

John 4:4-26

New International Version

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 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."

My grandfather had a well in his back garden. Actually it wasn't a back garden, but a back yard. It had a little workshop at the bottom of it. Leftover from the days in Kettering when a lot of the shoemaking operations were done by outworkers, then the stitched parts were finished off in the factory. Before the advent of bringing everyone together in one place. My grandad lived in Lancaster Road; he actually worked just around the corner at local shoemaker Wilson & Watsons, all his life. I remember the clock on his mantelpiece presented to him for 50 years' service. The reason for the well is that there is a brook that runs under Kettering in fact Water Street gets its name because it runs under there, then along Linden Avenue and at the bottom of London road.

I guess the wells were used before there was piped water to the houses. They came in handy if ever the water supply was interrupted or cut off.

Jesus has stopped off at Jacob's well and the woman comes along at noon the hottest part of the day to fetch water. This was unusual especially for the woman to be there alone at that time of day. Also strange that Jesus spoke to her a Samaritan woman looked down on and despised by the Jews. The reason as to why she was alone was that she was a woman of ill repute, having had five husbands and living with her present partner who wasn't her husband. So she would be in the eyes of a lot of people, pretty well down the pecking order. Yet Jesus through engaging and having this conversation, showed that he cared about her and through that engagement she told others and brought people to Jesus.

I love that this woman questioned Jesus, she was no shrinking violet even though especially at that time and in her circumstances of being a bit of an outcast, she could easily have felt that she shouldn't speak, some could even say she was being disrespectful. I suppose due to her life she was not shy. She also questioned Jesus about where was the true place of worship and Jesus says that it's not dependant on where you worship but who you worship in spirit and truth in your heart. He then reveals that he is the messiah.

We are going through extremely difficult anxious times, churches closed, or socially distanced services, masks, no singing, sometimes it can be difficult to feel like you are in a service and worshipping at all. Leaving in silence at the end. I know others can't go, or don't feel safe, all in all it has put our worshipping community in a place we have never experienced before. But I point to this lady who through Jesus talking with her and her desire to talk with him, was able to be pointed by Jesus towards that living water. I guess what's happening now can feel as if our worship has been cut off or there has been an interruption of flow, and just how my granddad's well was there if needed, we can draw close to Jesus, wherever we are, because as he revealed to that woman, he is the wellspring, he is the way and the truth and the life.

The reason I love the woman at the well is for several reasons. She remains nameless and yet the encounter with Jesus is life changing. I think of the women we have come across with our work in Street Pastors. Homeless, sometimes nameless, an encounter with Jesus could be life changing, and sometimes it only takes someone stopping to talk, it can and it does help.

Jesus invites all, all who are thirsty and he will give to you living water.

Let us pray:

O Lord, how we long for your refreshing living water. How we long for a deeper relationship with you. Help us to be bold, to leave the comfort of the shallow water, and to be uplifted into the depths of your love. Remove anything within us that blocks your living streams of water that cleanses, heals and renews us.

Open our hearts so that we may be vessels of refreshing water that overflows to all those we meet.

Living God, thank you that we come to you just as we are and however we feel we have the sure knowledge of Jesus who gives us that life changing water.

Life giving God, go with us through these times. The invitation Jesus offered to the woman at the well is as true for us as it was for her. Come all you who are thirsty, the water will not only quench your thirst, but will lead to eternal life.

Amen

<https://youtu.be/gxEB-m3UICA>

Water For My Soul

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. (Psalm 42 vs 1)

How I need you Lord,
Holy Spirit come,
For your mercies now,
I am crying out.

O God, you are my God;

I earnestly search for you.

My soul thirsts for you;

*my whole body longs for you
in this parched and weary land
where there is no water. (Psalm 63 vs 1)*

Pour our Your water for my soul,
Heal my brokenness and make me whole,
Set me free to follow You alone,

³⁷ On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart'. (John 7 vs 37-38)

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