

Living Water

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 June 2006

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] I have to, am I on now? Yes. I have to apologize to three countries. Those of you who were here last Sunday, I think it was 29 countries or something.

That's 29 if you count people born in Newfoundland before 1949. And I tried to count up the different countries of people who come to this church, either as they come here and they're immigrants to Canada where they are the children, of immigrants to Canada. And I got one country wrong.

I thought there was somebody here who comes from Kenya and I made a mistake. He's actually from the Sudan. He's a refugee from Sudan who lived in Kenya for a while. And that's how I made the mistake. But he's from Sudan.

And then I missed Scotland. How can I miss Scotland? And I missed Trinidad because Lisa Moreed, her parents are from Trinidad. So I missed two countries.

And it's really, I think, spectacular to be in any church, actually, that comes where people come together to be in God's presence and to meet with him and to allow God just to come and speak to us and deal with us.

[1 : 19] But it's wonderful that we as a church can gather around the fact that we need Jesus and that Jesus is the one who brings us to the Father and that we don't gather together because we share irrelevant similarities, like we're all of the same ethnic group or the same nation or that we all want Australia to win the World Cup of Soccer or something like that or that we all vote for the same party.

I know that in this church there are people who vote for the NDP and the Conservatives and the Liberals. And for all I know, somebody who's voted for the Bloc. I don't know how many of us live on the Quebec side.

And we all have quite radically different educational attainments and aspirations. And the Gospel shows us that these natural differences are spiritually natural to be in the same church.

That in fact, there's something not spiritually working if we all want the same soccer team to win or we all vote for the same party or we all like the same music or we all have the same educational background.

That's in a sense an unnatural spiritual state. That the natural working of the Gospel and the natural working of the Holy Spirit is to relativize these differences as we are brought to understand our need for Jesus.

[2 : 48] And by coming to Jesus, come to the Father. And Jesus gives us these springs of living water, which we're going to talk about a little bit more in a moment.

And it's really neat because the Gospel text itself today helps to illustrate the irrelevance of differences that the world thinks are very important.

Please turn with me in your Bibles to John chapter 4. Those of you who are bringing your... Well, it's all John chapter 4. If you're using the Pew Bibles, it's on page 921.

And we're going to just sort of look at this story again, the famous story of the woman at the well, one of the best-known Bible stories. And the story begins, in our version it says the word therefore, some versions it uses the word now, and that's because when John wrote the Gospel, he specifically intended to us to understand that the previous story and this story go together.

It's, in fact, part of the intent of the story that we would recognize that. And so it's just, you know, interesting for a second to think about it. Nicodemus, whom we just read about, was learned.

[4 : 01] The woman who we're about to read is unschooled. Nicodemus was powerful. The woman was weak. Nicodemus was respected. The woman is despised and shamed.

Nicodemus is orthodox. The woman believes in folk religion. But Nicodemus is theologically trained. The woman has a very low knowledge of the Bible.

Nicodemus is a man. The woman is a woman. Nicodemus is Jewish. The woman is a Samaritan. Nicodemus is a ruler. And the woman is an outcast.

In fact, from the eyes of the Jewish world, Nicodemus is the preeminent insider. And the woman was a preeminent outsider.

Last night, we saw not a very good movie, Sirianna, starring George Clooney. I don't recommend it. But one of the things which really struck me is they're showing tapes of suicide bombers.

[5 : 04] I guess the tapes that they make before they go in and commit a suicide bombing. These are Muslim suicide bombers. And one of the things which really struck me is that they're giving what they want for their funeral.

And one of the men said that he didn't want a pregnant woman to come to touch his body because that would be deeply shameful.

And I was thinking that, you know, in a way, for the rigorists of Jesus' time, they would have deeply understood that.

And so for the rigorists, the Jewish rigorists who would have been hearing this story about Jesus, the fact that Jesus in a moment is going to unbelievably cross a whole pile of cultural divides and ask a woman of Samaria who's obviously an immoral woman that her cup would be the cup that Jesus would take to drink water out of a Samaritan well would have just been the most shocking and astounding thing as the Jewish rigorists of the day would have been reading this story.

So we see that the story itself, as we read through, John, in fact, purposely puts the story of Nicodemus beside the story of the woman of Samaria, partially to illustrate that Jesus is making relative these distinctions that we all, in fact, need to come to Jesus.

[6 : 33] So let's read along. Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus himself did not baptize but his disciples, he left Judea and departed again to Galilee, but he needed to go through Samaria.

So he came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied from his journey, sat thus by the well.

It was about noon. Just sort of pause. This is just one of these little important asides. One of the many things that the Da Vinci Code got wrong is what the first several centuries of Christianity was like.

