

Second Sunday of Lent

March 12, 2017

John 4:5-26 (EHV) – ⁵So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the piece of land Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob’s well was there. Then Jesus, being tired from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸(His disciples had gone into town to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus 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“Sir,” she said, “you don’t even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this living water? ¹²You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his animals.” ¹³Jesus answered her, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty ever again. Rather, the water I will give him will become in him a spring of water, bubbling up to eternal life.” ¹⁵“Sir, give me this water,” the woman said to him, “so I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” ¹⁶Jesus told her, “Go, call your husband, and come back here.” ¹⁷“I have no husband,” the woman answered. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say, ‘I have no husband.’ ¹⁸In fact, you have had five husbands, and the man you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true.” ¹⁹“Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews insist that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will not worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³But a time is coming and now is here when the real worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for those are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” ²⁵The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (the one called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” ²⁶Jesus said to her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”

Introduction

Where does your water come from? A couple hundred years ago in our country – and in more than a few countries still today – that would’ve been a strange question. “Why, silly, the water comes from the crick down yonder. And from the upstream side of the cow pasture, mind you!” But for 21st century Americans, the question’s not so out-of-the-ordinary. Some get their water from the tap, which is supplied through city pipes. Some get their water from a well that’s drilled in the yard. Some buy it off the shelf in plastic jugs. Some have it delivered to their front doors. Some get it from the refrigerator door. Some buy water that comes from melted snow in the Swiss Alps, halfway around the globe.

No matter where it comes from, water is a staple of life. We wash with it; we bathe in it; we cook with it; we drink it. We couldn’t live without it.

Theme: Living Water Flows from Jesus!

That thought is really integral to our sermon study today. But in our text, Jesus talks about a different kind of water that comes from a unique source. Today, John records for us that **LIVING WATER FLOWS FROM JESUS. He’s a drink that satisfies a lifelong thirst. He’s a drink that wells up to eternal life.**

Part I: He’s a drink that satisfies a lifelong thirst.

To set the stage for this Bible story, we need to go back to verses three and four, which aren’t included in the text. Jesus carried out his earthly ministry in two main areas: Judea and Jerusalem in the southern part of Palestine, and Galilee in the north. Samaria was situated between the two. Our text finds Jesus and his disciples traveling from Judea to Galilee. Verse four says that they “**had to go through Samaria,**” but that’s not entirely accurate. There were actually three possible routes they could’ve taken. Besides going right through the middle of Samaria, they could’ve hugged the Mediterranean coastline. Most Jewish travelers preferred the third route, even though it was the longest – they crossed over to the east side of the Jordan River, turned north to go around Samaria, and then crossed back over when they came near the Sea of Galilee. So Jesus didn’t really HAVE to go through Samaria. Or did he?

It wasn’t geography that forced him to take that route. It was a person – more specifically, a woman – who was dying of a lifelong thirst. Jesus just HAD to speak with her!

“So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the piece of land Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there. Then Jesus, being tired from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman

from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone into town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)”

We’ve mentioned at other times that the Samaritans were people of mixed descent – a combination of Jewish and other conquered peoples. They were mixed both in their ethnicity and in their religion. They accepted only the first five books of the Bible, but they also kept many of their heathen ideas. The Jews despised them and avoided them at all costs. But Jesus was far from being an average Jew. His love for all people – Jew, Gentile, and a combination of the two – compelled him, even forced him, to go through Samaria. He had to.

Obviously Jesus has the advantage by knowing exactly what a person needs to hear, but he gives us a wonderful demonstration of how to move from earthly matters to spiritual things. It was hot. It was midday. Jesus had just walked a long distance and he was thirsty. A woman came to get water from the well, and Jesus broke the ice by asking for a drink since he had no way of drawing water himself. He begins by arousing the woman’s curiosity.

“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.’ ‘Sir,’ she said, ‘you don’t even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this living water?’ Jesus answered her, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty ever again. Rather, the water I will give him will become in him a spring of water, bubbling up to eternal life.’ ‘Sir, give me this water,’ the woman said to him, ‘so I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.’”

