

AM John 4:1-30 The One who gives Living Water to Thirsty Souls

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to John chapter 4, the fourth chapter of John's Gospel, which in the Pew Bible is on page 1071.

And we'll read the first 30 verses. Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself did not baptize but only his disciples, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

And he had to pass through Samaria, so he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there, so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour, that is midday.

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

[1 : 25] The Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?

For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, Give me a drink, 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. Where do you get that living water?

Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock. Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him, will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him, will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty, or have to come here to draw water.

[2 : 54] Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You are right in saying, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.

What you have said is true. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming, when neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, will you worship the Father.

You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

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.

[4 : 27] He who is called Christ, when he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you, am he.

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, what do you seek, or why are you talking with her?

So the woman left her water jar, and went away into town, and said to the people, come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.

Can this be the Christ? Christ, they went out of the town, and were coming to him. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come before you to give you thanks and praise, but also to bring our petitions, our intercessions to you.

[5 : 32] We thank you that... So please turn with me to John and chapter 4, and to this conversation that the Lord Jesus Christ had with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well.

Not sure if you know this, but this is perhaps the... I think it is actually the longest recorded conversation that Jesus had with a single individual in the Gospels.

The conversation with the woman at the well. What would it have been like to have 20 or 25 minutes alone, one-to-one, with the Lord Jesus Christ?

This is a marvelous incident. It's full of rich teaching, not only about this poor woman, but far more importantly, about the Lord Jesus himself.

And I think that's an important thing to notice at the very beginning and the outset, that the Gospels are not all about us.

[6 : 51] They are about the Lord Jesus Christ first and foremost. We ought to read the Gospels not trying to find ourselves in the picture or the story that's being presented, but asking ourselves, what does this passage teach us, show us, about Jesus Christ?

Remember too, that John himself gives us the reason why he wrote his Gospel and what his purpose was that he had in mind when he wrote it.

If you turn to John chapter 20 and verses 30 and 31, you will read these words. Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book.

In other words, he's saying this is not an exhaustive account of the life of Jesus Christ. There were many other things, signs he calls them.

Isn't that interesting? The other Gospel writers call the great works of Jesus his mighty works, works of power, but John refers to them as signs because these mighty works indicate spiritual truth.

[8 : 18] They tell us who Jesus is. They point like signposts to eternal truths and realities. Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but he says these are written.

Why? Here's the reason he gives. So that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. That Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One, whom God promised from Old Testament times. He is the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So John's Gospel is really an evangelistic tract. Its aim is to bring people to recognize the truth about Jesus that he is the Messiah, that he is the Christ, that he is the great prophet, priest and king, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So that's the purpose of John's Gospel and that is the purpose of the story of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. So let's then look at the story that John tells us here in chapter 4 of his Gospel.

[9 : 49] Jesus and his disciples have left Judea in the south and they are returning north to Galilee and they've been on the road for perhaps five or six hours.

If they had set out on their journey at first light then they've reached midday and they are weary and they're hungry and they're thirsty.

And the disciples had gone into the town of Sychar to buy some food according to verse 8. The town they had come to in Samaria had old associations with Jacob the great patriarch of the Old Testament whose life we read about in the second half of the book of Genesis the first book in the Bible.

The field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph was nearby and Jacob's well was also there. And this is where Jesus weary from his journey sat down to rest in the noonday heat.

I wonder what Jesus was thinking about during those few peaceful moments that he had to himself as he sat by Jacob's well.

[11 : 22] Jacob's well. Jacob. The stories associated with Jacob. Perhaps the Lord's well instructed mind turned to familiar scenes from the book of Genesis.

Moses. He's by a well. Perhaps he was thinking of things that happened at another well. And at the end of another journey.

This time not in Samaria but in a place called Paddan Aram where Abraham's servants stopped to rest on his very special errand to find a wife for his master's son Isaac among Abraham's relatives

in Mesopotamia.

And you remember how at that well he met a young woman called Rebecca who had come out to draw water for her father's flocks. And Eliezer Abraham's servant asked the same question of Rebecca as Jesus asked of another woman at a different well.

I am thirsty. Please give me a drink. And you remember how Rebecca not only gave the servant a drink but also watered his animals too.

[12:50] And humanly speaking so much depended on the response of Rebecca. Was she the one for the servant's master's son?

She was indeed. She later married Isaac and she gave birth to Jacob. And from that line of Abraham Isaac and Jacob eventually Jesus the Messiah was born.

