

Sermon Outline

1. Have you ever suffered a deep spiritual dehydration?
2. Jesus cuts through our religion of human choice to expose that deep thirst of ours.
3. Jesus' goal is to bring us to refreshing repentance.

JESUS IS COMING—AND NOW HAS COME—TO QUENCH OUR DEEP THIRST.

4. Jesus makes us his thirst-quenching business.
5. Come meet this man who knows about your thirst!

Sermon

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to Saint John the fourth chapter verses five through twenty-six.

Boys and Girls, I pray that you are doing well today and are not thirsty at all. Have you ever been really thirsty? Have you ever been so thirsty that you had a dry, parched throat? I doubt that many of you have, even moms and dads. We do not often get that thirsty. Yet, there are times when we do get thirsty and we need a drink, either of water, coffee, tea, whatever our drink might be. In our reading for today, we see a spiritual kind of thirst that this woman from Samaria has, what does she thirst for and how does Jesus satisfy her thirst? Ponder those questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go bac to your seats and those who love you.

1.

There is the thirst you feel with a dry, parched throat. There is another thirst, a kind that can possess you and you don't even know it's there, inside, deep. Is that possible? The medical evidence is in about that kind of thirst, and it can be dangerous. Dehydration is a serious problem and one not necessarily perceived. At least 75 percent of Americans are chronically dehydrated. It's the number one reason for daytime fatigue. Not enough water makes for a fuzzy-thinking brain. Would you believe that you can reduce your risk of colon cancer by 45 percent with more

water in your system? Migraines, back pain, and even breast cancer have been associated with this unperceived but very real thirst. These are only the iceberg's spire when it comes to deep, dehydrating thirst. Two kinds of thirst, one obvious, one not, one of the throat, the other of the organs—liver, kidneys, digestive system, and skin. You may recognize the first when it strikes, but how about the second?

Could the same be true when it comes to the things of God and of our inside, deep, spirit? The Bible also talks about thirst on two levels: thirst of body, thirst of spirit.

Have you ever been, are you now, thirsty like that? Are you thirsty in the way that anonymous woman at Sychar's well was the day Jesus had the audacity to ask for a drink?

2.

This is something that would never have happened—a stranger, a man talking to another stranger, a woman. Jesus, a Jew, talking to a Samaritan, a social taboo in those days. Jesus, a Jewish stranger, a man, talking to a Samaritan woman about theology, and that just didn't happen back then . . . did it? That's three strikes, and the conversation shouldn't have even gotten off the ground, but it did. It had to. It was part and parcel of the destiny of God's Son wrapped in our flesh to seek and to save the lost. That seeking and saving would culminate in his death for the sins of the world—the world, mind you. For that was his Father's will, willingly accepted by the God-man, Jesus. Of course, that also means that along the way to the cross there was the necessity of gathering those “other sheep that are not of this [Jewish] fold” (Jn 10:16).

Gently, but persistently, Jesus exposes this woman to the thirst she didn't even know was there down deep in a life she thought was all about her. The whole dialogue is a postmodern conversation two thousand years ago.

Our lady at the well has a set of religious beliefs about as eclectic and cosmopolitan as anything we see today. We could call her religion “Samara-mush.” She's interested in spiritual things, but that doesn't mean godly in any biblical sense. She knows something about religion but nothing about faith, real faith in God our Father. She can quote, or at least cite, important facts from her religion, like the place she ought to be worshiping. This also reveals something else about her beliefs: it

doesn't matter what denomination you are. Worship where you choose, since it's all a matter of human choice. You might wonder why she'd bother with "church" at all. Unless, of course, the Samaritans offered on their "holy" days the same things as any other man-made religion. The first is that she could expect to hear, one way or another, what she wanted to hear. The second is that what she heard threw the burden of her "salvation" (whatever that might be) back on her shoulders, but she'd have some control over it. (We do like our control of things!) Should we be surprised that she could manipulate her religious beliefs to accommodate five husbands and a man she's moved in with? At a well, water fountain, bubbler, or cooler, you know exactly what's going on inside people who are "religious" but without God himself. They are dehydrated in spirit—that is, without God and without hope in this world.

Here's the devil's hook. He knows we have a conscience. Conscience is life's permanently installed, constantly recording CD. God's people, who take him at his Word, have known this voice and its judgment calls all along. We've got Paul's word, God's Word, in Romans 1 and 2. Now it appears the behavioral sciences are beginning to come onboard. Dr. Karen Wynn at Yale's Infant Cognition Center (The Baby Lab) has managed to find a way to demonstrate moral discrimination. Children as young as five months old are allowed to make choices to approve or disapprove of puppet behavior. The behavior is simple interaction between puppet characters doing what would or would not be acceptable behavior. Can infants tell right from wrong, choose the puppet that acted in an acceptable way, and turn away from the one that didn't act that way? According to Dr. Wynn, yes—87 percent of the time (CBS, *60 Minutes*, Nov 18, 2012).

