

I went on a mountain bike ride recently through my town as it's one of my favorite things to do. So, I went on my regular ride from my driveway, up the hill, and eventually onto a trail system. And I stopped at the signal before crossing over to the trail system and went to grab my water bottle because I was already thirsty and sweaty. I forgot my water bottle! The rest of the ride was basically all uphill, and I knew I would be very thirsty. I started to wonder if I should go back, but then I remembered there was a drinking fountain two-thirds of the way up the hill. I pressed on and made it to the drinking fountain, took a big drink, and then made it to the top to worship and pray. It got me thinking that I never go thirsty! I've always got a way to satisfy my thirst whether it's working out, driving, or in church, like a lot of you, I always have my water bottle.

We know nothing about being thirsty. In our first-world easy access culture; we can always find water. We simply don't thirst. Sometimes it's good to be thirsty. To appreciate the water. That's true in the physical realm but also in the spiritual realm. It's good to be thirsty!

We are going to look at a passage that is all about thirst. The story of the woman at the well. Jesus was thirsty, and the woman at the well was thirsty. Jesus, in His masterful way, is going to use the physical realm to teach this woman, and us some of the most profound truths about Himself, about us, and about worship.

We are in the middle of our sermon series, "Life in Color." We are taking a deep dive into one of the most important aspects of our spiritual lives – worship. We are going to look at that today through the story of the Samaritan woman, and we will look at true thirst. We'll learn what that has to do with true worship.

**Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—although, in fact, it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. John 4:1-5**

Jesus and the disciples headed to Galilee from Judea because he was gaining popularity, and Jesus wanted none of that.

**Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me**

**a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) vv. 6-8**

So Jesus is alone and sitting at this well. This is what I call a divine alignment. Jesus arrived at the well just about the time this woman does and, something divine happened. Jesus was tired and thirsty. He asked the woman for a drink. This sounds like a pretty normal situation, but it absolutely stunned this woman. Why?

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) v. 9

For those of you who know this story, there is really more to this story than that. It was shocking that he, a Rabbi, would talk to her at all. They weren't allowed to talk to women or be alone with women as this was not done. This idea that Jews did not associate with Samaritans is a long story, but bottom line is they had some Jewish heritage and Assyrian. Interestingly, when it says Jesus had to go through Samaria, He actually didn't. Most went the longer, hotter trail through the Dead Sea Valley to specifically avoid Samaria. She was shocked by Jesus' request, but she was even more shocked at how He responded.

**Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself...? vv. 10-12**

She's confused about how and where he will get this water, but she stayed interested. She engaged. She was thirsty. And what I love even more is that even when the conversation sort of switches to some God talk (gift of God...living water...He is a rabbi...now we are going to talk about 'religion'), she actually wants more! Wouldn't it be great if all our conversations went this way? People often sort of check out when the God talk starts, or at least we think they will.

She not only stayed interested in the interesting man; she even kept the conversation on a religious track and asked if Jesus was greater than their father, Jacob, who dug the well. Again – they have some Jewish history and actually teach and learn from the writings of Moses – the first five books of Bible. She knows a thing or two, but once again, Jesus surprises her with His answer:

**Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." vv. 13-14**

He said, "You'll always be thirsty with this water, but what I'm offering you means you'll never thirst again."

**The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." v. 15**

She was all in. She was saying, "You have no idea what it's like to come here every day by myself and carry that water back (the fact that she comes alone at noon suggests she was an outcast in her village.).

I truly believe at this point, she was going back and forth in her mind. "Is this actually some kind of really special water – literally? But it seems this guy is talking about something deeper, something spiritual, something more. So whatever it is I want it!" She was thirsty for it. There was something different about this man, and she'd had enough relationships with men to know.

This man was different, and she wanted what He offered. Jesus knew that what He was offering was what she truly needed. It's not what her body was thirsty for but what her heart was thirsty for. So the first thing we learn here is that Jesus knows what our hearts are thirsty for and can satisfy us with His Living Water.

So, what is this Living Water? Scholars agree that Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit here. He calls it the gift of God, which is often how it is referred to. And what a gift it is.

Many times in the New Testament and Old Testament, water signifies the Holy Spirit. That is why it's called Living Water. Later in John's Gospel, it is spelled out. Jesus said,

**"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive." John 7:37-39**

So, here's a question for you.

