

28. The Gospel of John—4:1-8, 13

“Living Water” Pt.1

(4/29/18)

There are certain drives that God has built into the human body to ensure its health and survival.

One of the strongest of these drives is the water drive because water is so essential for life—we can survive only a few days without it.

Water is so vital to our body that only a 5 percent loss of body water will begin to affect our body’s ability to function; a 10 percent loss will cause mental deterioration; and a 20 to 25 percent loss will cause death.

Now, just as God has given us physical drives to keep our bodies healthy—He has also given us *emotional* drives which need to be satisfied if we’re going to remain emotionally and psychologically healthy.

I believe that the strongest of these is the need for **hope**.

What water is to our physical man, hope is to our psychological or inner man—it is vital to our emotional health—*“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life.”* (Prov.13:12)

Or in other words, when the hope of something important to us is constantly moved into the future out of our reach, like the proverbial can kicked down the road, and not ever fulfilled in the present we become emotionally unhealthy in our hearts—discouraged, disillusioned and depressed.

But without a doubt our greatest need isn't physical or emotional—its spiritual.

You see, there is a thirst deep in the soul of every person to know and connect with God.

If that wasn't true we wouldn't see the proliferation of religion around the world.

What is religion but man reaching out to satisfy his or her thirst to connect with God.

The psalmist expressed this when he said—

Psalm 42:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...

The Bible tells us that God made us with a God-shaped void in our heart that can only be filled with a relationship with Him, the true and living God—the Lord Jesus Christ.

So often people are thirsty in their souls for God but they try to satisfy that thirst with material things or relationships not even realizing that what they're really thirsting for is God and nothing else will satisfy them but Him.

Now, with all of that as background we come this morning to John chapter 4 and the story of a woman who came to a well to satisfy her physical thirst for water—only to be made aware of her deepest and most important thirst—her thirst for God.

John 3:22-23 (NKJV)

²² After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.

John 4:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ² (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³ He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴ But He needed to go through Samaria.

The Pharisees hated Jesus and would love nothing more than to have a confrontation with Him in front of His disciples.

But Jesus' time had not yet come and so rather than provoke a confrontation with the Pharisees at this time (that would come later) He decides to leave Judea and go up to Galilee.

Now, the Jews (especially rabbis like Jesus) if they had to go from Jerusalem up to the Galilee region—would never go directly north thru Samaria.

They would usually go east from Jerusalem, cross the Jordan River, and then go north thru Perea and then Decapolis (modern Jordan Valley region) and once they were adjacent to Galilee—they would go west, crossing back over the Jordan River and reenter the land of Israel.

Now this added quite a bit of time and mileage onto their trip—it would have been much shorter and faster for them to go directly north to Galilee passing thru Samaria—but they would never do that—why?

Well, it was because of a series of events that happened hundreds of years earlier.

You see, after King Solomon died, his son Rehoboam reigned in his place. (Explain)

So, the kingdom was divided—the 10 northern tribes became Israel, the capital being Samaria; and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin became the southern kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem being its capital.

The southern kingdom of Judah had some good kings and experienced some periods of revival—whereas the northern kingdom of Israel had no good kings and went from bad to worse spiritually and morally.

After a couple of hundred years of sending prophet after prophet to warn them if they didn't repent of their idolatry and immorality God was going to judge them—in 722 B.C. that judgment came.

And it came in the form of the Assyrians coming from the north and conquering the land of Israel, removing most of its inhabitants and relocating them throughout the Assyrian Empire.

They left a small population of Jews (the poor and infirmed) to tend the land—and then they relocated people they had conquered from other areas and put them into the land of Israel.

The strategy was simple and effective—by doing this you keep the people you've conquered weak and divided.

They are divided ethnically, culturally, and most important linguistically.

If they can't communicate with each other they can't come together and organize a revolt—you keep them in a perpetual state of defeat and subjugation.

But shortly after the Assyrians repopulated the land of Israel with foreigners—they began to experience attacks from lions.

So they sent word to the king of Assyria telling him that they had angered the God of the land because they didn't know the proper way to worship Him.

