

**“He Told Me Everything I Have Ever Done”**

John 4:5-30, 39

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As we heard the passage from John’s Gospel read, there were two words that likely stood out: **‘water’** and **‘drink.’** And as those words bounced around in this ‘cavernous cranium’ of mine, words of a well-known poem came to mind:

*“Water, water everywhere, and all the boards did shrink;*

*Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink.”*

These words come to us from... (?) ... “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This commonly referenced statement speaks to the truth that even when one might be surrounded by a particular object or substance, you will not always benefit from it. Like say, the waters of the world’s oceans which make up 97% of our earth’s water supply and yet are not potable. Not ‘portable’... but potable, safe to drink.

OK, here’s a bonus for you poetry buffs: Can you name the very next line?

*“The very deep did rot: O Christ! That ever this should be!”* Surprising? It was to me! NOT that I am a scholar of English lit. But upon reading that, I scanned the poem and was more surprised to see references to ‘prayer,’ ‘heaven,’ the ‘Spirit’ (capital ‘S’), and references throughout to the “Bridegroom” and the “Wedding guest.” ALL pretty Christian references. I would then come to find out that Coleridge was the ‘son of a preacher man’ (Anglican) and would himself serve a minister in the Unitarian Church for a couple of years. I found it quite gratifying to find that this classic piece of literature had strong underpinnings of the Christian faith. Even if they do kinda ‘swim under the sonar’...

The importance of water in the imagery of this poem is a reminder of the same powerful use of ‘water’ by Jesus. Figuratively AND ‘literally.’ He uses that most common and invaluable element of ‘H<sub>2</sub>O’... so critical and basically fundamental to physical life... to speak to importance of a different type of water in the *spiritual* life of people. That ‘living water’ that is so invaluable, so critically fundamental to our everyday survival. So, let’s take a look at the manner in which Jesus showed Himself to BE that ‘living water’ to US... and what we can learn from Him, and that Samaritan woman at the well, in how to be ‘living water’ to OTHERS.

We start our journey with Jesus coming to a Samaritan town called "Sychar." In Hebrew this name is defined as "drunken"... with synonyms including "madness; falsehood; deceit; deception; disappointment; foolish; impious; ungodly." NOT exactly an indication of a place too conducive to the message of the Messiah! A far cry from the area's association with the great Jewish patriarch Jacob, and land that he gave his son Joseph. Perhaps the manner in which this once-revered place had become so divided from God's 'Chosen people' contributed to Jesus being 'tired out'... but mainly from a long journey and the heat of the noonday sun. As he wearily sat down by that historic 'watering hole,' he no doubt thought about how good some of that pure well-water would taste.

This is the first reason we can look to Jesus for such 'inspiration' in our everyday lives. He felt the same heat, the same fatigue, the same bodily thirst that we do. One who, in Hebrews words, 'can sympathize with our weakness.' Perhaps we could add a parenthetical paraphrase in right here... a two word verse to go with the famous one, "**Jesus wept.**" Instead, "**Jesus sweat.**" And because of that, to borrow from another Biblical quote, we who 'labor and are heavy-burdened can see that his burdens are far heavier than our own...

It is here that we read that "**A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'**" (Jn. 4:7) There is SO much to 'unpack' in this one verse, and what it will lead to in the long interaction to come. The fact that Jesus is going against the social 'norms' of interacting with someone of a much-despised people group, this woman is coming in the heat of the day... unlike the usual late afternoon when most all of the women would come not only to gather water, but to gather 'gossip'... to have fellowship with one another. She chose to come when she didn't HAVE to interact with any of her peers. LET ALONE a Jewish male!

And what does Jesus greet her with? 'Hey, how ya doin'? Sure is a hot day, huh? How bout dem Tigahs?' No chit chat. He begins by asking her to do something for him. Well, it sounds more a command than a request. But how much different is this than when Jesus 'asks' those fishermen to "**Follow me.**" Jesus is all about commitment to **service**. From the very beginning. And aside from the word "forgiveness," there may be no better word to represent the Christian faith than "service." As in, "**the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" (Matt. 20:28)

His example of involving potential disciples in the act of service is a reminder to us all of how we too can draw others into the Christian faith. By inviting them to join us in ministry... in serving others. By getting them involved in working at Fairview/Oak Park or Welsh HS/Elementary. Ministering to our friends at Golden Age/Guardian. Supporting the rebuilding effort of the Mennonites/ SWLA Responds. Especially for younger people, today's seekers of life fulfillment want to know that their efforts are making a difference in other people's lives... With OR without God! Particularly for those who are marginalized, outcasts, disconnected with society. Like that Samaritan woman at the well.

