

Our passage today picks up with the Pharisees discovering that Jesus was surpassing John in popularity. If you recall, they had been keeping their eye on John and even sent some investigators out to question him. (John 1:19) Their fears were relieved when he said he was not the One, not Elijah, Jeremiah or the Prophet. But then John warned that one would come who is so great that he was unworthy even to untie His sandals. (John 1:27) That must have made their ears tingle. So when the word came to them about Jesus' disciples baptizing more than John, they were probably getting ready to send out the next set of investigators. Jesus knew it was not time for that encounter. That may be the reason He "had to go through Samaria".

Commented [notes1]: 19 Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. John 1:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 27 He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." John 1:27 (NIV)

The Pharisees did not like to travel through Samaria, though many Galileans took that shorter route to Jerusalem. The Samaritans claimed to be descended from Manasseh and Ephraim, while the Jews believed they were descended from Shechem's rape of Dinah. (Genesis 34:2) Samaritans had the books of Moses but did not accept any other Scripture. They chose to worship on Mount Gerizim instead of in Jerusalem. The Torah describes Moses blessing the Jews on that mountain (Deuteronomy 11:29), and they believed that is where Abraham worshipped. (Genesis 12:7) To Jews, these people were backslidden half-breeds that distorted Scripture. They thought evil clung to them and could enter another person by touching something they touched or using the same dish they used. One rabbi said their women were unclean from birth. That is why the preferred route for very religious Jews going from north to south was up the Jordan Valley instead of through Samaria even though it took extra days of travel. Pharisees were particularly focused on keeping themselves pure. They would never follow Jesus through Samaria. We will find out later that they went all the way to Galilee to investigate Him. (Mark 7:1)

Commented [notes3]: 2 When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. Gen 34:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 29 When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. Deut 11:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. Gen 12:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and Mark 7:1 (NIV)

So Jesus is escaping an encounter with the Pharisees by going through the badlands. This reminds me of the old westerns. The posse (the bad guys) is after the good guy thinking he is a bad guy. But the good guy knows how to survive the badlands where the bad posse fears to follow.

They arrived at a well outside of Sychar. This town is now in the West Bank, and a church now covers the well. It is probably the actual site where the encounter took place. Jesus was tired from the journey. Was he tired from picking up the pace to get out of Dodge? It was high noon. Can you hear the theme song from Good, Bad, and the Ugly? Jesus (the good) rests at the well while the disciples go to buy food.

I want to stop for just a minute on a side note. Jesus was tired! Do you hear that? He knows what it is like when you get tired. He's been there. (Hebrews 4:15) He was as every bit human as you and I yet without sin. He knows how you feel. You can go to Him, because He understands.

Commented [notes7]: 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Heb 4:15 (NIV)

Then here comes the Ugly (in the eyes of most Jews). What kind of a lady hauls water in the heat of the day? A lady that doesn't like the ridicule and scorn of the other ladies! This lady has a reputation. Now if you are ugly to those who are considered ugly that puts you about as low as you can go. Keep in mind that God in His

sovereignty orchestrated Jesus staying alone at the well and the woman coming at this unusual time of day. Jesus begins the conversation in verse 7. *"Will you give me a drink?"*

The woman is shocked! She can see by His dress that He is a Jew. *"You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"* You have a nice little note that says, (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Actually in Greek it says the Jews don't jointly use Samaritan things, but translators thought that would throw you off, so they put something you could relate to. The Jews don't use Samaritan dishes because they are afraid that saliva from a Samaritan might bring contamination of evil into their body.

To relate a little better, let's go back in our minds to the 1950s, before the civil rights movement. Imagine a park in Alabama. The "white's only" drinking fountain is broken, and it's a sweltering summer day. A white man goes up to a colored woman and says, "Mam, would you fill up your thermos from the 'colored's only' drinking fountain and give me a drink?" "What are you saying? You are a white boy and you want to drink out of this black woman's thermos?" She might have thought, "How dare this whitey look down on me and try to get me to serve him. Why I'm not helping a bigot like him. But maybe I could make him beg, if he's thirsty enough. That'll teach him to respect us!" Does that give you a sense of how the Samaritan woman would feel?

This animosity between Jew and Samaritan really got going when a hundred years before Christ, the Jewish high priest destroyed the Samaritan's temple on Mount Gerizim. Shortly after Jesus' life on earth, the Samaritans slaughtered a group of Jewish worshippers on their way to a Temple Feast Day. They didn't just dislike each other; this was centuries of hostility and derision from both sides.

