

## ENCOUNTERING JESUS

John 4:1-26

Key Verse 4:13-14

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

The entire purpose of John's Gospel is to reveal one thing: God in human form, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Jesus who is the light of the world, the good shepherd, the truth, the way, and the life. Today God is wanting to reveal himself once again to you. As we look at John 4 close your eyes and open your hearts and minds. Place yourselves in the shoes of this Samaritan woman and let us together begin an intimate conversation with Jesus. Let him speak to your heart and may everything that your heart longs for find its fulfillment in Jesus, the only one who truly satisfies.

Read verses 1-3. "The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee."

Going back to Galilee meant Jesus was about to take a road trip. And any good road trip requires some planning. The first thing you do is take out a map to figure out which route to take. Nowadays we just google it or mapquest it and voila, directions! Before we left for this conference I went to google maps and tried to figure out how long it would take to get here. It gave me multiple routes. Shortest time. Shortest distance. There were also a number of options that I could check to tailor the route. Avoid highways. Avoid tolls. In Jesus' day there would have been an option: Avoid Samaritans.

The direct route from Judea to Galilee was about 70 miles straight through the heart of Samaria. But Jews virtually never went that route. Instead, they went east, crossed the Jordan, went north, went west, crossed the Jordan again, and entered Galilee. This nearly doubled the travel time. But for Jews it was no trouble because as it says in verse 9 Jews do not associate with Samaritans. This practice was in place for over 400 years. Which way did Jesus go?

Read verse 4. "Now he had to go through Samaria."

I imagine that Philip since he was the smart one was the one holding the map. At some point they reach a fork in the road. Philip has been keeping his eye out for the exit where they would turn right and prepare to cross the Jordan River. But Jesus doesn't turn. Instead, he just keeps walking straight. Philip says, "Uh, Jesus, you know if you go straight you're going to hit Samaria. Are you sure you want to do that?" And Jesus says, "I know, Philip. I'm sure."

For Jesus there was no other option. The KJV says, "And he must needs go through Samaria." Now I'm not an English major but I do know how to recognize when something is urgent. If my daughter says I must go, then I know she has to go. If she says I need to go, then I know she has to go. But if my daughter ever came to me and said, "Daddy, I must needs to go." Then I better drop everything and take her to go. Because it's urgent.

There was an urgency in Jesus' visit to Samaria. He had to go because he had an unbreakable appointment at the well with a Samaritan woman. It's amazing to realize that Jesus was willing to reject over 400 years of Jewish custom and prejudice to sit down and have a conversation with one Samaritan woman. To Jesus, she was precious. She was the one sheep Jesus left the other 99 to find.

Jesus has another unbreakable appointment. With you. Here at The Well. Just as there was an inward impulse in Jesus' heart for this woman, there is an inward impulse in Jesus' heart for you, that He "must needs" to meet with you today. His divine love says you are precious to him. He urgently wants to meet you at this conference. Jesus

more than anything doesn't want you to leave this conference without getting to know him, maybe for the first time or maybe to meet you anew. Either way He must needs to meet with you.

Read verses 5-7. So he 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 the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

There are a couple places in the Bible that really reveal Jesus' humanity. When he weeps at Lazarus' tomb. When he prays in the garden of Gethsamene. And here in this passage. Jesus had been walking for some time. Enough so that he was tired and thirsty. The KJV says he was wearied. Probably hungry too since the disciples had gone into town to buy food. In a dusty town near Jacob's well, Jesus sits alone. Feet aching. Clothes covered in dust. Lips parched. And in this state of human frailty, verse 7 hits us with the humble grace of Jesus' divine love and nature. He shows he is not just a man. He is majestic, God in the flesh. He utters some of the most powerful words ever spoken in the Bible. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

The woman was understandably startled. "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" She was right. How could he? There were SO many barriers between Jesus and this woman. Jew and Samaritan. The word "associate" used in verse 9 literally means in Greek "do not use [vessels] together." Nowhere else in the NT is this Greek form of "associate" used. What shook this woman up was she couldn't believe that Jesus would want to share a cup with her, to drink out of her pitcher. Not only that, he was a man and she was a woman. This one is hard for us to understand today. But see the disciples surprise in verse 27. Religious leaders had forbidden men from speaking to women in public including your wife, daughter, or sister. (Although there was an exception for your mom.) Jesus was also a Rabbi and she was a woman of less than stellar reputation. As we'll see later, it's no coincidence that she comes to the well alone. Her neighbors didn't want anything to do with her. She was very much an outcast. Given a label much worse than being called a 2<sup>nd</sup> gen. I imagine that in this conversation, as a Samaritan woman and as an outcast among the townspeople, that there must have been a sense of self-doubt and self-condemnation inside this woman. This man can't be talking to me. Not because I'm too good for him, but because I'm not good enough.

