

John 4:7-14 "What Well Are You Drinking From?"

JOH 4:7-10 "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."

The context in which we find this particular occasion, where Jesus is about to enter into a conversation with a Samaritan woman, has to do with our Lord leaving Judea to go back to Galilee because the Pharisees and other leaders in Jerusalem were considering how they might drive a wedge between John the Baptist's disciples and those of Jesus, since Jesus was now receiving more attention than John.

And so as not to give these religious leaders of Israel an opportunity Jesus decides to end His ministry in Judea for the time being and go back to Galilee via Samaria. Now, as we saw last week verse 4 says, "he had to go through Samaria." Or as the KJV puts it, "He must needs go through Samaria."

The language indicates the necessity to do such a thing. And yet, we know that there were other ways to get to Galilee from Judea. And so, what we discovered is that Jesus had to go through Samaria, not because it was the only route, but because it was the divine will of the Father since He had work for His Son in Samaria.

And in this case the work Jesus had to accomplish was to seek out and bring into the Kingdom of God the last person any Jew of that day would have suspected as deserving eternal life.

And the truth of the matter is that this woman didn't deserve eternal life any more than we do, or any more than any Jew of that day did. But because God had known this Samaritan woman before the creation of the world He had to send His Son into Samaria to rescue her from eternal condemnation.

EPH 1:4 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

The specific time for this Samaritan woman to be introduced to the Savior was now, even though this day had been planned by our Lord Jesus from eternity.

This, by the way, is why we should be encouraged about lost relatives or friends as it pertains to their coming to faith in Christ. It may very well be that the Lord has not come into their Samaria as of yet.

We don't know the plans of God as it pertains to every detail of everyone's life, but we do know the means by which people come into the Kingdom and that is as the word is given to them as they receive it by faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

And so, keep praying and sharing with people who don't know Christ as of yet. You never know when the Lord will call them to the well. But back to our text.

Jesus had to pass through Samaria, and not just any place in Samaria, but a place called Sychar near which Jacob's well was located. It would be at this particular well where Jesus would seek out and meet this Samaritan woman.

By way of reminder it was midday; the sun was hot and Jesus was exhausted when this woman came out to the well. And He asks her a question which she never would have expected from a Jew.

"Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

Now verse eight of our text includes a parenthesis which indicates that had His disciples been with Him they would have got a drink for Him. But since they had gone into town to buy food there was only this woman. Again, none of this is a coincidence. This was the Lord's plan from eternity.

Now, as we come to our text we see that this woman was quite surprised at our Lord's question.

JOH 4:9 "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.)"

We saw last week how the Samaritans and Jews had great animosity toward each other, and in fact regarded each other as enemies. And this animosity goes back to the time in which Assyria had invaded Israel, (specifically the area of Samaria), and

took the Jews into captivity. They then brought foreigners into the land to cultivate it.

But they did leave behind some Jews who ended up inter-marrying with these foreigners; thus they became, in the eyes of other Jews, half-breeds, who not only served and worshipped other gods, but also practiced their own form of Judaism. And so, "full bred" Jews never accepted them.

What we see in this conversation between the Samaritan woman and Jesus is that this woman recognizes the division between their two peoples and questions why Jesus would break with the tradition of mutual hate. And through her form of interrogation she is actually questioning the motive of Jesus as she is obviously cautious.

Keep in mind that this woman not only recognizes the hatred between Samaritans and Jews, but she is probably shunned by her own people. This is a woman who we'll see later who is an adulteress. And even in Samaritan society she would be considered an outcast.

This is probably why she is going for water at mid-day by herself. It was customary to go out with a group during the cooler part of the day. It was a time, not only of gathering water, but also a time of fellowship in the labor. This woman would have no such fellowship with her own people.

If you've spent the better part of your life shunned by your own people as an adulteress who would you trust? Certainly not an enemy of your people who is acting out of character.

But of course Jesus is not acting out of character. He is acting in line with who He is; love. God is love and Jesus Christ came into this world because He so loved the world that He would die for the sins of men, including the Samaritans.

But the heart of this woman is such that she trusts no one, and the conversation between her and Jesus bears this out.

JOH 4:10 "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."

What Jesus is saying to this woman is that she has no earthly idea of who He is. In this response He's making it clear that she has

mischaracterized Him simply because He is a Jew. But He also addresses the hardness of her heart.

Instead of a response which would have addressed her cynicism about Him being a Jew, instead of addressing her prejudices, He instead extends love as He seeks her salvation. Again, this is why we should never give up on family and friends.

This woman was looking for a fight and instead grace and mercy is being extended by the Son of God who is about to change her heart. How many times have you shared Christ with someone who isn't listening and who is only looking for ways to disprove your faith?

In those instances our reaction is to fold up our tent and move on. Maybe we'll even use the phrase we've heard so often, "I won't cast my pearls before swine."

Well, there is something to be said for wiping the dust from our feet on occasion and moving on to the next person. But, for those we know and love who are family and friends, we should at the least be open to the possibility of sharing with them in the future if they've shut us off in the past.