It was radical for Jesus to talk to a woman alone. It was even more radical considering she was a Samaritan. But Jesus never conformed to this world's standards. He conformed to God's standards. She was made in the image of God. (Genesis 1:27) He knows saliva doesn't bring evil into your body. (Mark 7:15) He was thirsty. He had no other motives. It was a completely pure encounter from Jesus side. But all the prejudices of the world surely came to this woman's mind and she assumed Jesus was like everyone else.

¹⁰ *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."* Isn't Jesus amazing! He never says what you would think He should say. He doesn't address the prejudice issue. He goes right to the thirst in this woman's heart. So often we are put off and get defensive in this kind of situation. Not Jesus! He knows the thirst in every human heart. He designed it and graciously planted it in each of us.

I recently read the story of a church that goes out of its way to make sure everyone is welcome just as they are. The author described it something like this. If you were to find a Rembrandt masterpiece covered in mud, you wouldn't point to the mud and describe its color and consistency and start yelling at it for being there. You'd be too excited that you had found something that is priceless. And you wouldn't get out your pressure washer and immediately try to blast the mud off. It might damage that

Commented [notes8]: 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
Gen 1:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 15 Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.' "
Mark 7:15 (NIV)

precious painting. You'd take it to an expert, a master at restoration. He will carefully and gently remove the filth a little at a time until it is completely restored. It's not that Jesus never addresses the mud. It's that He addresses the God given hunger first. The only reason He addresses the mud at all is because it is going to reveal the Rembrandt. By bringing up living water, Jesus was turning the conversation to the thirst in her heart. He changed the tone and atmosphere of the conversation with that one comment.

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" That well is one of the deepest open wells in Israel. It is about 100 foot down to the water. Sure enough, she was spiritually thirsty and desires living water. Now Jesus has her heart's attention and she's asking how she can find what she has been searching for all her life. (Isaiah 12:3)

Living water in the Jewish mind set is water that flows. Israel is a lot like Arizona. The reason we have the Verde (green) Valley is that the Verde River flows through it. The water from the river brings life in the middle of the desert. Christmas Tree Canyon in Nevada illustrates this. You can walk up a hot dry riverbed between two enormous boulders covered in pictographs. Soon the temperature begins to drop and you can hear birds singing. Then the green plants appear and the sound of a babbling brook. Where the water runs there is life. That is the idea behind living water. It was understood that there is living water for the earth as well as for the soul. The thirsty soul would come to life if living water were to be found. This is what the woman was thirsty for. She knew she was spiritually parched.

¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" According to tradition, Jacob dug the well, but he never distributed living water for the soul. "Who are You?" is her question. She is following Jesus' suggestion. He said if you knew who you are talking to you would ask me for living water, so she is asking.

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, Did you hear that? No, I mean did you really hear that? This world will only satisfy you for a short time. (Hebrews 11:25) It has all kinds of water, but it will always leave you thirsty for more. Jesus is about to address that problem in her life. She has the problem most people have, trying to satisfy spiritual thirst with physical things. It only leaves you like you came, thirsty! (Isaiah 55:1)

Do you see how this story parallels the Nicodemus story? Nicodemus wanted to satisfy his spiritual thirst with rules and good works. Jesus insisted that he needed to be born spiritually. It is the same conversation but with people trying to slake that thirst in two different ways. Nicodemus thought the thirst would go away if he was really really good. This woman thought it would go away if she was really really bad. They had the same thirst. Drink either all you want, you'll just end up thirsty. (Isaiah 49:10)

The things of the world will always leave you wanting more, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." It doesn't just satisfy for a time and then

Commented [notes10]: 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Isaiah 12:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. Heb 11:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 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. Isaiah 55:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 10 They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.

Isaiah 49:10 (NIV)

leave you empty. The living water satisfies, but unlike the world's satisfaction, living water continues to satisfy. (John 14:16-17)

John will later clarify just exactly what Jesus meant by living water. He means the Spirit of the living God. (John 7:37-39) The Spirit of God is the only One that can satisfy the thirst of the heart. We all have a God shaped hole in our heart. We try to fill it with everything from good works, to relationships, to material possessions. Only God can fill it. Only an infinite God can continue to fill our need for awe and wonder. He designed us for Himself and unless we receive Him we will forever be trying to stuff things in that God shaped hole, only to find they don't fit. Jesus said this is no ordinary well He's talking about but a spring that bubbles up forever, an unending supply.

