



Series: The Gospel of John: For God so Loved...

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Speaker: Jake Greer, Executive Pastor

Text: John 4:1-30

Title: Will You Ask Him for a Drink?

Good morning, Mercy family! What's up to my Northeasters and anyone joining us online. Welcome!

INTRO -If you knew who was asking...

And in today's text, we're going to see a woman who doesn't really know who she's speaking with. At least not at first.

My hope today is to highlight who Jesus is and the

gift he offers. Church, I believe deeply in my soul that if we knew who Jesus was, we would ask Him for this gift.

Let's dig into the text starting in verse 1.

1 When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard he was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were), 3 he left Judea and went again to Galilee. 4 He had to travel through Samaria; 5 so he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon.

Alright, so quick recap of what's been going on. Jesus started his public ministry off with some miraculous signs, key conversations, bold proclamations, and inviting some disciples to come along with him as He preached the kingdom. As Jesus' reputation grows and his message starts to take root in people's



hearts, Jesus and these disciples head out to the Judean countryside to start baptizing people¹.

Well, the word gets out that Jesus is gaining a lot of followers, and for the religious rulers, this is a problem. John the Baptist was a medium threat to them, but this Jesus guy, He's becoming a problem to them. And Jesus knows this. Remember, He is God! He knows that them hearing that He's baptizing more people than John the Baptist likely will present a problem for his mission and the work He has planned to do in Israel.

So, what does he do?

He leaves. He and his disciples embark towards Galilee and pass through a region named Samaria. He stops off in a city called Sychar for some needed rest. Remember, Jesus is God, but He's also fully human. Which means, like you and me, after walking for a

¹ John 3:22

couple days, He gets tired. Well, He finds his recess near a well and we learn in verse 8, that his disciples take off into town to grab some food leaving him alone at the well around noon.

Now, before we go any further in the text, I want to point out something that original readers would have been thinking at this point in the story.

“Wait what? Jesus and his disciples went through Samaria?!? Why the flip would they do that?!?”

Here's what you need to know, for many generations there was a building tension between Jews and Samaritans. So much so, that in a society where cars didn't exist and most journeys were on foot, Jewish people, especially strict law-abiding ones, would generally avoid the more efficient route to Galilee, through Samaria, by walking an even further journey around this entire region. Avoiding its people.²

²D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 215.



I wonder what regions, what people, we're prone to avoid? More on that later.

So, what's the deal between Samaritans and Jews? Why all of this extra walking?

I want to invite you into a quick history lesson. You ready?

Around 1000 years prior to this conversation, the people of Israel rejected God as their king and a monarchy in Israel was established. Eventually this kingdom split into two separate kingdoms. Well, the northern kingdom was eventually defeated by Assyrian enemy forces.³ Assyria also conquered many other nations and various refugees from Israel and other conquered peoples ended up living together in this region which would later be named Samaria.

³ <https://embassies.gov.il/mumbai/AboutIsrael/history/Pages/History-Israel-Timeline.aspx>

⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B.

You with me?

Well, over time, the Israelites who were allowed to stay in this region began to intermarry with people from these foreign nations (2 King 17-18). As a result of this intermarrying, two things happened. First, an ethnically mixed people began to form. Ethnic Jews and Gentiles were married and had children. Second, the monotheistic religion that was standard for the original Israelite people began to dilute. Eventually this ethnically and religiously mixed people living in this region became known as Samaritans.

Well, after the exile, when the Jews began to return to their homeland, they viewed the Samaritans not only as the children of political rebels but as an ethnically mixed people whose religion was tainted by various unacceptable elements.⁴ Because of this,

Eerdmans, 1991), 216. & Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 140.



strict Jews believed that the Samaritan people were unclean, and thus they rejected them.

Lots and lots of history over many generations between the Jews and the Samaritans. So, here's what you need to know.

Well, this tension between Jews and Samaritans is important for us to note, for multiple reasons.

