

Never thirst again!

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. I'm going to just lower this down a bit because I happen to be short. I don't quite have the strength. There we go. I'm feeling weak today.

Firstly, I do have a bit of a confession. I don't quite know how long this sermon is going to be. I've gone over it a few times and it's been fairly different each time.

But that's the beautiful thing is we get to study God's word together. And I think that's the most important thing, but we'll try not to keep you too long. Behold the amazing and mysterious impenetrable box.

No man-made tool can penetrate its surface and no mortal man has ever seen inside. Of course, oh, sorry. There we go. There's the impenetrable box.

Of course, it isn't really an impenetrable box. It's actually just a representation of one. In this case, the way my sister wraps her Christmas presents.

[1 : 19] You can't get in them. We've tried all kinds of things over the years. Scissors, power tools, teeth. Many of those things have been broken in the process. We laugh, but I can assure you it's infuriating.

Today, we're going to see how people can be a lot like this box. So we're in John chapter 4. So if you have your Bibles, please open them at chapter 4.

And we're looking at this account of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at a well in Samaria. It's a conversation that, to be frank, I found a bit confusing.

It seems to go in many different directions. Water and thirst, relationships, worship, messianic prophecy, Jesus' identity, the woman's identity, eternal life.

There's so many different threads here. And as we go through the text, as we unpack it, with God's help, we're going to see that this conversation isn't a random collection of different things that jump around.

[2 : 22] But rather, it's quite a moving dialogue between two people. And it goes in one direction. And it ends with us seeing the glory of Christ, Jesus, the Son of God and Messiah.

As John says in chapter 20, These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.

That's a purpose. So our text has its own introduction of sorts, which follows on from the last chapter and shows Jesus moving on from Judea to Galilee.

And he's going through Samaria. So we're looking at verses 1 to 5 when we think about those things. And then from verse 6 to 26, we have a somewhat unusual conversation between this Samaritan woman and Jesus.

It's a conversation that's absolutely loaded with history and references and locations. And if I were to unpack all of that, I'd probably be here for a few hours.

[3 : 30] I don't think either of us quite have the capacity. Any of us really want to kind of sit here for three hours. We should, really, but I don't think I'd be allowed. So we'll be focusing mostly on the relational part of this text, which is the conversation, i.e. who this woman is to Jesus and who Jesus is to this woman.

That's where we'll be focusing today. So I've got three headings. Spiritual dehydration. A matter of truth.

Am I on the right slide? There we go. Spiritual dehydration. A matter of truth. And heart worship.

Once we've got through all of those, those three things, we'll make some conclusions.

So just as a brief introduction, the recap. If you've been following us through the book of John, the disciple, you remember that John the Baptist has already got the attention of the Pharisees.

This wild man who's been baptizing people and calling people to repentance found himself being questioned by the religious leaders, the Pharisees, as to his identity.

[4 : 47] They questioned his authority to be doing these things, to be baptizing. And they asked him, are you the Messiah? He wasn't the Messiah. He didn't go and sit down with the Pharisees over a cup of tea and a ginger biscuit and explain that to them politely.

Instead, he told them straight, I'm not the Messiah. John 1.20. He called them a brood of vipers, telling them that they need to repent. We heard how embarrassing that must have been for them. It's from Matthew 3, verses 7 to 8. He also confirmed that Jesus is the Son of God and that his purpose in announcing the arrival of the Messiah is now complete.

Now, Jesus must become greater while John becomes less. That was from John 3, 27 to 30. Jesus had begun instructing his disciples to also be baptizing people.

And they were baptizing more people than John, as we see at the beginning of this chapter and back in chapter 3, 26. So, if we think the Pharisees, the religious leaders, took great notice of John, then Jesus flagged up on their radar in a massive way.

[6 : 06] Particularly after the events of him going into the temple and cleansing the temple. He would have been really on their radar. He's got their attention.

So, let's go to our text. Verses 1 to 3. Now, Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John.

Although, in fact, it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. So, the chapter opens by saying that Jesus learned that the Pharisees were now aware of his growing popularity.

Your translation might say Jesus knew. I want to point out this doesn't mean that he was suddenly, this was suddenly new and surprising information to Jesus.

He already knew that this time was coming, but now is the time when people are really talking about it and the news came back to him. The text tells us that this was the main reason that Jesus left to go back to Galilee.

