

Drink It In! – John 4:5-26

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ March 16, 2014

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 noon. 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 livestock?" ¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them 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 ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, 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 the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the 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, the one speaking to you—I am he."



Dear fellow redeemed,

Half a millennia ago, the legend began about a Spanish explorer named Ponce De Leon setting sail from the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico to Florida in search of something truly precious – the fountain of youth. This fountain was said to reverse the aging process, granting those who found this magical fountain everlasting youth. Now, recent scholarship is telling us that De Leon never sought out for a fountain of youth, but was only seeking his own political gain. And yet the myth lives on, and people dream of a magical fountain of youth.

There's something about that story that captures the imagination, living forever by doing something so simple as drinking or bathing in said fountain. Hollywood has attached itself to this myth with movies like *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* or *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, both

movies containing a magical water that restores youth to the finder. It's a common human desire, to live a long life, but not to get old, and so people are searching for ways to make that happen – whether believing in a story, or taking vitamins and using creams. It's a common desire, because we all realize the inevitability of getting old.

And it is on that desire that Jesus talks about this morning in our gospel. The desire for youth, the desire for living water, water which will not make you thirsty again. It is this water which Jesus offers to a Samaritan woman at a well, and water that he offers to you and me today. DRINK THIS WATER IN!

1. The water which quenches thirst
2. The water which is available to all

(1)

Picture yourself in the scene that day as Jesus made his way from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north. He had his disciples with him. Many Jews would have taken the way around the region of Samaria, the region separating Judea and Galilee. They did this because the Samaritans were a detested people. It began when the Assyrians conquered the northern 10 tribes of Israel, took many of them off into captivity and then replaced them with other conquered nations. This mix of peoples created a mix of religion. Primarily Jewish, but interspersed with pagan ideas and practices. The Samaritans forsook God's command to not mingle with the heathen nations around them, they were a detested people. Conservative Jews even thought the uncleanness of the Samaritans infected the land, ergo the reason many of them went around.

And yet Jesus said he *needed* to go through Samaria. It was a need that revealed itself when Jesus stopped at a well outside of the town of Sychar. They reached the town at around dusk, and Jesus sent his disciples off to buy food. We imagine the rest of the disciples trekked the half mile or so it took to Sychar, while John, the author of the gospel quietly places himself in the background of the story as it unfolds. This well was not the primary well for the town of Sychar, it was out of the way, which is what made it more peculiar that a woman was coming out all this way to draw water.

But it was for this reason that Jesus came, for this woman, just like he has come for all people. It was one thing to go through the region of Samaria, but quite another thing to willingly interact with the people. So Jesus' interactions with a Samaritan woman were quite peculiar. She already had two strikes against her. But Jesus asked for a drink, just a simple request. But he got anything but a simple answer. Instead, the woman expressed her surprise by asking, "**How can you ask me for a drink? – Jews hate Samaritans, and now you're asking me for help. Jesus used this question as an opportunity to share the answer to the desire of all nations. "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."**

Jesus changed the topic from a simple talk about physical thirst to spiritual thirst, although the woman did not understand it at first. She certainly had an interest in living water, the water which quenches thirst. She had the desire to DRINK IT IN. In Jesus' interactions with the woman, he shares what this living thirst-quenching water is that he is talking about it – 1) It is given by Jesus and 2) It increases, producing a spring of water.

Before this woman could receive the living water, Jesus shows her need for it. He asks her to call for her husband. But it's not that this woman did not have a husband, it's that she has had five husbands! And chances are, not all five of her husbands died. This would explain why this woman was not going to the local well. Even among the detestable Samaritans she was considered an outcast. But it was specifically for the outcasts that Jesus came. It was her confession of sins which led Jesus to giving her this living water, he said, "**Believe in me.**"

The living water Jesus is talking about, the water which quenches thirst is nothing other than the gift of faith, that simple trust, that simple believing in Jesus. And why does it quench thirst? It quenches thirst because it satisfies the conscience. Everything else people look to does not satisfy. People look for satisfaction in money, in sex, in fame, in food, but none of this satisfies. The more money you have, the more you worry about losing what you have. Those who look for satisfaction in sex or other desires of the flesh are left with an empty feeling in the pit of their stomach. Those who look for satisfaction in fame will always look for more. The simple gospel message – Jesus is *your* Savior who cancelled out your sin. Believe in him, he satisfies. It is given by Jesus and it comes from him.

