

Sermon: John 4:5-18
February 17, 2008

Doctors tell us that during the winter most people don't drink enough water. We don't feel the need to drink as much as we might in the summer. For that reason doctors say that many people are actually dehydrated. To make matters even worse, when we do drink we choose something other than water like pop or coffee which contains caffeine and is a diuretic making us even more dehydrated. In the summer, it's a whole different matter. When the days get hot nothing is better than an ice cold glass of water to quench our thirst. Jesus uses water, the ultimate thirst quencher to teach about the basic truths of the Bible in the gospel lesson today. He uses something as simple as water to teach us about the spiritual thirst quencher.

It was ordinary water that gave Jesus his opportunity to talk about quenching a spiritual thirst. John says, "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 the sixth hour.⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?'"

Jesus' humanity shines through. Here is Jesus, tired, dusty, and hot from his long walk as the sun rose higher and higher in the sky. This is God's Son. It was about six o'clock in the evening when he stopped here at the well. A Samaritan woman also came to the well at the same time to draw some water from the well. There Jesus and this woman met. She is alone at a well with God's only-begotten Son, yet she doesn't know it...yet. To her Jesus looked like any other tired Jewish man traveling through her territory.

However Jesus uses this opportunity to do extraordinary things. "Will you give me a drink," he asks her. It was a harmless question, but Jesus intends it to do so much more. "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink," she responds to Jesus. Her question comes from a racism that our times could not even possibly imagine. John comments that Jews did not associate with Samaritans. It would be highly unusual for a Jew to even be at that well, let alone ask her for a drink. But Jesus was a highly unusual guy, with a higher purpose.

"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.'" Jesus hits her with a very loaded statement. Essentially he said to her, "If you knew of the free and full salvation that God gives through the Messiah and that the Messiah is sitting here in front of you, you would have asked him to give you living water." Most of what Jesus said to her didn't sink in. She was focused mostly on the living water idea. What she got out of Jesus' statement was that she should be asking Jesus for water and not the other way around. So what is this living water?

Jesus answers that question this way: "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." The living water that Jesus spoke of was no ordinary water. In fact it wasn't water at all. Jesus is the living water and to drink of that living water is to believe in Jesus. Think of all of the Old Testament references that Jesus fulfills as the "living water." "The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground a bubbling spring," wrote the prophet Isaiah. He also foretold that God's people would neither hunger nor thirst and that God would lead them beside springs of water. Psalm 42 says, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God."

This water was different. It was spiritual, heavenly, permanent. One sip of this water would quench ones spiritual thirst forever. It gives eternal life. This is the point that Jesus wanted to get to with the

Samaritan woman. It didn't matter to Jesus who she was or what race she came from. Jesus wanted her to know that she too could drink of the living water and live forever in heaven.

Could it be that easy? To take a drink of water and live? Perhaps this is why Jesus chose this wonderful picture to teach us about eternal life and how to get it. Water is necessary for life and one drink can satisfy the most voracious thirst. In the same way Jesus is the living water and we drink of that water when we trust that Jesus is our Savior. My guess is that you are here today because you drank of the living water. As we sit here today listening to the Word of our God and the good news of forgiveness through Jesus that living water is welling up in us all. You my friends are going to live forever. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies." It is that easy. This is the heart of the Bible's message. And Jesus teaches it to us again today with the simple idea that he is the water of life. So drink deeply and live.

In winter we don't always realize just how thirsty our bodies are. In the same way, Jesus had some work to do with this Samaritan woman to show her just how thirsty she was. In doing so Jesus teaches us that he can quench the guiltiest thirst.

To show the woman just how spiritually thirsty she was Jesus asks her to do something. He says, "Go, call your husband and come back." Just as we see Jesus' humanity as he is thirsty, here we see Jesus' divinity in that he knows all things. This request of the woman was meant to get at her deeper spiritual problem. She responds that she does not have a husband. Jesus quickly reveals the whole truth. "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸The 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."

Her situation is strikingly similar to our modern world, but in any age is contrary to God's will. She was living together outside of marriage and has had several divorces which also goes against God's will. Jesus opens her life wide open before her eyes. She was not unaware that these things were wrong and a sin against God's holy will, but now that they were out on the table, she felt the full weight of her situation before God. This preaching of the law made her keenly aware of just how spiritually thirsty she was. It was a spiritual thirst that was going to kill her, not just physical death, but death for all eternity in hell.

Now don't go casting stones at the woman, because Jesus can do the same thing to you. In fact, whether you realize it or not, he already has. As Peter confessed about Jesus, "Lord you know all things." Where can we hide where God cannot see us and our sins? Where can we sin that God will not know about it? Yes God is aware of our every sin. With his Word he exposes our sin just like Jesus did for this Samaritan woman and shows us like he showed here just how spiritually thirsty we are. There is no Gatorade for this, not rain or fierce, but only Jesus. He is the solution. He is the living water that quenches our spiritual thirst.

In the waters of baptism our sins are washed away. As we hear the good news that Jesus died for us, we are reminded of the spiritual thirst quencher that we have in Jesus. All of our sins are taken away. All of our guilt is gone. Our fears about how God will receive us when we die are gone, because Jesus is the water of life welling up inside of us to eternal life. Jesus is the spiritual thirst quencher.

Ponce De Leone came to the land that we now call Florida in search of a special fountain called the fountain of youth. De Leone hoped that in finding it he could live forever. For eight years he tested every source of water that he could find in Florida to no avail. He continued to age. In the end he was killed by a poison arrow shot by one of the natives of Florida and his quest to find immortality ended with his death. We don't have to go on a voyage. We don't have to test every source of water that comes our way. We have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus, the living water. Amen.