This last part is something that I know I struggle with. When I sin, I feel like I'm not good enough for Jesus. I wonder why I can't seem to overcome my sin. Why Jesus would accept me back again after I seem to commit the same mistakes over and over again? Why would holy God want anything to do with me? Maybe some of you can relate. Maybe some of you don't feel like you have anything to offer God. Maybe you've failed in many aspects of your own life and don't feel worthy of Jesus. Guess what? Jesus says none of that matters. Ephesians 2:13 says, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ." Jesus makes us good enough.

Read verse 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."

According to John 3:16, Jesus is the gift of God. He came so that through him we might receive grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. This grace and Holy Spirit are the living water that Jesus offers to this woman. It is the living water that he offers to us.

Jesus is saying forget whatever you're thinking inside of you. Forget whatever barriers real or perceived exist between us. As we'll see later, he knows exactly what kind of woman this is. He knows exactly what her sin is. He knows exactly what your sin and my sin is. He knows our guilt and our shame. He knows our faults and failures. And yet he completely shatters all barriers by extending an invitation. Just ask me and I will give you living water, my grace and my Holy Spirit, for your soul. You don't have to earn it or work for it. You don't have to be worthy. Just ask.

At this point she still doesn't know who Jesus is. If she did, then she would have recognized that she was thirsty. So thirsty. And in her thirst she would have asked, even begged, for him to quench her thirst. She would have realized

that the emptiness she felt her whole life wasn't physical. It was a spiritual thirst. Thirst for fellowship and peace with her creator God. Thirst for happiness, meaning, and purpose in her life. Later we see in verse 15 that as her understanding grows she does ask, and thus begins the process of drinking the living water of Jesus.

Like this woman, we so desperately need the living water because we thirst for the exact same things. Do you want peace and a real relationship with God? Does your relationship with God need a time of refreshing? Do you want meaning and purpose in your life? What about happiness and joy? And yet often why do we find these things to be so elusive?

Read verse 13-14a. Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst."

It's because we drink other things that can't satisfy our deepest longings for peace, purpose, and real joy. These things just makes us thirsty again. I like to say in Korean we drink from the "doo-doo" water. The "doo-doo" water is stale, stagnant, and dirty. It cannot and will not ever satisfy any longing for God in our hearts. And yet we keep going back to the puddle of "doo-doo" water.

When I look out at this group of people, I see a lot of talented, good looking, and very capable people. Outwardly you certainly don't look like a thirsty bunch. But we are all so thirsty inside. We are so thirsty for Jesus to touch our hearts. No amount of talent, good looks, or ability will take away this thirst that lives inside of us. No physical thing can satisfy spiritual thirst. Not my wife, not my children, definitely not my job can quench this thirst. Later this morning we're going to reflect on this past year. In so doing, I am willing to bet that if we are honest with ourselves, we will see that in 2011 we often pursued other things to find temporary pleasure and satisfaction.

What kinds of things did we turn to? Does the world turn to?

Relationships. Especially physical relationships with girlfriends, boyfriends, significant others. No person or level of physical intimacy can satisfy your spiritual thirst. Just ask the Samaritan woman. I know and I'm sure many of you know it just leads to brokenness, guilt, and disappointment. Up to 80% of stated Christians ages 18-29 years have had premarital sex.

Worldly success or achievement. Whether in school or work. If you're anything like me, you've failed a lot in school. Enough said. But when it comes to work, I realize that no matter how well I do or how hard I worked, you will always be overlooked, underappreciated, or constantly anxious because you're only as good as your last project. Make a mistake and there's no grace in the real world. That leaves people disappointed and bitter.

Alcohol, drugs, or addictive stuff (cigarettes, video games, and Facebook). Collectively, the table of the world. The scary thing about alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes is they really do give the body a sense of satisfaction and freedom. But what happens when those feelings wear off. Other stuff like video games and Facebook are serious time sucks. John Piper said of such things, "The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie. It is not the banquet of the wicked that dulls our appetite for heaven, but endless nibbling at the table of the world. It is not the X-rated video, but the prime-time dribble of triviality we drink in every night."

In contrast to these things, look at verse 14a again. But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.

The water from Jesus' well is ultimately the Holy Spirit. When we drink of it, it never disappoints. It never fails to satisfy. It never leaves us feeling empty or broken. Verse 24 tells us that God is spirit and the Holy Spirit aligns us with God and His will.