The Da Vinci Code makes it look as if somehow or never the first three centuries of Christians all believed that Jesus was a man, and Constantine sort of, with the help of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which there was no Roman Catholic Church then, there was just the church, but that's another error, that they somehow enforced this misleading idea of Jesus being God upon the people.

Actually, this verse here that we just read is what in fact shows that the exact opposite was in fact the case for the first three centuries. For the first three centuries, most people had problems believing that Jesus was a man.

[8 : 05] They had a very, very easy time believing that he was God, those who were Christians, they had a very hard time believing that he was man. So this text here where it says that Jesus was tired, that's one of the texts that for early Christians they got into big theological debates about because it was impossible for them to believe that Jesus being God could ever be tired.

And so in fact, the early centuries of the church, it's the complete opposite of what the Da Vinci Code tries to paint. But here we see Jesus, just a very, very normal, like completely and utterly obvious image.

He's been walking for several hours. It's noon. It's the heat of the day. He finally stops. He sits by the well. He's tired and he's thirsty. Verse seven.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, give me a drink. Give me a drink. You know, just a little bit of a, one of the things which is so cool about Jesus.

You know, there's been times we Christians have been terrible, terrible witnesses to Christ. But you know, how is it that Christianity entered Europe? Christianity entered Europe by Paul and a couple of men getting off a boat.

[9 : 26] And if you read the book of Acts, there's a story of them coming to Philippi and finding nobody who wants to talk to them and they go outside of the city and they find a place of prayer and they talk to a woman by the name of Lydia and they share the gospel with her and Lydia comes to faith.

And you know, we don't, it doesn't really jump out at us, but that simple story of Paul sharing the gospel with Lydia is how Christianity enters Europe.

So it's really quite astounding. The entire shape of the history of the world is changed and just very simply told in the book of Acts of Paul sharing the gospel with a woman by the name of Lydia and Lydia becomes the first European Christian.

Astounding. And here we see that the first Samaritan who is to become a Christian, who is to come to Jesus, is introduced to Jesus by these simple words in verse 7.

Give me a drink. You know, so neat about Jesus. It's so gentle and so respectful.

[10 : 39] It's not with force of arms or force of intellect. It's not with any type of power. It is with such a simple request. Give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Then the woman of Samaria said to Jesus, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink for me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

I just want to pause there for a second. This is, in a sense, the first thing which we really have to notice in the text, that Jesus can give us living water and that he wants us to ask him for living waters.

I'm a city kid, city guy. I guess I'm a city middle-aged person now. But I grew up in Montreal and then lived in Ottawa. And one of my most powerful childhood memories, I don't know if I had a happy childhood, maybe I didn't, but one of my most powerful childhood memories is the first time I ever went out to the country with my parents because somebody had invited us to their cottage.

[11 : 58] And the kids that lived in the cottage that we were visiting, they were really used to this. And one day they were thirsty and they said, let's go to the spring. And they took me to this little place and it was sort of covered with trees and out of the rock came clean water that you could drink.

And this, even today, this is one of the most magical moments of my childhood. The idea that I could go and that the earth itself in a shady place would provide me clean water to drink.

I have to confess that at first I was a little bit nervous about drinking it because of course we all know that water is made in factories somehow and it's approved by the government and all of these types of things.

And the idea that the actual earth itself could produce clean water that would just come out of the ground, out of the rocks, and that I could put my hand there and let the water pool in my hand and drink of it and it was just so wonderfully cold.

It was one of those spectacularly magical moments for me as a child, as a city dweller. And what Jesus is saying here is that if you ask him, he can make you like that spring.

[13 : 07] It doesn't matter how dry or how weary that you might feel. It doesn't matter what your resources are. In a sense, if you are the finance minister of Canada, if you are Bill Gates, if you are a street person, if you are a university student, it is not by our personal power that we have such a spring within us.

It is only a gift of Jesus that he can make us like a spring, like that magical place where something clean and cool and fresh that gives life to the world can flow out of you and me.

It's a wonderful thing. I have no authority in and of myself to tell you folks that. That's exactly what the Bible tells us. What Jesus says, just listen to here again what he says, if you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

And the phrase living water is specifically, it's an image of salvation. Remember in John chapter three, one of the images of what it means to be saved is and to believe on Jesus is that as we put our trust in Jesus and call out on him, that Jesus who alone is from above and from heaven can give us a birth, a new life, making us in a sense spiritually pregnant with heaven.

He can create within us a completely new birth. And here we see that if we ask of Jesus, he can create within us an ever flowing, abundant stream of cool and fresh water that flows from us.

[14 : 44] It's a super abundant stream that will never dry out, that will never lose its freshness and its life-giving power. The other thing behind this image is that it tells us something about what it means to be human.

We were born thirsty and we never lose thirst. I've had the privilege of being able to be there, you know, with the children being born.

And, you know, children don't, little babies when they're first born, they might not quite know how to find what they need to drink. They don't know how to find that. They need the mom to guide them and to help them.