[7 : 10] It wasn't a reaction out of fear or reprisal. It wasn't an unexpected deviation from the plan. But I'm going to suggest to you it was part of a plan of redemption that's been in place since the very, very beginning of creation.

Matthew 16, 21 says this. From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day raised to life.

So, there's a plan in place. There is a time coming for Jesus to confront the Pharisees, but not yet. So, he left Judea to go back to Galilee.

Verse 4 says he had to go through Samaria. I think that's had to in the sense of there was no other route. Later in the text, we'll see that Jesus meeting this woman was no accident.

Therefore, had to here seems to mean that he had something specific to do there, i.e. meet the woman. So, there's a map behind me on the slides.

[8 : 30] I hope, yeah, here we go. This is just to help orientate our brains. If you're anything like me, you need pictures. Lots of text confuses me. So, that's the map.

There are different opinions about the exact location of Jesus and his disciples at this point. But it probably would have been somewhere near Jericho.

The walk to Sychar in Samaria would have been around 40 kilometers. If you're anything like me, you need to hear miles. That's about 25 miles, 20 to 25 miles.

Various different opinions on that, but they don't vary that much. So, verse 5, Jesus arrived in Sychar in Samaria. The text tells us that this was near a plot of ground that Jacob had passed on to his son Joseph.

That's thought to be Shechem, which is the place that Jacob settled at. And you can read about that in Genesis 33. Jacob's well was there.

[9 : 34] Excuse me. And being tired from the journey, Jesus sat down by, probably actually, on the well. It's not a little bit tired. I don't know if anybody's ever walked 25 miles.

I've almost achieved it. It's quite a walk. It really is quite a walk. And he would have been up and down all various kinds of terrain. He was Jesus for this point.

The son of God, as he was, was experiencing some physical exhaustion. So, he goes down to the well. And he sits on the well. I'm going to stop here for a bit.

And we're going to rest on this point. I'm going to make some Poirot-style observations on the text. And if you're under the age of 30, Poirot was a famous detective. And he made lots of observations based on facts.

Here's my observations. Here's a verse from Genesis 24. When Abraham's servant journeyed out to find a wife for Isaac and came across a well.

[10:37] There are lots of things that actually kind of mirror each other from this text. Genesis 24, verse 11. He, being Abraham's servant, had the camels kneeled down near the well outside the town.

It was toward evening, the time where the women go out to draw water. Verse 13. The servant says to God, See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water.

I want us to notice two things from those texts. Firstly, the coming out to draw water is a communal activity. They were doing it together. And secondly, the women came out in the cooler part of the day, nearer the evening.

Back in our story, however, it's about noon. It's probably the hottest part of the day. So coming to the well, just outside of your town, to draw your daily water, it's not something that you would really be doing at that time of day.

You probably, especially in the Middle East, it would have been really hot. You would have been sitting in the shade somewhere, preparing lunch, scrolling through Facebook. Verse 8 tells us that Jesus had already sent his disciples in the town to buy food.

[11:56] So here's what I'm suggesting. I think when Jesus came and sat on this well, it was quiet. There was nobody around. I'm convinced of that. Which leaves Jesus on his own at this point by the well.

That leaves one question. If Jesus was really exhausted and needing a drink, why didn't he just go to town with the disciples? That would have been far more comfortable. He could have gone in, got a drink.

It seems to me, since he didn't have anything to draw water with, which we see in verse 11, Jesus wasn't there for the water. Jesus was there for the woman.

None of this was an accident. As we said earlier, it was planned from the very beginning. Jesus is omniscient, meaning he knows everything.

When it's going to happen. Before it happens. So Jesus knows this Samaritan woman is about to turn up and he has a mission. He's got a deep, heart-changing business to do with this woman.

[13:02] And he doesn't want any distractions. He doesn't want anybody else involved. It's just going to be him, the son of God, and this woman doing heart-changing business.

So those are my observations. So we'll move on to my first point, spiritual dehydration. This covers verses 7 to 15. So here she comes, the woman.

She's come to draw water. She has a water jar, according to verse 28. It's not a little flask for tea. It's not a place you go to just to fill up your cup. It's probably a big clay-like jug, which held several liters and was heavy once it was full.

