

July 14, 2013

Jesus: The Living Water

John 4:1-14

BI: Everyone is thirsty but not everyone is drinking the water that gives eternal life.

In the year 1512 the Spanish explorer and conquistador, Juan Ponce de Leon sailed from Spain toward the New World known as America in search of lands that were left to be claimed. His aim was to discover islands that were rich in gold and other natural resources that would make him fabulously wealthy. As he traveled he came to a certain peninsula which, after the vast array of flowers discovered there, he named Florida. In time, he would become the first governor of Puerto Rico. But Ponce de Leon is perhaps best remembered as the man who sought to discover the fabled Fountain of Youth.

As legend has it, when he was a boy he had heard about a group of islands where the waters of Bimini could be found. Once ingested, these waters would prove to be the cure for aging and a man could live forever.

Of course Ponce de Leon never found the fountain of youth. But the fact that stories like this have intrigued mankind through the ages reveals that humans seem to be hard-wired to desire something more than what the few years of our lives can deliver. We long for something that will fix what's broken deep inside. We have a deep desire to find that something which will restore us, satisfy us, and make us whole. And yet, no matter where we look, no matter what we experience, discover, or buy in this life our souls remain dissatisfied.

Chapter four of the gospel of John introduces us to a woman who is kind of the poster-child for dissatisfied souls. In a way, she represents all of humanity. Don't think of this passage as a lesson in evangelism. The character who represents *us* in this story is not Jesus. The character who represents you and me is a female, Samaritan, outcast whose only claim to fame in her community is the uncommon depth of her depravity. She, like all mankind, had a terrible problem. She was constantly thirsty. No matter what she did her soul would never be satisfied. But then one day she met a man who offered her something amazing. He offered her "living water."

I. The Context (1-6):

1. Read 1-6

2. As you know, Jesus had made His first appearance in Judea, just outside of Jerusalem. He had been publically baptized by John the Baptist. He had turned water into wine at a wedding. He had cleansed the temple. He had a private meeting with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, and he had called to Himself five disciples, and was baptizing people in the Jordan. All of this had happened near Jerusalem. But now it was time to move on.

3. The text is somewhat cryptic about why Jesus left, but it probably had something to do with keeping ahead of the animosity that was growing toward Him on the part of the religious leadership. It wasn't that he was afraid of them. It just wasn't His time.

4. Leaving the Judean countryside, Jesus and His men began a northward journey toward Galilee. And as they went, the text says (4) He had to pass through Samaria.

5. As many of you know, Samaria stood right between Judea and Galilee. It is popular to think that most Jews didn't travel through Samaria because of their disdain for the people there. Rather, they would cross eastward over the Jordan River, travel north for a considerable distance and then cut back west across the Jordan again to enter Galilee. This may, in fact, be the case but most of the research I read this week suggests that really only the most fastidious Jews took the long way to

research I read this week suggests that really only the most fastidious Jews took the long way to Galilee. Most people took the shortest route possible which led them right through Samaria.

6. In any case, the important thing to note here is that the primary reason Jesus entered Samaria was because he had an appointment with a certain woman. So Jesus and His little band of disciples came to the village of Sychar in the region of Samaria and stopped for a rest near Jacob's well.

7. Verse 6 tells us that Jesus was tired. This little comment is really quite important theologically because it demonstrates Jesus' humanity. Yes, He was the Word made flesh. Yes, He was the Son of God. Yes, He existed before all eternity. But He came to earth to live and die **as a man** in order to rescue sinners.

8. This is the context. Now, let's see the encounter.

II. The Encounter

1. Read 7-9

2. Now the story starts to get really interesting. Verse 6 says that it was the sixth hour. There is some debate as to whether this means it was noon or 6:00 pm (depending on Jewish or Roman time). Personally, I think they arrived at the well at noon. It is the middle of the day. Jesus and his five disciples have been traveling all morning. They're tired from the journey and it's time to stop for lunch and perhaps a little siesta. We know from v. 8 that the disciples went into the city to buy food.

3. The question is, why would a woman be coming to the well in the heat of the day. The rest of the women from the village would likely have come in the morning before it got hot, and they would be back in the evening to draw water again. Coming to the well was a social experience. It's where the women were able meet for a while and talk with one another and share news or the latest gossip. This woman, however, comes alone and at a time when she is most likely to avoid the other women.