These were the ancestors of Jesus Christ. And it wouldn't be surprising at all if during his brief rest on this journey his mind had wandered back to those Old Testament stories.

Perhaps he also thought about the question that was put to Rebecca as she faced the life-changing decision of leaving her home and family in Paddan Aram to marry Abraham's son Isaac.

You remember how the servant was anxious to get back on his journey and as he was waiting anxiously to set off on that long journey back to Canaan Rebecca's family put this question to her.

[14:17] will you go with this man? And just then Jesus lifts up his eyes through the shimmering heat of day he sees a woman approaching carrying a large water pot in order to draw water out of Jacob's well.

And now we must begin to think about the conversation that took place between Jesus and this woman from Samaria. let me point out that it is so very clear from the outset to the end of the conversation that this was a woman who had absolutely no inclination to go with this man.

In her responses to Jesus we see that she really doesn't want to have anything to do with him at all. Look at verses 9 and 10. The Samaritan woman said to him how is it that you a Jew ask for a drink from me a woman of Samaria for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Her response to Jesus question indicates that there was a hostility in her heart to this in her eyes Jewish man.

[16:12] Why do you a man and a Jew ask a drink of me a woman and a Samaritan? Jews have no dealings with us Samaritans.

Why a Jew wouldn't even talk to a Samaritan. Never mind touch or share the same cup or plate or cutlery. By the way isn't it interesting to observe in passing that there was nothing in this Jewish man in Jesus Christ that made him stand out or look special in the eyes of this woman.

Isn't that interesting? To her he looked just like any other Jew. That reminds us does it not of the words of Isaiah the prophet he had no form or majesty that we should look at him and no beauty that we should desire him.

And as far as this woman was concerned she didn't give him a second glance. He was despised and rejected by men says Isaiah the prophet.

And she certainly despised and rejected him. And did you notice that there is no mention of her giving him the drink that he asked for?

[18:01] I think it's safe to say that she thinks that she doesn't need him. And she doesn't want anything from him.

she has absolutely no idea what this man sitting beside the well can do for her.

now from her bold and forthright response to Jesus' initial question this woman I think we can say is a woman who has no shyness when it comes to talking to men.

In fact it appears that she is at great ease perhaps even a bit too easy in the company of men. We might say she was somewhat brazen but the Lord Jesus is not going to be brushed off in his pursuit of this woman's salvation.

And so he responds to her unfeeling and hard and insensitive reply and he says if you only knew who is asking for a drink you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

[19:31] Notice how Jesus persists. He doesn't back off. And we ought to thank God for the persistence of Jesus Christ.

He is the good shepherd who seeks the lost sheep until he finds it and then he brings it safely home.

And I'm reminded of the words of Isaiah that Paul quotes in his letter to the Romans chapter 10 verse 20. So this is an Old Testament passage that the apostle quotes as he explains the gospel

and how that gospel has come to those who were not part of the Old Testament people of God who were not born of the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

He says I have been found by those who did not seek me. I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.

Isn't that wonderful? Here was a woman who did not seek God. Here's a woman who did not ask about God and yet here is God the Son, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God and he's sitting by the well from which she comes to draw water and he's there engaging her in conversation not being brushed off by her harsh replies because he wants to be found by her.

[21 : 26] He wants to reveal his glory in his saving grace to the sinful lost woman. And so Jesus says to the woman you should be asking me for living water.

And you notice in verses 11 to 15 the conversation continues in what seems to be like a second round. And in this second round of the conversation you notice that there's a pattern developing very similar to the pattern that the conversation took in the previous chapter.

The well known previous chapter. John chapter 3 in which Jesus enters into conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus misunderstands the terms that Jesus uses in that conversation.

And in Nicodemus' case he misunderstood the biblical language, the language that Jesus was using drawn from the Old Testament scriptures. Language about the vital importance and necessity of the new birth.

And even though Nicodemus was an educated man he was the teacher of Israel. Even though he knew his Bible well yet it was plain he did not have any idea he had no clue as to what Jesus was talking about.

[23 : 09] The new birth. Can a man enter a second time into his mother womb to be born? And in the Samaritan woman's case though she had probably zero knowledge of the Bible and if she had an education which is unlikely it would have been a very poor and basic education certainly in comparison to Nicodemus.

She too misunderstood what Jesus was saying even though in her case Jesus wasn't using Old Testament language so much as everyday things like thirst and living water.

