

Physical thirst can be intense. Deprive the body of water and actions can be unpredictable, even deadly. Countless times, it has been told of during times of crisis and war of those in or near the crystal clear ocean and are thirsting drinking the salt water to their detriment. Those with experience often times trying to stop them for their benefit.

Physical thirst can be intense. Deprive the body of water and actions can be unpredictable, even deadly. The people of Israel grumbled against Moses whom God had used to part the waters and give them freedom. Now they demanded, "Give us water to drink." "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us...with thirst?" So deep and burning was their desire that they planned to kill God's messenger. Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Physical thirst can be intense. In the town of Sychar, in the heat of high Noon, a Jewish man asked a Samaritan woman for a drink. A man of that day requesting a drink from a woman was irregular. A Jew seeking a cup of water from a Samaritan was unheard of. This Jewish man, Jesus, asked water from this Samaritan woman to open her eyes to her deepest need and to satisfy her deepest thirst. "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." "Where do you get that living water?" she asked. "Are you greater than our father Jacob?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water..."

Despite her request, she was not yet ready to drink the water Jesus offered. Therefore Jesus initially acted to make her life hotter and dryer. "Go call your husband, and come here", He said. The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right...for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." Her answer was technically correct, yet evasive in what it revealed. The full truth is that she drank up five husbands. You can be sure they had been trying to satisfy their thirst with her

as well. But the thirst returned and now she was sipping a little sex outside of marriage. Jesus loved her too much not to speak the truth. He turned the blazing heat of God's law on her present effort to satisfy her thirst.

Feeling the heat, the woman tried to shift the focus to points of contention in the church. There is always contention within the church. "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus was not sidetracked. He swept away her attempted detour with a sweeping statement about worship. "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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming...When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I AM the one speaking to you." He spoke to her the very name that He gave Moses at the burning bush, I AM (Ex. 3:14). It is a name the Samaritans knew from the Pentateuch. He was saying to her, I the Lord, the Messiah, the Christ am the one speaking to you. I am here to give you living water.

Dear Christians, our story is really the same as that of Israel and of the woman at the well. Like Israel, we are quick to forget God's rescue of us and quick to find fault with God's provision for us. Some days we don't even think of our Baptisms. On occasion we do grumble, inwardly if not outwardly. It is not natural for us to rejoice in our sufferings. We sometimes think God has led us along only to let us die of thirst in the wilderness of this world. There can be so much thirst for meaning, in teenage and university years so much uncertainty on where the Lord is leading us, in later years uncertainty and doubts of living ones vocation. As the decades pass there can be plenty of doubts about suffering producing endurance and character and hope. One by one, we fall along the way and our caskets are carried out for burial. Along the way we do thirst for more of this world's things – else why would we withhold time and treasure from God? Like the sailors dying at sea, we do drink from the salt-water wells of our own understanding. Therefore, just as Jesus turned the burning heat of His word on the woman at the well, so He must show us our spiritual adultery.

Like the woman, we also like to play the victim and blame others for our unsatisfied desires. Imagine what the woman might have said about the faults of those five husbands. Imagine how she might have tried to justify her present choice of immorality by blaming untrustworthy men. However, her deepest problem wasn't others. Her core problem was her own sinful heart. Jesus loved her too much to let her die in the parched desert of her own sin with nothing to cool her tongue.

So what did He do? After He spoke the truth making her aware that He knew everything about her, He did the unthinkable! He gave her a sixth husband – Himself! That's the living water! Are you greater than our father Jacob, she asked? Indeed, He is! Jacob worked fourteen years to gain his lovely bride Rachel. But our Lord is greater than Jacob. He worked Himself to death to take this woman and us sinners as His bride. As Jesus gave Himself to the woman at the well, He presented her to Himself as His holy bride, without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. He could bestow water welling up to eternal life on her because He was willing to be stricken for her sins.

This is beautifully foreshadowed by what God told Moses to do in order to avoid being stoned by the thirsting Israelites. "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people...and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile. At that time, in the first of the ten plagues, the water of the Nile had turned to blood when Moses struck it with this very staff. But now, water is to come from its use. God continued, "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." Both blood and water came from striking with this staff according to the Lord's command.

Beloved, Paul identifies the spiritual rock from which the Israelites drank as Christ (I Cor. 10:4). And the word for strike is the same word used by Isaiah of the suffering servant, "we esteemed him, stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted (Isaiah 53:4). As Christ was there in the Old

Testament providing the water of life for His grumbling people, so He was stricken on Calvary as the Rock of Ages to provide living water for the whole world. As water poured forth from the rock at Horeb when it was struck by God's command, so water and blood flowed forth from the side of the Rock of Ages when Christ was struck down by God's command. His pierced side yields water and blood that still flow today with gifts of life and salvation. Water poured over Riley and all Christians at his font, blood that flows and is given from his altar. They flow to you who worship God in spirit and truth.

And that's what the father seeks – true worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and truth – just like the woman at the well. What true worship means is nothing more than to see the depth of our sin and seek forgiveness for it in Jesus Christ. While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. True worship is for Jesus to lay open sinful hearts revealing the whole mess and then to give repentant sinners Himself to drink. It is not primarily what we do for God – praying and praising. It is primarily about what He does for us – forgiving us by uniting Himself with us.

Last week Nicodemus showed us that nothing less than faith will avail before God. We must be born again of water and the spirit. This week the woman at the well shows us that nothing more than faith is needed. Jesus makes her a believer and a witness. "Come...see she said to the people of the town. Can this be the Christ?" Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony. At their request Jesus stayed with them for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said..."we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

Dear friends, Christ sees your entire life of sin – nothing is hidden from Him? He knows all the grumbling of your tongue and your heart. He knows all your sins of drinking from the wrong wells. He knows that the oceans of salt water that look so appealing will never satisfy your

deepest thirst. That's why He comes to relieve your thirst by giving you Himself. He has relieved the thirst of Riley this morning, giving her living water.

He has taken her, and he has taken you as His bride – holy and without blemish. He is the water of life! He carries you right through the dust of death for He has become in you a spring of water welling up to eternal life. He loves you just as much as He loved the woman at the well. He loves everyone you know this much.

God grant us the desire of the woman to invite others to come and see Him. God grant us the confident witness of the Samaritans of Sychar – “we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.