

The Woman Who Became A Well - Part 1

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Date: 21 January 1996

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[0 : 00] Well, there's a text of Scripture that will take us to the rock, and it's John chapter 4. It's a familiar passage, and one of the problems with a familiar passage is that we can read it and think we know it.

So I'm going to encourage you to try to read this as though you'd never read it before. If you are able, will you stand and listen to the reading of the Word? John chapter 4, verses 1 through 26. Hear the Word of God. When, therefore, the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were, he left Judea and departed again into Galilee.

And he had to pass through Samaria, so he came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied from his journey, was sitting thus by the well.

It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman, therefore, said to him, how is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink, since I am a Samaritan woman?

[1 : 18] 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.

She said to him, sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then do you get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?

Jesus answered and said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again. But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.

The woman said to him, sir, give me this water so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw. Jesus said to her, go call your husband and come here. The woman answered, I have no husband.

Jesus said, you have said well, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. You have said this truly. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are prophet.

[2 : 26] Our fathers worshipped in this mountain and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall you worship the Father.

You worship that which you do not know. We worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

For such people the Father seeks to be his worshippers. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming.

He is called Christ. When that one comes, he will declare all things to us. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. Spirit of the living God, we believe that hundreds of years ago now you inspired John to write down these words.

To tell this story. And now I pray that in your mercy and grace you will cause these words to come alive in us as never before. For we pray it in Jesus' name and for his glory.

[3 : 33] Amen. Clearly the major theme of this moving story is Jesus the thirst quencher.

Clearly John's purpose in telling this story is to show us how Jesus broke through to this woman and breaks through to us to bring us to the place where we will drink what he has to give us. And this morning I want to go back and walk through this story step by step, watching how Jesus does this, trusting him to do it for us today. But before I do, I want to briefly call your attention to something else that might be going on in this story.

A possible sub-theme, if you will. You see, this is not the first place in the Bible that a life-transforming thing happened for a woman at a well. As I was working through this text this week, my mind kept going back to three other well stories.

And I wondered if John did not have these well stories in mind as he wrote this story. And I wondered if John didn't assume that some of his readers had this in mind as they read the story. [4 : 47] As a sub-theme at least. You see, it was at a well that a servant of Abraham, Abraham was the father of the Jews. It was at a well that a servant of Abraham found a bride for Abraham's son Isaac.

It was at a well that they found Rebekah. It was at a well that Isaac and Rebekah's son Jacob found a bride. It was at a well that he found Rachel. And it was at a well that Moses, the first great leader and first great prophet of the Jews, found a bride.

Does John have this in mind when he tells us the story of the Samaritan woman at the well? John, as a faithful witness, records events as they happen. But as I pointed out two weeks ago, he does not merely record events as they happen.

He is consistently connecting the event to what came before and what comes after. Well, what came before this well event? The thing most of us remember is Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 about the necessity of the new birth.

But between Nicodemus and the woman at the well, there is a story about John the Baptist. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. Up until that time, the crowds would flock to hear John the Baptist preach.

[6 : 01] When Jesus came on the scene, the crowd stopped going to John and started to go hear Jesus preach. And apparently, some of the Baptist disciples were concerned about this. And apparently, they were concerned that John might feel very badly about this.

They came to John saying, Teacher, remember the guy who was with you on the east side of the Jordan, the one you spoke about? Well, he's baptizing now and everyone is going to him. They expect John the Baptist to feel very badly about this.

But the Baptist surprised them by expressing great joy. This joy of mine has now been made full. What? The attendance at your river gatherings is dwindling so that people can go over to these other gatherings and you rejoice?

Why? He says, listen, The bridegroom is the one to whom the bride belongs. But the bridegroom's friend who stands by and listens is glad when he hears the bridegroom's voice.

Did you hear what John is saying? John the Baptist could rejoice that people were no longer following him but following Jesus because John thinks of himself as the friend of the bridegroom.

[7 : 10] The friend of the bridegroom has only one goal and it is to get the bride and the bridegroom together. John the Baptist is saying that he thinks of Jesus as the great bridegroom who has now come into the world to call his bride to himself.

And so when people started following after Jesus, the friend of the bridegroom rejoiced and faded out of the picture. Then comes the story of the woman at the well. Is John the gospel writer hinting that in this encounter, Jesus the bridegroom is beginning to call his bride to himself?

