

Drink Deeply

Today two thirsty people meet at a well. One is Jesus; one is a Samaritan woman. Both are thirsty; they both want something to drink. On surface, it looks like Jesus is thirsting for plain water. He's been traveling; he's tired; he needs a drink. But really he's thirsting for something much greater. On surface, it looks like the woman is thirsting for plain water. She's come to the well to draw water for herself and her home. But really she's thirsting for something much greater. Today two thirsty people meet at a well.

You know what it's like to thirst for plain water. You know what it's like to be working outside, under the sun, in the heat of the day, working up a sweat, feeling fatigued, feeling exhausted. Your body needs water; you need a drink; you're thirsty! But you also know what it's like to thirst for something much greater – to long for the Lord, to yearn for his forgiveness, to thirst for his salvation.

Today at the well, Jesus meets a thirsty person. At first they talk about plain water, but soon the conversation moves to living water, which Jesus is thirsting to share, and she is thirsting to drink. So today, when two thirsty people meet at a well, Jesus gives the woman living water and invites her to drink deeply.

“[Jesus] came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’” Under normal circumstances, in that culture, these two would never have spoken. He's a man, she's a woman. He's a Jew, she's a Samaritan. He's a rabbi, she's an adulteress. She's been divorced five times, and now she's living with, and sleeping with, a man who is not her husband. So the woman is understandably surprised. **“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”** But Jesus is thirsting to break down barriers; so he replies, **“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.”**

What's living water? She didn't know; she thought it was some kind of different water, some alternative to always having to drag her water jugs down to this well. Later on she says, **“Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”** This is hard for us to fully appreciate because we have indoor plumbing; we have water treatment facilities; we have safe drinking water at the turn of a faucet every day! She had none of this. She had to travel to get her water and carry it back home. So she's interested to hear more about this living water.

Jesus explains: **“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... Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 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.”** It's not H₂O; it doesn't come from a faucet or in an Aquafina bottle; it won't take away your thirst if you're working out in the sun. Living water is nothing other than the gospel. Living water is the good news of God's forgiveness and love for the world through Jesus. Living water is the grace of God and the gift of God. Ephesians 2: **“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”** (8). John 3:16 from last Sunday: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son”** – as a gift, by grace. Living water is the gift of God, the grace of God, God's undeserved love for sinners, freely given. God has given us Jesus, and Jesus gives us the living water of the gospel. Plain water can only quench your physical thirst, and only for a time – you drink it, then you get thirsty again. But with living water, you'll never thirst for anything else. **“The water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”**

Picture yourself, for a moment, out in the desert, or up in the mountains. You've been hiking for several hours; you're tired, you're fatigued; you're starting to feel dizzy. So you sit down, but the sun is blazing down on you; sweat is pouring out of you. You feel like you might pass out. You're thirsty! What do you need? Water!

Now picture yourself hiking through life, through the desert of sin and guilt, up and down the mountains and valleys of uncertainty and stress. The heat of temptation is blazing down on you; the burdens of life are bearing down on you. You're sapped of your strength. You feel guilty and ashamed and afraid and exhausted and fatigued. You don't know if you can keep going. You're thirsty! What do you need? Water! Living water.

Today two thirsty people meet at a well: Jesus and you. You're both thirsty; you both want something to drink. Jesus is thirsting for your salvation, and you are thirsting for the same thing. And along comes Jesus, like an oasis in the desert, with his soul-quenching, faith-refreshing, life-restoring gospel of God's grace. And he calls to you and invites you, **“Drink deeply. Drink deeply from the living water I give you, because this living water is my love, my grace. It forgives all your sins; it takes away all your guilt; it quenches all your soul's thirsts. I sacrificed myself on the cross and rose from dead so that you could drink this water and be refreshed and have this peace in your soul. This living water is my free gift to you. So take and drink! Drink deeply!”**

That's essentially what Jesus says to the woman at the well here in John 4. "Drink deeply." But remember: she still has this Jew/Samaritan prejudice worldview, so she's not quite ready to accept Jesus' words just yet. It's like she has a glass of living water in her hand, but she's not quite ready to drink it. She's skeptical, so she changes the subject to the topic of worship. **"'Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.'** **'Woman,' Jesus replied, 'believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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.'**"

Worship is the most public, recognizable activity of the church. In worship we proclaim the gospel; we announce the forgiveness of sins in Christ. And through that proclamation, the Holy Spirit calls unbelievers to faith and strengthens the faith of believers. It is the highest form of praise that we can offer to God: to recall and retell the great things God has done for us – that is Christian worship! But the woman at the well didn't get it; she thought God was only interested in the externals, like what mountain we should worship on. True worship means worshipping **"in the Spirit and in truth,"** that is, recounting the truth of the gospel, which the Holy Spirit uses to work faith in the heart.

And the way to worship the Lord **"in the Spirit and in truth"** is to do what Jesus says here: drink deeply from living water of life. Drink in the gospel! Believe from your heart that Jesus is your Savior; that his death covers your sins; that his resurrection means your resurrection; that his promise of eternal life is sure and certain. When you believe the gospel by faith, when you trust in Christ and cling to Christ as your only Savior, then you are drinking deeply of the living water and you are worshipping the Lord **"in the Spirit and in truth."**

The happy truth for this Samaritan woman is that she did come to believe in Jesus; she did drink deeply from the living water, and it did well up in her to eternal life. The happy truth for you is that you believe, too. You've been drinking deeply of his gospel – some of you, for many years. You know what it's like to feel spiritually fatigued, exhausted, ashamed, guilty, weary, worn down. And so here you are today at church, because you thirst for more – more of that soul-quenching, faith-refreshing, life-restoring gospel of God's grace.

Today two thirsty people meet at a well: Jesus, who thirsts for your salvation; and you, who thirst for living water. Today Jesus pours you a tall glass and puts it in your hand and says, "Drink deeply. Quench your thirst for peace; relieve the parched dryness of your guilt; let the cool water refresh your weary soul. This living water is my gift to you. Take and drink. Drink deeply."

John 4:5-26

⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ 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.)

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."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" 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 livestock?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ 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."

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." ¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." 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."

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, 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. ²³ 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. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." ²⁶ Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."