And she responds in this state of misunderstanding how can you get water? How can you get living water out of this well? The well is deep you've got nothing to draw with.

How can you get living water? She is ignorant. She is clueless. She has no idea what Jesus was talking about and yet here's another little lesson to learn about Jesus Christ.

Notice how patient and kind he is to the ignorant and to the clueless and to those who misunderstand his teaching.

[24 : 34] Christian friends that's something that we need to remember especially as we deal with friends with family with workmates we're seeking to be truthful we're seeking to teach them what we believe concerning the scriptures teaching and they misunderstand and we are so inclined to write them off and have nothing more to do with them and how often we lose our patience with those to whom we witness who resist our approaches to reach them with the gospel and then who perhaps misunderstand and have no idea about the message we're trying to communicate and explain to them and at such moments like that we ought to think of the

Lord at the well handling so carefully the soul of this woman think of his persistence think of his patience with this lost and wandering sheep and so he says to her whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again the water in the well cannot put an end to your thirst thirst you know that and that is why you have to keep coming to this well day after day to fetch water out of its depths water ah but the water that I will give you if someone drinks of that water they will never thirst again for the water that I will give you will be within you a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life the life of God in the soul of man

Jesus gives the living water that hydrates our parched and dehydrated souls I think there is something else here a hint of something perhaps in Jesus words to the woman in verses 13 and 14 let's read these verses again Jesus said to her everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life why does Jesus who is having a one to one conversation with this woman speak about a hymn it's not strange and we've got to ask ourselves why is this woman at the well fetching water and the answer is because there was a man in her house and the man in her house was not her husband and I wonder is Jesus dropping a hint here is he hinting that he knows more about her and her life than she realises but

having heard

Jesus wonderful words about the living water the woman has heard enough to want what she thinks Jesus is offering to her but she still doesn't understand what exactly is on offer she says sir give me this water it sounds so good so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water verse 15 and at that point Jesus says go call your husband and come here Jesus has found her out and she knows it because her response you notice is far too quick and impulsive and defensive I have no husband she says it's almost as if she snaps back at the

Lord in these words now look carefully and see Jesus he is the great physician the great soul surgeon and he's got this wonderfully gracious bedside manner and in the second part of verse 17 he says you are right in saying I have no husband and then he takes out the scalpel and begins to cut for you have had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband and then he lays the plaster upon the wound what you have said is true do you see what Jesus is doing here he is exposing to her to her view to her eyes her sin not because he takes a malicious delight in doing so or because he's treating her like some kind of enemy that he wants to crush under a burden of guilt no it is because she needs to see her sin in order to experience

[31 : 29] God's forgiveness in and through Jesus Christ here in her life there is a recurring pattern of failed relationships great sadness deep needs that the world cannot satisfy she has been through five husbands husband after husband but she has found no satisfaction the deep seated soul satisfaction that no merely human husband can supply she said five husbands and the one she's now living with is not her husband that makes six you know that in scripture very often the number seven is treated with special significance she's been through six men looking for the ideal husband the seventh is yet to appear and now here he is at the well the lord is the spiritual husband of his people this woman is suffering you could say from the same spiritual condition that characterized the ancient

Israelites of Jeremiah's day the lord's word through his prophet Jeremiah to the people of ancient Israel was this they had forsaken the lord the fountain of living waters and instead that they had hewed out cisterns for themselves that were worse than useless because they could hold no water they had forsaken the lord the fountain of living waters and instead of him they had cut out from the rock their own cisterns but those cisterns were worse than useless because they were cracked and broken and could hold no water now see the woman's response it's as if she just didn't want to go where

Jesus was leading in this conversation and my friends that surely is a sign a certain and sure sign of spiritual sickness when our own sin is the one thing that we don't want Jesus to talk about to us and look at this conversation how it goes from here she is happy to talk about anything else rather than to face up to her true spiritual condition and sin and guilt the savior is before her and he has not condemned her in fact he has eternal life this living water to give her but she cannot have it on her own terms she can only have it on the terms that

Jesus sets out and now in verses 19 to 25 we see that this woman is not going to give in to Jesus without a fight and a struggle and her next approach is one that we're all familiar with she says you're a prophet a religious man a man of God well I've got something to raise with you that always troubles me you know there are just so many different religions in the world to me it's all just a matter of opinion who is to say one is right and another is wrong take us Samaritans for example our fathers worshipped on Mount Gerizim here in Samaria but you Jews you say that in Jerusalem that's the place where we ought to worship God now notice again how patiently and gently the Lord Jesus deals with her question and shows her how the hour has now come when worship true worship the true worship of

