



Text: John 4:1-19, 27-30, 39-42¹

Series: Jesus & ...

Title: Part 3 – Jesus & A Woman with a Deep Thirst

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What is it that draws us to the story of Jesus and the woman at the well?

I think it's because we can easily identify with this story in a variety of ways.

At the most basic level, thirst is a common human experience. We all know thirst and the fact that Jesus is presented as being thirsty enables us to connect with him at a basic human level. The woman has come to the well because she was thirsty and it was this simple thirst that created the meeting between her and Jesus. Often, our first meeting with Jesus is the result of a search to meet some basic human need that is unfulfilled. There are mission groups around the world who dig wells and build hospitals simply because these tangible structures that meet human needs create open doors for meetings with Jesus.

As a deeper level, we quickly can see that the woman's physical thirst was an expression of a deeper unexpressed thirst. Jesus immediately understands her real needs and helps her to express what is really on her heart. At this level, the story connects with our own often unexpressed need and longing for someone who really understands us.

At another level, this is a story of how Jesus overcomes barriers to reach someone with His love. Again, I believe we can relate to this aspect of the story because in one way or another we all put up barriers to Jesus. This woman put up barrier after barrier, but Jesus gently overcame each one of them. We long to believe that Jesus will stay with us even when we seem to push him off.

In this story we see Jesus relentlessly and gently overcoming each obstacle that is placed in his way to reach this woman because He loves her and wants her to come to know his love.

We all "thirst," men and women alike, and Jesus wants to meet the deepest needs in our lives.

This morning, I want us to take a good look at Jesus. My hope is that I can highlight several facets of the relentless love of Jesus for you and bring us all into a face to face meeting with the Lord this morning. If you will, I want each of us to

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go "one on one" with Jesus this morning and allow him to surface the real "thirst" in our lives that He wants to satisfy. I invite you to allow the Holy Spirit to move the scene from a well 2,000 years ago, to our own hearts and lives. This morning, I invite you to meet with Jesus.

But before we go on, let's ask Him to meet with us...

Lord Jesus, as we study your Word, we invite you speak to our hearts by your Holy Spirit. Meet with us this morning and reveal to us our own thirst and meet our need. Amen.

First of all, I want us to see...

Jesus' searching love

Jesus was on a mission that day in Samaria and he's still on the same mission today.

John tells us that Jesus...

"had to pass through Samaria." John 4:4

Actually, Jesus didn't "have to go" through Samaria. Jesus was travelling from Judah in the south of Palestine to the region of Galilee in the north of Palestine. Although Samaria lay in between these two regions, it was possible to travel by a different route. Some travelers would cross the Jordan River and travel north and south on the west bank of the Jordan, thus avoiding Samaria. Jesus could have chosen that alternate route.

But instead he chose this more direct route. But the force of John's words points to something more than mere geographic ease. There was a "had to" in Jesus' journey to Samaria. There was a purpose in his steps as he walked north from Judah, heading for Galilee. There was a mission he had to accomplish and it was necessary for him to pass through Samaria to accomplish it. Jesus had an appointment with a woman at a well in the Samaritan town of Sychar.

When Jewish people traveled through this region, they usually hustled through without stopping or talking with the locals. The Jews and the Samaritan didn't get along with each other. But Jesus explains his interaction with this Samaritan woman to his disciples by giving it a profound purpose. It wasn't simply for the purpose of getting water to drink. He said to them...

**"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."
John 4:34**



His conversation with this woman was part of his work for his Father in heaven. He was on a mission that was more basic to his life than eating or drinking is to our lives. But what's important to notice is that this conversation was no different in this respect from any other conversation Jesus had. Every moment of every day, Jesus was on a mission to accomplish the work the Father had given him. Jesus was driven by this passion to fulfill the Father's will every moment of every day.

Later in his ministry, Jesus spoke about his mission in terms of a shepherd and his sheep. He said...

“I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” John 10:16

Notice the passion of his mission: “I **must** bring them also....” Jesus was on a mission that day in Sychar, a mission to draw a woman into his care and love. And Jesus is still on the same mission today, drawing people under his care as their Shepherd. Every day, every moment, Jesus is working to draw new sheep into his flock. That means he's working right here and right now.

You might be here this morning because Jesus is on mission to meet with you. He can use a variety of means to reach you today. It could be something we've sung, or read, or prayed. It could be something I'll say in this message. It could be someone you meet in the foyer or it could be the still, small voice of his Holy Spirit in your heart. It could be someone you interact with during the week.

Jesus is on a mission to reach you with His love!

Secondly, I want us to see...

Jesus' unrelenting love

Jesus had to hurdle several barriers to reach this woman and He's still crossing barriers to reach people this morning!

The first barrier that needed to be crossed was **an ethnic barrier**. The woman said to him...