She hasn't come with the other townspeople. She's come at the hottest part of the day. This is all very unusual. We can only speculate really why. The text doesn't tell us exactly why this is.

Probably, I would assume, that she doesn't get on with the other women. Five failed marriages, even these days, that's a high number. And being in a sinful, unmarried sexual relationship, which is adultery, an extremely serious thing, then and now.

[14:11] Probably, she has a reputation. She's likely to be quite a lonely person. She's avoiding everybody and coming in the hottest part of the day to draw water.

I'm speculating on this, but I think it's likely to be the case. So she's come to her water to fill the jar, and there's Jesus.

And this would have stopped her in her tracks, a Jew sitting on a Samaritan well. And Jesus says to her, will you give me a drink? A Samaritan woman said to him, you're a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman.

How can you ask me for a drink? John comments here, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

So there was a long history of Jews hating Samaritans. We can't detour too much into the history of that. We've got some essential things to know about that.

[15:18] And that would be that Samaritans historically were Israelites, God's people. They disobeyed God by insisting on worshipping idols. Eventually, God exiled them, scattering them to various places.

And the king of Assyria resettled Samaria with pagans. So there was a mixture of Israelites and pagans. And they intermarried and they carried on a very distorted, corrupted version of Judaism and worship of false gods.

You can read about this in 2 Kings 17. I would urge you to go thereafter. So as the years passed, the Jews regarded Samaritans as like half-breeds, completely unclean.

Actually, the sentence for the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans, there's actually a word in there that means used together with.

It's like the literal Jews don't share things at all with the Samaritans. We don't touch the same cutlery. We don't do the same things. We don't use the things those unclean Samaritans use.

[16:24] I think this shows us something of the human capacity to hate that like 800 years later, this is still being carried on.

And at Jacob's well, this way of thinking is still very much alive. The woman is still very aware of it. And this woman is questioning Jesus. She's probably in shock. Really? You're asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?

You want a drink from my jug? And Jesus responds, verse 10. If you knew the gift of God and who it is to ask you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. He's talking in the third person. He's talking about himself. Jesus is using the situation of the well of thirst as a picture of what the woman needs. There are varying opinions about exactly what is meant by gift of God and living water.

I'll give you my opinion based on the context and what I've read. Because I'm Aaron. I can only give you my opinion. As always, I would urge you, search the scriptures.

[17:36] See it for yourself. Draw your conclusions as the Spirit leads you. Here's what I think. The Greek word used in the text means it's not just gift. It's free gift.

It's the same word that's used in Acts 2.38. Peter replied, Living water is used in John 7.37-39.

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.

By this, he meant the Spirit. I think the free gift of God is the big picture of our salvation, forgiveness for sins and regeneration. And this can't happen without the work of the Holy Spirit.

It's not something, the Holy Spirit is something as humans that we were born with. It already has. We must be born again, as we've already heard in these scriptures. And it comes through faith in Jesus.

[18:56] This short verse that Jesus says is a glorious picture of the Trinity. God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. So Jesus isn't just talking about water.

He's opening a much bigger conversation here with this woman. He's saying, You think I'm coming to you because I'm thirsty. I'm coming to you because you're thirsty. But she doesn't get it.

In fact, she pretty much ignores everything what Jesus has said about the gift of God and who he is. And asks him where he intends to get the water from. Because he doesn't have a jar. Verses 11 to 12.

Sir, you don't have anything to draw with. Where are you going to get this living water? Here's some sarcasm, I think, working its way into the conversation. Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself?

As did also his sons and his livestock. It's interesting that the way that she recounts the history of the well shows that Jacob was fairly revered for this workmanship.

[20:00] It must have been substantial. I mean, the well was probably over 1,500 years old. But it's sarcasm. Can you do this? You don't even have a jar. Jesus goes on to answer this question of where the water comes from and if he's greater than Jacob.

Jesus answered, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again. Pointing to the well. 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.

Nothing and no one can satisfy thirst like Jesus. He's a never ending source, not just of deep satisfaction, but of life itself.

He's the source of eternal, unending life. And he's saying, am I greater than Jacob? Come to me to drink and you'll never thirst again. It's pretty intense, isn't it?

What was her response? She still thinks he's talking about dehydration. Verse 15, the woman said to him, sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and I have to keep coming here to draw.

