

Living Water

SS/HN 4/07/04 am

Reading: Jeremiah 2:1-13, John 4

Study: John 4:9-15

Psalms: 23, 42:1-4, 36:5-9, 107:1-6

A weary traveller rested by an old well. A worried woman came to that well to draw water just as she had day after day for many years. Little did she know that on this day her life would be changed forever. She did not realize that she was in the presence of God the Son. As we read this wonderful story we want to tell this woman hey! look! this is Jesus Christ, Lord of all, you are talking to. She thought he was just another Jew passing through Samaria.

I wonder if someone looking at your life would say hey! look! The Lord of all is speaking to you but you don't realize. You are so busy in the daily grind of life that you are not aware of the presence of the Lord. *Do not forget to entertain strangers for in doing so some have entertained angels unawares* (Hebrews 13:2). It is often in the little things, the lowly things, the little people and the unimportant people that the Lord speaks to us. Even a cup of cold water given to one of these little ones will bring great blessing (Matthew 10:42).

Jesus asked the woman for a drink of water. A simple request; such a little thing. Before long she is asking him *give me this water that I may not thirst nor come here to draw water again*.

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God. A highly respected Jewish teacher came to him one night to ask him questions. Jesus told him you must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God. Thinking in an earthly way he said *how can a man be born when he is old. Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb?*

Now we see Jesus in a completely different setting. It is in the country and at mid-day. It is a woman, a Samaritan woman that he meets, a person at the opposite end of the social spectrum to a Pharisee. Yet her thinking was much the same- it was earthly thinking. It would be great if I did not have to come here everyday and carry water all the way back to my village she thought. And her need was the same – to realize that Messiah had come and that by believing in him she would have eternal life.

Give me a drink

Jesus was sitting by the well alone, weary from his journey. He was hungry and thirsty. When this woman came to draw water he asked her for a drink – a seemingly innocent question. Long ago Abraham's servant had asked Rebecca the same question. Jacob and Moses had also spoken to women when they came to draw water from the well.

But this woman was not a Jew. She was a Samaritan so not pure in race or in worship. We saw last time the historical background of this animosity. Even as a woman she could have been unclean but as a Samaritan woman she was certainly regarded as unclean by Jews. How she recognised Jesus as a Jew we are not told but she was taken aback by his request for a drink.

Jews do not have dealings with Samaritans – these may be her words but probably an explanation given by the writer. More precisely this translates as 'Jews do not use the same dish as Samaritans'. His disciples had gone to buy food from the Samaritans – that was okay – but to drink from the same cup would have made that person unclean.

High caste Hindus will not use the same cup a low caste or outcaste person. If they visited your place for a meal they would not drink from any of your cups. And if you went to their place and drank from their cup they would break it after you left. Such practices are not conducive to social interaction or sharing the gospel. Hence Christians who eat and drink with outcastes are loved by such people.

The simple request of Jesus had the effect of breaking the ice – of starting this life changing conversation. Allowing someone to do you a favour or doing a favour for someone else is a most effective way to initiate a relationship and an opportunity to share the gospel. It is not easy in our society of fiercely independent individuals locked up in houses, offices, or cars. But Jesus found a way, and he will show you a way if you are looking to Him.

Living water

We are not told if Jesus actually got a drink or not. His concern was not for himself but for this lost soul. He did not go into the historical issues and religious differences. Rather he spoke of the gift of God, in terms of living water. What he meant by living water and what she understood by living water were of course two different things. Jesus knew that, but at least he was speaking in language she could understand.

I remember on the farm how pleasant it was on a hot day to go down to the creek and drink the clear running water. It was cool and refreshing. But we never drank stagnant water from waterholes or the dams.

Living water was spring water or running water in first century Palestine. Water for ceremonial washing was poured out; it was running or living water. This woman was still focused on the well before her. She saw Jesus had nothing to draw water with from this deep well. So where was he going to get such water.

Moreover, she reminded Jesus that it was Jacob himself who had dug this well. She knew her history. She may have claimed to be a descendant of 'Jacob our father' through Joseph sons who were given this piece of land. Yes Jacob was one of the patriarchs, a great man of God. He dug this well and drank from it himself. It produced enough water for his sons and even his livestock. She was so privileged to be drinking from the same well as Jacob and his sons.

Are you greater than our father Jacob? 'You' is emphatic here. The irony in this statement is so strong. She is talking to the Messiah, the Son of God. The Jews would later say much the same thing – *are you greater than Abraham our father* (9:53). **Living in the past they were blind to the work of God in the present.** J.C. Ryle makes the comment 'dead teachers always have more authority than the living ones'. 'It is a common failing of the human race to think that those of an earlier time were greater and wiser than those more recent' (Morris).

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters. This is what the Lord said through the

prophet Jeremiah (2:13, 17:13). This is the living water that Jesus meant. The Samaritans did not hold to anything beyond the Pentateuch so this woman knew about Jacob but not Jeremiah. But this is the gift that Jesus was offering this woman. If only you knew who I am you would ask me and I would give it to you – life giving water, water that will flow from a heart filled with the Spirit of God (HS-7:39).

No more thirst

Jesus was not yet ready to reveal who he was – that he was in truth greater than Jacob. Remember he was concerned for the soul of this woman not his own reputation. She was listening but still thinking on the earthly plane. Jesus spoke of this water in the well, reminding her that she would drink it now but would have to come back tomorrow, and the day after and the day after that because she would thirst again.

She came day after day to this well because every day she felt thirsty. You would think more about your thirst and need for water if you had to walk a mile or so every day to draw water. I am sure if we had to go and collect all our water from Warragamba or from the river we would think much more about water.

Jesus now had her thinking about her thirst. She was thinking about physical thirst of course but note how far he had taken her. Now at least she was realizing some of the drudgery and hopelessness in her life.

Oh that men and women today would see that the way of worldliness is the way of ongoing dissatisfaction with life. They strive to get this or that and when they get it are they satisfied – for a very short time. Soon they are striving for more of what the world has to offer. And so the treadmill of life goes on until people drop from exhaustion.

This woman was exhausted. She was ready to take what Jesus offered, even though she did not yet know what he was talking about. She saw a glimmer of hope in her hopeless world. She saw that this living water that he offered her was more than just water from this well – but did not yet know what it was.

Sir she said, give me this water that I may not thirst. There is no reason to think that she was being sarcastic. Rather she was bemused, skeptical, wondering and maybe even hopeful of something to make her life easier.

Jesus offered her living water. Now he goes a step further and tells her that *whoever drinks this water will never thirst again.* What was this thirst quenching water that he offered. What was this water that taken once satisfies for ever? It is the gift of God, remember, and it satisfies the soul. Jesus said he *who believes in me will never thirst.* Is your soul satisfied?

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