But babies are born thirsty. If a baby, as the minutes and all tick by, if a baby shows no sign of thirst, the doctors start to get nervous because babies should be thirsty.

And just as we are physically thirsty for water and for other fluids, even so, at a pure natural level, we are thirsty for other things.

[15 : 52] It's part of what makes us to be human. Our minds are thirsty for truth. Our hearts are thirsty for beauty. Our wills are thirsty for goodness. And our very soul is thirsty for love.

But underneath and in and over all of these things, we human beings have been made with a thirst for God and nothing other than God will satisfy that thirst.

That is how we have been made. And many of the problems that we have in our life is because we do not recognize what we are truly thirsty for and we think that something other than God himself will satisfy that thirst.

I have terrible eating habits. Nobody should follow my eating pattern. Vi, who used to be the secretary here, would sort of joke and mock in a loving way the odd things that I would eat in my odd eating patterns.

And sometimes I realize at the end of the day that if I'm feeling really, really sluggish or I'm feeling maybe a little bit grumpy or I'm feeling really tired, that part of the problem is that I'm probably dehydrated, that I haven't been drinking enough.

[17 : 03] I can just sort of be so caught up in working, working, working, working, working, and I'm not taking time to drink and then it starts to sort of affect how I'm able to function.

And many of us have been going through life not even recognizing that the thing which drives us to this or the thing that drives us to that or the reason that this feels empty or this isn't working is because in fact we were born with a thirst for God and only he can quench it.

And Jesus here, the image of living waters, of a spring of clean water that flows in us, as we'll see in John chapter 7, Jesus makes clear that it's the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus says, ask me and I will give you this stream of living waters, a stream that will both start to purify and deepen our thirst for God and at the same time as it clarifies and deepens our thirst for God yet both satisfies that thirst and yet makes us even more thirsty for the living God.

Let's listen as Jesus continues to talk to the Samaritan woman. The very last bit of verse 10. You would have asked him and he would have given you living water. The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep.

[18 : 20] It's over 100 feet deep. Where then do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well? Actually he is and drank from it himself as well as his sons and his livestock.

Jesus answered and said to her, whoever drinks of this water will thirst again but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst but the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water, a spring of water springing up into everlasting life.

It's an image of a spring which will never run dry which will always be cool and clean and is just completely and utterly abundant to flow into our lives.

The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst nor come here to draw. Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband and come here.

I just want to pause here for a second. If the first thing which we can see in this story is that Jesus can give us living waters, the second thing in this text is this simple phrase, Go, call your husband.

[19 : 29] It's clear in the overall context of the story that as we're going to see in a moment that the woman has been married five times and currently she's living with somebody that it's not the case that she's had five tragic things happen to her husbands and they've all died or something like that.

The whole context of the story, the fact that she's getting water at the heat of the day when the other women, normally women would come together at dawn and at dusk when it's cool, everything about her shows that she has lived in a moral life and she has been shamed and ostracized by her culture.

And so it's, Jesus says this shocking thing. He says to her that if you ask me, you can give me, I can give you living waters. He, he, she understands this and though she doesn't quite understand what living waters would probably mean, she gives a very simple request.

She says to Jesus, give me these living waters and his response to her is go call your husband. Now at first, this is a completely and utterly un-Canadian moment.

Don't talk about sin. Like let's, okay, you know, I can just picture a typical Canadian like me being beside Jesus and say, no, no, no, no, no, no, Jesus, just stay with the good stuff.

[20 : 48] Like don't, don't get into this other type of stuff that's going to make her feel uncomfortable or hurt her feelings or, you know, isn't really, really nice. Like I, I would have just been right beside Jesus and I would have been giving him the wrong advice as soon as he said this.

But Jesus is vastly smarter than me and, and vastly kinder because you see, he's showing us that if we ask him for this gift of the Holy Spirit and it's an image of salvation, Jesus is the light of the world and he's going to reveal the darkness and the evil in our life.

But the question that Jesus gives to this woman is in fact a statement of great hope. It is a hope that even a woman who has lived such a life to come to such a point of being ostracized by the community and even by Canadian cultural standards would probably be viewed very, very poorly having, having broken up five different marriages and currently living with, with a man.

But even for such a person, Jesus isn't saying, ha ha, I tricked you. I said to you I'll give you living waters. I've tricked you to tell me how bad you are.

There's no way, Jose, that I'm going to give you the living waters now. It's not like that at all. He's saying there is profound hope. He's saying to you and me that it doesn't matter in God's eyes how bad we've been, how much of a mess that we've made of our lives.

[22 : 21] That Jesus hasn't come to talk to people who seem to have at least on the surface managed their lives in complete and utter perfect power. He is hope for the hopeless.