First, it's odd that Jesus and His disciples even took this route. Remember Jesus is considered a Rabbi. And Rabbis would have been example setters when it comes to avoiding unclean things.

Second, this context gives us some clues into how our next character might have felt as she approached this well and saw a Jewish man sitting there.

So, let's continue in the text. Picking back up in verse 7

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

Now I want to pause here real quick (I know, I know! We'll get there. Don't worry. Since I'm not Jesus, I'm just taking the long way around)

Before we actually hear from Jesus, I want us to take note of multiple things that are important to know about the culture and context of this story that the original hearers of this story would have innately known. When reading the Bible, context is important for understanding.

These 8 words we just read pack so much meaning to our story- "A woman of Samaria came to draw water"

So here are several things for us to note before we go on.

1. In this context, women would typically be responsible for gathering water for their



household. During this time, this water served many purposes and met many needs. So, retrieving water was a regular everyday activity.

2. Women were very isolated in this context, very looked down upon in society. In particular, Jewish men would generally avoid speaking with women in public, even their own wives.⁵ So as you can imagine, women surely felt socially isolated.

Although, women talking with other women wasn't frowned upon in the same way as women talking with men. Thus, this daily task of fetching water at the well was typically a social activity. This chore was often done in the context of community. The women of your town or city would journey together to the well to get their needed water and they'd converse and connect along the way. It's very

likely that this time with other women was a highlight in their day.

You know, we are made for connection with other people. And as you can imagine in a society like this, particularly for women, this opportunity to socialize with your friends and neighbors was no doubt a needed and anticipated time.

3. Generally speaking, the most common time for Jill to go and "fetch a pail of water" was in the early morning or evening when it was cool. As you can imagine, carrying this water back to your town, sometimes a few miles away from the closest well, was hard work. So going to this well when it wasn't hot outside would have been much preferred to going midday when the sun was at its peak.

So, here's what we need to note:

⁵ Gerald L. Borchert, [John 1-11](#), vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 202.



- She's alone
- And she came in the heat of the day

These are textual clues that should lead us to think that she was an outcast even among her own people.

Alright, now I think we're ready to get into the actual conversation. Here's a quick recap of what we've covered.

- Jesus is headed to Galilee.
- Instead of taking the more common path AROUND Samaria, Jesus goes the road less traveled through a region full of people commonly despised by the Jews.
- Jesus, who's alone resting at the well, is approached by a Samaritan woman who's likely trying to avoid interacting with anyone, either by choice or by exclusion.

Now, I think, we're ready.

Picking back up with verse 7

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. "Give me a drink," Jesus said to her, 8 because his disciples had gone into town to buy food.

9 "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."

This scene starts off with a scandalous shock factor- Jesus, a Jew, asks this woman for a drink.

Taken aback, she replies, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"

She knows that He's not supposed to be talking to her. And she knows that most Jews think that even drinking from a cup touched by a Samaritan would bring defilement. So, she's probably shocked at his request.



Well Jesus, ignoring the wall she puts up, responds with a deeply spiritual truth. Look back at verse 10. This is going to be our anchor verse today so I want to read it aloud together, the words are on the screen.

10 Jesus answered, “If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would ask him, and he would give you living water.”

This reason this is our anchor verse is because it serves as an outline for this conversation. The first part of this conversation in verses 7-15, I think Jesus is trying to get her to understand spiritual things. Spiritual things about the gift of God, about living water. And the second part, which we’ll get to shortly, is about relational things, about knowing who Jesus is, about knowing Him.

⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 218.

Now, when Jesus responds to her by telling her she should have asked him for water, she’s likely even more taken aback. In her mind, he’s referring to a certain kind of actual water.

Let me explain.

The word Jesus uses for “living water”⁶ was sometimes understood to mean “fresh” or “flowing” water-the kind that comes from a stream. And in this culture, this kind of water was considered superior to water from a well. This is the meaning she understands. She thinks that Jesus is offering is her literal water from a nearby stream.

Look at her response in verse 11.