Are you thirsty? Remember it's good to be thirsty, but what are you thirsty for? And how are you trying to quench that thirst? Where are you restless? Where are you feeling parched – work, marriage, relationships, parenting, or caretaking? Life is a workout, and we often find ourselves thirsty.

Do you truly thirst for God, and most importantly, for what He offers – the Holy Spirit. Could you say like the Psalmist,

**As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? Psalm 42:1-2**

God wants thirsty people; God seeks out thirsty people! And this woman was truly thirsty!

Why was she is so engaged; so interested in Jesus. Because He is the most interesting man in the world. He was the most interesting man in her world.

So how do we stay thirsty for what He is offering – for the Living Water – The Holy Spirit? There isn't a greater gift! He is our comfort, counsel, understanding, and conviction. So many things he does for us, through us, and more than anything, there is a kind of power Jesus offers us. I don't think we have scratched the surface of it. What a Gift! So how do we get this gift – this power?

We must thirst for the Living Water. We must ask for the Living Water. That's what Jesus said in verse ten. And She does ask for it in verse 15.

Jesus gives that simple recipe to the Samaritan woman – thirst and ask. Ask for the Holy Spirit in any and every situation. I think it is truly the greatest and most untapped power for believers! It is the power that brings us to Faith. It did for this woman. And it is the power we need to live out our faith!

What if we lived our lives like the Holy Spirit was as easily accessible as drinking water from a water bottle or faucet? What if we believed we could tap into the Holy Spirit that easily? What would our lives look like if every time we took a sip, we said, "Lord fill me with your Living Water, and give me what I need today for this hard workout of life I am in."

This woman teaches us about true thirst, and she teaches us about asking for the Living Water. And now Jesus is going to teach about true worship. Remember we left her mid-conversation.

The woman said, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied.

**Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." vv. 15-17**

Jesus changes subject kind of abruptly, and He's not only most interesting, but He's very interested in her! He's going to get right into her world, and her heart to expose it, which is where those thirsts are coming from. Jesus has no interest in superficial conversations – there is always something going on deeper. I've had the joy of working with women for over twenty years. We get deep; we get real, and we get vulnerable. And when we do; when things are exposed, power and freedom are unleashed. I think that is true for this woman also. Let's look at how she responds.

**"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this**

mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." vv. 18-24

This is the heart of what Jesus wants to talk about, but interestingly, she's the one who took the conversation in this direction. She liked God talk, and she knew there was something very special about Jesus. She must have thought, "He's not just interesting. He must be a prophet. He has received a special revelation from God. How else could He know these things about me? So, maybe He can answer some questions." Maybe she's had these questions on her mind a while.

Now most people's first impression of her response, asking this seemingly unrelated question about worship, is that it is just a way to change the subject. Her dirty laundry has just been laid out in front of her; her embarrassing sinful life – exposed. So she wanted to talk about something else – right? But I've read several scholars who say, and I tend to agree, her question about worship has everything to do with her sins just being exposed. Because, for her, worship is coming to the altar for confession.

Mark taught about this last week. She's not just thirsty, she's dirty, and she wants to get clean. Maybe she thought that the Living Water could wash her clean somehow? She thought, "If this man is a prophet, He can tell me how to get clean because I keep going up to that altar; that place up on that hill taking my offering. But I come back, and I still feel dirty." That place in Samaria was a temple and altar erected up on Mt Gerizim right above them. It was built as a rival to the temple in Jerusalem. Remember, they had a mixed-up race, and they had a mixed-up religion –so they had mingled the Law of Moses with pagan idolatrous practices. There was controversy and confusion in her mind about the proper place to worship, which meant where was she to take her sacrifice so her sins could be forgiven. I think she's asking an honest question! She wants to know where and how to find true worship!

So, Jesus said that things were changing. Worshipping the Father was not about a place. It was not where you worshiped, but who you worshiped. The Samaritans didn't really know the God they were worshipping, but the Jews knew and revered the one true God. Jesus said real worshippers –that God seeks, I might even say that God thirsts for, are ones who connect deeply with both God's Spirit and His Truth

Look how the woman responds.

**The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he." v. 25-26**

I think it's worth noting that this woman was waiting for; longing for, and thirsting for Jesus the Messiah to come. We can learn from her. Do you thirst for Christ's return? I love that she was thirsty for the Messiah to come. Are you? Because He's coming back!