[21 : 15] So Jesus is going to go deeper. He's going to reveal to her his omniscience as son of God by showing that he knows everything about her. It's a matter of truth.

He told her, go call your husband and come back. It's unexpected, isn't it? A conversation suddenly turns. I have no husband, she replied.

Okay. Jesus responds. Jesus said to her, you're right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have five husbands and the man you have now is not your husband.

What you've just said is quite true. There's two things going on here, in my opinion. Firstly, and primarily, most importantly, he's reaching into her heart and he's pulling out all this sin and this mess of her life that she doesn't want to give over.

He's reaching in and he's showing his omniscience. He's showing his power as Messiah and son of God and saying, I know this. You need to give me this.

[22 : 28] In doing this, he's laying down the foundation for her salvation. Conviction of sin. John 2.25, we read before, said, He did not need any testimony about mankind for he knew what was in each person.

That was firstly and primarily. Secondly, and there are various opinions about this also. I'm going to tell you what I think. Jesus is calling out a deception.

A surface level illusion. When Jesus says you are right and what you've said is quite true, I don't think he's commending her for telling the truth.

Because she's trying to hide it. At this time in history, in this region, saying I have no husband would likely have been synonymous with saying I'm single. Because living with a man as if he was your husband would have been an extremely sinful pursuit.

In both the eyes of the Samaritans and the Jews. The Samaritans were based on Judaism. Where there would have been a sentence for death. For adultery.

[23 : 49] She didn't want Jesus to know about her relationship. She's trying to go off in a different direction. She said, I don't have a husband. She didn't want the truth to be known.

It's a true statement that is used to deceive. I'm just going to hang on this point for a second.

Because it speaks about what's going on on the surface.

And then what's going on underneath. Which is the kind of big picture of our story today. That's the thing about deception.

It's supposed to look good or nice on the surface. Remember in Genesis 3. Satan tricked Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. By using deception. You will not surely die.

The serpent told her. For God knows that in that day you eat of it. Your eyes will be open. And you will be like God. Knowing good and evil. And down in verse 22. God says, behold the man has become like one of us.

[24 : 51] Knowing good and evil. There's truth there. But it's used to uphold a lie. Adam and Eve did die. And a very downfall of humanity was founded on Satan's deception.

Satan may have spoken the words of truth. But there was nothing but deception underneath them. And in obviously a much lesser way. We're seeing something of this in this conversation.

Again, it's sin. It's all wrapped up with what's going on deep in our heart. It's all one and the same. Jesus said this to Satan.

There is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language. For he is a liar and the father of lies. Jesus, on the other hand, is the absolute sovereign truth. He doesn't just speak the truth.

Jesus is the truth. Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. Christ and deception are totally incompatible.

[25 : 54] There's no place for deception in a relationship of Christ. And as he meets with this woman, I think he's calling it out. And he's saying, I want the truth. I want inside your heart.

I want the deep, true things of you, of your heart. And it speaks to us as well as Christians. Because we need to be vigilant.

We live in a world of lies at this time in history. Our education system tells us we've evolved from soup.

Our online shops tell us that happiness can be bought. We just buy more stuff. You'll be happy. Our magazines tell us that we can be whatever we want to identify as. Our politicians, well, pray for them.

We must live lives marked by truthfulness. Let's give Jesus the deep truth of our hearts. Let's move on. So Jesus has miraculously called out the truth of the woman's sin.

[27 : 00] All of it. Marriage after marriage. Adultery. Jesus has opened the impenetrable box of her heart. And the woman is stunned.

Sir, the woman said, I can see that you're a prophet. She still, still doesn't want to go there. So she completely changes the subject.

And starts talking about worship. Verse 20. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain. You Jews claim the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.

The mountain that she's referring to is Mount Gerizim, which would have been right near the well. Historically, the Samaritans have built a temple there for them to do their corrupted worship to rival the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

But they didn't know God. Despite her changing the subject, Jesus responds by taking this straight. And he goes right back to the matter of truth and right back to the matter of the heart.

[28 : 00] Jesus says, okay, let's talk about true worship. Verse 21. Jesus replied, believe me, a time is coming where you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know for salvation is from the Jews. That sounds complicated. He's drawing a line between knowing God and not knowing God.