Is John hinting that the Samaritan woman is the beginning of the calling of disciples from every nation who would constitute not only his body in the world, not only his temple in the world, but who would turn out to be his bride?

In John 24, Jesus makes the statement, for such the father seeks to be his worshippers. Seeks. This woman is clearly being sought.

Is John hinting that in the encounter at the well, the father is seeking a bride for his son? It's worth considering, at least as a sub-theme to this text.

[8 : 23] Clearly, the major theme is Jesus the thirst quencher. And the irony is that the theme is developed by beginning with Jesus the thirsty one.

The thirsty man at the well turns out to be the one who quenches human thirst. He was on his way with some of his disciples from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north.

Between Judea and Galilee lies Samaria. Very strict Jews would never go through Samaria. Instead, they would take a two- or three-day roundabout pass. But Jesus the Jew chooses to go through this forbidden territory.

He's seeking someone. By the time the disciples and he arrive outside the city of Sychar, Jesus is very tired. It's a strong word that John uses here.

The word is used to describe that kind of exhaustion which you experience after working in the fields all day. Now, put that observation in the larger scope of the Gospel of John.

[9 : 27] That Jesus was tired. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory.

And he traveled from Judea to Galilee until he came to a city of Samaria called Sychar. Jacob's well was there, and the Word, tired by his journey, was sitting by a well. The creative Word became flesh, and wearied from his journey, sat down by a well.

Amazing! The one who in the beginning determined that two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom should go together to make water is now sitting by a well, exhausted and thirsty.

Two books of the Bible have a very high view of the divinity of Jesus. They are the book of Hebrews and the Gospel of John. Yet it is those two books who also have a very high view of the real humanity of Jesus.

The picture of the Word made flesh sitting by a well, tired and thirsty, has played and is playing a redemptive role in my life. As those of you who know me well know, I have very high expectations of who I can be and what I can do in ministry, which means that I live with a lot of disappointment.

[10 : 46] Somewhere, I got the crazy notion that as a pastor, I ought to be able to do all the tasks of ministry, do them all well, do them all cheerfully, and do them all without getting tired.

Somehow, I got the notion in me that if I were totally committed to Jesus Christ, if I were totally sold out to the kingdom of God, if I were completely filled with the Holy Spirit, I would not get tired.

But because I do get tired, something must be wrong. What a picture. There sitting on the wall of Jacob's well is the creator of all things, tired.

There sitting on the wall of Jacob's well is the only one who is completely committed, the only one totally sold out to the kingdom, the only one completely filled with the Holy Spirit, the only one free of sin, and he is tired, and he is thirsty.

Even the incarnate God cannot do all ministry without suffering fatigue. Jesus, the thirsty human, it's a wonderfully liberating picture to us type A perfectionists.

[11 : 54] And in his thirst, he turns out to be the one who quenches human thirst. While sitting on the wall of Jacob's well, he meets a thirsty woman. The woman's thirst, however, is very different from Jesus' thirst.

His thirst can be quenched with H₂O, hers cannot. She does not know why she's thirsty. She does not know where to go to quench her thirst. Besides, she's been disappointed so many times in trying to quench that thirst that she, like many other humans, ignores it, burying it in the unconscious and subconscious parts of her being.

She comes to Jacob's well during the hottest time of the day, the sixth hour, says John, which is 12 noon. She comes to do what she does nearly every day, to fill her water jars. Water jars, water jars, an endless round of water jars.

Know anyone like that? She's a social outcast. At least it's reasonable to assume that. Coming from the village at high noon at the hottest time of the day, and coming alone leads us to conclude that either she is embarrassed to be with the other women or the other women are embarrassed to be with her.

As she approaches the well, she sees Jesus. He's a perfect stranger. She has no clue who he is. By the end of the encounter, she's going to have all kinds of clues. Now watch as Jesus seeks to quench her thirst.

[13 : 18] Watch him go to work now. Give me a drink, he says. It's brilliant. Yes, he is genuinely thirsty, and yes, he has nothing with which to draw water from the well, but he's wanting to draw this woman to another well, to the only well where her thirst can be quenched.

Had Jesus begun the conversation at the end, revealing who he was, she would have dismissed him as some kook suffering from sunstroke. But Jesus begins where she is, and begins by asking a favor of her.

Now think about that. That's an amazing thing. God incarnate, now asking a favor of one of his creatures, give me a drink.