Aside from speaking to her about spiritual truths to drink from the 'living water' that was the Messiah, and that the most important aspect of giving glory to God was not WHERE it was done, but HOW it was done... to worship 'in spirit and in truth'... perhaps the greatest statement that Jesus makes here is a SOCIAL one. Of the worth and value of **women**. Particularly ones that were considered 'damaged goods.' Remember how the disciples reacted when they rejoined Jesus? ***"They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman."*** (Jn. 4:27) And this was not brief encounter... but a deep and lengthy one.

It was Christ who gave women their due; who offered them a chance to see their own possibilities; who recognized their value. It was Jesus who elevated women in society and in Christian ministry. As one commentator put it, "So long as mothers are Christians, there is not much to fear. BUT if they too should give themselves up to selfishness, worldiness, and pleasure-seeking, what would become of the next generation, and of the church it ought to form in its day? My fellow men, let us not let a day go by without giving thanks for the women in our personal lives, and the life of Christ's church, who keep these engines GOING!

Which brings me back to that woman at the well, and what we can learn from her in being a 'living water-bearer.' First, she engaged Jesus. She asked questions. She wanted to know more. And even when she just wasn't getting it... ***"Sir, give me this (living) water, so that I may never be thirsty and keep coming here to draw water"*** (Can't you just see Jesus shaking his head, with a disappointed yet maybe just a little amused smirk on his face)... SHE KEPT COMING BACK! Like those ladies who lead our various study groups, asking questions, engaging our Lord Christ, and one another... .. and keep coming back, two and three times a week, never satisfied that

they 'know it all.' And for you GUYS who might learn something from the 'fairer sex' ... there are still LOTS of room available in ALL of our Bible studies...

What spoke to me most in how God powerfully used this woman was the manner in which she shared this experience with her fellow townspeople. ***"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done."*** But I think that there is MORE than this that she communicated. Maybe just not in our written transcript of this encounter. Jesus ability to know everything about this woman was so much more than some psychic fortune-teller. She told those people... even the ones who mistreated and gossiped about her, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done... and STILL LOVED ME! ...and STILL TREATED ME WITH RESPECT! And still FORGIVES ME! ... and no matter who everyone else might have frowned upon me, He thought enough of me to tell ME that HE IS THE MESSIAH! The SAVIOR! (An honor bestowed on NO ONE ELSE in the Gospel until Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin!)

That 'living water' that Jesus spoke of was not merely to quench physical thirst, or to wash dirty hands and feet, or to help plants grow. It is the very Spirit of God who does the same for us as it did for that woman at the well. That even though Jesus knows everything about us, he still LOVES us. Still RESPECTS us. Still FORGIVES us. And thinks enough of us to SAVE us from our sins. Calling us to show those same qualities to those who need to know that those promises are for them as well. I came across this beautiful description of what it drink DEEPLY of the living water that IS Jesus:

*"Whoso lives with Christ and in Christ has in his/her heart a spring of water perennial and inexhaustible; a peace that passes understanding; a joy deeper and more real than any other joy; a life far more abundant than anyone else can know; a power that can meet every call upon it— a perennial fountain, clear and clean, cooling and refreshing."* (Arthur John Gossip, The Interpreters Bible)

Our world is indeed, in Coleridge's words, filled with 'water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink.' Tempting potions that make promises that only Christ can keep: unsurpassable peace, deepest joy, incomparable power, abundant life. He IS our 'fount of every blessing.' Ever-present and inexhaustible... clear, clean, cooling, refreshing.

It was just such peace, joy, power and LIFE that those Samaritans saw in that outcast woman's life. All because she simply 'went to the well' one more time. In the heat of the day. And met a stranger that changed her life forever. And enabled her to change more lives that day that all of disciples put together. May her life be an example to us of how Christ can use OUR lives to reach others. To tell them how Christ knows everything we've ever done... and STILL loves us... In the same way that we love them... by the power of the living water of Jesus... Amen!

**CHARGE:** In a little while many of us will be gathering for food and fellowship at the 'banquet table' of Mr. Gatti's (or of tasty treats awaiting in the Fellowship Hall). The One whom we meet at THIS 'Table' [**pt. to Lord's Table**] also speaks of 'nourishment' in today's Gospel passage (which we did not read, but I invite you to go back and 'fill-in-the-blank'). Jesus said: ***"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ... I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting."*** (Jn 4:35) Those 'fields' are not just the neighborhoods adjacent to us, but all those places that await us once we go through these doors. From work place to school to grocery store to street corner. WHEREVER YOU GO to be 'fed' by 'doing the will of Him who sent you,' KNOW that you DO NOT GO ALONE. But the "Spirit of the Living God" ...

**Questions for Reflection:** As you read John 4:5–42, think about the meaning of water—its symbolic qualities, its presence in nature, and its use in human life. How is Jesus like water? What are the things that are most necessary in your life? Where do you get them? Contribute to or participate in a service project that provides clean water (or some other necessity of life) to people in need. As you do so, make a commitment to pray for all the providers and recipients of this service.