

The Gospel of John

The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are going to look at one of the many great stories in John's Gospel that he wrote that we might believe. This story is told with the intention to bring great encouragement to all of us. A story that is meant to communicate to all people.

- Any race or nationality.
- Any gender or background.
- Those who are at the top of the social and economic ladder.
- Those who are the outcast of outcasts.
- And everyone in between.

It is a story that reveals to us the "**Gift of Living Water**". It is a message that says that everyone in this age is welcome to drink freely from the Lord Jesus Christ.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 4 (NASB)

4 Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), ³ He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. ⁴ And He **had** to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So He *came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; ⁶ and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ There *came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus *said to her, "Give Me a drink."
⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹ Therefore the Samaritan woman *said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." ¹¹ She *said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? ¹² You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" ¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman *said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." ¹⁶ He *said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." ¹⁷ The

woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus *said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband';¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."¹⁹ The woman *said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."²⁰ Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."²¹ Jesus *said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father."²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."²³ But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."²⁵ The woman *said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."²⁶ Jesus *said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

²⁷ At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?"²⁸ So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and *said to the men,²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I *have* done; this is not the Christ, is it?"³⁰ They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."³² But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."³³ So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him *anything* to eat, did he?"³⁴ Jesus *said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest."³⁶ Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."³⁷ For in this *case* the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.'³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

³⁹ From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I *have* done."⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.⁴¹ Many more believed because of His word;⁴² and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

Prayer

BODY:

I. Jesus Goes to Galilee.

In this story we see Jesus leaving Judea in the south and heading up to Galilee in the north. It is a 60+ mile journey that would take Him across some very dry and dusty, rugged and hilly types of terrain.

The journey itself is noteworthy. Because generally when the Jews would travel from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north, or vice versa, they would go around Samaria on the east through the Jordan river valley. So, geographically it was not necessary to actually go through Samaria. Actually, even though the route was somewhat shorter, the

travel was much more difficult.

They did this because they would do anything to avoid contact with the Samaritans. This was the Samaritan's country had been captured by the king of Assyria who had taken many of the Samaritans as captives to Assyria and sent foreigners to their country to intermingle with them. These foreigners intermarried with the Israelite population that was still in and around Samaria. This intermarriage caused them to merge the Assyrian idolatrous religion with their own. Thus Samaritans were generally considered "half-breeds" and were universally despised by the Jews.

Despite the Jews hatred toward the Samaritans, we see here in verse 4 that Jesus "Had" to pass through Samaria. It is an interesting choice of words.

So, why was it necessary for Jesus to go through Samaria?

But we are told that it was necessary for Jesus to take this route. From the beginning we are tipped off that something significant is about to take place on this journey. There is a reason why it is necessary for Jesus to go through Galilee.

II. The Samaritan Woman.

As I mentioned earlier, this is a tough and wearying route. We see that evidenced in **verse 6** where He is "**wearied from His journey**" and was sitting by Jacob's well in the middle of the day around noon.

As Jesus was sitting there a woman, left unnamed, approached the well. He opened a conversation with her by asking for a drink. She questioned why He would be asking her, a Samaritan woman, for a drink. Then He said to her,

John 4:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

But she knew neither the gift nor the speaker, so Jesus proceeded.

He knew she needed eternal life, and He introduced her to that need. This was not unusual for the Lord. We read in chapter 3 of John, that while Nicodemus *felt* no need to be born again, Jesus knew his need. The **real** needs of people are not always they **think** they need. What Jesus offers is not a feeling of satisfaction for a **perceived** need but genuine satisfaction for a **real** need.

Jesus offered the Samaritan woman "**living water**" to quench her thirst. In verse 14, He used "**living water**" as a metaphor for a restored spiritual life (to be born again). However, understanding it literally as "**running water**," she challenged His offer: "**Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.**"

The woman did not crave the water Jesus offered because she did not understand her own spiritual thirst. So Jesus ask her about her marital history. She had tried one man after another and had not found satisfaction. Like many people today, she had attempted to quench a thirst for the heavenly with the earthly.

When she understood her thirst, she understood that Jesus was speaking metaphorically. In verses 19-20 she replied: “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” While she was only beginning to see who Jesus is, she did understand that an offer of living water was an offer of access to God.

Yet there was still a barrier: How could a Jew make her a legitimate offer of access to God when Jews did not believe Samaritans could come to God? Jesus had enabled her to see her need. Now He would overcome her objection.

