

*John 4:5-26 – Thirst No More!*

*March 12, 2023 -- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent*

*Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin*

<sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. <sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "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." <sup>11</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" <sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." <sup>16</sup> He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." <sup>17</sup> "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." <sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup> "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." <sup>25</sup> The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." <sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

*Grace, mercy and peace to you, from God our Father and his Son Jesus, who comes to us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The story is told about four men adrift on the Atlantic Ocean near the equator. They were so thirsty that they were trying to squeeze moisture from the pieces of canvas on their small lifeboat. When rescuers finally arrived, the men lay prostrate from dehydration. After gradually reviving them, the rescuers informed the men of an incredible irony: All the while they were fighting for a few drops of moisture, they had actually been floating on drinkable water! You see, they were near the Amazon River - a river so huge that it pushes fresh water far out into the ocean. The men could have dipped a bucket off the side of their boat and drawn out all the water they wanted.

This story is similar to the Samaritan woman whom Jesus interacted with at Jacob's well. She was spiritually parched and was about to learn of the spiritually-refreshing water of life which Jesus supplies. Through his conversation with this woman Jesus invited her and today invites us to:

### THIRST NO MORE!

People today resemble the men in that lifeboat - thirsty, but unaware of a readily accessible source of fresh water. Pope Benedict spoke about this at World Youth Day. Addressing a crowd of a half million in Sydney, Australia, he said: *"In so many of our societies, side by side with material prosperity, a spiritual desert is spreading: an interior emptiness, an unnamed fear, a quiet sense of despair. How many of our contemporaries have built broken and empty cisterns in a desperate search for meaning...?"*

The Samaritan woman shows us the spiritual desert in which she was dwelling. As she introduces the religious scene in Samaria, she refers to her ancestors worship, not her own. Even what passed for religion in Samaria was not Biblical. When the Assyrians and Babylonians had conquered Israel they left a remnant of Israelites, who intermarried with the Canaanites and they mixed their religions together, so that the truths of the Old Testament promises were hidden.

Not only was she parched spiritually, her morality also led her away from any soul-satisfying refreshment. It reminds me of the passage in Jeremiah which Pope Benedict had referred to: Jeremiah 2:13 -- ***My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*** That term cistern may need some explanation. Most commonly it refers to an underground storage tank. Old farmhouses had them. They were filled by collecting rainwater from the roof. When people forsake God in their faith and life they are depending on cisterns which can hold no spiritually refreshing water.

What about us? What kind of cistern are we trying to drink from? Life offers so much attraction to things that seem so satisfying – our modern homes and autos with all the neat and wonderful features; then there are all the fun, bright fashions; and how many choices do we have in stylish foot wear! And then there are the vacation destinations – to the sun and the sand in winter and the woods and the lake in the summer! All those things may not be harmful by themselves. But where is our focus? Where do we seek satisfaction? How often are we trying to drink from broken cisterns?

Verse four just before our text says that Jesus ***“had to go through Samaria.”*** After meeting the woman at the well and listening in on her conversation with Jesus, we can see the urgency of this trip through land where most Jews never ventured. Jesus was compelled to go through Samaria, so that he could invite her to **Thirst No More!**

Our verse of the day says it: <sup>13</sup> ***Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (vs. 13, 14)***

The truth is simple, the image profound. Faith in Jesus gives eternal life now. Jesus and his Spirit can be understood to be the water. Faith is receiving the water. The water Jesus gives us becomes in us “a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Life with Jesus becomes a part of our being: dynamic, fresh, flowing, everlasting.

The woman wanted the water now, but she still thought of earthly water and physical thirst. She needed Jesus to reveal her real thirst to her.

Jesus had been telling the Samaritan woman the saving truth of the gospel. But now he spoke law to her. Only this way could she realize the thirst that Jesus quenches forever. When he told her to get her husband, he effectively showed her sin to her and gave her the opportunity to confess.

Her short answer opened the door. Perhaps she said it with a sense of shame: “I have no husband.”

Jesus drove the point home. You have spoken the truth, he emphasized, a truth that encompassed a history of adultery, divorce, fornication: five husbands and a live-in.

What a gracious invitation Jesus offers to sinners everywhere. It is not a new invitation for Isaiah invites with these words: Isaiah 55:1 -- ***“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. (quoted in Revelation 22:17)***

Jesus repeats this invitation: John 7:37-38 -- ***On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”***

When the truth of Jesus Christ reaches our souls and God's Spirit touches ours so that we believe, true worship begins. We don't merely go through the motions of worship. Our whole being is involved. But putting heart and soul into worship is only part of true worship. Many who fashion "God" according to their own ideas call on that god most fervently.

True worship is done "in spirit *and truth*." It revolves around and is anchored in the truth of God's revelation. It praises the true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It sorrows over sin and rejoices in the undeserved love that brought about salvation. It trusts in Jesus for forgiveness and life eternal. It proclaims the Scriptures and rejoices in the message. True worship can use forms as we do today, or not, but it doesn't need specific forms. It needs only "spirit and truth."

The Father seeks true worshipers, as, even at that moment, he was seeking to reach the heart of that sinful woman. She need not go to a certain place to find God and be cleansed. "God is spirit" and not confined to any one place like Gerizim or Jerusalem. When God reached her spirit with his truth, her worship could begin. Once she, in faith, accepted God's forgiveness offered in Jesus, she could raise thanks and praise to God for his great mercy and love.

Jesus succeeded in getting the woman to think of the Messiah. Although the Samaritans used only the books of Moses for their scriptures, she knew of the seed of the woman who would crush the power of Satan (Genesis 3:15). She knew of the promise to Abraham (Genesis 18:18). She knew of the prophet to come, like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). She hoped to see the Messiah, called Christ in Greek. She knew he would proclaim and explain everything.

This marvelous invitation to Thirst No More has a permanent character. In the Revelation to St. John we hear these words. Revelation 7:17 -- ***For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*** And again in Revelation 22:1-2 -- ***Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb<sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.***

Our thirst forever quenched in the peace and joy of heaven. Here on earth we will still say with the psalmist: ***"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. (Psalm 42:1)*** How comforting and reassuring to know that our Savior promises ***Thirst No More!***

Amen

Joel W. Jaeger