

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. *“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.”*

Do you ever have one of those days where from the moment you wake up, it’s just go, go, go – you’re so busy you don’t even realize you haven’t had anything to drink for hours and when you finally stop moving, you just want to sit down and gulp down a tall glass of water? We don’t often think of it but Jesus had those days too. He is human! Jesus was weary from his journey and he stopped and sat down by a well; sent the disciples ahead, “Go ahead into the city and buy the food we need. I need to sit for a few minutes.” Yes, Jesus was actually tired...and thirsty.

A Samaritan woman came to the well. They were both there for water, and I do believe that Jesus actually was thirsty but he also never did anything by accident. His encounter with this woman was purposeful. She asked him for a drink. Now John cues us in here. Jews and Samaritans were not on good terms. So the woman hesitates, “Wait...You’re talking to me? Shouldn’t we just avoid eye contact and mind our business?” Then Jesus begins to lead her to realize that her thirst was for more than ordinary water. “If you knew who I was, you would be asking me for a drink, and I would give you living water.” Now she is curious. Who is this man? And what does he mean by ‘living water’? She points out that he doesn’t even have a bucket to draw up well water – where, then, would he obtain running water? But Jesus has shifted from drawing water from the well to drawing the woman to recognize her greater thirst for what God has to offer. Jesus goes on to explain further, *“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.”* The water Jesus offers is nothing less than eternal life. Nevertheless, she still thinks he’s talking about ordinary water – “Yes, please! It would be so convenient if I didn’t have to come here to the well to get water!”

The Samaritan woman thirsted for a short-term fix but she had a long-term problem, just as we do. God gives us what we need to meet our daily needs in the short-term but what we still lack; what we thirst for deep down is eternal life. That was forfeited in Eden when humanity fell into sin and God blocked off the way to the Tree of Life. And so, lacking the eternal life we were made for, we thirst for all kinds of things to try to improve and prolong earthly life.

The Samaritan woman thirsted for an unlimited water source. For all intents and purposes, we have that in each of our homes. So what do we thirst for? More hand sanitizer! More toilet paper! Better yet, a cure for the Coronavirus! Unlimited food; unlimited money; better healthcare; better exercise and dietary plans to

follow; better science and technology. And why do we want these things? Because they improve our quality of life and keep us alive longer...because we know that we will not live forever and that terrifies us. Terrified of dying, we thirst for anything that will keep us alive just a little longer. Our real problem is sin, and the result of sin is death.

In the middle section of the account, Jesus draws the Samaritan woman toward a confession of sin. Jesus knew her life frontwards and backwards, so he didn't need to ask for his own sake – but in order to invite her to confess freely, he said: *“Go, call your husband, and come here.”* We know how it goes from there. The woman makes a partial confession; just the tip of the iceberg – *“I have no husband.”* So Jesus, knowing her shame and remorse graciously completes the confession for her, *“You have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband.”*

Is this not all of us? Confessing our sins is hard – especially out loud in the presence of another person! It's shameful. But God knows our whole story as soon as we begin and he is gracious and patient in his invitation to confess. He waits with open arms like the father of the Prodigal Son, ready to embrace and forgive before we can even get our confession out.

As the conversation develops further, the Samaritan woman expresses an inkling of the hope that she might be forgiven and saved: she has heard that Messiah would come and he would reveal the fullness of God's truth – this one who is called the Christ. She hasn't quite figured out that it's the Lord standing in front of her, so just as Jesus completed her confession of sin for her, now he graciously completes her confession of faith: *“That's me. The one speaking to you is the great I AM.”* John notes that the woman **left her water jar** and went into the town telling everyone about Jesus. She left her water jar because her thirst was satisfied!

I find this tremendously comforting. So often, we find that our faith is weak. We can't always find the right words to articulate it perfectly. And we all know people who believe in Jesus but they don't have all the puzzle pieces put together. It's a simple faith; sometimes an immature faith; an undeveloped faith. And Jesus engages with these people. He engages with us in our feebleness. Like the father of the afflicted child, we cry out to Jesus, *“Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!”* And he does. He leads us and guides us into a deeper understanding of who he is. He is the Messiah, the Christ; and as we have come to know, he is the Savior of the world. He is the one who came to satisfy our deepest thirst with the water of eternal life.

A weary Jesus thirsts for a drink of water. And later this Jesus, more weary still, beaten, bruised, and bleeding would thirst again. On the cross, *“Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop*

branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." The reason Jesus endured all this was because his deepest thirst was for our salvation. His deepest desire was that sinful man would receive him, the water of eternal life; that we know him, the one who defeated death and rose from the grave so that we need not fear death. We have the precious water – it is ours in our baptism. It is ours in the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out on us. And unlike toilet paper, it is in abundant supply, a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. By Christ's thirst for our salvation, he conquered our thirst. He has given himself to us completely to satisfy our thirst forever. AMEN.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.