

This morning, I am continuing in my series “The Power of One Life,” looking at the difference one life can make for better or worse as we obey or rebel against God. For this morning, I want to look at the life of the first Christian missionary – an unnamed Samaritan woman, popularly known as “the woman at the well.” Her story is found in John 4:1-42. As we read, **pay attention to the continued theme from this morning’s worship of hunger, thirst, and where we look to in order to find satisfaction for our deepest longings.**

John 4:1-42 - *The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John,* ² *although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.* ³ *When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.* ⁴ *Now he had to go through Samaria.* ⁵ *So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.* ⁶ *Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.* ⁷ *When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"* ⁸ *(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)* ⁹ *The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)* ¹⁰ *Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."* ¹¹ *"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"* ¹² *Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"* ¹³ *Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,* ¹⁴ *but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I 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 won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."* ¹⁶ *He told her, "**Go, call your husband and come back.**"* ¹⁷ *"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband.* ¹⁸ *The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."* ¹⁹ *"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet.* ²⁰ *Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."* ²¹ *Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.* ²² *You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.* ²³ *Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.* ²⁴ *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."* ²⁵ *The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called*

Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." ²⁶ Then Jesus declared, "**I who speak to you am he.**" ²⁷ Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" ²⁸ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" ³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him. ³¹ Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But he said to them, "**I have food to eat that you know nothing about.**" ³³ Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" ³⁴ "**My food,**" said Jesus, "**is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.**" ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶ Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷ Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. ³⁸ I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor." ³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers. ⁴² They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

This is such an incredible encounter. It is both totally surprising and totally transformative. **In many ways this encounter never would have taken place if Jesus were not the Son of God.** Why? By talking with this woman, Jesus crosses just about every possible barrier in his day. Men were not to talk to women in public who were not their wife. Jews were not to associate with Samaritans, a group of people who were partly Jewish, racially mixed, and had mixed other influences into their religion. And she was a moral and social outsider. She came to the well at 6th hour (noon), in the heat of the day, probably to avoid the other women of the town. This could be because she has had five husbands and is now living with a man who is not her husband. The bottom line is that the Samaritan woman is likely a moral, social, ethnic, and religious outsider. No self-respecting Jew, especially a rabbi, would ever talk to her. But Jesus initiates a conversation with her and asks her for a drink. And after she questions why he would do such a thing, he says:

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

As you can see by her response, she thinks he is talking about something in the physical realm.

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

But Jesus corrects her in his reply:

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

As Jesus talks, it becomes clear that he has left the physical plane and is talking on a spiritual plane. He is talking spiritually, telling her that he has something that can completely fulfill her spiritual thirst: a spring of living water welling up inside of you to **eternal life**. Just to be clear, Biblically speaking, eternal life is not strictly life after death, but a different quality of life, the life of the Spirit, knowing God.

John 17:3 - Now **this is eternal life**: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Eternal life is a higher quality of life. Think of the difference between the life of a rock vs. a plant vs. an animal vs. a human vs. a human filled with the Spirit of God. And as we find out later in John's gospel, the living water is the Holy Spirit:

John 7:37-39 - *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

He has put his Spirit in you, living water, a well from which you can draw for life, for joy, for peace, for love. No matter what the circumstances, you have this eternal life inside of you.

Naturally, she wants this living water. ¹⁵ *The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."*

Naturally, she wants this water. She is ready for this deeper life-giving water that will keep her from having to return to the well. But Jesus throws her a curveball:

¹⁶ *He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."* ¹⁷ *"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."*

What's he doing? Is he changing the subject? Is he condemning her? No. He is pointing out that she has been seeking to quench her spiritual thirst at the fountain of the love of men. In order to experience His life-giving water, she is going to have to stop looking for it elsewhere. **She is going to have to repent as well as believe**, to turn from seeking fulfillment elsewhere to find it in Jesus.

But rather than get into her marital history, she tries to change the subject to where they should worship.

¹⁹ *"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."*

Is true worship found on Mt. Gerazim or Mt. Zion? In other words, let's get off of my personal life and turn this into a theological debate. Jesus responds:

²¹ *Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

It's not about place but about the spirit. It's not about where you are externally but where you are internally. Worship Him sincerely and according to who He is.

The woman has one more dodge:

²⁵ *The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."* ²⁶ *Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."*

Well, one day Messiah will sort it out, she says. And in return, Jesus says, "I am the Messiah." This is the only time he reveals this fact prior to his trial. It is amazing that he says this to this random Samaritan woman when he hasn't even told his own disciples.

Finally, the disciples return:

²⁷ *Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"* ²⁸ *Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,* ²⁹ *"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"*

The disciples come back shocked to find Jesus talking with a woman.

And the woman leaves to become the first evangelist, going off to tell everyone: Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! She is excited to tell people that Jesus knows all about her? And to top it off, she goes to the people she was avoiding! Her fears, the views others have of her no longer have a hold on her. **And she leaves her water jar**, the very reason she went to the well in the first place (v. 28). And because of her witness, the town comes to hear Jesus, and many become believers.

⁴¹ *And because of his words many more became believers.* ⁴² *They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."*

There is a lot I could talk about from this story, but this morning, I want to go back to the living water and focus on that this morning. When she asks Jesus to give her living water, he points out her history with men. Is this a change of subject? No. Jesus is offering her something that will satisfy her thirst, but he needs to help her to see that she has been looking to something else, something in this world, to satisfy that thirst, and that she will need to stop looking there if she is going to be able to receive and be satisfied by His living water.

She was drinking from the fountain of the love of men, and it had not satisfied her. Jesus offered her something greater, a love and satisfaction that would be hers forever. There is a great prophecy that speaks to this:

Jeremiah 2:13 - *"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*

A cistern is a waterproof receptacle for holding water. God, speaking through Jeremiah, tells His people that when they are looking anywhere else for their joy and satisfaction and love in life, they have created something that can not hold what they are looking to have. God offers springs of living water, which sounds good, until God puts his finger on those wells that you are drinking from.

It's like Jesus with the rich young ruler: go sell all you have and give it to the poor and then come follow me.

Maybe you question Jesus as the spring of living water. I tried Jesus and it didn't fulfill me. Are you sure? First of all, it's a fountain you can draw upon. And secondly, as we learn in John 4, you can not enjoy the spring of living water without ceasing to look to the broken cisterns of this world to fill you up. What is your cistern? To what are you looking to satisfy you?

Love – looking to men or women or romantic love to satisfy you and fill you up

Money & power –

Comfort

Pleasure – build up a tolerance

Accumulation of things

Repent - stop sleeping with your girlfriend. Start tithing. Give away half of what you own. Volunteer somewhere.

Only God can give the spring of living water, the Spirit, eternal life. Remember this passage from the opening worship time:

Isaiah 55:1-3 - *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. ³ Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul*

may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

That is God's Word to you today.

Lastly, look at Jesus when they return:

³¹ *Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."* ³² *But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."* ³³ *Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"* ³⁴ *"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."*

I have food to eat that you know nothing about. My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish His work. That is what satisfies me. That is what fills me up.

Evangelism comes from experiencing the grace and kindness and power of Jesus. She experiences that and then she wants to tell everyone about him, even at the expense of her own dignity and the cost of her water jar. Seek Him, feast on Him, stop trusting in broken cisterns to satisfy you. Come to Him and feast, and as you delight in Him, you will share about Him out of the overflow of that joy.