

Main Street

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



John 4:1-30 **“A Gulp Of Living Water”**

August 10, 2014
(9th Sunday After Pentecost/ Day At The Lake)

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

JOHN 4:1-30 "A GULP OF LIVING WATER"

A. vv. 1-7a INTRO: 1) TRAVEL TO GALILEE BEGUN, 2) WOMAN DRAWS WATER.

1 Now then the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard
 that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John
 2/3 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples),
HE LEFT JUDEA AND DEPARTED AGAIN TO GALILEE. Withdraws From Competition, Inclusion With v.43
 Goes Through, Not Around; Samaria Between Judea & Galilee
 4 He had (*dei-* necessity) to pass through Samaria. Divine Guidance, Not Strictly Necessary Geographically
 5 So he came to a **CITY** of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.
 6 Jacob's well was there, v.12, Unlike Mt. 10:5, Lk. 9:52-53, Samaritan Mission
 and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. Evidence Of Humanity, Divinity- v.26
 It was about the sixth hour (i.e. noon? 6pm?). Well "Betrothal"Scenes: Gen. 24:10-61, 29:1-20, Ex. 2:15b-21
 On Samaritans, Sir. 50:25-26, m. Shebiith 8:10, m Niddah 4:1, m. Kellim 1:1
 7a There came a woman of **SAMARIA** to draw water. 8:8 (Demons), Dramatic Encounter: Hottest Part Of The Day

Divine Appointment With Jesus Alone: She Is Ripe/Receptive, Considered Unclean

B. vv.7b-26 DIALOG ON LIVING WATER/ TRUE WORSHIP: MESSIAH REVEALED.

1) vv.7b-15 Living Water: Jesus Is Source.

Conflict: Gender, Nationality, Race, Religion, Acts 8

a) vv.7b-9 1ST Exchange: Jesus Issues A Command, Explanatory Footnotes.

Notice Jesus Skillful Use Of Conversation
Request Ignores Centuries Of Hostility

7b Jesus said to her,
 Command "Give me a drink." 19:14, Jesus Leads With His Need! Clean/Unclean, (Level 1: Physical)
 8 (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) They Are Now Backstage
TITLES "It is forbidden to give a woman any greeting," m. Kiddushin 70a
 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, Divisions: Man/Woman, Jew/Samaritan, m. Pirke Aboth 1.5
"YOU JEW" "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" v.22
 (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) No Common Plates: Clean/Unclean Laws

b) vv.10-12 2ND Exchange: Father Jacob: Invitation and Misunderstanding.

Water Has More Than One Meaning

10 Jesus answered her,
 "If you knew 'the gift of God,' (Eternal Life) Torah
 and *who* it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' (Messiah, Savior Of The World)
 you would have asked him,
 and he would have given you living water." Running Water, Ezek. 47:1-12, (Level 2: Spiritual)
 7:37-39, 20:22, Water As Holy Spirit, Tg. Isaiah 44:3

11 The woman said to him,
"SIR" Q1 "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; She Shows Misunderstanding
 where do you get this living water? (Implied Answer: Inner Well)
 12 Q2 Are you greater than our Father Jacob who gave us this well, 1:51, Hears Him As Jewish Boast
 and drank from it himself, and his sons and his cattle?" (Implied Answer: Yes)

c) vv.13-15 3RD Exchange: Invitation and Misunderstanding.

Here He Tries To Lift Woman To His Level Of Speech

13 Jesus said to her,
 "Everyone who drink of this water Jesus As Giver Of God's Gift
 will thirst again,
 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him
 will never thirst;
 the water that I shall give him Is. 12:3, Odes Of Solomon 30:1-3
 will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 3:5, Internal Well Of Life
 7:37-39 Acclamation, In Middle East, A Well Is An Oasis Of Life

15 The woman said to him,
"SIR" "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." She Misses The Point
 Thinks Of Running (Non-stagnant) Water

2) vv.16-24 True Worship: Jesus Is Prophet/Messiah/Place Of True Devotion.

a) vv.16-17a 1st Exchange: Jesus Issue A Command.

16 Jesus said to her, **Jesus Receives Divine Revelation Through Spirit = Word Of Knowledge**
Command "Go, call your husband and come here." **Jesus Gets Personal; She Gets Evasive**
Long Discussion About Theology With A Woman Was Not Jewish Custom

17 The woman answered him,
NOTHING "I have no husband." **1:47-48, 2:25, 6:15, 61, 64, 70; 13:27, 14:24-25, Jesus Knows**

b') vv.17b-20 2nd Exchange: Our Fathers: Jesus As Prophet (Word of knowledge).