**“How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?”
(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)” John 4:9**

In many parts of the world there are ethnic and religious hostilities that keep people apart. Usually they are rooted in some event in the distant past and the situation between the Jews and the Samaritans was this kind of ancient hatred.



The Samaritans were a mixed race of people who had been transplanted by an ancient conqueror onto what was historic Jewish territory and the Jews resented their presence. The Samaritans had lived in Palestine for hundreds of years but they had never been accepted by the Jews who lived around them. The Samaritans practiced a religion that was part Judaism and part national religion. Their Bible contained only the first five Books of the Old Testament but even these books had been altered to suit their own ethnic purpose. The text of their Bible had been altered to change the focus of worship from the temple mount in Jerusalem to Mount Gerizim, a hilltop near the ancient city of Shechem in central Palestine.

The Jews and the Samaritans despised each other. Just to give you a flavour of their animosity, let me quote what one Jewish Rabbi, Rabbi Eliezer, wrote: **"He that eats the bread of Samaritans is like to one that eats the flesh of swine."** And we all know what Jews thought of pigs! But Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water. He crossed a barrier to reach her.

The second barrier he crossed was **a gender barrier**. The Samaritan woman said to him...

"How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"

When the disciples returned from buying provisions in the town of Sychar, they were shocked to see Jesus talking with a woman. John tells us that...

"They marveled that he was talking with a woman...." John 4:27

Again, to give you a flavour of the cultural issues we're dealing with let me quote what one of the Jewish Rabbis wrote: **"A man shall not be alone with a woman in an inn, not even with his sister or his daughter, on account of what men may think. A man shall not talk with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife, and especially not with another woman, on account of what men may say."**

There are appropriate lines of communication between members of the opposite sex, but the rules of Jesus' culture went beyond what could be seen as wise. The rule against talking with your own wife in public demonstrates that this cultural faux pas was rooted in a demeaning attitude towards women. But Jesus didn't see women that way. He didn't care about these "barriers," or what people might say about Him. His view of men and women was rooted in His Father's desire to extend his grace and mercy to everyone without respect to their gender or their ethnic origin. Jesus had someone to reach with the Father's love and he was going to do it regardless of what people might think of him!

Two weeks ago I encouraged you to consider a summer meditation on Jesus' challenge to some of his critics. He said to them...



“Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” Matthew 9:13

I think his interaction with this woman of Samaria is one of the passages we should include in our search for Jesus’ understanding of what it means to “desire mercy.”

Jesus is still crossing barriers to reach people with His love! Right now, Katie and Matt, two young adults raised on the Prairies of Western Canada are being used by God to reach the mountain-dwelling people of Asia. Joel has just come back from a time of ministry among tribal people deep in the rain forest of Papua New Guinea. **Jesus’ love is relentless!**

I wonder what barriers we need to cross right in Olds to reach people with God’s love and grace. Remember: the Jews and the Samaritans were neighbors not strangers, but there were barriers that restricted the flow of God’s mercy from one to the other. Are there barriers we need to cross? Are there social barriers or economic barriers of various kinds that need to be crossed so that God’s grace and mercy can be shared?

One of the questions we need to keep asking ourselves as a congregation is whether or not this church represents the social profile of this community. Do we, gathered here this morning, represent this community in its age outline, in its ethnic identity and in its economic profile? If you were to take a slice through the population of Olds this morning, would we be representative of this community as a whole or have we allowed barriers of one kind or another to limit our communication of God’s grace?

One of the moments that very much encouraged me was the baptism here a couple of weeks ago of a young woman from the Philippines. May came to Olds as a contract worker and was befriended by one of the families here in the church. She moved to Calgary for work opportunities but she wanted to be baptized here because of the friendship she had with that family. That family reached across an ethnic barrier with God’s grace. And I know they are not alone in doing so. Let’s do more of it!

Thirdly, I want us to see...

Jesus' personal love

for this woman. What he does to reach her demonstrates an incredible sensitivity to her unique situation. Notice how Jesus gently directs the conversation from the ordinary things of life, drinking water, and touches upon this woman's particular need.



Jesus was thirsty. He had travelled a long way on dusty, hilly roads. He was hungry. We know that because the disciples had gone into Sychar to buy food. (v.8) But he noticed some things about this woman that we should take note of as well.

He noticed that she had come to the well at noon, **the hottest part of the day**. John tells us that it was **“about the sixth hour” (v.6)** which translates into noon hour in our system of time. The women of the city usually came to the well in the morning and evening when it was cooler, not in the heat of the day. But this woman was there in the noonday heat.

He noticed that she had come to the well **alone**. Raising water from the depths of the well was tough work and it was usually done with the assistance of others, but she was alone. And there was a safety issue here as well. Women came to the well in numbers because there was safety in numbers when meeting unknown people. But she came alone.