It's marvelous, and to her, it's a total surprise. She probably expected this stranger to act as though she did not exist. After all, that's how the villagers treated her. At most, she expected some lustful look or some condemning stare.

Give me a drink. She's so caught off by this that she drops all cultural etiquette and does not even use any honorific title when speaking to him. She just blurts out, how is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman?

[14 : 31] In Jesus' apparently innocent request, give me a drink, he is leaping over high walls, and he is breaking through thick barriers, and he is bestowing on that woman incredible dignity.

She is stunned that a Jew would ask a drink from a Samaritan. Jews hated Samaritans, and Samaritans hated Jews. The hostility went back some 500 years.

First century rabbis used to say, let no man eat of the bread of Samaritans, for he who eats the bread of Samaritans is like swine's flesh. Imagine what they said about drinking from the cup.

Give me a drink. She can't believe her ears. A Jew asking of her, Samaritan, a drink. It's incredible, because in order for Jesus to drink in that situation, he's going to have to touch his hands and touch his lips to the cup she has been using to drink.

Jesus breaks through one of the thickest racial barriers there is. And is that not what we see him doing in the rest of the New Testament? Jesus the Jew, always reaching out to people of other cultures, other races, other religions, other socioeconomic status.

[15 : 47] He is so interracial and so multicultural that he seeks all kinds of people and makes them into one body and makes them into one new race. Jesus is always jumping over walls.

And if we love him and follow him, we will find ourselves jumping over the walls with him. May I suggest a simple yet powerful way in which we can follow him over the walls right here in this city?

I want to propose to you that each of us learn how to say hello in at least two other languages. That little gesture goes way beyond what can be measured in terms of building bridges in the city.

Learn how to say hello in two other languages spoken in this city. Pick Armenian or Spanish or Korean or Tagalog or Chinese or Indian.

Choose two languages and learn how to greet people. As I was working through this passage this week, I sensed the Lord saying something like this. I want GPC to be known in Glendale as those are the people who jump over walls.

[17 : 00] I could use an amen to know if I'm right. If you follow Jesus, you can't help it because he's always jumping over the walls.

Learn to say hello in two languages. What further impresses the woman at the well is that Jesus, a Jewish male, spoke to her, a Samaritan female.

I mean, talk about leaping over walls and breaking through barriers. The rabbis of the first century laid it down that if a man wanted to be righteous, if he wanted to be holy, he would never greet a woman in public.

Never. Listen to just a few of the rabbinic statements from the first century. He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the law and at last will inherit Gehenna.

Yikes. A woman shall not be alone with a man in an inn, not even his sister or his daughter on account of what men may think. A man shall not talk with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife, and especially not with another woman on account of what men may think.

[18 : 10] William Barclay tells of a group of Pharisees called the Bruised and Bleeding Pharisees, so named because whenever they saw a woman coming down the street, they would cover their eyes and thus bump into buildings and trees.

You may know that one of the prayers that the pious, spiritual men of the day prayed regularly was, O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast not made me a Gentile or a sinner or a tax collector or a woman.

Surprise! Sitting on the wall of Jacob's well is a man whom other men will call rabbi and he is talking to a woman in public alone.

And more than that, he is going to drink from the same cup she drinks from. When Jesus' disciples return to this scene, they're horrified. The woman, she's shocked, but for the first time in a long time feeling very special.

Jesus Christ does not treat women as second-class citizens. The way he relates to women was and is truly revolutionary. He treats women as fully human, as full partners in the adventure of discipleship.

[19 : 21] And is that not also what we see in the rest of the New Testament? Jesus even goes beyond the revolutionary thing he did at Jacob's well. He invites women to become part of his apostolic band.

He invites them to become part of the group of disciples, something first-century rabbis would never, ever do. Joachim Yermias, this respected New Testament scholar, calls this fact an unprecedented happening in the history of that time.

Jesus knowingly overthrew custom when he allowed women to follow him. Give me a drink. A simple sentence. But in it, he's leaping over and breaking through long-standing racial, cultural barriers to draw this thirsty woman to the thirst-quenching well.

The woman's question is shot through with wonder. How is it that you, a Jewish man, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman? Well, now that her heart is soft, Jesus begins to move in to address her thirst.

In response to her wonder, he says, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asked you for a drink, you would ask him and he would give you living water.