Aner = Wordplay: Man/Husband

Jesus said to her,
"You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; **Speaks By Revelation From God**
18 for you *have* had five husbands (men),
and he whom you now *have* is not *your* husband; **Adultery? Shacked Up! Now On No. 6!**
this you said truly." **Issue = Serial Fornication**

19 The woman said to him,
"SIR" "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. **He Knows What She Did Not Tell Him!**
"PROPHET" **If He Has Such Knowledge, Then Let Him Solve A Thorny Issue**
20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain (i.e. Gerazim); **Shifts Topic To Religion Controversy!**
but you (you Jews) say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."
Samaritans Accepted Only Pentateuch

c') vv.21-26 3rd Exchange: Revelation Of Jesus' Identity.

Jesus Shifts Place To Mode And Manner

21 Jesus said to her,
1 "Woman believe me, the hour is coming **No Longer A Sacred Location**
when neither on this mountain
or in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

22 2 You worship what you do not know; **Judgment On Samaritans, Restricted Canon**
2' we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews. **Ps. 76:1, Affirms Jewish Era**
God Is Spirit: Immaterial, No Idols Ex. 20:4

23 1' But the hour is coming, [and now is] when the true worshippers **The Future Is Now**
will worship the Father in-Spirit-and-in-truth; **Jesus' Divine Revelation , Spirit-Of-Truth**
for such the Father seeks to worship him. **New Era Replaces Old**
24 God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in-Spirit-and-in-truth." **14:16-17**
For The Born-From-Above, Jesus Supercedes Jewish Worship, 3/7 Episodes

25 The woman said,
"I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); **Dt. 18:15, Samaritan Taheb = Restorer**
when he comes, he will show us all things." **Typically Samaritan Response, Shared Hope**
Church Claims To Carry On True Worship Of God

26 Jesus said to her,
"I who speak to you am he." **Jesus As Divine Revealer Of God's Will**
Jesus' Claim About Himself, Greek = Ego emi = "I am"
Basis For Instruction On True Worship, Formula Of Revelation

C) vv.27-30 A SHIFT OF AUDIENCE: COMING & GOING AROUND JESUS.

She Comes To Faith Through Conversation + Insight
27 Just then the disciples came. **Jesus Broke Prejudice Against Women Apostles**
They marveled that he was talking with a woman, **Jewish Practice, Foreigner**
but none said, "What do you wish?" or "Why are you talking to her?" **Disciples Come From Town**
She Now Has New Water, Forgets Old

28 So the woman left her water jar (??), and went away into the city, **Woman Goes To Town Excited**
29 and said to the people, **"Come see," 1:40-42, 1:43-46, Prov. 9:3, 5-6**

"MESSIAH?" "Come see a man who told me all I ever did. Can this be the Christ (*Taheb*)?" **Testimony + ?**
She Bears Witness To Personal Experience, Hostility Of v.9 Overcome

30 They went out of the city and were coming to him. **People Come From Town After Her Testimony**
Etiology Of Samaritan Presence In Johannine Church, Acts 8
Sinful Outsider Now A Messenger For Jesus Christ: Accepted/Life Changed

MSUMC Day at the Lake
August 10, 2014
John 4:1-30, “A Gulp Of Living Water”

A paradox happens today. US Navy F-18 fighters drop 500 pound laser-guided bombs on ISIS artillery and convoys while Air Force C-130's drop water and food on members of an ancient religious minority. They are the Yazidis stranded atop Mount Sinjar along with some Christians, and there people are dying of dehydration. From the sky comes death for one and life for another. In a sudden blast of light and heat some will die while others read from the label on a bottle of water: *A gift from the United State of America*. High explosives and H²O rain from the skies.

The Middle East is a dry place; it’s also full of deep-rooted tribal, sectarian, and religious hatreds, the depths and particulars of which are hard for us who live far away to understand. We have a five year memory; they think in centuries, even millennia. And try as we might to extract ourselves from entanglements and tend to matters closer to home, we are drawn back by necessity since we are the only empire standing and have strategic as well as moral and humanitarian interests. From third grade social studies I remember a lesson on *The Fertile Crescent*. Little did I know....