There was something magical about what Jesus said. “How nice it would be to not have to walk out to this well day-in-and-day-out to haul water back to the house! What could this water be that this man is talking about?” But the woman was still missing the point. She wanted what Jesus offered, but she was confused. She still thought that he was talking about a special type of physical water. Relief from physical thirst was enough for her at the moment. But Jesus hadn’t orchestrated this visit to solve a physical problem. After arousing her curiosity by hinting at the gospel, he recognizes that this woman needs to hear the law to wake her up from her spiritual slumber. He knows that it’s our sins that give us a lifelong thirst.

“Jesus told her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come back here.’ ‘I have no husband,’ the woman answered. Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say, ‘I have no husband.’ In fact, you have had five husbands, and the man you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true.’”

Only when this woman acknowledged her sin, guilt, and need of everlasting life would she understand Jesus’ offer. Jesus commanded her to do something she couldn’t possibly do. He might as well have said, **“Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** Both are equally impossible. This woman’s thirst for worldly happiness had led her into an immoral lifestyle.

Sin causes us to be spiritually thirsty. Our consciences make us feel guilty – thirsty – but don’t offer a solution. So we wear ourselves out trying to find a way to take care of our sins. What are some of the sins that cause your throat to be spiritually parched? Is it a dependency on the things of this world? Is it a refusal to forgive? Is it a short fuse and a hot temper? Is it laziness? Is it pride? Is it greed? Is it a carefree attitude toward God’s Word and Sacrament? No matter – all those things sap the life out of us and cause us to become a spiritual desert.

One psalmist writes, **“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.”** Another says, **“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”** The prophet Isaiah said, **“The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst.”** God used the pen of the prophet Amos to say, **“The days are coming when I will send a famine through the land – not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.”** Where there’s no gospel, there’s only a burning thirst for forgiveness.

Transition

How do we find those quiet waters of which Psalm 23 speaks? Our Savior, Jesus, is a drink that wells up to eternal life.

Part II: He's a drink that wells up to eternal life.

The woman at the well immediately recognized her sinfulness and was led to seek forgiveness. Maybe she was quickly trying to change the subject. Maybe she was actually bringing up an important issue: Where should I go to seek God's mercy?

“‘Sir,’ the woman replied, ‘I see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews insist that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will not worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. But a time is coming and now is here when the real worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for those are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.’”

Our righteousness before God isn't based on external things such as where we choose to worship. We worship God through faith in Christ. In our Old Testament and Epistle lessons we heard how God credited righteousness to Abraham through his faith. Jesus reminded the woman that the manner of worship was much more important than the location. God-pleasing worship is in spirit and in truth.

God is spirit. His nature is spiritual. He doesn't live in buildings or temples made with human hands. We worship him properly when he moves our spirits to trust in him and in him alone. We worship properly when we take our stand on the truth of God's revealed Word without adding anything to it or subtracting anything from it. Any worship that's simply going through the motions or that's at odds with what God has given us is offensive to him.

The object of our worship is of primary importance. The woman knew her sins. Her limited knowledge of the Bible also told her that **“Messiah is coming”** and that he'd **“explain everything.”** Jesus told her that Messiah would do more than explain. He'd completely solve the problem of sin. He'd provide the living water of salvation. Even more than that, he said, **“I, the one speaking to you, am he!”**

The water that Jesus provides is more soothing than any natural spring water we could buy at a store. The living water that Jesus gives restores our lost and broken relationship with God. The living water is nothing other than himself. He died so that we might live. His blood and righteousness wash over us from head to toe. One sip of this gift of salvation and we'll never thirst again! Our consciences are quieted. Our burdens are lifted. Our guilt is removed. Need passages to back it up?

Isaiah: “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs.” “They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.”

Jesus: “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.”

The saints in heaven: “Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

The Apostle John: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”

Conclusion

Do your sins make you thirsty? The Lord is your Shepherd. He leads you beside quiet waters. He restores your soul. He quenches your thirst. With joy draw water from the wells of salvation that will never run dry. Amen.