[20 : 39] Jesus sees through the hard crust of this woman. Jesus sees through the masks that she has learned to wear and Jesus sees that she is deeply wounded. Five husbands, five slashes of woundedness, says Michael Caird.

And even now, there is the ongoing injury because she is living with a man who will not love her enough to make her his wife. Apparently, none of those relationships were ever fulfilling.

Jesus sees that. He sees the nagging pain and the emptiness. It is the nagging emptiness of our time. It is what T.S. Eliot calls hollow men.

Hollow men. Nothing finally there except this excruciating discontent, this excruciating void, this restlessness for who knows what.

For living water, that's what. If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would ask Him and He would give you living water. In the Old Testament, this word living water came to symbolize fulfillment.

[21 : 46] Over and over again, God's people are portrayed as parched ground. And over and over again, God promises to pour water on the parched ground. Isaiah 44, verse 3, I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground.

Isaiah 12, 3, Therefore, with joy, you will draw water from the wells of salvation. It later became clear that this thirst-quenching water was nothing other than the Spirit of the living God, which John makes clear in John chapter 7.

The thirsty woman, however, does not understand Jesus' metaphorical language, and so she takes it all with a kind of crude literalism. In her mind, living water meant flowing water.

The better water you find in a living stream. She's thinking in terms of stagnant well water versus flowing stream water. And so she says, Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is way too deep to get down to the living water.

Where are you going to get the living water? So Jesus clarifies. And in so doing, he now begins to move in on her unfulfillment. Everyone who drinks of this water, Jacob's well, will thirst again.

[22 : 53] But those who drink of the water that I will give will never thirst. The water that I will give will become in them a well of water springing up to eternal life.

Did you hear that? David Redding paraphrases Jesus' words this way. Drink my water, and you will be drinking a well. Don Mumau paraphrases it even better.

Drink my water, and you will become a well. Again, she misunderstands. Understandably so. Yet because that deeper thirst now has been quickened by Jesus' word, she asks Jesus for the gift. Sir, give me this living water so that I don't thirst anymore and so that I don't have to come back here anymore. Whatever it was, she is now ready to receive it.

Are you? Then Jesus leaps over the highest barrier of all. He breaks through the wall and goes right to the center of her being.

[23 : 54] He says, Go call your husband and come back. I have no husband. Notice that again, she forgets cultural etiquette and does not use any honorific title.

That's because she's stunned. She's probably embarrassed. She may even be a bit irritated. Jesus responds, You were right in saying you have no husband for you have had five husbands and the one you are with now is not your husband.

You have said this truly. Why did Jesus do that? Why on that day did he put his finger on all of that woundedness?

Why did he bring up that which embarrasses her? Why did he bring up that which stigmatizes her in her culture? She was no doubt surprised that he knew her so well but I would imagine also very hurt.

Why did Jesus do that? Because the biggest barrier to fulfillment is denial. Denial of all of that stuff that is going on in our lives.

[24 : 54] And as long as we deny it, as long as we ignore that pain, as long as we ignore that void, or as long as we think that we can deal with it in some other way, we will not ask and we will not drink.

But therein lies the dilemma. Admitting our need is a step that you and I will not naturally take. We humans are too proud to admit that we need more.

We are too proud to admit to our friends that contrary to the facade, everything is not going well.

Thank you. So we keep the little secrets, the little painful secrets to ourselves. Go call your husband and come back.

That's love. That's love breaking through the barriers of denial and pride. You've had five husbands and the one you are with now is not your husband. Jesus there is taking off the mask and revealing the woman to herself.

Painful as it might be, Jesus Christ will, step by step, bring us face to face with ourselves. When the light shines, that which we seek to hide will be revealed.

[26 : 06] Do not be alarmed. Do not be afraid. He is breaking through the wall to bring us to the well. But there's another reason why I think that Jesus brings up this painful subject to the woman.

Up until that painful moment, the woman was feeling loved. After all, look at all that Jesus was doing to break through to her. But if she had gone home before that painful moment, if she had gone home before Jesus brought up the subject of her husband's and her live-in, she would have begun to doubt Jesus' love.

I can imagine her walking back to the village, this feeling of love slowly going away as she wondered, would he love me if he really knew? If he knew about my life, would he have broken through to offer me this gift?

After all, everyone else in the village puts me on the shelf, I wonder if he knew what he put me on the shelf. So in order to head off that doubt, Jesus exposes that which he seeks to hide.