11 “Sir,” said the woman, “you don’t even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this ‘living water’? 12 You aren’t greater than our



father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock.”

She’s still thinking very literally. This well, to the Samaritan people, her people, represents sacred ground. And Jacob is one of the founding fathers of her belief system. So, if Jacob himself didn’t find this stream or source of ‘living water’ then how could this Jewish man have found it?

But she’s not understanding what Jesus means by this offer. He’s not talking about literal water. And again, despite her misunderstanding, Jesus patiently continues. Isn’t He beautiful?! (Praise YOU Lord!!) Look at his response in verse 13.

13 Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. 14 But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well, of water springing up in him for eternal life.”

This doubling down on this Living Water, is Jesus alluding back to the gift in verse 10. This gift is the living water.

And that brings us to our second meaning of the word he uses for living water- His intended meaning.

When Jesus refers to the “gift” and again to the “living water”, He’s referring to the Holy Spirit, to God Himself! To learn this, we have to zoom out and see the way the Bible uses water to symbolize the Holy Spirit, to symbolize God.

Now, I don’t have time to get into all of it, but I want to show you a two verses that are helpful here.

In Jeremiah 2:13, God Himself mourns

“For my people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves— cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.” Jeremiah 2:13



Do you see this? God is calling Himself the living water.

And later in the Bible, John, our same author, writes the book of Revelation, telling us what's to come at the end of time. And he paints this picture of this same living water. Look at Revelation 21:6

Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life." Revelation 21:6

That spring is Himself!

Even more, the Greek word that is used in verse 10 for "gift", is the same word used throughout Acts (Acts 2:38, 8:20, 11:17, Eph 3:7) to refer to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is saying again, just as He's been teaching all along, that He is God. This gift of living water is the

gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of God and eternal life found only in Jesus!

But this woman still doesn't understand. She replies in v 15.

15 "Sir," the woman said to him, "give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

Remember our anchor verse 10, "If you knew the gift of God..."

Does her asking for this water reveal that she understands the gift?

Not quite yet.

Let's pick back up in verse 16.

16 "Go call your husband," he told her, "and come back here." 17 "I don't have a husband," she answered. "You have correctly said, 'I don't have a



husband,' " Jesus said. 18 "For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

Do you see what Jesus is doing here? This woman has already misconstrued the understanding of the water that Jesus was talking about, and she clearly hasn't yet grasped who Jesus is.⁷ And I think the thing that's most important to note here, and maybe the most relevant to each of us, is that before she misunderstood the meaning of the water, the gift, she misunderstood her very own need.

She came to this well, thirsty. And that makes sense. She needs this water; it will help meet her physical needs. But Jesus didn't primarily come to this world to meet our physical needs. He cares about them, yes! But He's most interested in our deeper and truer need, our spiritual need. This woman's problem, our problem, isn't primarily physical thirst. It's spiritual

thirst. And this seemingly abrupt shift in the topic is Jesus' gentle and persistent way of showing this woman her deeper need.

And it's in this part of the conversation that we learn the most likely reason behind her loneliness in this chore of retrieving water. This woman has had five husbands. And the man she's now with isn't even her husband. Listen church, I don't think this number is figurative. I think this woman has been with 6 different men. Now, we don't know the stories behind these 6 relationships and the scriptures never tell us the details. But here's what we do know about this woman. She was hurting and she came alone!

And maybe this is you today. You come in here hurting? You came to church alone. Listen, I'm so glad you're here. And think that my gladness pales in comparison to Jesus'!! He's ready to meet you! How do I know this?

⁷ D. A. Carson, [*The Gospel according to John*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 220–221.



Jesus picked this route to Galilee. He chose this well. He knew who was coming around noon! And I think He planned it all, every detail. He wanted to be in this moment. He wanted her to know the gift of God and who is asking her for a drink. Why!? Because He wants to give! This is who He is friend. So, if you're in here today and you feel unseen, I want to remind you that He sees you. Just as He saw what was really in this woman, He sees what's really in you. He saw her pain and He sees yours.

