

Today, we are going to be studying John 4: 1-42, the story of the woman at the well.

There is SO MUCH that we can draw out of this passage, but a key theme I would like to bring attention to is that of thirst.

I've observed some interesting realities about thirst connected with one of my favorite hobbies: Golf! I like to play and to watch professional tournaments on TV Sunday afternoons. One Sunday afternoon this summer, as I was watching, they showed modern day wells, called hydration stations, and yes, I am kidding about the fact that they are actually wells. They have these hydration stations all throughout the golf course where spectators can go and drink as much water as they need, at any time. They are certain to be a lifesaver in the heat scorched summer days that we have been experiencing.

There is also a spiritual thirst or longing within our souls that only God can fill. This is what the Psalmist must have had in mind when he transcribed **Psalm 63:1**, "**O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.**" Simply put, loving God and being loved by Him, is why we were created. May we drink from the Spring of Living Water, God Himself, the true giver of life, and accept no substitutes!

In our text today, Jesus is planning to meet and have a conversation with a desperately thirsty Samaritan woman, ignoring all long-held customs that were to be followed concerning interactions between men and women, and Jews and Samaritans. In that day, Men were not to speak to women in public and women did not have the same rights as men.

Now, let's take a deep dive into the passage! This chapter starts out with Jesus and his disciples in Judea. Verses 1-3 reads: **4 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.**

Here we see that Jesus felt the need to leave Judea. Commentators have varying views concerning the specific reasons why Jesus needed to leave. What is clearly documented throughout the gospels is when the Pharisees became privy of the work Jesus was doing and his rise in popularity, they would become alarmed and try to put a stop to it. It is also important to keep in mind that Jesus was working within a timeline and he had specific things he needed to accomplish prior to his death on the cross. Jesus was highly aware of that timeline and intentional in all he did. An example of this was in our recent study of John chapter 2, verse 4, when Jesus said to Mary, his mother, concerning the need for more wine at the wedding, **“My hour has not yet come.”**

Concerning verse four, **4 And he had to pass through Samaria.** It is important to realize that there were other ways to get to Galilee besides going through Samaria. Although going through Samaria was the most direct. For example, to avoid going through Samaria, the religious Jews, would take a much longer route, crossing over the Jordan river to the east, and then making their way up to Galilee.

JEWS and Samaritans had a tumultuous relationship. **JEWS** despised Samaritans and the Samaritans detested the Jews. This is in part due to how the Samaritan race began.

It can be traced back to the Assyrians when they conquered the Northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. The Assyrians sent most of the Jews into exile. Those left behind intermarried with non-Jewish peoples who came into the region, and the Samaritans emerged as an ethnic and religious group.

The Samaritan religion was a mix of portions of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, and idolatry. They established their primary worship site on Mount Gerizim. And conveniently, they changed up some of the stories of the bible, claiming certain events occurred on Mt. Gerizim, such as Abraham offering up his son Isaac. The Samaritans considered the Jerusalem temple and the Levitical priesthood illegitimate. While the Jews saw Samaritans as half-breeds, defiling the only true religion.

Jesus does not see the Samaritan woman as unclean because of her ethnicity and beliefs. Nor does he see her as a second-class citizen because she is a woman. He sees her with eyes of compassion. Just like the shepherd in Jesus' parable about the lost sheep. He is leaving the ninety-nine, to go after the one sheep, because of His great love for her.

Getting back to verse four, **“he had to pass through Samaria,”** there is a nugget of truth packed in there! **“Had to”** translates the Greek word *Dei*, to mean “to be necessary,” which always indicates divine necessity or requirement. Sisters, he had a divine appointment with the woman at the well!

Let's pick back up at verse 5, **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.^[a] 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.)

The sixth hour was about noontime. It was a woman’s job to go get water each day, but they would do so early in the morning or in the early evening, in the cool of the day when it wasn’t quite as hot. It was also a time to socialize with other ladies of the town. When we read further, we will see why the Samaritan woman was avoiding the other women. She was likely feeling ashamed and rejected.

Jesus requesting a drink from this woman is an act of compassion, breaking away from culture and tradition. We can see that the Samaritan woman was taken back by the request as well. J.C. Ryle, in his commentary, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John*, writes as “Simple as this request may seem, it opened a door to spiritual conversation. It threw a bridge across the gulf, which lay between her and Him. It led to the conversion of her soul.”

Let’s listen in on their conversation a bit. Starting at verse 10, 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.^[b] 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."

