

Our need for living water

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[0 : 00] Turn with me to John chapter 4. This is a familiar passage to probably most of us here.

If it isn't, it soon will be. It's just one of those real-life accounts that you don't forget. There's many of them, and this is one of them.

We're going to read John chapter 4. We're going to begin in verse 1, and we're going to read through to verse 30. Though I would encourage you, if you've got the time at another point, to be able to read through the entire chapter of John 4 and encourage yourself that way.

But for this evening, we'll concentrate 1 to 30. Now hear God's word. 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 Saqqar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

[1 : 21] 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. 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 said to him, how is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?

For Jews have nothing to do 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 water with and the well is deep. Where do you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob?

He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and as did 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.

[2 : 36] 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 may not be thirsty or have to come here and draw water.

Jesus said to her, go and call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, you're right in saying that you have no husband.

For you have had five husbands and the one that you're with now 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 it's 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 true worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth. For the father is seeking such people to worship him.

[3 : 48] God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman said to him, I know that the Messiah is coming. He is 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? 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 the town and said to the people, come. See a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?

They went out of the town and they were coming to him. Well, we ask that God would bless the reading of his word to our ears. I think it's the sixth gospel message in a row that has come out of one of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

[4 : 57] I think there's a couple more to go in how I've worked it out. And then overall, you ought to be able to see a theme. But of course, there would be a lot to remember.

So let me just give you a quick recap as we enter into John chapter four. Over the past several weeks, each message has concentrated on the gospel.

We have seen that everybody has the need for God's forgiveness. No one's excluded. Everyone needs God's forgiveness. And we all need it all the time.

So it doesn't matter where you are on the spectrum, whether you need a lot or you need a little. The fact is we all need God's forgiveness. And the good news of the gospel is that God forgives.

So that's a straightforward line there. OK, we all need forgiveness and God forgives. The issue, though, in that coming to God is not always that clear for us because it's not just whether or not we see God clearly.

[6 : 00] The issue is we learn in Mark two is whether or not we see ourselves clearly. OK, some people are kept from God, not because they can't see God clearly, but because they can't see themselves clearly.

OK, the issue here is that whether or not you see your need for Jesus, do you see yourself as someone who needs your sins forgiven? Well, if you do, then you see yourself clearly.

But there are many people I know and many people that I'm even related to who truly believe that they're good and even good enough for God not to turn them away or to do anything with them but accept them.

The issue there is is that they don't see themselves clearly. They are kept from God by not seeing themselves clearly. They are keeping themselves from God by not seeing themselves clearly.

Now, they have opportunity to do this. We all have opportunity to do this because God's word is the mirror. We look at it and suddenly we see what we're really like. But it's a very gracious mirror.

[6 : 59] It's a very loving mirror. It tells us gently what we're like. It tells us clearly. It tells us accurately. But it does tell us gently. OK, it does reveal to us our sin, but it does it in a gracious way.

Then we saw another issue is that sometimes we don't come to Jesus because we don't want to lose what we have like the rich ruler. OK, he had much and he recognized that I just can't let go of this and follow Jesus.

And sometimes we want to avoid loss in our life, but in the end end up losing. And the loss is we don't have Jesus. And there is no greater loss than that.

So last week we saw that another barrier that needs to be overcome is that we all have to give to God what belongs to God and you belong to God. OK, you belong to God.

So give to God what belongs to God and recognize you are someone who needs forgiveness and you are someone who belongs to God. Now that we come to John chapter four, this point is made ever clear again.

[8 : 13] We get to see what Jesus has to say to this woman at the well. And again, Jesus is both gracious but very accurate. Now, when you meet Jesus, you are meeting someone who knows you better than even you know yourself.

And that is uncomfortable. But it's uncomfortable in the way where God is gracious with it. And God is very gracious with this woman, but he is very accurate with this woman.

He's very clear and direct, but he's clear and direct in a very gentle and caring way. Now, the interesting thing also to notice here is that sometimes we can grow up believing that we are seeking God.

And of course, at least a couple of occasions in the gospel is explicitly stated that we don't and God is the one who seeks us. Jesus here again says it very, very clearly that God is seeking.

God is the seeker. Jesus says himself in Luke that the son of man has come to seek and to save the lost. And I'd much rather have confidence in a God who's seeking you than people who are not seeking God.

[9 : 24] If we're going to have confidence in people being saved and having their sins forgiven, I'd rather have my trust in God who seeks than in people who don't. And that's the confidence of the

gospel.

So you may be sat here this evening wondering whether or not you are in fact seeking God. But know this, God is most definitely seeking you. That's the point here in John 4.

