesus chose to bring the blessing of eternal life to the Samaritans. He chooses Jacob's well to reunite Jacob's children. And he chooses Mt Gerizim to reveal the new worship that God has begun. Because the hour has come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.

What does it mean to worship the Father in Spirit and in truth?

Remember that Jesus has just cleansed the temple (ch 2): he has just declared that he will raise up a new temple--in his body--and THAT is where we must worship God.

Jesus is saying that **where** we worship God is still important! There is only ONE place where you can truly worship God! But that one place is no longer Jerusalem; and it is certainly not Gerizim. That one place is in the Spirit and in truth. God is Spirit--and so you must be united to God through the Spirit if you are to truly worship him.

That is why we come together every Sunday!

It is why we groan during this time of our exile and fasting – as we are banished from one another – because Christ has established a new, holy temple in his body.

And we *are* his body.

We gather together, in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the truth of God's Word, and as the new, holy temple of God, we worship Him--we praise Him--and we rejoice to hear His Word.

I want you to see something very important here:

Notice how important worship is to this woman!

It was her first question, once she realized that Jesus was a prophet!
She understands that worship is to be central in her life.

And Jesus agrees!

Jesus says that worship is what God is looking for!
The Father is *seeking* people to worship him in Spirit and in truth.

5. “I Who Speak to You Am He” – Jesus the Messiah (v25-30)

Well, this Samaritan woman is getting curious.

She understands her Bible--and she knows that Messiah is coming.
This Jesus has told her a lot; but who is he, really?
so she says, (v25)

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.”

The Samaritans did not have quite the same fondness for the house of David –
after all, they had followed Jeroboam in rebellion *against* David’s grandson –
but they seem to have had some sense of a future Messiah who would reunite all Israel.

And the prophets had frequently spoken of how God would restore Israel –
bringing Jerusalem and Samaria back together.

But look at Jesus response in verse 26:

²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”
literally it reads: "I am, who speaks to you"

In Exodus, God had revealed himself as "I am who I am"--Yahweh.

Now Jesus reveals himself as "I am, who speaks to you."

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God – and the Word was God.
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

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.

We will look more next week at how the Samaritan woman responds to Jesus;

but for now notice that she responds by going into the city,
and calling all the people to come see this man
who told her everything that she had ever done!

The disciples had been in the town--buying food for their meal.

But did they evangelize the Samaritans?

Oh no--not the Samaritans!

“Jews have no dealings with Samaritans!”

But this Samaritan woman went to all the people and said, "could this be the Christ?"
"Could this be the one that we have waited for?"

There is no need for you to have lengthy theological arguments ready!
When you speak to friends and family about Christ,
 you may sometimes get into doctrinal discussions,
 but at its heart simply tell them what Jesus has done for you!
The Samaritan woman is overjoyed at what Jesus has done!
 He has revealed all of her sordid past!

Wait a minute!!!!
 Why is she so excited?
 If I had her past, I wouldn't be too happy about someone knowing all the dirty details!
 Why is she so excited?

Because,
 if he KNEW all those sordid details,
 and yet STILL offered her the living water,
 what does that mean?
It means that the Messiah--the Promised Deliverer--the prophet greater than Moses,
 the ONE greater than Jacob--the Redeemer of Israel,
 the I AM who spoke to Moses,
 HE has forgiven her!!!

 He has washed away all her sins in that fountain of everlasting life,
 and now SHE can worship God in Spirit and in truth!
 She who was an outcast is now brought into fellowship with God himself!!

And not only that!
 But he chose HER to be the FIRST of the Samaritans to hear the good news!

Her joy is overflowing!
The Messiah chose me!
The Savior of the World has saved ME,
 and has included me in his salvation!

Brothers and sisters,
 where is our joy?
 where is our excitement in what Jesus Christ has done for us?
You can't manufacture it.
You can't hype it up.

But when you hear the Word of God,

and when you are offered the living water that springs up into everlasting life,
what is your response?

Let us truly give thanks for the great salvation that God has wrought in Jesus.

And let us respond with hearts full of joy and gratitude.
And let us respond like the Samaritan woman,
and tell others of what Christ has done for us!