The Samaritans worshipped in ignorance. They didn't know God the Father. They worshipped false gods. The Jews knew who they worshipped. And God used a relationship with his people throughout all of history to reveal the glorious promises of salvation that we see throughout the Bible.

And we're going to see it in this text as well. And it's revealed to all mankind. Ultimately, it's a foundational statement. If you don't know the true God, God the Father, there is no true worship. And there is no true salvation. Verse 23 to 24. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

[29 : 13] For they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in the spirit and in truth. Jesus tells the woman, The time of change has come.

Whether you're a Jew, whether you're a Samaritan, you don't need a temple or a mountain or any special place or ritual. Again, a picture of surface things.

Worship must be deeper in spirit and truth. It's not a matter of going to the right place, saying the right special words. It's a matter of where your heart is. Deep spiritual heart worship.

This is what the Father seeks. Jeremiah 29 and 13 says, You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart. These are the kind of worshippers God the Father is seeking.

That's the language Jesus is using. God is our heavenly Father. And he so loved the world that he sent his only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

[30 : 22] And for this woman, he's standing right in front of her. Just her and him. Then comes another miraculous moment. In case you thought there was only one miracle.

Jesus revealing his omniscience to her. The lady recognizes her need for a savior. The woman, seeming to accept what Jesus has said, says, I know that Messiah called Christ is coming.

When he comes, he will explain everything to us. Jesus declared, I, the one speaking to you, am he.

He reveals his full identity to her. Her and him. He is the Messiah. He is the Son of the Father. He is the giver of springs of living water.

Of eternal life. He is her savior. And the woman believes. That's a hallelujah moment, isn't it?

[31 : 27] Let's draw some conclusions. The woman woke up that morning, probably in the same way as every other morning.

Sad. Broken. Going out to draw water in the heat. On her own because she didn't want to have to deal with the people. Or the people I had to say. Or the gossip.

Fed up with it. Not dealing with it. She didn't want to think about her adulterous lifestyle. All the failed marriages. Just keeps it all locked away.

She didn't want to be there. Give me this living water so I don't have to keep doing this. Then she met Jesus. Who came to meet her.

And as exhausted as he was from the journey. He didn't change his mind. The mission went ahead. The plan went ahead. He didn't care about sharing with the Samaritan.

[32 : 24] He didn't carry on to Galilee. Because her sin was so extensive. It was problematic. Or couldn't deal with it. Or it caused too much hurt. He's the son of God.

He can deal with that. He didn't ask her. Are you doing the right things? Are you going to the right mountains? Are you wearing the right clothes? Jesus came to meet her as she was.

Sin and everything. And he loved her. And he forgave her. For who she was. I don't know about you.

But I feel convicted by that. Puts my love to shame. And we should use this as a model. What love? Heard it in the song. Amazing love. That Jesus gives.

He did the impossible. He opened that impenetrable box. It was her heart. He looked inside. And he said. Woman. You are thirsty.

[33 : 22] But you're drinking in all the wrong places. Jesus says. My water. Is self-sustaining. Thirst quenching. Eternal. Life-giving.

Living water. And it's free. Come to me to drink. And that thirst. Will be gone. You will never thirst again. By the end of their conversation.

Just her and Jesus. Having it out. She had confronted her sin. Recognized her need for a savior. And believed in Jesus as Messiah. And next week's sermon.

We'll see the joyful fruit. Of that belief. So here's a question. For us. Today. Are you finding yourself thirsty?

Maybe you know Jesus. And you still have a thirst. You're just not going to him to drink. Worship is an ongoing process.

[34 : 22] Maybe you're still keeping some things locked up in your heart. I urge you. Take them to Jesus. Go back to the fountain of life. We're not perfected yet. There's still things that we keep away. This is worship.

Continuing to offer ourselves to him. With all our hearts. Maybe you're not a Christian. And you don't know Jesus. And maybe you can't see your own thirst. Maybe you see something of your life in this woman.

Maybe your heart is all locked up. And you can't open it. I say to you. As many of us have done. Give it to Jesus. Believe in him. He'll open that impenetrable box.

And you will never thirst again. Ezekiel 36. 26. I will give you a new heart. And put a new spirit in you.

I will remove from you. Your heart of stone. And give you a heart of flesh. Amen. Thank you.