The woman had asked in verse 11, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?” “Are you greater than Jacob?” But Jesus answered none of her questions. He did not ignore her questions, but He refused to be sidetracked by them. Instead he focused on helping her see her thirst. Only after she saw her thirst did He answer her objection.

Earlier Jesus had engaged Nicodemus in this way. Nicodemus twice responded to Jesus’ message by asking how such things could be. Jesus did not answer “how.” Instead He insisted on His friend’s need of being **born again**. He knew that once Nicodemus saw that, the “**how**” would not be an issue.

Jesus had another lesson to teach. When the disciples arrived, they wondered why He was talking with a woman. They questioned Him because they didn’t recognize the harvest. Like the woman, the disciples had a need. **She had a thirst**, and **they had a hunger**. Her need was to **drink the water of life**, and their need was to **reap the harvest of souls**. Jesus’ lesson to His disciples was that the harvest is ripe, and those who labor in the fields reap an eternal reward.

I don't believe it was just a coincidence that the story of the Samaritan woman followed the story of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was at the top of the social and economic ladder. He was a Pharisee and prominent member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. The woman at the well was left nameless. She was an outcast even of the out casted Samaritans. During biblical times, drawing water and chatting at the well was the social highpoint of a woman’s day. However, this woman was outcast and marked as immoral, an unmarried woman living openly with the sixth in a series of men. She may have come to the well by herself because she did not want to be ridiculed by the other women.

Jesus was on this earth for one reason. And that reason was to do God's will by bringing salvation to **all men**. By visiting with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus began **breaking down the barriers between them** by preaching the gospel of peace to the Samaritans. The apostles later followed His example.

Galatians 3:26-29 (NASB)

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

III. The Gift of Living Water.

What did Jesus mean when He spoke of "**living water**"?

Jesus uses the phrase "living water" in two instances in the Bible.

The first instance is found here in John chapter 4 verses 13-14. "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will **give** him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Notice that He does not say that **He** is the living water, but that He would **give** living water to her, and when she received it, she would never thirst again. **Of course, that does not tell us what the living water is!** For that, we must go to another passage of Scripture. In this case, Jesus is in the temple surrounded by a throng of worshippers.

John 7:37-39 (NASB)

³⁷ Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ But this **He spoke of the Spirit**, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet **glorified**.

Here Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the living water. The Spirit who would indwell believers had not yet been received. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit began on the Day of Pentecost fifty days after Christ's death on the cross. Jesus would be glorified by God when He died on the cross.

Jesus Himself intended the phrase to mean the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers and seals them for salvation.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NASB)

¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

It is the ministry of the Spirit, flowing out of a heart redeemed by God, that blesses believers and, through them, brings life and light to the world. This is the "living water" that Jesus was referring to.

The Samaritan woman went straight from the well to the field. She ran to communicate with the townspeople, and she started with them where they were. The Samaritans looked for the Christ and expected Him to be a prophet who would teach them. So the woman said to them in **verse 29**: "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?". Then it says in **verse 39** that "many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified".

Our testimony about Jesus is a powerful tool in leading others to believe in Him.

In **verse-42** they said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

CONCLUSION:

What are we to learn from this?

The Samaritan woman was not trained to tell others about the "living water" that she had just learned from Jesus. God uses those who are excited about their salvation for His glory. May we regain that same level of excitement in our Christian lives!

We don't have to discern whether our field is ripe. Jesus said that one sows while *another* reaps. Our field may not be ready for harvest, but it is always ready for labor. Whether we sow or reap, we labor with God for a lasting harvest.

We are among a world of people who earnestly seek wealth, power, pleasures, and earthly relationships in an effort to satisfy their unquenched thirst. Yet they object to the gospel. Let's help them see their thirst and point them to the one who can satisfy it. Christ has given us genuine satisfaction for our thirst, but we still have a hunger. **Our food is in the field!**

The Samaritan woman did not have to "force" herself to go back into Samaria and tell the people there what she had learned! What she had heard was wonderful news and she **wanted** others to know!

That is the way our faith is supposed to work. If we have a true faith in God, our faith will produce action.

The story of the woman at the well teaches us that God loves us in spite of our sinful lives. We do not need to first clean up our lives in order to come to God. We come to God and let Him clean up our lives. God values us enough to actively seek us and welcomes us to a close relationship with Him. This will result in a satisfied life of rejoicing and worship of God. A person like the Samaritan woman, an outcast from her own people, could fully understand what this means. To be wanted, to be cared for, when no one, not even herself, could see anything of value in her—this is grace indeed!

The Family of God.