

March 12, 2023 at St. Matthew, Port Washington, WI

Drink of the Living Water and Live Eternally!

Every year, dozens, even hundreds, of people have to be rescued from the trails in the Grand Canyon because of dehydration. The humidity is so low in Arizona that the sweat evaporates off your skin before you even realize your body is sweating to cool itself down. Without even realizing it, you can become dehydrated. Your body needs about 3 quarts of water a day to operate efficiently. Water, which makes up about 60% of your body, is important for digestion, for blood circulation, temperature control, and your joints, not to mention other things. Water is essential for life.

Jesus knew that someone in Samaria needed water. At the time of the Jesus, most of the Jews lived in the southern region of Judea. There were also a smaller group of Jews up north by the Sea of Galilee. In between those areas was the nation of Samaria. The Samaritans were a mixture of left-over Israelites and imported Assyrians. They were cross-breeds both physically and spiritually. The Jews hated them and the Samaritans returned the favor. If Jews wanted to go from the southern region to the northern region, they would walk far out of their way to go around Samaria. Jesus led his disciples right through Samaria to a town called Sychar because he knew that someone in Samaria needed water.

Jesus sat down by the well in town and sent his disciples to buy food. That way, he could be all alone at the well when she came. She was carrying a jar to get water. She knew she was physically thirsty. She had no idea she was dying of spiritual thirst. She was thirsty for love, for a clear conscience, for a Savior. Maybe there have been times when you were spiritually thirsty. Maybe you've ever been hit by an unexpected tsunami of stress that's so out of your control that it you feel that God is punishing you. Maybe important parts of your life are starting to break down – your marriage, your friendships, your relationships with your kids – and God's love seems far away. Sometimes the pressure and grind of daily life can leave you feeling spiritually empty as if God has forgotten about you or does not care how you're feeling. Maybe you've had your heart broken again...and again and now you feel unlovable and worthless. Maybe people have taken advantage of you and you feel that God is not being fair with you. Maybe you have been as spiritually thirsty as that lady at the well.

We know we are not perfect and our conscience nags at us. We know that we are slowly dying and that leaves us edgy. That's being spiritually thirsty. Some people try to quench that thirst in wrong ways. Some try to escape reality through alcohol, drugs, TV, sexual pleasures, sports, hobbies and other things. From what we learn about this lady in Sychar, she tried escaping reality by looking for love in all the wrong places.

When she approached the well, Jesus got the conversation going (:7), **“Will you give me a drink?”** This shocked her because Jews and Samaritans did not get along. Also, one man talking with one woman might seem scandalous. Jesus steered the conversation to spiritual matters (:10), **“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”** The gift of God refers to salvation through Jesus himself, the gospel. It is living water in the sense that it gives eternal life. The lady, however, was still thinking of physical water in the well. I like to imagine Jesus pointing to the well as he continued (:13), **“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.”** She was still thinking of physical water. She thought Jesus had some sort of magic water that, if you drank it, you would never get thirsty again. She was excited about the idea of not having to lug a jug of water across town each day.

Jesus then forced the conversation toward spiritual matters so she would finally understand. He told her (:16), **“Go, call your husband and come back.”** Her heart must have stopped with fear and guilt. **“I have no husband,”** (:17) she stuttered. Then Jesus pulled the bandages off of her broken heart. He knew that she was not married. She had been married and divorced 5 times and now was just living together with a guy instead of being married. She was living a sinful lifestyle. She was the lady in town with a bad reputation. She was the one that others talked about. She was the one who had her heart crushed again and again. She felt lonely and used and unloved.. She was the one who was dying of spiritual thirst. She was looking for love in all the wrong places. She could not find contentment and peace for her soul.

What would Jesus ask for in order to remind you that you are a sinner? Maybe he would say,

- “Show me your bin of empty beer cans.”
- Or, “Show me your report card and let's see if your grades match up with the abilities I gave you.”