Go get your husband. It is as though Jesus were saying, woman, woman, I love the real you. I'm not talking to the ideal you.

[27 : 19] I'm not talking to the you you want to be. I'm talking to the real you. And woman, it is the real you I love. It is to the real you that I am offering living water. This text tells us that Jesus will not play games with us.

He will confront us with ourselves, not to rub our face into the ground, but to let us know that he knows who he has called. He knows the one he's chosen to love.

He's not making a mistake. The Redeemer knows. He knows our ache apart from him, and he knows all the sorry ways that we are trying to ease that ache apart from him.

And he breaks through the denial and the pride to bring us to the place where we face the need and ask for the drink. The woman then speaks again. Sir, she says, I perceive you are a prophet.

And then she raises her concern about worship. Should it be where is the right place of worship?

Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, Mount Gezerim. You people, the Jews, say you ought to worship in Jerusalem. Which is it?

[28 : 20] Now, I used to think and I used to think that the woman was trying to weasel out of this intense confrontation. I used to think that Jesus' knowledge of her was so terrifying that she shifts the subject away from the personal to the theoretical.

Nothing like a good theological debate to avoid dealing with human pain, right? But I was wrong.

She's not trying to weasel out of this. It was Leslie Newbigin of India who helped me see this.

The woman, see, has experienced Jesus as a prophet. I perceive you are a prophet. And Jesus is doing what prophets are supposed to do.

Expose us to ourselves. So the question becomes for this woman, now that I'm exposed, where can I go worship God and be restored? Jesus takes her concern seriously.

And in his response, finally draws her to the well. Watch this. The woman expects Jesus to say, well, it's in Jerusalem that you're supposed to worship. But no, he surprises her again and says, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor Jerusalem.

[29 : 29] An hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for such the Father seeks to be his worshipers. God is spirit.

Those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth. We don't have time this morning to unpack that loaded statement. What is enough to know is that Jesus is not saying that worship in a particular place at a particular time is now irrelevant.

No. He is saying that the living God is not confined to a particular place. The living God is not confined to a particular mode of worship. God is spirit. That is, God is able to be everywhere at all times and able, like spirit, to be very active.

And as the ever-present, ever-active one, God is always seeking people to be worshipers. The point is, the woman can deal with her need right here.

She need go nowhere else. That's what he's saying to her. Well, the woman is impressed, but she's not ready to buy into it. She's at the well, but not quite yet ready to drink.

[30 : 33] So she says, I know that Messiah is coming, and when he comes, he will reveal all truth to us. Now, again, she's not changing the subject.

She's not trying to weasel out. She's pressing at the next dimension. For the Samaritans, holy scripture consisted of the first five books of the Bible. That's all of the scripture they had.

The first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses. Which means, then, that the Samaritans' view of Messiah would be shaped by those five books. In the last book of the Samaritan Bible, Deuteronomy, Moses speaks to Israel, preparing Israel for his death.

In Deuteronomy 18, Moses says this, The Lord said to me, I will raise up a prophet like you, and I will put my words in his mouth. One day, God would send another prophet, and this prophet would speak the unique word of God, and lead the people of God into the life of God.

The book of Deuteronomy ends. The last line of the Samaritans' Bible is this, Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. So the Samaritan woman is going to wait to deal with Jesus' insight about worship, going to wait until that prophet comes.

[31 : 47] The Samaritan word for Messiah was the word tahib, and it means the restorer or the revealer, the one who reveals truth. I'm going to wait until tahib comes. Then Jesus, as it were, hands the woman the cup.

I am he, the one who is speaking to you. I am he, the one who is speaking to you. Woman, I am that prophet. You need not wait any longer.

But is that all he is saying to her? No, I don't think so. He's saying a whole lot more. I am he. Underline those words. They ought to be printed in capital letters in every Bible. I am he.

I am he. They are the very pronouns the living God uses when he speaks of himself in the book of Deuteronomy. If her ears had been attuned, she would have remembered God's self-declaration in Deuteronomy 32.

In the highest theological chapter of the Samaritan Bible, God says, see now that I am he. There is no other God beside me. Do you realize what Jesus was saying to that thirsty woman?

[32 : 51] The one with whom you must deal is sitting right here. I am he, the one who is speaking to you. I am the one who met Moses at the burning bush. I am the one who met Moses in the tent covered with a cloud.