God will no longer be tied to certain special or holy places but will be worship of the Father in spirit and truth but even her response to Jesus is what we might call crash course in the theology of worship doesn't seem to soften her heart it's as if she has found a way to rebuff Jesus and to put off dealing with the thorny problems of her failed relationships ah spiritual worship I like the sound of that that's the worship that I believe in you don't need to go to Mount Gerizim you don't need to go to Mount Zion you can just worship God anywhere and besides one day when the Messiah comes who is called Christ I can have all my questions answered ah when the

[37 : 46] Messiah comes in her mind that was far distant in the future it wasn't now in other words she is saying to Jesus look stranger I'll deal with it but not for now I can put it off until Messiah comes and the words are hardly out of her mouth when Jesus looks her in the eye and says I who

speaking to you, am he my friend, this is the woman's moment, this is the will you go with this man, moment for she went away into the city and it looks like from her actions and from her words that in a spiritual sense she appears to take

Jesus Christ as her savior because you notice what she says when she goes into the city to whoever she meets there she speaks openly she speaks freely to the people about the man she had met at the well she says come see a man who told me all that I ever did you can see what was occupying her thoughts what big thing was overshadowing everything else her past life it's as if he knew everything but because she had been forgiven her conscience is both cleansed and freed come come see a man who told me all that I ever did I've got nothing to hide anymore because it's all been forgiven and

I am cleansed and freed surely this is one of the sure marks of a work of God in the soul he knows everything about me and yet he loves me I know he knows everything but rather than condemn me he loves me and is tenderly patient with me and he makes me to know my need of him and he saves me and he freely gives me this living water of eternal life and she says to her neighbors can this be the Christ and the way the question is framed in the original Greek indicates that she expects the answer yes this is the Christ she has taken Jesus at his word when Messiah comes he will teach us everything

I who speak to you, am he and she believes him and perhaps in the text John has recorded a detail a small almost insignificant detail that might be a hint of the woman's change of heart did you notice that in verse 28 so the woman left her water jar at the well what a detail does this little detail act as a kind of symbol a sign a pointer to the thoughtful reader of the gospel that having received from Jesus the living water this Samaritan woman would never thirst again and didn't need to rely on such worldly things if someone should ask but how does Jesus take away this woman's thirst then we need to read a little bit further on in this fourth gospel until we come near to the end to another day to another sixth hour of the day when

Jesus was taken to be crucified and on the cross we are told by John the eyewitness of the events that shortly before Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit he said I thirst Jesus thirsted so that our thirst might be quenched and satisfied and it is through Christ's sufferings and death that we receive the living water that wells up into eternal life I want to finish with two personal stories when I was growing up in Bangor County Down Northern Ireland my mother who had recently been converted was given a country and western hymnal LP now some of the younger ones will need to have it explained what an

[43 : 42] LP is but you can do that over lunch downstairs and my mum used to play this LP often when she was doing the household chores and her ironing and such like things and one of the songs on the album was based on the story of the woman of Samaria in John chapter 4 and it went like this I mean I wasn't a Christian at the time and I didn't appreciate listening to these words being played in the background as I was doing my homework or whatever trying to watch television but it got into my head and I can remember them verbatim like the woman at the well I was seeking for things that could not satisfy and then I heard my saviour speaking draw from my well that never shall run dry fill my cup Lord I lift it up

Lord come and quench this thirsting of my soul bread of heaven feed me till I want no more fill my cup fill it up and make me whole later after my conversion I came to love the words of a hymn that we'll sing in a few moments time by an old free church minister Horatius Bonner who lived during the 19th century and his hymn was adopted by my grandmother as her testimony to the Lord's saving grace towards the end of her life following major surgery for lung cancer she found and she experienced the living water that only the Lord Jesus Christ supplies and after her death my mother found the words of

Bonner's hymn written out in my grandmother's handwriting on the flyleaf of her Bible I heard the voice of Jesus say behold I freely give the living water thirsty one stoop down and drink and live I came to Jesus and I drank of that life giving stream my thirst was quenched my soul revived and now I live in him I want to close by repeating these words of Jesus to you in the hope that their logic and their power will lead you to him for what only he can give 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 these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the

Christ the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name amen let us pray heavenly father