Now if we journey back two thousand years and switch our perspective from global politics to a personal encounter between a man whose name we know and a woman whose name we don’t, we find the same two issues: water in a dry land and the distrust and hatred of tribe and religion, and there is Jesus in the midst of both.

Things had gotten a bit heated in Judea down at the Jordan because the new Jesus movement was beginning to eclipse the older John the Baptist movement, and so Jesus was led to travel north, back to the home territory of Galilee. Now between Judea in the south and Galilee in the north lay the intervening province of Samaria and the Samaritans. They were distant family you didn’t want to be around. To most Jews there were half-breeds who intermarried foreigners and were ritually unclean. They had a separate temple and priesthood atop Mt. Gerazim and a history of all sorts of religious tensions and political violence, so much so that most Jews traveling south to north and back again took the long route to the east of Samaria across the Jordan.

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So when John says in verse 4 that Jesus “had to pass through Samaria,” it’s not a geographical but a theological necessity. The Father was calling the Son and his companions to march into hostile territory. And why was that? Because there was a certain woman in the village of Sychar who was primed by her history for a gulp of living water. Her heart was dry and parched from looking for love in all the wrong places. Time for an alternative to be presented.

God knows where receptive people are; after all, it’s the Holy Spirit who’s been working through life circumstances to prepare them for a meeting with Jesus through one of his representatives. Have you ever considered that someone you meet during the day may be a *prepared person* for whom your listening ear, your conversation, and your simple witness might be living water? So Jesus and his friends headed north, not knowing what was ahead, only that Jesus walked with a sense of confident purpose waiting further instructions. Jesus lived and walked by faith, and he must have wondered, “Why go this way? Who is it that needs my help?” Jesus’ habit was to obey current orders as standing orders till new orders came. Life unfolded as he lived in trust, in daily dependence, and modeled the new life for his trainees.

It was noon and the blazing sun at its zenith when they arrived at Jacob’s ancient well. It had been a long time since breakfast, and the disciples were sent into the city to buy food. I love the scene John paints in verse 6, “...and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well.” Alone, sweaty, tired, a wayfaring stranger to the lone woman who came to attach her jar to the rope and drop it deep into the well with a splash and echo. Women typically did this early in the day when it was cooler and in groups for safety, but here she comes alone. I wonder why? He’s thirsty for a long drink and its refreshing power, perhaps some water to wash his face from the dust of the road; she’s thirsty for that and something more, a longing deeper than water can slake. By his clothing it’s clear he’s Jewish, not Samaritan. Gangs wear their colors; so with tribes and villages in that world.

You can feel the tension and see it in her body language as she approaches. All the old battles between Samaritan and Jew are in the emotionally compressed air between them. A young female Jewish soldier meets a young Palestinian man at a Gaza checkpoint. Can you feel the tension on both sides? The toxic blend of fear and hatred, here compounded by the male - female polarity and all the rules that govern such relations in that part of the world.

The silence between them is broken by Jesus’ request, “Give me a drink,” to

which her response is to recite history as a barrier between them, “You guys hate us. Wouldn’t you rather stay thirsty than ask me, a scumbag Samaritan woman, for help?” It’s a humble request from a tired, Jewish gentleman on a journey, one who never mistreated or leered at a woman. “Give me a drink?” I think the punctuation is a question, not a demand. With no one at the well, a rogue might have taken her jar and gotten his own water, but that’s not who Jesus is. Instead, the Holy Spirit brought to mind a riddle, something to engage her curiosity, and this is the turning point in the dialog, “If you knew the gift of God, and who I am, you’d ask, and I’d give you *living water*.” Well water was OK, but living, flowing water from a mountain stream was better. How clever of Jesus, how inspired in the moment by the Spirit’s wisdom.

Earlier she called him *a Jew* to distinguish them, but now the address is direct, even respectful, “*Sir*, you have no bucket for a well as deep as this one, so where do you get this living water?” She’s a bit of a flirt, I think, and follows her question with another jab, “Are you greater than our Father Jacob and all his herds?” She knows how to deal with a bragging Jew.

It was then that Jesus moved from literal water to water as an image for spiritual thirst, “What if,” he asked, “what if instead of coming to this well every day, there could be an artesian spring within, a never-ending fountain of life?” Notice his move from well water to flowing water to spiritual water. From still water to water with life to a spring from God that is life. Verse 15 shows how skillful and Spirit-guided is his conversation and how quickly he speaks to her deepest desires, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst or come here to draw.” His skillful, Spirit-led conversation opened her heart. From time to time I see this happen in my own conversations, particularly when I listen to them and God at the same time. When you touch the deepest desires of a person’s heart, you’re on holy ground, so tread carefully. There is a longing in us nothing in this world can satisfy, and when someone let’s you in this deep, trust is at work, and such trust is fragile.

