

Thirst, and Living Water

Portraits of Jesus—John 4

January 24, 2021

Overview: This chapter illustrates both our human dilemma and the divine solution. While this woman spent a lifetime trying to fill herself Jesus finds filling in God and filling others.

DAY 1: Human thirst

1. Jesus and the disciples are traveling into Samaria, a region where Jewish people refused to travel out of resentment and bias. The disciples head to town for food, while Jesus meets a woman at a well outside of town.

John 4:7 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.)

2. Who initiates the conversation? Why was she surprised that He talked with her?

3. How does He initiate the conversation?

John 4:10 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."

___ He relates to her as personal and spiritual equals.

___ He suggests that God wants to give her a gift!

___ He moves the conversation toward a spiritual direction, but only with a nudge.

___ He assumes she may not know God, but hints that if she did, something good would happen.

___ He takes something very ordinary, water, and uses it as a metaphor for what He can give.

___ He uses a vague term, "living water," to create curiosity.

4. Jesus now speaks to her human thirst, and anyone's inability to quench our human thirst.

John 4:13 "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, [14] 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."

5. Thirst is often felt as emptiness, loneliness, apathy, discouragement, hopelessness, hunger, ache, pain, or yearning.

6. Jesus says there is an insufficient way to quench our thirst, and hints that there is another way!

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Human effort to quench thirst

1. How do people try to quench their thirst?

John 4:13 "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, [14] 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."

2. Jesus uses the metaphor of water. We will always be thirsty for physical water. Physical water will quench physical thirst for a short time, but we will be thirsty again.

3. Jesus applies the water metaphor to what we “drink” to quench our soul’s thirst.

a. What does He say about human efforts to quench our thirst?

b. What does He say that He can do to quench our thirst?

John 4:16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

4. Up until this moment the conversation had been more philosophical and theoretical in nature. Now it is also personal. Why do you think Jesus turned the conversation to her husband?

5. What wrong assumptions do we make regarding human thirst?

a. Assumption #1: I can quench my own thirst.

b. Assumption #2: God does not play any real role in quenching my thirst.

c. Assumption #3: The people and events of my life are all I need to quench my thirst.

John 4:17 "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."

6. What had been the woman’s “strategy” for quenching her thirst?

7. How was her strategy working?

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: The remedy (part 1): relationship with God: drinking living water

John 4:10 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."

John 4:13 "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, [14] 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."

1. Write down what you think Jesus means by each of the following terms:

a. "Gift of God" (v. 10)

b. "Living water" (v.10)

c. "I give him" (v. 14)

d. "Never thirst" (v.14)

e. "Spring" (v. 14)

f. "Will become a spring" (v. 14)

g. "Eternal life" (v. 14)

2. Yesterday we looked at three wrong assumptions we make about quenching our own thirst. Beneath each one, how would you change each assumption?

a. Assumption #1: I can quench my own thirst.

b. Assumption #2: God does not play any real role in quenching my thirst.

c. Assumption #3: The people and events of my life are all I need to quench my thirst.

John 4:23 "... true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. [24] God is Spirit and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth."

3. How does worship in spirit and truth add to your understanding of living water?

DAY 4: The remedy (part 2): relationship with people: dispensing living water

1 By the time the disciples return from town with food, the woman has discovered living water for herself! She is euphoric, and runs to town to tell everyone about Jesus.

John 4:31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

³³ Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

³⁴ "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

2. Jesus uses food as a metaphor with the disciples.

3. What does Jesus' "food" mean? (v. 34).

4. Jesus has just been doing "the will of Him who sent me" and been busy with the "work" God gave Him to do. Both of these had been going on in the way He related to the woman.

5. When we eat food we come to a point where we are full. No more food is needed. This is what Jesus is telling His disciples. The "food" that has filled His soul has been by dispensing living water to the woman. He has been relating (1) for her benefit, not His, (2) to reflect the love of God to her and make it become felt by the way He related to her, and (3) to help draw her to a priority relationship with God where she will now have a spring of water welling up in her.

6. The paradox of filling our souls is "completed" when we:

- a. Turn to God and not ourselves for the living water for which we thirst, and
- b. Turn to others to become dispensers of living water to them!

7. Jesus then lifts their eyes to the harvest to which He sows seeds, and wants them to "work the fields" sowing kingdom seeds to others.

John 4:35 Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶ Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷ Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. ³⁸ I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: The thirst and remedy illustrated

John 4:28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,
²⁹ *"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"*

³⁰ *They came out of the town and made their way toward him.*

1. Is there any significance to the woman leaving her water jar at the well?

2. How does the woman illustrate the wonder of living water? (Look for two ways).
 - a. (Hinted at with her leaving her water jar).

 - b.

John 4:39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

⁴¹ *And because of his words many more became believers.*

⁴² *They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."*

3. The woman did not come to Jesus and then enjoy gospel benefits in a cocoon. She didn't become "it's all about Jesus and me," or only "what can Jesus do for my family and me?"
4. Instead, she is engaged with the very people that once scorned her as "that woman," a woman who burned through five husbands and was shackled up again.

5. She is alive with living water, the spring is cleansing and refreshing her soul, and she is alive with purpose with a new love for these people.

6. We'll let bible commentator William Barclay finish our week.
 - a. "At the heart of all this there is the fundamental truth that in the human heart there is a thirst for something that only Jesus Christ can satisfy." -William Barclay
 - b. "There are two revelations in Christianity; there is the revelation of God and the revelation of ourselves. No man ever really sees himself until he sees himself in the presence of Christ; and then he is appalled at the sight of himself... Christianity begins with the sudden realization that life as we are living it will not do. We awake to ourselves and we awake to our need of God." - William Barclay

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?