"If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water." OR "If you knew, you would ask, and He would give"

The story continues and she replies

19 "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." 21 Jesus told her, "Believe me,

woman, an hour 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, because salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth."

Do you hear the build? Do you see what Jesus is doing here? These are profound and deep truths. He's talking about this kingdom that He's been preaching since chapter 1.

She still doesn't understand.

Look at her response in verse 25

25 The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will explain everything to us."



It's like she's saying, "I hear you. But let's just agree to disagree. When the Messiah gets here, he'll explain it to both of us." You see, both the Jews and the Samaritans believed a Messiah was coming. While there were differences about the specifics of their religious interpretations, they both were expecting a Messiah, the hope of salvation, for a long, long time.

Then comes the peak of the conversation! The culmination of the dialogue!

26 Jesus told her, "I, the one speaking to you, am he."

The Messiah has arrived! And he's enacting a new way of worship. A worship that isn't governed by place, and rules, and animal after animal after animal spilling its blood for the sins of people. No, He's here to bring the kingdom! This Jewish man is here talking with this mixed woman whose part Jew and part Gentile telling her about the kingdom he's been preaching since chapter 1. Telling her that God is Spirit, and the time is here when people won't

worship this God like they used to. No, they will worship a God who dwells, not in a temple or a tent or the side of a mountain, but inside the hearts of those that believe. The king has arrived! The silence between the testaments is broken. The Lamb of God, who with one final sacrifice will secure forgiveness forevermore, is here!

And this concludes the interaction between this woman and Jesus. And as good readers, we're left wondering what happens?

Remember our anchor verse, verse 10.

10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."

In the first half Jesus is revealing to her what the gift of God is, this living water, the Holy Spirit. And in this



second part when He gently presses on the spaces of her heart that hold the most pain in this, He's revealing who He is. This is He! The Messiah!

I wonder, do we know the gift of God? Do we know who is offering this gift?

Maybe, you've heard it said, that God's kingdom is an upside kingdom. There's plenty to back this up through the biblical story. God, often, isn't what we expect. He often doesn't do what we expect. And church, that's part of why He's so wonderful! I mean, I'm not really that interested in a God that I can figure out. Are you? If He always does what I, a sinful/temporary/and prone to wander soul, expect Him to do, then He's not really that great, that awesome, and that worthy.

And this God's upside-down kingdom is on center stage display in this story.

The people who were reading this book written by the apostle John were Jews. And while this story

might not seem that scandalous or that "upside down" to us as Americans in 2022, it would have been to them. The Messiah is supposed to bring the kingdom. And to most of these Jewish readers, the kingdom is about their people alone. It's about their ethnic line being preserved. It's about their religion being right. And it's about defeating their enemies.

And this story is featuring several things that seem very upside down.

- This woman isn't Jewish. No! She's an ethnically mixed Samaritan. Jesus is showing us that His kingdom is for the Jew and the Gentile!
- This woman is isolated and rejected by her own people. Jesus is showing us that His kingdom is inclusive to any outcast!
- This woman is hurting! Jesus is showing us that His kingdom brings healing more than punishment!



- This woman thinks that worship is tied to a specific place. Jesus is showing us that His kingdom is wherever His people are!

Jesus isn't like us. And that's John's point. This Messiah that John wants us to believe in, isn't like us. He's not what we often expect. This is why His kingdom feels upside down. But really, we're the ones who are upside down.

Perhaps the most striking thing to me in my studies of this story is found back in verse 4.

4 He had to travel through Samaria.

The language here depicts this idea that "it was necessary" for Jesus to travel through Samaria. But we know from context and other sources that certainly it wasn't necessary. Why would Jesus, who is God, have to do anything that He didn't want to?

He wouldn't!

Listen, I don't know exactly what is meant with this expression of "he had to", but I think John is trying to get us to see that what compels Jesus is different than what compels us.