Notice that Jesus went and spoke with a Samaritan woman, because he came to seek and save the lost. And yet he did not just leave the Samaritan woman where she was at, he never condoned her lifestyle, he offered her a gift, a gift that would change her life. This gift would well up in her like a raging river, so much so that when she would run back to town, she forgot her water pitcher. It is that same living water that Jesus pours over us, changing us from death to life, it makes us thirst no more. And this water is found in God's Word, for it is written, "**Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.**"

There are so many other things that can busy up your schedule, and oftentimes, time with God's Word gets left out completely, time for church or Bible study become a chore that we feel obligated to go to, instead of the living water it is meant to be. We know about the living water already, so why do we need to hear about it again. There's one crucial difference – it's one thing to hear about the water, it's another thing to DRINK IT IN.

(2)

Jesus wants all to DRINK IT IN. He made this very clear when he spoke with the Samaritan woman. Just to recap the line of thought going on here. Jesus asks for a drink of water, the Samaritan woman is surprised that a Jewish man is asking her for something, Jesus peaks her curiosity with living, thirst-quenching water, and then exposes her life with five previous husbands. Some think that the woman is merely trying to change the subject with this talk about where to worship, but a better explanation would be that Jesus' words convicted her that she needed cleansing, and now she wondered where and how she could get that cleansing.

Jesus surprised her yet again. He said, "**Believe me.**" Worship will not happen at a certain place, but in spirit. The daily sacrifices which were offered for sins in Jerusalem would no longer need to be offered because Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient. Jesus said the place isn't important but the spirit in which it is done. Jesus says, "**true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.**" This living water, which we drink in is available to all, it isn't restricted to the Jews, or those with Jewish blood. Yes, the Messiah, the Savior came from the Jews, but he came to save all people.

True worshipers will not be defined by their skin color, their heritage, or whether or not they're Lutheran. There's nothing in the job description of true worshipers that says you must be a pretty good person. This living water is available to all, regardless of background. True worshipers will worship in the Spirit and in truth. Now what exactly does this mean? There are some who say this means I don't need to go to church, I am very spiritual, I have conversations with God. That's not what Jesus is saying here. He doesn't limit our worship to a church, but he doesn't eliminate church from our worship. Also it's more than just feeling spiritual. There are many people in this world who are spiritual, there are many people who are very zealous for their religion, but that isn't going to help them. Jesus says, true worship must be in truth, it must be found in Jesus who is the way, the *truth*, and the life.

DRINK IT IN, this water available for all. We don't have to earn it. We, like that Samaritan woman, have no right to claim that we are God's chosen people due to our religious background or effort. Like the woman, we have rushed headlong into a lifetime of sin, trying to satisfy our thirst for real life. But then Jesus comes along, and he offers to us the living water of eternal life. By believing in him, we are drinking of that water freely, fully. Our consciences rest. Our haunting doubts dissolve. Our vain pursuit for real life, empty and hopeless without Jesus, are over.

Think about what I just said. Do you really believe what you believe is real? What effect will this have on your lives? It should have the same effect as that woman, who rushed to share the living water she had just been given. This my friends is the gift of God, that he comes to us and saves us, that he uses us to share his message.

Jesus may not have gotten his drink of water that afternoon at the well near Sychar, but the thirsty traveler became the true giver of thirst quenching water. It is the water that everyone is searching for but few find. It isn't because it is so well hidden, it is because those who are dead in sin see no need for a Savior. The only way we find it is when Jesus, the giver of the water, opens our eyes to see it. He opens our eyes and verifies it's real. Partake in this spiritual drink, DRINK IT IN. It is the only water that satisfies, and it is available for all. Amen.