**JESUS, THE SPRING OF LIVING WATER**

October 16, 2016

John 4:1-26

Key Verse 4:13,14 “Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 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.’”

When I got the first computer in 1996, I was very excited. Then I began to crave for more powerful computers. All I could think about was computers with more memories and more power. Then I repented with the words of 1 John 2:16-17, which says, “For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” From then on I never craved for the latest technological gadgets. In this passage we meet a Samaritan woman who was thirsty for love. She went through 5 marriages and she was living with a boyfriend. She desperately believed that men are the water she is thirsty for, but she was left with a deep emptiness and horrible reputation of being an immoral woman. She was rejected and despised by her own people. Nobody wanted to talk with her. But Jesus lowered himself in order to talk with her. Through loving personal conversation Jesus opened her heart and offered her the living water. This conversation is called a conversation between the prince of heaven and a representative sinner. Jesus presented himself as the living water welling up to eternal life. Only Jesus can quench our deep thirsty soul.

Look at verse 4. “Now he had to go through Samaria.” The most direct route from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria. Using that route, the journey could be made in three days. But because of the centuries-old feud between the Jews and the Samaritans, the Jews usually did not pass through Samaria. They crossed the Jordan River and went through Perea and crossed the Joran River again. The alternate route took twice as long—six days. The Jews did not mind taking the longer route in order to avoid the despicable Samaritans. They would not even use the same cup that Samaritans had used. It was because Samaritans were mixed breeds. They practiced all kinds of religion. So in order to protect the purity of their faith, the Jews began to practice a policy of segregation. Their initial motivation may have been good. But as time passed, they no longer regarded Samaritans as the same human beings as them. Rather, they despised and disparaged them. Jesus had to go through Samaria, not to save on gas, but he had a divine appointment with a needy soul in Samaria, and the ripe harvest field.

Jesus came to the outskirts of a town called Sychar in Samaria and sat down by a well. It was a place rich in history for the people of Israel. Jacob’s well was there and Mt. Gerizim was nearby. On that mount, six tribes of Israel read blessings from the Law as they entered the promised land. The other six tribes read curses from the Law on Mt. Ebal (Joshua 8:33). In the time of Ezra, Samaritan people were prohibited from helping rebuild the Jerusalem temple. Then they built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. Thus, it became the national place of worship for Samaritans. Jesus sat alone by the well, tired, hungry and thirsty. It was noon, the sixth hour by Jewish time.

Look at verse 7. “When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’” It was unusual for a woman to come by herself to draw water during the heat of the day. Women usually did this together in the early morning or in the cool of the evening, talking and laughing and gossiping. But this woman dared not join them, because she was a social outcast due to her past life. She had had five husbands; she was presently living with someone. It is quite unusual for a woman, even in our time, to have had five husbands. When she first married, she must have been happy for a while. She gave her heart to her husband. In return, she wanted his love. But things didn’t go well as she had expected. Finally, she and her first husband were separated. Whatever the reason, the separation must have caused deep wounds in her heart. She had gone through five husbands. She was broken again and again until she was beyond recovery. Even though she had had five husbands, she had never felt loved. Of course she could have blamed others, especially those men who took advantage of her. She thought that she was terribly unfortunate to meet bad guys. But the main cause was she herself: in short, she lived according to her sinful nature. Her coming to draw water in the heat of the day all by herself is the exact description of her sorrowful life and her thirsty soul. Now, for each broken relationship, there was a network of wives, mothers and sisters who blamed her unconditionally. They might have attacked her with harsh words that irritated her wounded soul, like salt in an open sore. She could not bear it. So she came to the well by herself. She was a most despised woman. She was a lonely woman. She represents an immoral sinner. Ordinary people thought that she was too dirty to look at. But Jesus the heavenly prince was willing to talk with her in order to give her the living water. But how?

Unlike Nicodemus, who sought out Jesus, here is a woman who wasn’t looking for him at all. She had no idea who he is. Nicodemus is moral, he is religious, he is devout, he is respected by everyone. He came to Jesus to ask about the way into the kingdom. Once in a while, we meet Nicodemus kind of person who asks, “Do you know how I can be saved?” It is a lot easier to start with that question. But that is very rare. Most of time, we encounter ignorant, indifferent people who are in their own belief. How can we preach the gospel to them? We need to take the initiative as Jesus did. We need to start the conversation. We have to start with things we have in common. What was the thing both Jesus and the woman had in common? It was water. So Jesus said, “Will you give me a drink?”

How did the woman respond to Jesus’ humble and gracious words? Look at verse 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?’” The Samaritan woman seems to rebuke Jesus for violating social norms. She probably enjoyed the chance to snap at a Jewish rabbi. She was feisty and spoke her mind freely. How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 10. Jesus spoke in the subjunctive mood so as to speak to her in a most gentle way. “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.’” The gift of God is the living water—Jesus himself, who gives us the eternal life. Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is what sets the gospel of Christianity apart from every other religion in the world. Every other religion in the world says, “Do this and God will accept you. Do that and God will accept you. Do this ritual. Better yourself and God will accept you.” But Christianity says, “ask, ask.” That’s all the sinner can do. All the sinner can do is ask. Then God gives us the free gift.