It is God who changes the heart, not us. And if we deny the possibility of ever sharing the gospel with someone because we feel they're not worthy, because of past responses, then we would have to conclude that Jesus had no business sharing with this woman since her life has been one of rejecting God.

Jesus could have lectured this woman and been short with her as He went down the list of things she has done which are not in accord with the law of God, but He doesn't do that with her. Instead, He calmly and lovingly points out that there is something she doesn't know about Him; namely that He is one who has a gift that she should have asked for.

He has turned this whole conversation around. Remember, He started with a question which made Him a recipient of her grace. "Will you give Me a drink of water?" Now, He becomes the Giver if she would but ask. He doesn't explain what this gift is yet, but now He's got her attention.

But there are some things in verse 10 we need to look at which are instructive.

JOH 4:10 "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."

The first thing we notice here is that Jesus addresses the need for knowledge, but that knowledge then needs to result in asking.

A.W. Pink makes the point that "the only thing between the sinner and eternal life is an ASK."

Lots of people have got the knowledge. Many have heard the gospel message, but they're not willing, for whatever reason, to ask for that gift. And one of the reasons they won't ask is because of their pride. "I don't need God or a Savior."

But if you don't ask, you won't receive. But if my eternal future has in it only eternal damnation, you better believe I'm gonna ask. "What's the question, Lord?" "Give me the question again I need to ask?" "What must I do to be saved?" "I'm asking."

And yet, we also know that the Lord Himself needs to do a work in our hearts to bring us to the point of asking such questions. "[We] need to be brought to a realization of [our] awful condition and terrible danger: [We] must see [ourselves] as lost and bound for the lake of fire. [We] need to be made to see [our] desperate need of a Savior. [We] need an acute thirst for the water of Life." (A.W. Pink)

God is in the business of making us aware of all of this so that we will reach out to Him for the only solution to our sin problem and "ask" for this salvation.

That is what He is doing with this Samaritan woman despite the fact that her response is somewhat stinging and jesting. Essentially she is saying, "we Samaritans are to you the scum of the earth, but we'll serve well enough when you're thirsty." (Merrill C. Tenney)

But in turning this around and offering living water to this woman she again wants to play mind games with the Lord. She is still operating in the realm of cynicism. And so, she's not taking Him seriously.

JOH 4:11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"

I mean you can almost see this woman with a little smirk on her face as she decides to treat this conversation as some sort of

entertainment. She's got an opportunity to have some fun here on an otherwise boring hot day.

'Oh, you've got living water? Well, you've got a problem because the only person who's got something to draw with is me, not You. You're obviously not in a position to offer me anything since I'm the one who has the means for getting this water.'

And again, if you don't trust the Jews who all of your life have done everything to avoid you, and if, when you had an encounter with them they essentially turned their backs, either figuratively or literally, then you can get a sense of this woman's attitude when this Jew, as she describes Jesus, makes an offer of living water.

But let's say we give her the benefit of the doubt that she's truly interested in what Jesus has to offer. She still is interested in only material things, not spiritual things. She's only looking at the means rather than on the One who satisfies those means.

As Pink puts it, "her mind was centered upon wells and buckets," buckets and wells.

'My body is thirsty and this well has got water to satisfy it.' And as far as she is concerned Jesus is just in her way to get this water. And she continues to call into question His sincerity and ability to satisfy her need as she brings Jacob, whose well they're visiting, into the conversation.

JOH 4:12 "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?"

Notice that she identifies herself with a Jew and calls him her father, which means her forefather, and yet she disdains Jesus who is a Jew. In all likelihood she is at best one third Jew, but she brings Jacob's name up not to validate her ancestry, but to continue to set herself apart from the Jews.

She's not identifying herself as a descendant of Jacob to show that she is part Jewish, but she is doing this to acknowledge that Jesus is less than Jacob. It's like, 'well you claim to be a Jew of some power and authority. Let's go back to the Jew who started it all, Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.'

She can claim Jacob as the one who settled this part of the land in which she lives. She can even claim Jacob as being in her ancestry. But her real motivation is to get to the bottom of this matter with

this stranger who is making claims of offering something even Jacob couldn't offer.

Keep in mind, it's not as though she is completely clueless as to what Jesus is talking about. Remember, they are at a well which has plenty of water. She knows that Jesus knows she only needs to put her bucket down into the well to get cold satisfying water.

And yet, knowing that she understands this Jesus offers her something different. He calls it living water. Now, the word used here in the Greek for living is a way to describe something other than stagnant.

In other words, this well is part of a system of underground water which moves. And so, this woman knew that this water was already living as opposed to being stagnant like you would find in a pool of water.

And so, when Jesus comes along and identifies the water He offers as living she understands that it is a different type of water that He has in mind, which is why we can infer that she is having some fun with Him by asking these questions. "Where can you get this living water?, as though it's not already living."

'If you can offer me something greater than this existing water which is not stagnant you must be someone special with special powers.' Thus the question, "are you greater than our father, Jacob?"

And by the way, Jesus knows what she's doing, which makes His patience with her even more amazing.