And so the king sent one of the Jewish priests taken in the captivity back to Israel to teach the people how to properly worship the God of Israel—this had the effect of introducing thousands of foreigners and pagans to the true and living God.

The Jews left in the land eventually married the gentiles that were brought in to repopulate the northern kingdom of Israel and the result was a race of people who were a mixture of Jew and gentile who later became known as the ‘Samaritans’.

A hundred and fifteen years after the northern kingdom was captured and taken into captivity by the Assyrians—the southern kingdom of Judah got so bad that they were conquered and carried away into captivity by the Babylonians.

After 70 years of captivity they were allowed to return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem, its walls and their temple which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and his army.

As they started to rebuild the Jewish temple, those in Samaria came down and offered to help them since they had Jewish blood in them and felt a strong connection to the God of Israel.

However, the Jews that had returned from Babylon refused their help—you see they considered them ‘half-breeds’—a defiled race, cut off from the covenant God had made with Moses and the Jewish people which forbid intermarriage with gentiles.

This created a deep animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews living in the area of Judea and in particular in Jerusalem.

And so, the Samaritans built a temple of their own on top of Mount Gerizim near Shechem (Sychar) and they began to worship the God of Israel thru a revised form of Judaism.

Through the years their traditions developed, one of which claimed that Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Gerizim in Samaria—not on Mount Moriah (Calvary) in Jerusalem.

Their holy book consisted of the Pentateuch alone (Genesis thru Deuteronomy), consisting of some minor deviations from the Hebrew text—including an additional verse specifically mentioning Mount Gerizim as the original site of Solomon’s temple—the only place where true worship could be offered to God.

In 128 BC the Jewish high priest and ruler of Israel, John Hyrcanus, captured Shechem and destroyed the Samaritan temple—but the Samaritans continued to offer sacrifices to God on top of Mount Gerizim.

To this day, the Samaritans still offer animal sacrifices on top of Mount Gerizim.

They strictly observe the Sabbath and celebrate Passover and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) every year.

Last time I heard (about 25 years ago) there was only about 200 Samaritans left, and because they only marry other Samaritans—all the inbreeding has left most of them imbecilic.

As we come to John 4, remember the background, and understand that the deep-seated feelings of animosity and resentment that the Samaritans and Jews had for each other was still very much alive in Jesus’ day—so much so that neither would set foot in the other’s land.

So, when we read in John 4 that Jesus wanted to go up to Galilee, but He *needed* to go thru Samaria—understand that the only reason I can think of why He needed to go thru Samaria to get to Galilee.

It was because He had an appointment with a woman of Samaria who was thirsty in her soul and needed living water.

This appointment was made before the foundation of the world by God Himself, and had to be kept—therefore Jesus needed to go thru Samaria!

I. A Thirsty Soul

John 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

As we have already pointed out—the name ‘Sychar’ refers to the ancient city of Shechem.

We are told in Genesis 33 that Jacob bought a parcel of land from the descendants of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money—a piece of land that seems to have had this well on it already (the text doesn’t say Jacob dug the well himself although he and his sons might have).

And then here in John 4 we are told that Jacob gave this parcel of ground to his son Joseph.

We know from Genesis chapter 50 that as Joseph was dying he made the children of Israel take an oath that when God brought them out of Egypt they would not leave his bones there but would carry them back with them and bury them in the land of his fathers.

Four hundred years later, when the children of Israel finally came out of Egypt under Moses—they brought with them Joseph’s bones (Ex.13:19) and they buried them in this parcel of ground outside of Shechem where Jacob’s well was—a well that is still there to the present day.

According to ancient tradition, Jacob’s well was about half a mile south of Sychar.

It’s a deep well (approx. 100-120 feet), fed by a spring.

John 4:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

The Jewish day began at 6am and so the sixth hour would have been noon—the hottest part of the day.

Even though Jesus was the omnipotent God—in His humanity He was still subject to the physical limitations of His human body.

And so Jesus being tired and thirsty from His journey sat down by Jacob’s well and waited for His divine appointment to show up.

John 4:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ A woman of 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.

The fact that this woman came to draw water alone at noon tells us a few things about her.

A. She was an outcast

The Samaritan people in general were outcasts—but she was an outcast among outcasts.