He's seeking you to be a true worshiper. He's seeking you to give you this living water. He's seeking you to give you it so that you can have eternal life. And he's seeking to give it to you right now.

There's no waiting here. He has it ready to hand and he has it to give to you. But then Jesus seems to, in this passage, change the subject quite constantly.

First, he's asking for literal water. Then it moves on to a spiritual water, this living water which is about eternal life. Then the conversation moves on again to this woman having five husbands and the man that she's with now is not her husband.

[10:27] And then it moves on to worship. In other words, if you look at it as a Bible passage, Jesus is saying a lot. But here's the thing. It all has to do with the same thing. Okay, whatever we talk about here, whether it be the husbands or the man that she's living with now, whether it be the living water or her coming to the well, whether it be Jesus talking about worship, at the very heart of all of this is one thing.

That God is seeking you. And that God is seeking this woman here. Jesus then says the hour is coming when people will be the way God wants them to be.

They will worship God in spirit and in truth. Eternal life then is this, knowing God. Eternal life is not only knowing God, but it's knowing his son, Jesus Christ.

And if you were to read through to the end of John and get to John 17 where Jesus is praying and we actually get to hear his pray, this is what he says. That eternal life is to know God and to know the son.

So you know you have eternal life when you know you know God. And you will know that you know God because God will make himself very plain to you.

[11:40] So Jesus is saying here in John 4, like he said in John chapter 3, that a real transformation has to happen. A man named Nicodemus came to Jesus and he's asking about the things of the kingdom and Jesus says to him, well, you must be born again.

Now, Nicodemus is taken back by this because he has no idea what Jesus is really speaking about. And even made even more complicated by telling someone to be born again. Well, Nicodemus knows, just like I know and just like you know, that you can't create your own birth.

That's a real problem. So Jesus is telling him he must be born again. But a little bit of logic and a little bit of reason will tell you that you can't do it. So how are you to be born again?

You must be born again. And how is that going to happen? Well, for God so loved the world that he gave his son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life, have everlasting life.

Okay? You must be, but as I said this morning, you must do nothing. God, through his son, will do it all for you. So you must be born again, but you must be born again through Jesus.

[12:54] Jesus is the one who does it. Why? Because God's the seeker. Jesus comes to do the work of God. God wants to seek and to save the lost, that he wants to seek people, and he sends Jesus to get us.

God wants us for himself, and the way that he gets us to himself is by bringing us to Jesus. That's how a person is born again. Nicodemus can't do it on his own.

He has to have it done to him. And where it happens is in God giving his son, and he gives his son to the cross. So that's really the context of everything here.

So when Jesus comes to this well in the middle of the day, the sixth hour is like the hottest part of the day, the middle of the day, and he meets the woman there, you've got to ask yourself the question, why did Jesus go that way?

It says that he had to go through Samaria, but it also says that he's leaving Judea to get to Galilee. Now, I don't have a map, but if I did, and I showed you on a map which is the most direct route from Judea to Galilee, it's not through Samaria.

[14:05] If you were to look which is the easiest route, not necessarily the most direct, but which is the easiest route from Judea to Galilee, again, it wouldn't be through Samaria. Samaria is out of the way.

So why does Jesus have to go through Samaria? It cannot be because he's trying to get to Galilee. There must be another reason for why he had to go through Samaria.

And I want to suggest to you that the reason is because God is the seeker. Now that we understand that God is the seeker, and now we understand that this woman is coming to the well, we can put two and two together and get four and understand that God is seeking this woman. Plain as day. God is the seeker. Jesus had to go through Samaria, not to get to Judea. Galilee, rather.

Okay? He was coming from Judea to Galilee, and he didn't have to go that way. But he did, and I would argue he did, because he is looking for this woman. And not just the woman, but all the other Samaritans that come out to Jesus in the end.

[15:10] This woman runs back home, telling them, could this be the Christ? He has told me everything that I've ever did. And the next thing you find happening is all these people are now running back out to Jesus, coming to him.

So God is the seeker. God goes through Samaria in his son on purpose, because he is seeking these very people.

While Jesus is at the well, of course he's thirsty, we're told that he is, he asks this lady for water. And she's taken back, because he's a Jew, she's a Samaritan.

She understands that these two groups don't mix. They have no dealings. We just don't get on. You know, you draw your water at a different time of the day than we draw ours, so that we don't, you know, if we're drawing it from the same well.

But it seems to be the case that she comes to a well when no one else is there. The only thing is, Jesus is. And Jesus is at this well, and Jesus is not like other people, clearly.

[16:12] And so he asks this woman, give me some water. Now, there's a couple things here to notice, is that this woman comes out at the sixth hour. We can read that in verse six.

She comes out at the sixth hour, which is the hottest part of the day. No one, in their right mind, comes out at the hottest part of the day to get a big vessel full of water.

