

# LIVING Water

John 4:5-26

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In the time of Jesus, Jews and Samaritans were as divided as any two peoples could be. A division deeply embedded by a history of conflict, hatred and prejudice. More than half a millennium earlier, the Babylonians had conquered the Southern Kingdom of Judah and taken many of the people into captivity (605-586 BC). As was the custom of those nations, Babylon transported masses of Jews from Judea and the surrounding areas, and settled them in the kingdom of Babylon. However, Israel was not left completely desolate; the poor people of the land were left to work the land (2 Kings 24:14; 25:12).

Even earlier, the same thing had happened with Israel's Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and the Assyrians brought other people in to repopulate the land (2 Kings 17:24-29; 2 Chronicles 30:1-10). While the Jews were exiled in Babylonia, the people left in the land—Israelites and Gentiles—intermarried, and that created the Samaritan people. They were partly Jewish but partly not.

After the Persians conquered Babylon, they allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. However, Nehemiah refused to allow the mixed people of the land to have any part in the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:20). Also, the returning Jews denied them any part in the rebuilding of the temple, thus, deepening the animosity between the two (Ezra 4:1-5).

As a result, the Samaritans eventually found another place of worship. Their beliefs came to include monotheism, the Law of Moses (they accepted the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, but not any other books), and they built a temple at Mt. Gerizim as the one appointed place of sacrifice and worship. However, the Jews destroyed the Mt. Gerizim temple in 128 B.C., adding more bitterness to the already strained rivalry.

Strict orthodox Jews would rather travel to Galilee from Judea by crossing the Jordan River and circling all the way around Samaria rather than pollute themselves with Samaritan dust, even though this added days in contrast to the more direct route straight through Samaria. The Samaritans were no band of angels either. Both sides had made reconciliation an impossibility, that is, until Jesus arrived that day at Jacob's well. (Lorenzo Arroyo)

This woman, whose name we are never given, walked the same path to the well that she'd walked countless times before. She has no idea that Jesus was also walking a path that led to this same well. John writes that He was making His way from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north and that He 'had to go through Samaria.' "Had to," not as in, it was the only way to get from point A to point B. But 'had to' as in, 'had to' meet with this woman. (Paul Nielsen)

When the woman comes to the well Jesus is sitting beside it, tired from his morning's travel. He has nothing with which to draw water, and so he asks her to draw him a drink. She's stunned! She asks how he, a Jew, could ask water from her, a Samaritan woman. After all, Jews and Samaritans shared nothing in common. It's as though Jesus was living in the days of black-white segregation as a white boy and had asked to drink from the "colored" water fountain. Later, John tells us that his disciples are astonished to find him talking to a woman, Samaritan or not.

Jesus turns the conversation from the mundane (a drink of water) to the spiritual (living water). "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." She has no idea what he's talking about. The living water he would give would come "gushing up into eternal life." With this spiritual water her thirst would finally be quenched, once and for all.

What was her spiritual thirst? What's our *spiritual* thirst? What do we thirst for *other* than water? Ultimately, to be *right with God*. To be accepted by Him. To be loved unconditionally. No matter what. No matter all our faults and failures.

The woman asks for this water, and in the conversation that follows, Jesus does what? He peels back the layers of her life right before her eyes. Moving boldly into the secret places of her heart, he tells her that she had had five husbands and was now living with a man not her husband. When at last she leaves him, she hurries into the city and tells anyone who will listen, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done." (David Sapp)

He knew! He understood! He got her! He saw her sin, calling it what it was, and he loved her anyway. He offered her hope. He gave her living water, Himself.

We don't like to deal with our sin, do we? We don't like to think about it. We don't like to talk about it. We'd rather do what? Avoid the subject altogether. Not Jesus. Jesus always brings up our sin. Jesus always deals with our sin. How could He not? That's WHY He came. We need a Savior. A Savior from what? Sin - our sinful hearts.

Jesus knows. He understands. He gets you, better than you get yourself. He knows all about your sin, and he loves you nonetheless. *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ... God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ... we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* (Romans 5:6-10)

At times we wonder, "How could God ever love someone like me? If only he knew. If only he knew what I've done. If only He knew what I was *really* thinking? What I was *really* feeling? If only he knew what I was *really* like!" Like the Samaritan woman, we have our own secrets hidden away, that no one else knows of. Sometimes, oftentimes, we're even blind to them ourselves.

Jesus knows, and loves you nonetheless. That's why He came. *"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."* (John 4:34) To live for you. To die for you. To rise for you, that you shall rise with Him. To be with your Beloved, forever.

*Jesus said to her, "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. 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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

The *place* of worship wasn't the important thing, but the openness of worship. Being honest with yourself and with God. Not merely an outer thing, but an inner thing. A true thing. Worshipping truthfully. In spirit and truth. Confessing your unworthiness. Repenting.

Repentance and confession is the way of spirit and truth. Not cover up and worship. Not deliberately sinning and worship. That is to worship in flesh and lies. But to the one who comes in repentance/confession - spirit and truth - there is living water. Forgiveness and life!

*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." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."*

All that the Temple and the ceremonies at Jerusalem had served so long, was passing away, was in a sense already gone - for the Redeemer and Savior was now here in Person. The time had now come when those who worshiped the Father would worship him in spirit and in truth. They would worship Jesus - the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

**John 7:37-38** *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (Is 58:11)*

The Living Water that never runs dry and that springs up to eternal life is **God's love for you in Christ**. Romans 5:5 ... *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... neither death nor life ... nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, [not even your sin] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 8:35 ...)

Jesus wasn't offering free advice to this woman. He was offering her the same thing He's offering you - Himself.

In the end, this isn't simply a story about Jesus "getting" a woman he met at Jacob's Well--as in understanding her. It's a story about Jesus "getting" her as his child. Getting you as His children.

We don't like to talk about sin. We don't like to deal with our sin. But Jesus does. He loves you too much not to. *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* (John 3:17)

At the well that day was someone dying of thirst. Not her *physical* thirst, but a *deeper* thirst. Her inner thirst for love, acceptance, forgiveness, cleansing, a *spiritual* thirst. A thirst she wasn't even aware of. *Each of us has the same thirst.* We thirst to be loved and accepted. We thirst for meaning and purpose in our lives. On the *outside*, everything may look great. But truth be known ... we're parched on the inside, often unaware of it ourselves.

And like this woman with the five husbands, we too try to quench our thirst the best way know how. Overdosing on entertainment. Overdosing on materialism. Overdosing on technology. Overdosing on relationships. Overdosing on work. Overdosing on medication. Overdosing on food. Overdosing on alcohol. Even overdosing on spirituality. We'll try anything to quench the thirst of our parched souls!

All these ways of trying to quench a deeper thirst may give us *temporary* relief. Yet the soul continues to thirst. *"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst."*

That day in Samaria, John tells us, when all this happened, it was about the *sixth hour* - the very same hour when Jesus, hanging on the cross, entered the darkness of sin. It was the sixth hour when the sun stopped giving its light. A darkness, even deeper than this Samaritan woman's. Deeper than yours. The darkness in which Jesus, the giver of living water, said **"I thirst."** And the darkness in which finally, when bowing his head in death, Jesus hands over His Spirit. That is the time when Jesus was loaded with the sin and shame of Ms. Samaritan and you and me to take it all away. (James Douthwaite)

LIVING water is God's love to you in Christ. Drinking in, is believing. Trusting. Being quenched. Coming alive. Being born again. Rejoicing!

*Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! ... For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.* (Psalm 95)

Come to the *Living Water!* Not a *place* or a *thing*, but a *Person*. One who washes away your sin and wipes your slate clean ... forever!