Although we see in verse thirteen, that Jesus is speaking of eternal life. Many theologians agree that in verse ten, the expression of the term 'living water,' in the original Greek, has two levels of meaning. On one hand, it denotes fresh running water from springs, a brook, or fountain. The best water to quench a thirst. On the other hand, the expression relates to a network of metaphorical uses. The most obvious relates to **Jeremiah 2:13, which reads, "For my people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."** Cisterns, when they weren't broken, held runoff water that was dirty and infested. The worst water source. Jeremiah was using the illustration of broken cisterns to show how foolish the people of Judah were to forsake their God, the spring of living water, for idol worship. I don't know about you, but throughout my life I've tried to meet my own needs, replacing Jesus with things, and even people. Those things and people, in and of themselves, can be fine gifts in their proper place, but when they replace the one true God, we have a problem. I have found that Jesus is the only one who can truly satisfy. What are those go-to sins and Jesus replacements in your life? What do you thirst for when you are lonely, tired, or

discouraged? I would guess that like me, as much as you try to satisfy the deep thirst in your heart with these things, it just doesn't work.

We will see in the next section of this passage how Jesus will start to zero in on this woman's heart issue.

Let's listen in on more of the conversation, picking up at verse 16, **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 you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."**

First, I appreciate how gentle Jesus is with this woman, when He goes to a sensitive place in her life. Did you notice, Jesus did not reprimand her for her manner of life. He affirms what she has said is true, while adding more of the details. However, he has brought her sin to light none the less. The marriages had been dissolved by divorce or the death of her husband. In that day, it was more acceptable for men to divorce their wives, and they could do so for nominal reasons. Rabbinic opinion disapproved of more than three marriages, even though they were legally permissible. Furthermore, no one of religious opinion approved of common law marriages...people just living together, perhaps feeling like they were "married in their hearts", but not before God. We don't know all that transpired within those marriages, but we do know she must have experienced a lot of pain and loss related to those relationships. Yet, she chose, based on her desires and what she deemed important in her life, to live with a man outside of the marriage covenant.

When Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband,” it appears to have pierced her conscience and expose her spiritual disease as we will see in verses 19 through 26. Jesus addresses her sin and brokenness for purposes of repentance and salvation. He desires to bring healing and wholeness!

Let's read, starting in verse 19, **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.”**

Now he is no longer a stranger to her, she has come to know and believe that he is at least a prophet. There is no other way for him to know her story except from God. She feels the conviction of the Holy Spirit which causes her to want more. She wants to repent, but she's not sure where to go, or really, what to do. So, she asks Jesus where she should go to worship. Her soul is bowing slowly, and she knows that being right with God is a matter of worship.

We see in this passage, Jesus revealing a principal truth when it comes to true worship. The attitude of our heart is of primary importance in all of our approaches to God. 1 Samuel 16:7, states, "The Lord looks on the heart." Upon Jesus' death on the cross, remember, the veil was torn in two. There was no more need for temples, rituals, and sacrifices. Jesus was the sacrifice for our sins to end all other sacrifices. True worship is always about loving, honoring, obeying, and serving God from the heart in truth, the truth of scripture. We must bow our hearts to the Lord, as king of our lives. We also know that after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the church would be established.

In verse sixteen, we see that in response to this woman's faith and repentance, her heart's craving and thirst has been satisfied as Jesus reveals himself to her. We will not find in all of the gospels such a clear declaration of who Jesus is and he chose, not to reveal himself to the astute scribes or self-righteous Pharisees, but to this broken, sin diseased, outcast of a woman.

I believe further proof of her transformation is found in the next few verses. Starting with verse 28, **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.**

Let us remember that this woman was trying to avoid people by going to the well at noon time! She had been embarrassed and ashamed. Now, through the forgiveness and cleansing only Christ can provide, she has been stripped of the shame that had so tightly bound her! She has been seen and known by Christ. He has changed everything!

Psalms 34:5, says, “Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”

She has had her thirst quenched and she can no longer contain herself, she is excited! So, she takes off into the town, leaving her water jar, to proclaim the good news of Christ! “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.”

We see down in verses 39 through 42, that God used this Samaritan woman to bring most of the town to faith in Jesus Christ.

God is so good. He does not leave us in our guilt and shame. We were estranged from Him and He brings us close. He adopts us and calls us His children. He transforms our lives for his glory and kingdom purposes.

So friends, here are a few things for us to each reflect on, and perhaps share in our small groups:

1. Are there Jesus replacements which you go to consistently to try to satisfy the thirsts and hunger in your heart? Maybe like me, it's people...a friend, boyfriend, husband, son or daughter even. Or other good gifts like money, food, jobs? As has been said, we so easily replace our loving and generous God, with his gifts.
2. Also, do you resonate with the woman at the well...maybe secretly carrying shame and fear? How might Jesus be drawing you to come close, in order for you to receive the assurance of his forgiveness and bring further healing in your life?

3. Finally, perhaps God is stirring your heart like this woman to GO AND TELL others about Jesus! How might you take a step in that direction this week?

Ladies, would you pray with me? Father, thank you for calling us your children. Thank you for your provision of salvation and providing the Holy Spirit to meet our thirsts whenever we have need. By your grace, please keep us from wondering because there is none sweeter than you. Now we ask that you would be with us as we move into our small groups. Please guide and lead our discussion time. In Jesus' name, amen.