In that culture going to the well was an opportunity for women to socialize with each other.

They usually went to draw their water early in the morning while it was still cool.

The fact that this woman came to get water (a half mile walk) by herself at noon, during the hottest part of the day indicates that she was a social outcast—someone the other women didn’t want to socialize with, and apparently, she felt the same way about them.

Why was she an outcast?

B. She was immoral

As we read the story we learn that she had been married five times and now was living with a man she was not married to.

She was probably the town flirt, the loose divorcee, that had broken up some other marriages in town and now none of the other women trusted her or wanted anything to do with her.

C. She was empty

Look, none of us as Christians would excuse the way she had lived her life—and that goes double for Jesus.

We would all agree that the way she was living was wrong but—why?

Why had she been married and divorced five times and was now living with a man out of wedlock?

The answer to that question is because she was thirsty in her *soul* and she didn't know it.

All she knew was that she was empty inside—an emptiness that she thought could be satisfied with a man.

There are a lot of men and women who are empty inside who think they can satisfy that emptiness with a relationship if they're single or a new spouse if they're married—

It seems that this gal fit into that category.

And so, each new relationship brought with it new hope for her that this was going to be “*Mr. Right*” who was finally going to bring her the happiness she was so desperately seeking after—only to have it end in divorce which led to heart-ache and loneliness until the next man came along and the whole sad-cycle started over again.

And she found herself trapped on an emotional roller coaster...until finally she gave up on marriage and moved in with a guy.

She didn’t realize it at the time—but she was looking for love and happiness in the wrong places.

You need to understand that, even in marriage, your spouse can’t satisfy the emptiness inside of you—because, that is an emptiness that can only be filled with God—remember that God-shaped void we talked about?

Augustine said, “*Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.*”

Today we live in a culture that is empty and desperately trying to fill that emptiness with:

1. *Alcohol and drugs*
2. *Pleasurable experiences* (expensive vacations, sexual encounters)
3. *Material possessions*
4. *Romance* (internet romance and adultery has become an epidemic especially among married woman)

Notice what Jesus said to her—

John 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,

That is an extremely profound statement spoken by the One who made you and knows how you work and what will satisfy you.

It is a statement that should be written over every desire and ambition you have in life.

What is it that you think will bring you satisfaction and happiness?

What is it that you are pressing towards—what are the goals that you hope to achieve?

What are you hoping to acquire thinking if you only had that—then you would be fully satisfied?

“O, if only I could have that or him or her—I know I’d be happy, I know I wouldn’t want anything else.”

But listen, Jesus, the One who made you, is telling you that whatever it is, write over the top of it, *“Drink of this water but you will thirst again.”*

Nothing this world has to offer in the way of material possessions, accomplishments, successes or even human relationships will ever satisfy that deep longing in your soul the way a relationship with Jesus Christ will satisfy you.

And yet people still try.

There is always going to be the “*when/then*” person—“*when I get that—then I’ll be happy, then I will be satisfied.*”

Jesus is here telling us that that is one of the biggest lies Satan has deceived us into believing—it's what Paul the apostle called, "*the deceitfulness of riches.*" (Explain)

My pastor, Chuck Smith, pastored a mega-church for many years and knew a lot of people—most of them Christians, some of them unsaved—and some of those were wealthy .

I remember him saying that some of the most miserable and unhappy people he knew were those who had everything that money could buy.

You see, they have it all. They've done it all. They really have nothing left to experience or look forward to—they have maxed out life and nothing has satisfied them or made them happy.

Years ago, Donald Trump, a billionaire, talking about the emptiness in his life said that once you finally acquire what you're chasing after—it's a disappointment.

Quarterback Troy Aikman, after guiding the Dallas Cowboys to back-to-back Super Bowl wins in '93 and '94 said, "*Is this it? I thought it would satisfy me more.*"

Why should that surprise us when the Creator of the universe, the One who made us said, "*drink of this water* (fill in the blank)—*but you will thirst again*".

It will satisfy for a while—but in the end it's like eating cotton-candy—sweet to the taste and giving you a little rush—but contains nothing of substance, leaving you still hungry.

Next week we'll finish this message I've entitled, "Living Water".