Right then our story gets interrupted. The disciples returned, and they were shocked. He was talking to this woman. The woman fled and left her jar behind. Not because she didn't want to face them, but she's had some amazing news! She ran to tell everyone what happened. She's got a testimony.

**Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him. vv. 28-30**

This is crazy. This woman had the most amazing encounter with Jesus, and now she had this amazing faith story. "Come see a man who could see right through me – who exposed all my sin! You've got to meet him! Isn't this great! I wonder if He is the Messiah we've been waiting for?" How would that testimony work with your loved ones who aren't yet followers of Jesus? Maybe better than you think. Here's another question, how do you think someone would respond to you if you were so excited and so transformed by an encounter with the Living God?

This woman was changed! Jesus, in his kindness, was leading her to repentance! There was a freedom; a transformation that the people saw. So, they came to see for themselves. Many believed in her testimony of Jesus and how he exposed her sin. They wanted more. They were thirsty.

But let's back up a minute because we really want to unpack what we've learned about worship. Remember, we are in this worship series "Life in Color," and this woman's life just went from a lot of gray, lots of gray areas of confusion, and had become completely clear and vibrantly colorful. So, what did we learn about worship through this story?

This thirsty woman uncovers possibly one of the most profound and necessary elements of worship that I think we often miss. She equates worship with coming to the altar to confess. We think of worship purely as this lively, upbeat experience, and confession as a very somber and head down experience. And it is a somber thing to take a hard look at our sin. But let's go back to what Jesus said, "*True worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24).

There are very few things that Jesus says we must do. One scholar points out that there are only three 'musts' Jesus gives in John's

Gospel: You must be born again; the Son of Man must be lifted up, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

We must get this right. So, what does it mean? For me, the simple definition is that we worship with our hearts and our heads. We engage our hearts with God; our emotions; our soul. But, also, we can't worship a God we don't know. That's what Jesus told her. "You worship a God you don't really know." We must engage our minds; renew our minds every day in His Word.

Again, let's look at these two elements of worship.

**IN SPIRIT:** Jesus said that God is spirit. God exists in three persons. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He's talking about that Living Water flowing through us. He's talking about the Holy Spirit. It's not something we can totally comprehend, but we can experience this with our hearts.

**IN TRUTH:** On the other hand, is what we can comprehend; what we must comprehend. And there are two key elements. The truth about God and the truth about me. This woman just obtained the most important truth about God. That Jesus is the Messiah; the one sent; the one she had been thirsting for. In other words, Jesus is God! But this woman also just had the truth about her exposed by the one who is the truth in a person. And here's what happened. She was overflowing. She was welling up with excitement; with freedom! The truth had set her free. She was welling up with worship.

She experienced the Holy Spirit within, what Jesus described to her as eternal life! *Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (v.14).*

Worship will well up from us as God's Living Water wells up in us. Worship will well up within us as He fills us with His Living Water – the Holy Spirit.

When I worship in Spirit with all my heart and in the truth of who I am – broken, sinful, and messy; and in the truth of who God is – a Holy and loving Redeemer. When I think about how He bridges that chasm, I can't help but well up in worship.

So what might this look like for us?

I'll tell you what it looks like for me, I literally well up. I'm a weepy person who easily gets choked up. But I'm not talking about just that. This is something different. There are tears of joy, and that's welling up! I experience it often. The two most common examples are right here! I well up when I worship Him in corporate worship because I take in those words of truth about our God; about Jesus, and I think about the bigness of him and the

smallness of me. I am simply amazed that He is mindful of me. Read Psalm eight if you want to see the infinite and the intimate of God. Sometimes – not often enough - but sometimes I well up when I come to the altar. One day I was driving to WBS, and I was dealing with some self-righteous behavior. I was clinging to my right to be right, and it was messing with an important relationship. I was having a pretty serious conversation with God and just then that song, "O Come to the Altar" came on, and I literally had to pull over to sing, weep, confess, and worship. It was welling up in me. His Living Water was welling up in me. The Holy Spirit was convicting me and comforting me at the same time, and all I could do was worship.

What does worship look like for you? Do you ever well up with an inexplicable joy? And if you haven't experienced that I would simply say, "Stay thirsty my friend!" Thirst for His Living Water and ask for it!

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

© 2019 Central Peninsula Church, Foster City, CA  
Catalog No. 1435-3FC

---

This message from Scripture was preached on Sunday, May 12, 2019 at Central Peninsula Church.

[www.cpc.org](http://www.cpc.org)