And we must drink from it. Continuously, constantly. It is not a water fountain, but a spring. When we read verse 14 again, Jesus isn't telling us that once we drink the living water that our sinfulness and our wandering will cease automatically. In Galatians 5:17 Paul references the Spirit and the sinful nature saying, "They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." He goes on to say in verse 25, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." We have to struggle to drink of the Spirit, to live according to the Spirit. But when we do so we will taste and see that the Lord is good, so good. So good, why would we want anything else? And this is

how we grow and mature as Christians. When we drink from the well of Jesus, we begin to see real fruit of the Spirit working in our lives.

Read verse 14b. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

The Jesus life is a dynamic life. Like a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Charles Spurgeon said, "He who has Divine Grace in his heart is a happy man—he grows more and more satisfied with the Grace as it wells up increasingly in living power in his character and life." I was watching the Veggie Tales Christmas edition last week, Saint Nicholas: A Story of Joyful Giving. There is this great scene where Saint Nicholas as a young carrot boy goes up to the cucumber nun in the church. She is giving out bread. Saint Nicholas asks her, "Do you do that to feel happy." She says, "Oh no. I do it because I am happy."

The Greek for "welling up" is hallomai which means leaping. It's the same leaping we see in Acts 3:8. When Peter told a crippled beggar to get up, he jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and **jumping [leaping]**, and praising God. When the people in the temple court saw this crippled beggar the Bible says they were filled with wonder and amazement. When we drink from Jesus' well we experience life changing power from within. Our life becomes a testimony to the power of God to change us and use us. People should look upon our lives with wonder and amazement because they see Jesus living in us. In everything we should literally and figuratively be leaping and praising God for the gift of Jesus. Life in Jesus is full of passion and heavenly greatness. It is a life of eternal significance. There's no coasting into heaven. I want my life to be full of leaping and shouting and praising, don't you want this?

Last night I was struck by something Paul Dang said in his message. God asked Hagar, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "Where are you going" is a really important question. Without knowing the destination, we are aimless and wandering like Hagar in the desert. In Jesus, our destination is secure. Eternal life in the kingdom of heaven. How awesome is that.

There's a part of me that wishes the passage would skip from verse 15 where the one asks "Give me this water" to verses 25-26. But it doesn't because there's one additional thing Jesus needs to do.

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

Remember when I said Jesus' words in verse 7 were some of the most powerful words in the Bible. The words in verse 16 are some of the most painful. It's painful to watch. As if Jesus is punching this woman right in the gut. Because we see in the next verses what's going on in this woman's life.

Read verses 17-18. "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 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."

Ugh. So painful to watch. Liking peeling a scab off an old wound. Here is this woman standing uncomfortably before Jesus. So exposed and vulnerable. Nowhere to hide. All her innermost secrets and sins laid bare right before Jesus to see. That cringe inducing feeling is exactly what we need to feel when it comes to our sin. Before we can truly know Jesus and grow in him, we have to bring our sin to him. To put it plainly, we need to repent. Really repent.

Too often we treat our sin much the same way as the woman's response in verse 17. She says, "I have no husband." That's a half truth. She should've just said I don't have a husband. I have a live-in boyfriend. And actually I've had five husbands before that. But she tried to hold on to some semblance of dignity or goodness. When really what she needed to do was admit her utter sinfulness. I imagine she didn't get to this place in her life overnight. But the power of sin is that if left unchecked it only drags us further and further away from God.

When the leadership committee first approached me about giving this message I immediately thought no way. I'm too busy. I was going to have a baby soon. Most of all, I thought John 4. What do I know about a Samaritan woman? How am I supposed to relate to someone so different than me? But in preparing this message God has opened my eyes to see I am exactly like this Samaritan woman. I am a Samaritan woman! Because I so desperately want to hold on to some façade of goodness in me. When really in my heart I am utterly sinful! In my heart, I have cheated on my wife. I have murdered my brother. I have cursed God. Until we're ready to confess our sin to God and really repent, we're stuck. We say we want Jesus while still keeping a foot in the world and satisfying ourselves on the world's offerings. We can't have it both ways.

As your sin and my sin become ever more clear to us, don't run away from Jesus. Don't turn him away. As we see in verse 19-24, this woman in the face of her sin didn't run away. But she drank of the living water of Jesus. She let him answer her questions and really touch her heart. Until finally Jesus reveals his identity as her Messiah. Her Savior. And in verse 28 this woman refreshed by the living water symbolically leaves behind her water jar. She doesn't need it anymore. She has Jesus and His Spirit living in her. Praise God. Praise Jesus who came to satisfy our soul.

In conclusion, Jesus is speaking to your heart this morning. He wants to hear from you and he wants to meet with you. Let us let go of the things that hold us back and drink freely from the well of Jesus. If we do, we are going to feel and experience his life changing power. Let's read the key verse.