



Living Water for a Thirsty Soul

Message Notes, April 10, 2016

This week's teaching is from John 4:3-42, the story of "the woman at the well," to whom Jesus revealed Himself, the living water of heaven that quenches the longing thirst of the human soul.

John intentionally juxtaposes the stories of this woman and Nicodemus (3:1-21). These two couldn't be more opposite! Nicodemus was an educated, prominent, religious, Hebrew man. She was an illiterate, shunned, "sinful," Samaritan woman. Why does John put these two Jesus encounters back to back? What is the underlying message here?

John 4:4 – "Now he [Jesus] had to go through Samaria" . . . Why is that?

- It was not the social norm of the day for Jews to "go through" Samaria. Jews despised the Samaritans.
- They gladly elected to travel three extra days to go around Samaria and avoid these loathsome people.
- Jesus, the seeker of the lost, the healer of the broken, the demolisher of social walls, *had* to go through Samaria because he had a divine appointment with a woman, a town, a people!

He came to Jacob's well there in Sychar. It was mid-day (the sixth hour). It was hot! He was thirsty. This Samaritan woman was there – alone. The other women came early each day when it was cool. Out of shame, she waited to come alone, fearing she might be one of the topics of their gossip. Shockingly, this Hebrew man asks her, a Samaritan woman, for a drink of water from her own bucket. This was a violation of every social protocol of the day. It confounded her!

With gentle kindness, Jesus responds, "If you only knew who I am, you would ask me for a drink" of *living* water – running water, fresh, springing up, ever flowing. She responds with skepticism, a bit of sarcasm, and perhaps a tinge of hopeful wonder – "How can you give me a drink without a bucket?"

The stage is set for heaven to invade earth – "Whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst, it will be in her an eternal spring of life for the soul" (John 4:13-14 paraphrased).

How is Jesus tapping into the familiar scripture that reveals the heart of God, who longs to give us life, but we opt for lesser, unsatisfying waters? (See Jeremiah 2:13)

She calls his bluff – "OK, give me some of this living water." On the surface, it might appear Jesus is changing the subject, when in reality, he is cutting to the chase, going straight to her thirst, revealing her need for living water – "Go get your husband."

He says, in essence, "I know your story. I know your trail of broken relationships and love unfulfilled. I know your longing thirst for love and acceptance. I have the healing, satisfying water you need!"

Jesus has her attention. She responds – "I perceive you are a prophet." But she feels vulnerable – her shame and pain are exposed. She is guarded; she walls off her wounded heart.



“So let’s discuss worship.” (It’s much easier to talk “about” God than to engage *with* Him in honest dialogue about our hearts.

Jesus indulges her question, but He brings it back to matters of the heart. “The answer to your question is not about geography or temple sites – worship is not about externals but a rather genuine *heart, soul, mind, and strength* connection to God. Worship is about *spirit and truth*.”

Her heart is stirred as she remembers all the teachings/readings she has heard through her years: “When Messiah comes, He will explain all things.” Wonder, hope, and joy well up in her – “Could this be the One?!”

And Jesus reveals Himself – “I who speaks to you am He.”

The story brings us to two postures:

1. People who have had this “living water” conversation and have said “yes.”
2. Those who have not and need to have it.

To the second group, the invitation is clear. (Refer back to the Jeremiah 2:13 passage.) Jesus is passionately inviting you to come to Him with the deep thirst of your soul and let Him satisfy it with His own love, forgiveness, and life. His living water will fill and flow through you, by His Spirit that will indwell you when you trust Him and surrender your life (your thirst) to Him. Stop trying to quench your own thirsts by your “man-made cisterns” that do not hold water and can never satisfy.

To the first group, the story ends with the woman’s joyous sprint back to her town (where she has lived in isolation and humiliation) to share with her “neighbors” (hardly understanding it herself) the healing and freedom she has found. “I met one who told me all about my thirst and how He has water to satisfy it. I think this may be the Messiah. Come and see!”

The disciples show up. They are at a loss. They have no idea what has been happening. With good intentions, they try to get Jesus to eat dinner, but He can’t. He’s too filled with joy! “Guys, there is a food you can’t understand. There’s nothing more satisfying than joining with my Father in His work to transform lives. Join me in this work. The fields are white with it! Come feast on the food of proclaiming living water to a world dying of thirst!”

Reflection Questions

1. How are you thirsty? How can you bring your thirst to Jesus, the source of living water?
2. Who do you know that is thirsty? How can you share the living water of Jesus with them? Can you commit to praying steadily for them and for God to lead you in sharing with them.
3. How are you experiencing true worship – *in spirit and truth* – in your life? If you are not, what are the obstacles? How can you begin to clear these away?