Why would you do that? Why would you do that? You wouldn't do that. So there's got to be a reason for her coming out in the middle of the day rather than the morning where it's cool and rather than the evening where it's cool.

And there's safety in numbers, right, when you travel out to a well. But no, here we have a woman all on her own, apart from Jesus at the well, who travels out in the hottest part of the day when nobody else does.

So the issue here is that if she's not making her life harder than it needs to be, the question is, is she making it easier than it needs to be? Or easier than what it could be?

[17:15] Now, we don't get to find the answer out to this until we read on. Because it's strange that this woman would be on her own at the well at that time a day.

But she is, and Jesus is there. And Jesus finds her in the place where nobody else is, and he asks her for water. Then the subject quickly moves on to living water, and she then has this desire, well, give me it.

Here's living water that will rise up to eternal life. Please give me this water so that, you know, I never have to be thirsty again. So Jesus takes this literal water and then changes the conversation into living water because he wants the subject to get on to eternal life.

She has no idea who's asking her for water, and she has no idea at this point how the conversation has now got on to eternal life, other than the fact that this man that she is speaking to has brought it up.

The woman doesn't understand that this water that Jesus will give her can do what it can do, but she desires it. She wants this water, and she wants it now.

[18:27] She wants the water that will keep her satisfied. She wants the water that will keep her full. She wants the water that will do exactly what Jesus said it would do. So she says, verse 15, can I have the water?

Can I have this water? And then Jesus, straight away, no break, says, okay, but go and get your husband. Now that's a conversation changer if I've ever heard one.

I mean, what would you do if you were that woman? How on earth did it get on to this? Jesus has a reason for moving the conversation on, but how on earth does it go from literal water to eternal life, then onto my marital status?

We think these are just a collection of random conversations, but the point is, is Jesus is moving this woman graciously, but very accurately, into the grace of God. And he does this because he has

to get her to see what she is really.

Mark 2, remember? What's one of the barriers that hold us back from God? Well, not seeing ourselves as we really are. So Jesus here graciously, very graciously, but very accurately, moves the conversation into the area of her husband.

[19 : 43] Well, she says, you know, I don't have a husband. And Jesus says, no, you're right, you've had five husbands, and the man that you're with now is not your husband, and that's the issue.

The issue is not whether or not she's had five husbands. It's quite possible to have had five husbands. You know, each husband dies, and then you get married again. It may not be that desirable or that practical, but you can understand how that could happen and still be within the biblical framework.

The issue is that she's now with a man who's not her husband. That's the pincher. That's the point. So Jesus is speaking with this woman, and now it's a turn in subject.

We've gone from literal water to living water to the issue over husbands, and now to a man that she's living with is now not her husband.

Jesus, by saying this, by bringing up the issue of husbands, is getting to the issue of why she's out at the well in the middle of the day.

[20 : 44] And here's the reason. She's not making her life harder than it needs to be. She's actually making her life easier. I want you to understand this, that a woman with five husbands and living with a man who's now not her husband is not making her life harder by coming out to the well when nobody else is there.

She's making it easier. Do you understand? It's better to be at the well when nobody else is there, even if it's the hottest part of the day, to avoid the other women and what they might be saying to her or about her across the well.

So this woman on the surface, superficially, it looks like, boy, aren't you making your life harder than it needs to be? No, this is easier than having to face others. And the reason we know why this happens to be the case, the reason why we know this happens to be the issue is because of what Jesus says next, and more importantly, what she also says next.

We need to realize that both men and women, even today, do things to make their life easier, even if on the surface it looks like they're making their life harder.

You know, I like observing. This is why if I ever go to a restaurant, I like to sit with my back against the wall, okay? It's not because I'm afraid of anything being spilled on me. It's because I can't help it but observe.

[22 : 12] Every now and then, which is not that often, I get to stand at the school gate waiting for the children, and I observe, okay? I notice that the older mothers, okay, either come late or younger because, you know, they've got young children the same as younger mothers, but they don't fit in.

So they come at a later point in the day. I notice that a woman who's been married several times can be accused of another woman by saying that she likes the taste of wedding cake, her own wedding cake.

Okay? I understand, and I hear these things. I've grown up in an environment where these type of things are being said. I can see how hurtful those type of things can be and why, on the surface, it looks like people are making their life harder when actually they're making it easier.

Because it's easier to avoid certain places and certain people so that you can avoid those things that come with it. So this woman here is coming to the hottest part of the day, to the well at the hottest part of the day, because it's easier.

It's not easier practically or physically, but it is easier than having to face the others there at the other times of the day. We are social creatures, and therefore, when there is social pressure, peer pressure, when there is social immoral issues, we go into hiding.