He is a delivery of shame for those who have been shamed. He is new life for those who have died. He is a new future for those of us who think that the story of our life is only leading in a bad direction.

And Jesus doesn't ask her this question because he desires to mock her. He asks her this question because repentance is part of being able to be thirsty for the living God and coming to God and asking for salvation.

He is going to bring to light the sin and the evil and the brokenness and the shame in our lives not so that he will belittle us or burst into mocking laughter at us but because he desires to give us living waters and to make us springs of living waters.

And so repentance is needed not something abstract. Do you feel guilty? Do you feel bad? But something very specific go call your husband. And Jesus says to you and me go call your husband.

[23 : 42] And as he says to you and me go call your husband each of us will almost instantly in most of our consciences know what that is. Some of us maybe it's because we cheated on our taxes.

I don't know. Maybe it's because we've been really telling a lot of gossip. I don't know what it is. But it's specific. It's not abstract. It's not about feelings and emotions. It's very specific. So the woman continues on in verse 17.

The woman answered and said to him I have no husband. Jesus said to her you have well said I have no husband for you have had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband in that you spoke truly.

The woman said to him sir I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Now just pause here for a second.

Commentators all differ in how to interpret this part. Some people think that she's trying to change the topic. Some people think she's trying to pick an argument. I think that there's a third reason but I think even more fundamentally is this.

[24 : 54] I think what the text is trying to show us is that often we're not even clear about our own motives. I mean sometimes we're pretty clear about our motives but you know if we have any type of introspection at all a lot of times in our life it's not clear to us why we do what we do and why we say what we say that there's in a sense a mixture of motives within us and partly the text wants to keep showing us not to trust in ourselves it's not as if Jesus is only going to give living waters to those of us who have unbelievably clear and consistent motives and have had no sin in our lives the text is going to always put Jesus here at the center driving us on and on and on and on not so that we understand what we can do and be proud of ourselves but so that we can understand how wonderful the Savior is and how great our need of Him is and I think that what's happening with the woman here is this she's been promised living water she's been convicted of sin she says where can I go for atonement which temple do I go to and if you tell me

I have to go to the temple in Jerusalem I have no hope at all Jesus because they won't let me in where do I go for atonement and Jesus says this verse 21 woman believe me the hour the hour is coming the hour here by the way in John's gospel one of the good things about this version of the bible the new king James version is to translate the hour and the hour in John's gospel is a little clue this is just a little help for you to read it the hour refers to as crucifixion and as death upon the cross and resurrection all viewed as one mighty act of God every time if you're reading a version of the bible like this where it translates the hour out of Greek literally it's always it's a little bit of a pointer that the hour is coming when the son of man the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world will die upon the cross will taste everything there is to taste of death with nothing left over and will conquer sin and death and hell and the evil one in his resurrection on the third day that's what the hour is referring to

Jesus said to her woman believe me the hour is coming when you will not when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the father you worship what you do not know we know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews but the hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and truth for the father is seeking such to worship him God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth just notice verse 23 isn't that such a wonderful line the father is seeking such to worship him and it's really important when we read this text not to read it as if we have amnesia and not to read it as if we think that somehow truth means whatever happens to be true for us or where truth means the abstract scientific pursuit of truth or truth means just being able to speak the truth or spirit means some type of internal emotion or doing things with gusto or anything else like that we can't read the text with amnesia who is the temple

Jesus is the true temple who is the truth Jesus is to say I am the truth who is the life Jesus will say that he is the life who is the way Jesus is the way who is the savior of the world Jesus is the savior who is the one who narrates God Jesus is the one who narrates God who is the one who bestows the Holy Spirit Jesus is the one who bestows the Holy Spirit.

Who is the one who can give us new life from above? Jesus is the one who can give new life from above. Who is it that needs, who is it who can give the spring of water that will spring up into us into eternal life?

[28 : 47] Jesus is the one who can do that. And what is that spring of water unto eternal life? That is the Holy Spirit. And we can't read these texts as if somehow it's talking about something other than Jesus.

Jesus is saying the Father is seeking people to worship him. And to worship means to come into the one whose hour is about to come.

It means to come to the one who is the temple, who is the truth, who is the life. It is to, by coming to Jesus and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, that one is able to actually come and know the Father and worship him.

And the good news to the woman in Samaria, the good news to the woman who can't even be with other people because she has to come at noon, the good news to the one who has had five husbands and is currently living with another man, is the Father is seeking you.

The Father is seeking you. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, we ask that you make us thirsty.

[30 : 03] We ask, Father, that you deepen our thirst for you. We ask, Father, that you humble us and heal us and form us so that as we thirst ever more deeply, we turn to you ever more completely and fully.

We thank and praise you, Father, for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We thank and praise you, Father, that he can give us springs of living water.

Precious Jesus, give us this water. Give us, make us such springs. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. This we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.