



Text: John 4:1-42¹

Series: *Life in His Name* – The Message of John’s Gospel

Title: Part 8 – The Searching Heart of Jesus

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

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In John’s account of Nicodemus visiting Jesus at night we have a story of someone who was seeking Jesus. In our scripture this morning, we have a story of Jesus seeking someone. This morning, I want us to fill our minds and hearts with this picture of **the searching heart of Jesus**.

This is God holy, inspired and authoritative Word. Let’s listen with open ears and receptive hearts to what God is saying to us this morning.

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ A woman from Samaria came 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 The Samaritan 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.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered 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.” ¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” ¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” ¹⁷ The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one

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you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.”²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on 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 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.”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 he comes, he will tell us all things.”²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?”²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?”³⁰ They went out of the town 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 said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?”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, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.”³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.”³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.”⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.”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 we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

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 searching 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 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 meditate on 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. In your name we ask it, 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, in order to avoid 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!

Several of you have asked about **the graphic** I'm using for this sermon series. It's a picture I took at the British Museum in London of a mosaic that was discovered in England on the floor of an ancient Roman villa. It's dated to the 4th century AD at a time when the Romans occupied England. The picture is a representation of Jesus and it might be the earliest representation of Jesus anywhere. Behind him to you can see the "Chi Ro." The "chi" is the x-shaped letter; the "ro" is the p-shaped letter. In the Greek alphabet, the "chi" and the "ro" are the first two letters of the word "Christ." The fruit in the mosaic that frames the picture of Jesus are pomegranates and to the Roman mind they symbolized eternal life. This mosaic, composed just three hundred years after John wrote his Gospel, declares that Jesus is the Christ, the source of eternal life. I thought it would make a perfect backdrop for this series in John's Gospel because, of course, that's the theme of John's Gospel. John tells us that he wrote this Gospel ...

“so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may life in his name.” John 20:31



What is amazing to me is that this mosaic tells us that within three hundred years of these words having been written, the message about Jesus had reached ancient Briton, the edge of the known world at the time! To reach Britain Jesus had crossed physical barriers of mountains and rivers and oceans! He had crossed ethnic barriers, reaching into Roman society. And he had crossed economic barriers. This mosaic was on the floor of a rich man's house, not the home of a fisherman or a carpenter. Barrier after barrier fell to the march of Jesus' love!

Jesus is still crossing barriers to reach people with His love! This past summer, Katie, Candice, Anna & Matt, four young adults raised on the Prairies of Western Canada were used by God to reach people for Jesus in the Far East. This past summer Everett travelled the opposite direction, to Estonia, to reach post-Communist eastern Europeans for Christ. And as you look at our Thankoffering missions appeal, you can see Jesus at work through his messengers here in Canada, in Africa, in Europe and in Asia. **All because Jesus' love is searching and 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 right here in Olds? 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? Are we allowing human barriers to keep us from communicating the searching love of Jesus?

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, from 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**. It's estimated that the well at Sychar was about 100 feet deep! 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 and connection**. 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 that circulated 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 and connection 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. 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. That isn't just a promise of some home in heaven when we die; it's the promise of God's life being poured into our lives right now and forever! Eternal life isn't just, "I've got a home in glory land," it's "I've got the life of the God of glory surging in me today and forever!" But sadly, we often don't allow that the possession of God's life to change the way we feel about this life. Jesus wants us to experience God's love now, not just in eternity.

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

As believers in Jesus, 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. 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 believe His Word. Unless we believe His Word on his love 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.

Let me ask you today: "Believer in Jesus, do you believe that it is impossible for God to love you more than he does right now?"

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 in John’s Gospel, 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)

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.

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

...How?

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**

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?

"...you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." John 4:20

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.

"Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." John 4:21

The Father was seeking worshippers who would worship him...

"in spirit and truth." John 4:23

Then she tried to deflect the discussion by **putting Jesus off until another time**. 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.

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? Why? Maybe you don't know why you're running from God but let me ask you a diagnostic question that might help you figure that out: **Do you think that God is pursuing you to save you or to punish you?**

The Bible tells us that Jesus pursues us to save us, not condemn us (cf John 3:18). Stop running and believe him!

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)

I invite you to commune with Jesus around the Lord’s Table this morning in prayer, allowing his grace to flow fresh into your life.

Let’s pray.

- Invitation to the Lord’s Table**
- Songs of Communion**
 - Behold the Lamb
 - As the Deer
- Benediction**