[23 : 38] Birds of a feather flock together, and she's not likely to flock with a lot of other women, given her lifestyle. And so the reason this woman wants this living water that wells up to eternal life is not actually because she wants eternal life.

And that's what you notice in verse 15. Her motivation is not to come to the well again. You'll notice that in verse 15.

Verse 14, The woman said, Now, it looks like that she's asking for what Jesus is offering.

But if you read on carefully, this is what it says. So that I will not be thirsty. Okay, but why is that important for this woman? Or have to come here to draw water.

Now, you take that verse, and you put it alongside the verse of why she's coming to the well at the hottest part of the day. Her whole motivation for wanting this from Jesus is to avoid the well.

[24 : 47] Okay? She is more concerned with these kind of social inferences than she is of what actually Jesus is offering. This is why Jesus moves the conversation onto her husband's.

He understands fully what the issue is. He understands accurately, graciously and accurately what the woman's issue is.

She's had five husbands, and the man that she's with now is not her husband. It's getting in the way of everything. It's getting in the way of being with others, and it's getting in the way of coming to God.

Jesus isn't changing the subject. He's keeping the subject on the very issue that it needs to stick to. This water, which is an illustration of eternal life, symbolic for eternal life, which then moves on to a conversation about worship, is speaking about the same truth.

Worship, in its most basic form, is this. It's the creature responding to the creator in the right way.

Now, there's a lot more that can be said about worship, but it is very foundational level.

[26 : 05] Worship is me, the creature, responding to God, the creator, properly. And this woman isn't. Her life isn't. Jesus says, no, the man that you live with now is not your husband.

Jesus graciously but accurately gets to the heart of the subject in her life. Jesus then moves the conversation on, and he does this by saying, well, the hour is coming.

The hour is coming when we will worship God in spirit and in truth. But you've got to remember that this woman wants to change the subject. She's been confronted with her sins, so she looks at Jesus and says, sir, I perceive you're a spirit.

And Jesus then, I perceive you're a prophet. You know, we worship here, and Jesus gets into this conversation about worship, but he's happy to keep it there because that is the issue.

She's not responding to God as she should. In fact, Jesus says, no one is. But the hour is coming when you will worship God in spirit and in truth.

[27 : 10] Now, the most important thing here, though there's a lot being said, is the word hour. Not hour, O-U-R, but hour, H-O-U-R, hour.

Okay, the reason being is this. In John 2, when Jesus says, my hour has not yet come, he's thinking about the cross. Here in John 4, when he says the hour is coming, when people will then worship God in spirit and in truth, he's again thinking of the cross because what he had to say to Nicodemus, you need real transformation, and the only way you're going to get real transformation is by me dying on the cross.

Then in John 17, Jesus says that God has given him authority to give eternal life to everyone. The hour has come for me to do this. And then straight after, not long after the prayer, he goes to the cross.

Jesus here, by referring to the hour of people being transformed by God into these true worshippers, is speaking of his death on the cross.

The transformation that we all need. Being true worshippers. The thing that we all need to be. Being born again. The thing that God wants us to have. What Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about.

[28 : 27] Having the sin removed from us. The penalty of sin paid. All of this happens in the hour that Jesus speaks of. The cross. His life.

His death. And then his resurrection. Everything here is about how does a person become what God wants them to be.

And the answer is in Jesus. You may come from different backgrounds. You may have different social standings. And you, like this woman, may hide from things and make your life harder as it appears on the surface.

But your internal motivation is telling you quite clearly, no, this is far easier than the alternative. But here's the exhortation as you've come this evening. You may be sat here thinking that I have been seeking God.

Or you have may look back over your life or even be thinking this now. I am seeking God. But you need to know this. That God is seeking you. And God is enabling you to seek him.

[29 : 29] Okay? God is seeking you. And he is enabling you to seek him. Different people meet Jesus differently. And Jesus has a wonderful habit of being able to find us in the place where we're

hiding.

And Jesus has a wonderful way of being both gracious and accurate with our sin. He is able to reveal the things about us that we know are true but we hide from.

God so loved the world that he gave his son. And God so loved you he gave his son. God loves the world and he is seeking you in the world.

And he has sent Jesus to get you. So the water here in the well provide is there for anyone.

The issue is you have to come to the well every day. That's hard work. God is not so demanding.

You come to God once.

[30 : 32] And once you're there, you're there. God calls you but once you come, you're there.

There is fullness. There is freedom. There is completeness.

There is the thirst that is met eternally. There is the life that lasts forever. The eternal life that God speaks of here is a gift from himself to you.

So come and turn to God by believing and by trusting in the son who has come to get you. So come.

Amen.