I've heard this story talked about before as Jesus going out of his way to meet this woman. And I think that's actually a little backwards. It's subtle, but I think it's off.

Let me explain. Jesus doesn't go out of His way. We only think that it's out of His way, because it would be out of our way to intentionally go into the "Samarias" of our time. And the irony of this whole "avoid Samaria at all costs" rule is that we have to go out of our way to avoid these places, these people. Jesus took the shorter way. We often take the longer.

Makes me wonder, who's someone that you're going out of your way to avoid right now?

Jesus isn't like us. His inclusive kingdom feels upside down. Because Jesus loves outcasts. He loves the



one. And I think what's on display in this story tells us so much about who Jesus is and what He's like. *"If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."* And believer, doesn't this give us a powerful insight into how we, as His disciples, should live. We have to stop going out of our way to avoid people that God loves. People that God has put right in our path.

Chelsea - That homeless person that you see every day on that same street corner on your way to work. Do you know her name? I bet Jesus would.

Scott W - How about that difficult coworker who always talks about himself? He's always one-upping everyone's stories. And his obnoxious ego is so irritating to you that you'd rather just avoid him altogether. I bet Jesus would happily ask him about his weekend.

Mr. Howard - What about that minority neighbor who's older than you and you think is unlikely to ever

become a friend because of the cultural and age gaps between you and him. I bet Jesus would invite him over for dinner.

You see friend, Jesus is in the business of turning things upside down. This story is evidence! He "had to go" to Samaria. He wanted to talk with this Samaritan - Jesus loves people from all cultures and ethnic backgrounds. He wanted to talk with this woman - Jesus loves women! This perfect Rabbi, sinless and powerful in every way. This miracle-working man wanted to meet this Samaritan woman. He wanted her!

This woman, despised because of her ethnic and religious heritage. Isolated because of her gender. Rejected by her peers because of her scandalous reputation. She's on her way to just another day at the well. Another lonely and laborious journey from Sychar to her forefather's well. Just in the normal and hard routine of her life. But, on this day, things would be different. She wouldn't return the same way she did day in and day out toting a heavy jar full of water



heading back into whatever her home was like to this man that she's not married to, who's probably just taking advantage of her brokenness. No! Not today!

Today, she meets Jesus. And while she doesn't know the gift of God or who's asking her for water when she first gets there. His gentle patience, his diligent pursuit, and his confrontational love all come together in a profoundly beautiful moment when He graciously tells her, "I am he." I am the one you've been waiting for. I am the one who can quench your actual thirst forevermore. And I know you. I know all of you. And I want you. I love you daughter!"

What begins as an ordinary day, ends in an extraordinary way!

Look at what happens to her as a result of this encounter.

27 Just then his disciples arrived, and they were amazed that he was talking with a woman. Yet no one said, "What do you want?" or "Why are you

talking with her?" 28 Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" 30 They left the town and made their way to him.

She's headed home with a different kind of water then she came looking for-living water. In a moment of humor and poetic punch, she leaves her jar. She has no need for this water! She just met the Living Water! And while the text doesn't give us a clear, "and then she accepted Christ into her heart" it gives us something better. She goes and tells all the people of the man who told her everything she ever did. And she invites them to come and see for themselves.

We're going to get into this more next week when Pastor Brett and Pastor Joseph share the back half of this chapter and the way that true acceptance of the gospel leads to sharing the gospel with others.

So, here's where I want to land.



I don't have any sermon points today other than these three questions to leave you with.

Do you know the gift of God?

Do you know Him who is offering you this gift?

Will you ask Him for a drink?

If you're in this room and you don't believe yet, maybe today is your day! Would you ask Him for a drink? He's ready to give you living water! Come talk to one of us if you want help.

If you're here today and you have already received this water, praise God! Do you need to be refreshed by this Living Water? He wants to pour out His Spirit afresh! Who have you been avoiding-what Samaritans are in your world? Who do you need to invite to come and see the man who gave you this water?

One more time, our anchor verse.

10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."

Let's pray