You need not go anywhere else to settle the matter. You need not wait. Worship and restoration are possible now. I am he. What an encounter.

In Jesus, the thirsty man, God himself was reaching out to the thirsty woman. This woman would never be the same again because she had now drunk from the well that never runs dry.

That well is present right here today. And that well will be present this afternoon wherever you go and tomorrow and the next day and the next day. It will be present because Jesus says once we drink of his well, once we drink of this living water, we become the well.

John 7, verse 37. If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink and out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. This text is reminding us that we were created in such a way that only the living God, only the living God can quench the horrendous thirst of our souls.

[34 : 08] St. Augustine once said that all human longings are at root, the longings for the Holy One. Every longing you have is at root, a longing for the Holy One. We will never be satisfied with anything or anyone else.

Why is it taking so long to get that? Why is it taking so long for us to get that? God's word to the people of God through Jeremiah is still pertinent for us.

Jeremiah 2.13. My people have committed two errors. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and dug cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

I do it all the time. I hear Him calling to me. But what do I do? I go to another well, and I am momentarily satisfied. That's the problem. The wells satisfy momentarily.

But then I'm thirsty again, and I hear Him calling me, but do I go? No, I dig another well. And again discover that however good it is, it never quenches the thirst.

[35 : 15] How long is it going to take for us to get it? We drink at the wells of our possession, trying to quench the thirst at our material well-being.

We drink at the wells of our reputation, trying to quench the thirst in other people's acclaim of us.

We drink at the wells of overeating or over-drinking. We drink at the wells of sensual pleasure.

We aimlessly flip the television dial, looking for something that will stimulate us. We drink at the wells of our work, thinking that all of that creativity will finally ease the thirst.

If I can just get myself another job, and all the while, the fountain of living water is standing nearby, and in the still, small voice saying, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that is right beside you, you would ask Him, and He would give you living water.

Would you allow me to conclude yet another sermon with a reading from C.S. Lewis, three weeks in a row? I won't promise you that I'll stop doing this, but it's the fourth book of his Chronicles of Narnia, children's stories, and I'm going to be reading from The Silver Chair.

[36 : 32] In The Silver Chair, Lewis tells of this young girl named Jill, and tells of Jill's first encounter with Oslon the Lion. Oslon the Lion is the Jesus figure of the story.

Jill has done something very stupid, and she feels very ashamed about this. It's something that has hurt her good friend, Scrub. She ends up in the forest all alone, and she ends up very thirsty.

Off in the distance, she can hear this persistent sound of running water, and she cautiously follows the sound until she comes to a stream. The sight of the stream makes her ten times thirstier than she had been, but she does not rush to the stream to drink, and the reason she does not rush is right in front of her she sees the big lion, and we read, It lay with its head raised and its two forepaws out in front of it like the lions of Trafalgar Square.

She knew at once that it had seen her, for its eyes looked straight into hers for a moment and then turned away as if it knew her quite well. If I run away, it'll be after me in a moment, thought Jill, and if I go on, I shall run straight into its mouth.

Anyway, she couldn't have moved if she had tried, and she couldn't take her eyes off it. How long this lasted, she could not be sure. It seemed like hours, and the thirst became so bad that she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the lion if only she could drink some of that water first.

[37 : 52] If you are thirsty, you may drink. For a second, she stared here and there, wondering who had spoken. Then the voice said, If you are thirsty, come and drink. And of course, she remembered what Scrub had said about animals talking in that other world, and realized that it was the lion speaking.

Anyway, she had seen its limbs move this time, and the voice was not like a man's. It was deeper, wilder, stronger, a sort of heavy, golden voice. It did not make her any less frightened than she had been before, but it made her frightened in a rather different way.

Are you not thirsty? said the lion. I'm dying of thirst, said Jill. Then drink, said the lion. May I, could I, would you mind going away while I do? said Jill. The lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl.

And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience. The delicious, rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

Will you promise not to do anything to me if I come? said Jill. I make no promise, said the lion. Jill was so thirsty now that without noticing, she had come a step nearer.

[38 : 59] Do you eat girls? she said. I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms, said the lion. Didn't say it as if it were boasting nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry.

It just said it. I dare not come and drink, said Jill. Then you will die of thirst, said the lion. Oh dear, said Jill, coming another step nearer. I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.

There is no other stream, said the lion. There isn't.

There is no other stream.