But up to this point she simply isn't interested in what Jesus has to offer because she's not buying what He's selling; at least as she perceives it. But, instead of rejecting her based on her unbelief and unwillingness to seriously inquire of the living water He has in mind, He lovingly and mercifully continues to drive home the point of the need for this water.

JOH 4:13-14 "Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 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."

Notice here how Jesus now makes the distinction of waters this woman obviously understood. She knew He was talking of a

different type of water which is why He says, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.."

In other words, whoever drinks from Jacob's well, or any other well with H<sub>2</sub>O, will eventually have to come back to the well since the human body, no matter how much water you drink, will eventually become thirsty again.

And so, what Jesus has done is to explain what His water is not. He hasn't really explained what it is at this point. But he's getting closer as He explains some of the benefits of His water.

JOH 4:14 "... 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."

Whatever this water is, Jesus explains that it has spiritual side-effects; namely eternal life.

Now we're getting closer to the truth here. The whole conversation is still in the context of drawing water from Jacob's well. But at this point Jesus is making it clear that the water from Jacob's well is not what He has in mind.

In fact, the water from this well can be seen as a metaphor for life in general. There is no well in this earth which can ultimately satisfy man's need. There is no material thing in this world which can satisfy or gain eternal life. And yet, man continues to flit from well to well looking for that one thing which will satisfy.

Maybe it's a new career, or a new wife. Maybe it's a change of location or a new house or car. Maybe it's winning the lottery. Man's insatiable need to satisfy his inadequacies in this world always points himself to more stuff, more buckets and wells.

Jesus comes along and says, 'you're drawing from the wrong well. You need to draw from the well where I offer living water; a water which not only satisfies but actually has such properties to where you will never thirst again.'

What Jesus means by this is that once you have tasted that the Lord is good and that His gift is a gift which reunites men to God, what else do you need to become satisfied? You have everything you need for life eternal. Nothing else can satisfy like Christ.

In fact, this is exactly what our Lord says later in this gospel.

JOH 6:35 "Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

Never be thirsty? Yes, never be thirsty for anyone other than God who satisfies our deepest need and thirst which is spiritual in nature. We've all heard the expression that this or that person has a thirst for life.

What they mean by this is that they have an insatiable desire to live life to its fullest. They climb mountains, they skydive, they swim the depths of the ocean and like this man who recently bought a ticket on the Space shuttle to live on the Space station for a few days, they do almost anything to experience what this world has to offer.

What Jesus is saying is that all of these experiences combined will still leave you thirsty. How many times have we seen the news where some wealthy movie star who has no lack of fame has been arrested for taking drugs? If life is so wonderful, and if you have all the money you need to buy things and people, why do you need to medicate your life, unless you feel the need to escape something which doesn't satisfy?

"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."

This is the real issue; eternal life. All other water, if you will, only leads to eternal condemnation.

MAR 8:36-37 "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

To put it into the metaphor of buckets and wells we might say, "What good is it for a man to drink at every well of the world, yet forfeit his soul? Or how many wells can a man give to God in exchange for his soul?"

God doesn't want our wells. He wants us to drink at His well. He wants us to experience His life. And that life is a gift. Again, look at what Jesus says in verse 14. "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."

The well of water, or the eternal life which comes from the spring of God's love, is something Jesus Christ gives. He's not selling a magic elixir. He's not bottling Perrier to make a profit.

He is giving away eternal life. It is His to give freely. But it is a life which is not only for this world as we place our hope and faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, it is also a spring of water welling up to eternal life which goes well beyond the scope of this world.

That's what makes it eternal. Eternal in duration, and most importantly, eternal is quality. The quality of eternal life is the quality of the life God is. God is life. God is love. It is His life we are given to be shared with Him in abundance. There is no limit to eternal life. It is a well which only gets better and a well which only continues to satisfy.

MAT 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Do we hunger and thirst after God like this? Only God can fill that need. The very God who sent His Son into this world who humbled Himself to die for us so that we might be able to draw from this well of eternal life, the life we have in our resurrected Savior.

When speaking of those saints who gave their lives for Christ's sake, Jesus really gives a sense of what every saint experiences.

REV 7:16-17 "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. 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."

Nothing in this world can do that. No well we drink from can satisfy like our God. And yet people still don't have eyes to see or ears to hear what it is that God is saying to them regarding this well of water springing up to eternal life. Their eyes continue to be fixed on the things of this world as we'll see next week with this woman's response.

JOH 4:15 "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."

The hardness of the human heart is amazing. But what is more amazing is the grace that God continues to extend to sinful human beings who haven't got a clue. Jesus Christ was on a mission from the Father to bring this woman into the Kingdom. But His mission hasn't changed as He continually reaches out to people like you and me to bring us to this well of eternal life.

Only He can offer this life as He freely gives it. But as we said early on in this study we need to ask for it. All of the gifts in the world are no good to us unless we freely receive them. And the gift of eternal life in Christ must be received by faith as the one gift which keeps on giving, now and for all of eternity.

This is the gift we have received in Christ alone and this is the gift we must give away to a lost and dying world as we invite them to the well.

I'll just end with an exclamation from Paul when writing to the Corinthians.

2CO 9:15 "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"