¹⁵ *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."* Either this woman is totally missing the point or she has picked up on the analogy and is running with it. Up until the preparation of this sermon, I thought that she was being like Nicodemus. You know, "How can a man be born again? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb..." duh. But the rest of the conversation leads me to a new opinion. I think she was catching on. She didn't want to keep trying to fill the void with the things of the world and was saying as much. It's like the alcoholic saying they don't want to go back to the bottle, or the pornography addict saying he no longer wants to view the dehumanizing garbage, but they need something else that fills the void and fills it completely. Give me the cure. (Psalm 4:6-7)

Jesus turns the conversation to the one thing that she has been trying to fill the void with. ¹⁶ *He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."* Let's get real with where you are at first. There must be repentance first, a recognition that trying to fill your heart with God's creation, which is an affront to God. (Romans 1:25)

¹⁷ *"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ 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."* Let's get honest about where you are at first. She tried to deny the truth about her spiritual condition and Jesus called her on it by spelling it out. Now how did He know that? The Holy Spirit must have revealed it to Him. (1Corinthians 12:8) And suddenly her mask was gone. Instead of revealing to this Jew the error of His prejudice, He revealed to her the secret sin of her heart. Man after man, she had tried to fill her heart with a relationship with men instead of the living God. In the process of what was probably divorce and remarriage (more than Jewish rabbi allowed), she finally ended up just living with a man outside of marriage. She was an adulteress, but the real sin was trying to replace God with men. With what are you trying to fill that void?

¹⁹ *"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."* "OK, so you hear the Spirit of God. Let's change the subject." When things strike too close to home, let's talk about doctrine. The Samaritans worshipped on Mount Gerizim. Notice she said, "this mountain", because it is visible from Sychar. The Jews insisted that Jerusalem was the only place to worship.

Commented [notes14]: 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--
17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.
John 14:16-17 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.
38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."
39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.
John 7:37-39 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 6 Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?" Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.
7 You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.
Psalms 4:6-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.
Romans 1:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,
1 Cor 12:8 (NIV)

²¹ Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Jesus gave another atypical answer. "Neither!" That age was drawing to a close. Jesus tells it like it is but quickly moves to the issue of salvation, the need for a Savior, and we should follow His example. Don't get sidetracked with the age of the earth, the political issues of the day, or anything that would keep the seeker from their greatest need, the Savior! Jesus briefly clarified that salvation is from the Jews. The prophets foretold that the Messiah comes through the house of David. (Psalm 89:29) Even the Samaritan Pentateuch prophesied the Messiah would come through the tribe of Judah. (Genesis 49:10) That Jewish Savior was sitting in front of her, speaking to her. The Samaritans saw the coming Messiah more like a teacher in the style of Moses, rather than the Jewish idea of a David like military deliverer.

Commented [notes19]: 29 I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. Psalms 89:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. Gen 49:10 (NIV)

²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. It isn't about a location. It's about the heart. The Father is actively seeking that kind of worshippers. Not only do they worship in truth, that is a correct understanding of God's direct revelation in His word, but also in their spirit. It requires both the knowledge and the born again heart. He described the born again spirit in the last chapter and will describe the Word as truth later. (John 17:17) He doesn't seek ones that go to a certain place or say a certain prayer or follow a certain life style. It is about truth and a new heart. They are the true worshippers. (Isaiah 26:8-9)

Commented [notes21]: 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. Gen 49:10 (NIV)

²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." God is an unseen spirit. He is truth. That is why we must worship in spirit and truth. We must worship in a way that is in accord with who He is. The physical location or structure mean very little to God because His glory fills the whole earth! (Isaiah 6:3) A spirit does not need a building. He is not bound by space.

Commented [notes23]: 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah 6:3 (NIV)

Jesus said salvation comes from the Jews, so²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." She knew there was spiritual depth in this discussion like she had never heard before. She started to wonder if He is the One. It would be impolite to ask outright, so she asks in a subtle way, and, in spite of all the mud, Jesus honored the Rembrandt with a straight answer. "I who speak to you am he." The Greek is a lot more powerful. *Ego eimee laloon soy.* "I am speaks with you!" The eternal thirst buster is talking to you! (Exodus 3:14) He is the eternal internal thirst quencher, and He's talking to some of you this morning.

Commented [notes24]: 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Ex 3:14 (NIV)

You are either a thirsty soul or you have found the spring welling up within you to eternal life. If you are thirsty, I Am, the eternal One, has spoken to you through this text. He's what you've been looking for. Repent of trying to fill your heart with anything else, and invite Him in to be Lord of your life. And if you have that well within, has the enticement of the world lured you away from that eternal spring? Have you been trying to store a little water in a broken pot while neglecting the fountain within? (Jeremiah 2:13) Repent and come back to Him. Everything else is a poor substitute. Come to Jesus!

Commented [notes25]: 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. Jer 2:13 (NIV)