Look at verses 13,14. “Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 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.” The water of Jacob’s well gives only a temporary satisfaction. It is true that the more we have, the more we want. People work hard to drink the water Jacob’s well offers. But they have to keep on coming back because they are never satisfied. Even a man like Nicodemus, who seemed to have everything, was not satisfied. He felt empty and insecure. Things of the world cannot quench the thirstiness of human being. We are living in one of the most affluent and technically advanced society in the world. There are all kinds of drinks available 24/7. But the thirsty problem remains unsolved. Modern men are ever thirstier. Why? Jeremiah 2:13 says, “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.” Men replaced God, the source of living water with own cisterns that cannot hold water, such as human love, human honor, and money.

Money is the water of Jacob’s well. John D. Rockefeller was at one point the world’s richest man and first ever American billionaire. When a reporter asked him, “How much money is enough?” He responded, “Just a little bit more.” Human love is also the water of Jacob’s well. There was a popular song in Korea, “Love is always thirsty.” Many young people agreed with it, and sang it enthusiastically. Even the water of the sweetest love between lovers makes them thirsty. Without fellowship with God, man is always thirsty and hungry in spirit. But when we have the living water, Jesus, he satisfies our souls to the very depths. The life that Jesus gives is refreshing and it is so vibrant and dynamic that it overflows. It makes us a source of blessing to others.

But like Nicodemus, she does not see the spiritual meaning of what Jesus says. So in verse 15 she says, “Sir, give me this water, so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” All that this water means to her is that it would save her the trouble of coming to the well in the heat of the day. At this point, be careful not to give up on people too soon. This woman seems hopelessly unspiritual. She can’t see beyond her physical senses. But Jesus aims to make her a worshiper of God in spirit and truth. So now he touches the most sensitive, vulnerable spot in her life — “Go call your husband.” It seems to be out of the blue. These days, many people never talk about the basic problems in others’ hearts, thinking that this would invade their privacy. So people become very superficial and only talk about today’s weather or sports or healthy diet. But Jesus endured the pain of exposing her inner sin problem so that he might, by any means, help cleanse her sin, which was decaying her soul. He is forcing her to deal with the inside — the secret places — of her life. The living water that he had offered is for the inner person. This is not water you drink with your mouth; it is water you drink with your heart. He was dealing with her deep, inner life and need. Jesus exposes her sin in verses 17–18, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.” She says in verse 19, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.” And then she changes the subject to worship. Jesus never comes back to this issue of her adultery. He didn’t bring it up to condemn her. He brought it up to expose the thirst that she doesn’t even know she has. He had offered her living water — water that if she drank it in her heart by faith would become a well of water springing up to eternal life and joy and satisfaction. This water is for her soul, not her body. It is her soul that’s thirsty. And she doesn’t know it. So Jesus showed her.

Her husband problem made her thirsty. Many women have been duped and misled into believing that there is a man, a soul-mate, Mr. Right, out there who will bring happiness and make them feel complete. They become disappointed and disillusioned over and over again. The Samaritan woman gave everything she had: purity, devotion, love and woman’s faithfulness. But all five men abused her and left her one by one, leaving a deep wounds in her heart. Human beings can mutually love and help one another. But no human being can be another’s object of worship. Because this Samaritan woman did not know God, she worshiped men and pursued her happiness through men.

When her sin was exposed, she had a deep desire to be forgiven. The weight of guilt which she spent her whole life trying to avoid has now come down in full force on her head. This reality breaks on her once indifferent mind that she needs to be right with God. She wants to make her life right, but where can she go? Can she go to Samaritans’ temple on Mount Gerizim and offer a sacrifice? How can she find peace? How can she get forgiveness? That is why she asked for a place of worship. She thought that forgiveness is possible only through worship. Look at verse 23. “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” Worshiping in spirit refers to worship that comes from our spirits which are made alive by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” “God is spirit” means that God is in the spiritual realm. So our worship must take place in the spiritual realm. In fact, when we worship in spirit, we are joining a continuous worship taking place in the spiritual realm. Our body may be in the office, home, or field, but our spirit is in the presence of God in the heavenly realms. Hebrews 12:22 says, “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.” We are not alone when we worship in spirit. We join innumerable angels and other believers before the throne of God in our praise and worship of God and Jesus Christ.

The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” She had many questions about life; why the 5 marriages failed. Why she was so thirsty. She was desperately waiting for the Messiah who would answer all her questions.

Look at verse 26. “Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” It was a declaration of his true identity. Jesus did not reveal his identity to those who came to him seeking miracles. Jesus revealed his identity to the woman whose heart had been laid bare before him, and who really wanted to meet the Messiah. Indeed, Jesus became her Messiah, the spring of living water for her soul.

Today we see that human beings are thirsty for something. Nicodemus in the last chapter was one of them. The Samaritan woman is one of them. But we are never satisfied with things of the world. Only Jesus, the eternal God, who is a spring of living water, can satisfy our souls completely.