Jesus and the woman got to talking about "water." Jesus offered her "living water" and she was puzzled by the phrase because "living water" was a term used in her culture to refer to running water. She wonders how he would draw this "living water" since he didn't even have a bucket with him. Then, Jesus offered her water that would satisfy her thirst forever! She would never have to come to the well again, in the heat, alone, and she said to him..."I'll take it!"

Then Jesus seems, on the surface, to change the subject...

“Go, call your husband, and come here.” John 4:16

She responds by telling Jesus that she has no husband and then Jesus takes the conversation all the way around the corner!

“You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” John 4:17-18

What was Jesus doing? Was he changing the subject? No, at least not the subject he was dealing with. What he was doing was identifying her real thirst - **the thirst for love**. Why was she at the well at noon? Why was she at this well alone? She was there because of shame and guilt. She was there in the heat and alone to avoid the community gossip about her!

One writer has described gossip as “the most deadly microbe. It has neither legs nor wings. It is composed entirely of tales, and most of them have stings.” This woman had been hit with the stings of every put down, snide remark and in-your-face sneer in the lexicon of human cruelty.



She was so hungry for love that she had tried marriage five times and failed and she was in her sixth relationship - because she couldn't give up on her search for love! What Jesus offers her is water that will satisfy her deep need, her need for love and forgiveness. There was a deep hole in this woman's heart and what Jesus offered was something that would fill that vacuum and make her life full and whole.

This "never thirst again" promise often puzzles us. Many of us have received the water that Jesus offers, but we still find a thirst in our lives at times. We need to recognize that Jesus spoke of "living water" in two ways.

First, he spoke of the **"living water" of eternal life**. Drinking the water Jesus gives creates within us...

"a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:14

The moment we come to faith in Christ we are given the water of "eternal life. But sadly, we often don't allow that the possession of that eternal life to change the way we feel about this life. Jesus wants us to experience His love now, not just in eternity. We need to realize in our spirit, as well as in our mind, that God can't love us any more than he does right now.

When we believe in Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us that...

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Romans 5:5

Whether we "feel" it or not, it's a fact because God says it is. The Word of God tells us that the love of God "has been poured into our hearts." Literally, the word "poured" means "flooded." The moment we came to faith in Christ, the Spirit of God took up residence in our lives. All that he is became united with us. But we won't experience the joy and peace that the Spirit of God brings into our lives unless we let go of our performance expectations. We can't earn God's love and we have to stop trying to do so or else the fact of God's love poured out upon us will never become our experience of God's love. We will, in that sense, remain thirsty for love even though God's love is present for us to enjoy.

Secondly, Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman about the **"living water" of the Holy Spirit**.

Jesus said to her...

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." John 4:10



What was “the gift of God” that Jesus offered? Later, Jesus repeats his offer to meet the thirst of those who come to him by saying...

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” John 7:37-39

“The gift of God” to which Jesus referred is the Holy Spirit. (cf. Luke 11:13) John tells us here that Jesus was speaking of the future gift of the Spirit because the Spirit had not yet been given. But only a few months later, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the Spirit was given and is being given today to everyone who believes in Jesus. (Romans 8:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

The picture that Jesus gives us here of the presence of the Spirit in our lives is that of a refreshing spring of water. When the “spring” of the Spirit in our lives is tended by Spirit-guided obedience to God’s Word, it produces in us...

“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...” Galatians 5:22-23

There are books and books written about how to tend “the spring of the Spirit” in our lives. Let me give you just a couple of Scripture guides this morning on tending the spring in your life and let me recommend one book to you.

The key to "tending the spring in our hearts" is found in Jesus' instruction...

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. John 7:37

Let me suggest some ways in which we can “come” to Jesus to have the spring of the Spirit refreshed in our lives...

- By asking Jesus to fill us with His Spirit again and again. Luke 11:13**
- By asking Jesus to clean out whatever dirties the spring. 1 John 1:9**
- By living in loving obedience to Jesus' instruction to us. Acts 5:32**
- By thinking deeply on Jesus' word and allowing it to fill our minds and spirits with the wonder of God’s grace and truth. Colossians 3:16**
- By spending “quality abiding time” with Jesus in prayer and in His Word. John 15:4**

I also want to recommend a little book that has been immensely helpful to me. It’s called...



The Bookends of the Christian Life
by Jerry Bridges & Bob Bevington
Crossway Books, 2009

The two “bookends” they suggest that we need to live our lives between are the bookends of...

The Righteousness of Christ *[MY LIFE]* The Power of the Holy Spirit

Leaning our lives on Christ and what he has done for us to secure our eternal life with God delivers us from performance expectations. Leaning our lives on the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to live authentically Christian lives and experience the “living water” that Christ gives us. I’ve just placed two copies of the book in the library so just give the librarian a few days to process it before you look to borrow it.