3. Now the encounter begins with a simple request from Jesus. (7) *"Give me a drink."* Notice her response in verse 9: *"How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?"* (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

4. Now you have probably picked up on the fact that there seems to be some tension between the Jews and the Samaritans. Where did that come from? Well, let's think about some Jewish history for a moment. You see, after King Solomon died the nation of Israel split into two separate kingdoms. The kingdom to the north was called Israel and the kingdom to the south was called Judah. The capital city of the Judah was Jerusalem and the capital city of Israel was called Samaria.

5. Now, in 722 BC the Lord brought judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel. God sent Assyria to completely decimate all 10 tribes of the northern kingdom. He took the people and scattered them all over the known world and brought people from other places into Israel. Over the years the remaining Jews in Israel ended up intermarrying refugees from the other nations which was strictly forbidden by the law of Moses.

6. Not only that, but the foreigners who came into Samaria and intermarried brought their pagan gods with them and developed their own systems of pagan religion. They even built a rival temple on top of Mt. Garizim, the very place where Joshua and the priests had stood centuries earlier to proclaim all of the Lord's covenantal promises of blessing upon Israel.

7. Now let's fast-forward history about 130 years. In 586 BC, Babylon came and attacked the southern kingdom of Judah and took the Jews captive for 70 years. After that period of exile many of those captives and their children returned to Jerusalem and attempted to rebuild the temple which had been destroyed. When some of the Jews from Samaria offered to help, they were rebuffed. Then later, when Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem to rebuild the walls, the people of Samaria did everything they could to stop them.

8. All of this produced a great deal of tension between the two groups. "The Jews who returned to Jerusalem after the exile regarded the residents of Samaria as racial half-breeds and religious compromises." So hated were the Samaritans that "the Pharisees actually prayed that no Samaritan would be raised in the resurrection. And when Jesus' enemies wanted to insult Him they called

would be raised in the resurrection. And when Jesus' enemies wanted to insult Him they called Him 'a Samaritan'(8:48)" (*Dr. Constable's Notes on John*, on line).

9. So here is Jesus (a Jew) sitting at Jacob's well when this unnamed Samaritan woman comes to draw water, and he says to her "Give me a drink."

10. Let's try to get a feel for how awkward this situation would have been. I think the best way to illustrate what's happening here is to think of the racial tensions that existed right here in TX back in the 1950's when segregation was still in effect. Everything was separated. White children and black children were required to attend different schools. There were different train cars, different sections on busses. There were even different public bathrooms and water fountains that were clearly marked "White" and "Colored."

11. Now, imagine what it would have been like for a white man to sit near a "colored" water fountain waiting for someone to come for a drink. John Piper writes, "[Jesus] is standing by the fountain marked "Colored" watching a black woman fill her water bottle and then, for all to see, says, "Can I have a drink from your water bottle?" She says, at the end of verse 9, "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." But more literally it says, Jews don't "use together" with Samaritans. [In other words] You can't be asking me to use the same bucket. That isn't done" (from his sermon, *You Will Never Be Thirsty Again*, on www.desiringgod.org).

12. What I want you to see here is the amazing, glorious, relational grace of Jesus. There was no racial prejudice in him. That fact that she was a woman, and a Samaritan, and a known sinner did not keep Him from engaging in personal ministry to her. In fact, she is the very reason He came to earth. He came to "seek and to save the lost" (Lk. 19:10). He came to reconcile outcasts to God. He came to love prostitutes and tax collectors, lepers and Pharisees, and people who are possessed by demons. He came to ransom fornicators and adulterers, thieves and murders, liars and loners. He came to heal the broken-hearted and set the captives free. He came to call to Himself *losers* (like you and me) from every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue and to transform us all into sons and daughters of God.

13. One time the apostle Paul famously said, "Consider *your* calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, *so that no man may boast before God* (1 Cor. 1:26–29).

14. This is the woman at the well. And Jesus says, "Can I have a drink from your water bottle? So she counters, (9) "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman? (for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans)." Get the picture?