There is a always a point with Jesus when his offer of new life clashes with the ways we’ve been trying to meet our own needs, and with her it was men and their ravenous attention. They were her well, her source of satisfaction, which is why Jesus- again by the Spirit’s illumination- knew which question to ask next, “Go, call your husband and come here.” Her answer was true but evasive, “I have no husband,” implying, “I am now single.”

What Jesus says next is what Paul calls *a word of knowledge*, which is still in operation as a gift of the Spirit, and- when present- quickly moves conversations from

the polite surface down to the deeply personal. He knew things about her only the Spirit could have told him, and now he reveals them, probably with a smile:

“You are right but not truthful. You’ve had five husbands, and with number six you’ve given up the formalities of making it legal. You think men and their attentions will fill the ache within, but they just keep throwing you away in divorce, which is why none of the women in the village come to draw water with you. How many husbands have you stolen thus far? Who’s next on your list?”

It’s getting tense as he meddles in a forbidden area, and so she makes two quick moves. First a compliment, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet,” and secondly a shift back to old religious controversies, like in what city and on which mountain should worship be conducted since Jew and Samaritan disagree? He, a perfect stranger, has uncovered the tenderest, most painful and shameful secret of her life, and she is eager to get back to something less embarrassing.

But Jesus will not be so easily diverted. He restates Jewish privilege, then gives the news that the time is soon to come when all true worshipers will worship God in spirit and in truth, not in this or that place. She then follows his word of prophecy with a hope that also resides among her people that Samaritans, that a Messiah *is to come and show us all things*. It is only then, at the end of his leading conversation, that Jesus pulls back the veil, “I who speak to you am he.”

There he sits, tired and thirsty, weary and dehydrated, without a bucket, an unlikely Jew sent all the way from Judea just for her. At one level Jesus is humanly helpless, at another level in perfect sync with unlimited divine resources. Such is God’s grace who saw her lonely tears and heard the prayers just under the surface of her immoral lifestyle. Here was a man unlike all the others, one who looked at her with a blend love and truth that made her insides tremble, one who wants nothing from her and everything for her. It was, as we say, *a divine appointment*. Their meeting was no accident; it was God’s way of getting good news in a corner where it was needed and living water to a shriveled soul. God’s still doing that every day, only now through us as Jesus’ living extensions. We are to be faucets.

It shocked the disciples to see Jesus conversing with a hated, unclean, unescorted, heretical Samaritan women, but such unconventional encounters had become so frequent they dared not ask, “Why in the world are *you* talking to *her*?” They are learning day by day that the love of the Father displayed in the Son and

energized by the Spirit is no respecter of persons and not limited by prejudices of any kind. This is a faith for all people and for the whole world. God puts new life into dead hearts. And when the water starts to bubble up after a meeting with Jesus, the accumulated crud of life is washed away. New life precedes new behavior as a deeper satisfaction edges out old habits of the heart.

Something inward has happened to our unnamed friend. We see it in her behavior. When Jesus said, “I who speak to you am he,” it let loose. She trusted him as her hope. And if you’d been able to see the dry desert of her inner landscape, you’d have seen a small spot in the sand grow dark and slowly widen, then begin to bubble with a hidden spring now released to the surface. First a puddle, then a rivulet, then a stream gushing through her to fellow villagers who knew her sordid story. Verse 28, “So the woman left her water jar and went away into the city, and said to the people, ‘Come see a man who told me all I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’ They went out of the city and were coming to him.” Joy and curiosity are infectious, and she now has both. First she came alone; she returns with a crowd.

The one is the key to the many. A single conversation can be life-giving when a prepared person meets a prepared witness who listens for the voice of the Spirit. That thirst in your soul, that longing no good thing can fulfill, much less something less than good, that sense of lack that remains unaddressed, that is the very space God reserves for himself. As necessary as water is to everything that lives, Jesus to every person. When his love and life are let loose within, we becomes wells in the desert for others. He knows you; he knows your dead ends and dry times, and he wants to fill you to overflowing with his own life. How humble and human is our Lord, “Give me a drink?” In that moment he knew why he left Judea. “How kind is my Father.”

Pastor Phil Thrailkill