Jesus wants us to have eternal life **AND** to experience His love for us by the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives.

Fourthly, I want us to see...

Jesus’ persistent love

for this woman. He handles all this woman’s objections and brings her back to face her need for His love. He won’t be put off by her objections.

She wanted to deflect him from dealing with her need for love by getting into a **theological argument** about where people were supposed to worship? Was it Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim? But Jesus shocks her with his answer. He tells her that it really doesn’t matter where people worship as long as people worship Him from their heart and in truth.

“...the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:23-24

Then she tried to deflect the discussion by **putting Jesus off until the future**. Oh, she said, when the Messiah comes we’ll understand everything. (v.25-26) And now Jesus really shocks her with his come-back...

“I who speak to you am he.” John 4:26

He doesn’t let her get away! Today was her moment of decision. No deflection.



Dorian Leigh Parker was a more contemporary Samaritan woman. She was the first "Revlon Girl." After her modeling career was over, she opened one of the first modeling agencies in Europe and discovered many of the major models of the fashion world. She owned her own restaurant and socialized with the big names of the day.

However, her story was more than glitter and romance. Like the woman at the well, she had several failed marriages, four in all. She struggled with her son's drug addiction and her grief over his eventual suicide. She dealt with the threat of business failure and with rejection by former friends and associates.

Her sister in the United States had become a Christian and sent her a "present" one day. Parker opened box with excitement and inside she found books, books about God, about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, about being born again and living a Christian life. Parker was mad! She thought the package was God's idea of a joke!

A month later, Parker's daughter, who was also a Christian, was getting married. Parker asked her what she wanted as a wedding gift and her daughter told Dorian that she wanted her mother to go to a three-day Christian women's retreat with Edith Schaeffer. Edith Schaeffer and husband, Francis, were major Christian leaders in Europe in those days. Parker went to the retreat.

There she met a woman there who entered into a discussion with her for two weeks about what it meant to be a Christian. After they talked through the story of Jesus, his death on the cross, the problem of sin and how God called people to believe in Jesus and finally Dorian did, she believed.

Dorian summarized her encounter with God in these words: "I fought Him. I had been fighting Him all my life, sometimes convinced that I had outdistanced Him completely only to find Him hot on my heels when I least expected it. Thank God He was persistent."

Our God is persistent to save! We often run from God, but he pursues us to rescue us, not to punish us or harm us but to save us! Have you been running from him? Don't. Stop. Believe.

Finally, I want us to see...

Jesus' transparent love

for this woman. In what is one of his most transparent self-disclosures of his life on earth, Jesus simply said to her...

"I who speak to you am he." John 4:26



This is the only time outside of his trial before Pilate where Jesus openly declares to anyone that He is the Messiah! There are many clear inferences to his identity as Messiah from what Jesus said and did, but only during this encounter at the well and later at his trial does Jesus make the simple “I am” confession as Messiah. Here, on this stone bench beside an ancient well, Jesus openly shared his true identity with this thirsty, needy woman.

He was telling her...

"I'm the One you've been waiting for!"

"I am he!"

"I am the One who will meet your deepest need!"

"Here I am ... the next move is up to you."

Jesus has revealed himself to us in the Word of God and we need our eyes of discovery opened to see that...

He loves us ... that He loves you and me.

He is the Son of God, come down from heaven to live and die among us.

He is the Saviour of the world ... that He is your Saviour and my Saviour, the answer to our deepest need.

And the next move is ours. What will we do with Jesus? What's the thirst that Jesus wants to meet in your life?

Do you need the water of eternal life? Jesus said...

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” John 6:35

You can begin a relationship with Jesus today. The door into that relationship is opened by acknowledging that you need God to forgive you for your sin and rebellion against him. Your rebellion against God has a penalty attached to it and the Bible tells us that it's death. But the good news is that Jesus died on the cross in our place to take our punishment for sin and God now offers us his complete forgiveness when we believe in Jesus. When we believe in Jesus, God's mercy removes our guilt and he also gives us His Holy Spirit to give us power to live a new life.

If you would like to know what it means to become a believer in Jesus I have a booklet I'd love to give to you this morning. It's called **“Big Questions; Real Answers”** and it will give you important information about what the Bible teaches about becoming a follower of Jesus.

If you are already a believer in Jesus, do you need to renew the spring of the Holy Spirit in your life? Jesus said...



“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. John 7:37

This morning, I invite you to renew and refresh your relationship with Jesus by asking him to fill you anew with His Spirit. (Eph 5:18) Ask him to clean the spring and allow the love, joy and peace to flow in your life. (1 John 1:9) Renew your commitment to live your life under his control and direction. (Colossians 3: 15-17) As you close, I invite you to commune with Jesus in prayer, allowing his grace to flow freshly into your life.

Let's pray.

- Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- Final Song:** All Who Are Thirsty
- Benediction**