- Or, “Show me how much money you made or were given last year, and then show me how much you gave back to the Lord as a thank-offering.”
- Or, “Show me the devotion book you’ve been reading.”
- Or, “Show me your internet browsing history or the TV shows and movies you watch.”
- Or, “Show me how much time you spent focused on your spouse or family instead of staring at your phone or TV or things that only interest you.” And on and on.

Make no mistake. The Lord knows your our guilt even better than we do. There is a good and useful reason why our worship begins with a confession of sins. We need to regularly be reminded that we are sinners, otherwise we’ll get smug and think, “I’m pretty good. Better than most. I don’t really need to hear about forgiveness.” Confessing our sins at the beginning of the service and then hearing the pronouncement of God’s forgiveness in Christ Jesus is living water to our souls. We need that.

When Jesus told the lady that he knew about her secret sins and broken heart, she realized that he was a messenger from God. Now she was finally focused on spiritual matters. Where could she get this living water of salvation? Where could she quench her thirst? Where could she receive forgiveness? The Jews worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem. Did she need to go there? The Samaritans worshiped at nearby Mount Gerazim. Would that be good enough.?

Jesus explained that God was not interested in WHERE she worshiped. He was interested in her heart. Jesus told her that she (:24), “**must worship in spirit and in truth.**” To worship *in spirit* means a heart that recognizes and confesses sins, a heart that repents as it turns away from sin and turns toward God for forgiveness and life. To worship *in truth* means worshipping with the knowledge of the one and only way of salvation—not by works, but by faith in Jesus.

She did not know what to think or do so she said (:25), “**I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.**” In other words, “Whatever. I do not want to continue this conversation.” But Jesus knew she needed water. As he had done from the start, he gripped her with his words and held her, refusing to let her go (:26), “**I, the one speaking to you – I am he.**” It was not merely that he had something that her heart needed. It was that he, himself, was

what she needed. He was true God in the flesh who would live a perfect life for her, die to take away her sins and rise to give her life after death.

You know what it’s like to be thirsty, I mean really thirsty. Maybe it was when you finished running a race or playing a game. Maybe it was when you working in the yard on a hot and humid summer day. Your tongue starts to stick to the roof of your mouth and it’s hard to talk. What a relief when you are finally able to get a large glass of cool, clear water! You guzzle it so fast that it overflows your mouth and runs down your chin. You take a deep breath and drink even more. That is the same joy and satisfaction that this lady in John 4 felt. She realized that Jesus was the Savior she needed. If you read further in John 4, you’ll see that she ran and told all sorts of people about Jesus. He stayed with them two days and many came to believe in him.

For her and the whole world, Jesus would be whipped and lose precious blood. He would be nailed to a tree and hung out to dry with the hot sun beating on him. He would be dehydrated and thirsty so that even a sponge of vinegar would be welcomed. He was drained of all his strength but filled with such a love for you and every person that he forced his dry throat to scratch out the words, “**It is finished.**” You do not ever have to be thirsty again. Ever. Jesus took away your nagging guilt. He took away your sins. He proved how much he loves you and his love will never stop. He will never leave you or forsake you. He rose from the dead to guarantee that you will live after you die. Jesus gives you the spiritual water of salvation that can bring a smile to your face and lift your chin in spite of how the world is treating you.

Jesus does not meet us at a well in Samaria. He comes to us through the good news of salvation in Word and Sacrament. Make sure you get to church. Read your Bible and devotion books. Daily recognize and repent of your sin and drink again of the water of life. Jesus is our “fountain,” our “fount,” as we will sing in our next hymn, of every blessing. Still want more assurance? At the end of the Bible Jesus says to you (Revelation 21:6), “**It is done.** [Salvation is accomplished. There’s nothing to fear. Heaven is already yours.] ... **To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.**” Meet Jesus at the well of his Word, where you’ll discover the same exact thing about yourself that this woman did. You are loved. Jesus is waiting. He waiting for you. And he has something to give. He gives you himself. Every drop of blood in him. Drink of the Living Water and Live Eternally! Amen.