15. So now we have seen the context and the encounter. Let's consider the concern.

III. The Concern (10-11)

1. Why is Jesus doing this? This kind of inter-racial conversation was unheard of and definitely out of bounds. Read v. 10

2. Jesus is the master of engagement. He knows exactly how to lead a conversation to get to the point He desires to make. In v. 7 He is the thirsty One who is asking this woman for a drink. Now He turns it around making her the thirsty one who should be coming to Him for a drink. If he didn't have her attention before, He's got it now. And this woman is totally up for the game even though she has no idea where it is going.

3. Notice the two things Jesus says the woman doesn't know. (10) She doesn't know the "gift of God." In other words, she doesn't know the gospel; the way of salvation. She doesn't know that God is offering sinners complete forgiveness, the cancelation of all their spiritual debt. She doesn't know the very thing that Nicodemus didn't know, that it is necessary and possible to be "born again." She doesn't know the "gift of God." That's the first thing.

4. The second thing she doesn't know is "who it is who says to you 'Give me a drink.'" In other words, she has no idea that the Person she is speaking with is the only One on earth who has the authority to give her the "gift of God." If she only understood the magnitude and worth of the "gift

authority to give her the gift of God. If she only understood the magnitude and worth of the gift of God” and that He alone was able to offer it, she would beg Him to give it to her. But for now, she doesn’t know.

5. The apostle John is moving toward a very specific goal in this story. The central point he is leading us to is found in verse 26, where the woman says (25) I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us. And Jesus responds: “I who speak to you am He.” In other words, “I am the Messiah. I am the Christ. And I have come to provide for you the “gift of God” which I like to call “living water.”

6. The word for “living” here means moving, bubbling, or dancing. She would have understood the term “living water” to be “spring water.” Not water that is sedentary at the bottom of a well, but pure and clean water that is moving, bubbling up out of the earth.

7. One thing is for sure. This woman didn’t know what Jesus was talking about, but she was beginning to think there was more to it than just finding a better water supply. Some basic deduction made that quite evident to her.

Read v. 11.

8. Normally, when people traveled through that arid country they carried with them a kind of collapsible, goatskin bucket that could be used to draw water out of a well. Clearly Jesus didn’t have one. The disciples probably took it with them into town. And to add to the obvious difficulty, she knew that Jacob’s well was deep. In fact, today that well is still there and it is approx. 75 feet deep - the deepest well in Palestine. So she asks, “Where then do you get that living water? Obviously not here!

9. Now at this point, she still doesn’t know who Jesus is, but she derives from Jesus statement “If you knew who it is who says to you, Give me a drink,” that Jesus must have some status or authority that is not readily apparent. So she asks (12) “You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You?”

10. Notice Jesus’ answer. Read v. 13-14

11. In other words, whoever dug this well may have been great, but the water from his well will leave you thirsty. My water, however, will quench your thirst completely. Not that you will lose your ability to thirst, but the water I give will become a perpetual spring of water coming *NOT* out of the ground, but out of your very soul; a perpetual fountain of eternal life!

12. What is this living water? It is the same “water” that God had promised throughout His word. If you look, you will find it all over the O.T. Let’s just consider what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 12:3 “Therefore you will joyously draw water From the springs of salvation.”

Isaiah 44:3 “For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land* And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants.”

Isaiah 49:10 “They will not hunger or thirst, Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has compassion on them will lead them And will guide them to springs of water.”

13. What is this living water? It is the fulfillment of all the Spiritual promises God has ever given to His people. It is the promise of forgiveness of sins. It is the promise of a new and living heart that longs to worship and obey the Lord. It is the promise of regeneration. It is the promise of new birth. It is the promise to be made a new creation. It the promise of changed status in the eyes of God; the promise of adoption as sons and daughters of God. It is the promise of eternal life together with the Father in heaven.

14. These are the spiritual promises of God and they are promises that can only take place in the heart of man by the power of God. In fact, we get a fuller explanation of the meaning of “living water in John 7:37–39

“Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” ³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive.”

15. Do you see what Jesus was offering this outcast of society and infamous sinner? He was offering her the greatest gift in the world. He was offering her the Holy Spirit. And He alone has the authority to do that because He alone is the Christ, the Son of God who came from the Father to give us life.

16. Will this woman take this precious gift? Well, you will have to come back next time to find out. But the most important question you need to ask today is, do you know the “gift of God” and Who it is who is offering it too you? Do you thirst for what He is offering? If you do, ask Him, and He will grant forgiveness of all your sin and put within your soul a well of water springing up to eternal life.

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