When Jesus tells the lady to call her husband, he's not asking for information; he was exposing her thirst, her deep thirst. It's a thirst that tells us we may be doing what we want, but if what we want isn't what God wants for his creation, we're getting mighty thirsty. The small voice logs it all. It approves or disapproves. Conscience reminds us that we are all accountable and responsible to someone above and outside of us. Conscience stabs when we've violated what we know, or sense, to be right and just. It stores all of this, our lack and loss of righteousness, our shallow misbehavior and deliberate dis-behavior, sins of omission and

commission, all find a common repository. And conscience is life's permanent CD.

“Go, call you husband, and come here” is the piercing scalpel of the Law, “piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The Law kicks out from under us every means and way that we might attempt to use in order to justify ourselves. The Law leaves us naked before God and his just judgment. We see clearly the how and the why of our thirst. The thirst created by our sin, our sin, our own real sin, is seen for what it is, and there's now no denying a totally dehydrated spirit.

3.

Jesus exposed the very place where she hurt. The goal was to bring her to refreshing repentance. For this man, now *a prophet*, who exposed her inside out didn't condemn her nor destroy her. Jesus is living up to his name and his job description: to seek and to *save* the lost.

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4.

Sifting through eight hundred years of religious rubble, “Samaramush,” there was one shard of truth that came to the throat of this woman. It was about Messiah. He's coming. “He will tell us all things” (v 25). Now, it may be that version of the coming Messiah was one where he would arrive like a super religious entertainer. When he comes, he will fill in religious blank spots or make himself available for useful religious information as deemed necessary. But that makes his arrival still “all about me (us),” doesn't it? He's here for the idly, albeit, religiously curious. If that was the case for our lady, she suddenly discovered what “tell us all things” really, truthfully, meant. The Messiah introduced himself as the God of Jacob: “I . . . am he” (v 26). He made himself her thirst-quenching business. He could look inside her, expose what he saw, and draw her to himself just as he'd promise to do later in the Gospel of John. The Lord and Giver of Life, the Holy Spirit, created the no-stop-flowing fountain of faith, faith in Christ, that promised Messiah, bubbling up inside her. Faith in Jesus Christ is the soul-satisfying

relationship God instills by his grace in people who “hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

The man who had asked for a drink of water, the man who had the eye of a prophet to see and expose, this man was the Messiah, the promised Christ from God. The progressive identity of Jesus for this woman is the work of God digging a well where there had been none before. She would never be the same. Life can't be when you know where to go when you're thirsty and worn out by sin and guilt and you're as dehydrated and shriveled up as a prune.

Who would ever want to leave that? Who wouldn't start and end the day with a good long drink from the well of eternal life: “Your sins are forgiven” (Lk 7:48)? Forgiveness means the welcoming arms of God, a reception as his child who can say “Our Father” with all boldness and confidence and certainty that nothing in all creation can separate us from his love (Rom 8:35), and we have an eye, a spirit, thirsty for the best yet to come.

5.

That Good News from Sychar's well meant Good News for Sychar city. Forgetting her past, without a thought of her reputation or credibility, she invites others to taste and see for themselves. “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” (v 29). It wasn't about her, was it? It wasn't about what God might or might not be doing in my life today. This was plain and simple witness wrapped up in an invitation. “Come, see.” This is the word of Jesus who himself said, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 10:32).

I'm told there's a survey that says a lot of people might be numbered among those in worship on Sunday except for one thing: they were never invited. Friends in Christ, it doesn't take an evangelism program (helpful as that might be), and you don't need to spend a lot of time memorizing a lot of Bible verses (as useful as that is). It would appear that the thing most necessary is a wet spirit, one that you already have since your Baptism. It's already yours, all yours. The water and life-giving Spirit right now is yours.

Come, meet the man. It's quite simple. Come, meet the man who already knows all about you and has come for you. Come, meet the man

who knows all about your thirst, your very real sin, and did something about it with two pieces of wood, three nails, a crown of thorns, and a spear. Come, meet the man who made all things right and righteous for us in the eye of God our Father and brought to us faith, God-given faith, bubbling up into God-gifted worship. Your well is waiting. Are you thirsty?

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.