

But here we have a Jewish male talking to a Samaritan woman—wrong gender, wrong race, wrong religion! But is this not one reason Jesus came... to bridge those barriers of difference, those things that divide us and keep us apart from one another and the living God? Here in this encounter, Jesus is showing us in his person, demonstrating for us the love of God, bridging the gap. Here in this encounter is a foreshadowing of that which would ultimately occur on a cross, making the two one. Why can't we move beyond our differences? God help us tear down the walls.

So a woman meets a strange man named Jesus when she goes to draw water at the town's well. And he talks to her. He talks to her, a man, a rabbi, speaking in public to a woman. He is a Jew. She is a Samaritan and, furthermore, when he speaks, he speaks to her of "living water"; water far more life-giving than the water she came to draw. "Give me this water to drink, she says, that I may never be thirsty again."

And then Jesus begins to speak to her of a depth even deeper than the well she is visiting. He seems to know more about her and her spiritual need than even she herself knows.

"Call your husband."

"I have no husband," she answers Jesus.

"You are right in saying, 'I have no husband, for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband.'"

"You are right... I perceive you are a prophet."

But Jesus takes her deeper still, to a place she would not have gone had she been left to her own devices. What Jesus did for this woman, this outsider, this social outcast, was to encounter her, take her seriously, intruded upon her ordinary day and invited her to drink her fill of the life-giving water that he alone could give, water that would never dry up, a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

The conversation ends with the woman, leaving her water pot, the container of physical water, to share with the townspeople the life-giving water that Jesus offered her.

"Come and see a man that told me everything I have ever done!" *He cannot be the Messiah, can he?*

And what was the result of this woman's budding faith, her testimony, the preached word, to her town?

Verse 39-42: *Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony... So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."*

"Give me a drink," Jesus said. "I am thirsty."

"O, Sir, give me a drink of this living water," the woman said, and he did.

For what are you thirsty today? For what does your soul yearn?

How is it with your soul?

If you are an *insider*, if you are a Christ-follower, a member of this church, or whether you, like this woman are an *outsider*, know this. *Jesus has found you and longs to quench your thirst.*

He seeks us out,
engages us,
and begins the conversation.

He gives us what we need.

To the insiders and this is a word to us, FBC. He gives a challenge, he prods us, sometimes confuses us when things don't work out like they are suppose to and he pushed us off balance so that we are forced to journey with him toward new understandings and experiences of faith. He thereby reminds us that we are on a journey with him and we are not at the destination yet. To those who consider themselves outsiders, he gives welcome, conversation, encouragement, and embrace wherever you are on your spiritual journey.

Where do you find yourself this Sunday? What would you call yourself, an insider or an outsider? Well know this, today's Gospel, the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, is a reminder that wherever you are, Jesus has found you. He calls us and bids us, "come and drink!" Amen.


FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Let Us Share First With You.



February 24, 2008
Third Sunday in Lent
Sermon by: Rev. Dr. Carol McCall
Richardson

Give Me a
Drink
Joh 4:5-39

First Baptist Church of Memphis
200 E. Parkway N.
Memphis, Tennessee 38112

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink...' The Samaritan woman said to him. "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

Water. The lack of it causes physical thirst. Without it, we die. Jesus was thirsty. He had been traveling through desert lands, from Judea on his way to Galilee, having to go through Samaria and he was thirsty. It was hot. It was high noon and so, Jesus stops by a well to rest when an unnamed Samaritan woman comes in the middle of the day to draw water and Jesus engages her in conversation. *Give me a drink*, he says to her. Jesus was thirsty.

When I was a gangly sixth grader at Snowden School, I remember distinctly what it was to thirst. My sixth grade teacher, Miss McKee, made sure we children knew what it really was to thirst and to appreciate water's relief from our thirst. Sending us out to play, in the heat of a hot, sultry, summer day, giving us a break from our academic pursuits, she made sure we children played hard, organizing games—jump rope, dodge ball, red rover and the like. When we returned to the classroom with black, beaded balls sweat under our necks and in the creases of our arms, we were thirsty. But on this occa-

sion we would not get to quench our thirst right away. Instead our teacher ushered our sweaty band to our seats and made us sit down and listen to a recording with the sounds of rushing water in the background and the repetitive words, "Cool, clear water!" "Cool, clear water" it played over and over again as we groaned and begged for water and accused our teacher of "killing us, bringing on early death." Eventually, she would smile, rise in her very dignified manner, have us line up and lead us at last to the fountain of life-giving water.

I know what it is to thirst and I know the sweet relief that comes from quenching that thirst with cool, clear, clean water. But there are thousands around the world who do not. Water. It is something we take for granted. It is only as far away as our nearest faucet. But in many other places, finding portable, fresh water is a daily burden—sometimes dangerous to obtain and almost always complicated by lack of rain fall or by war and storm-damaged wells. The lack of water has become one of our great ethical, moral concerns of our time.

Are you aware that unbelievable tragedies have been unfolding in the part of Africa that includes southern Sudan to the east of Lake Chad, where genocidal murders have become commonplace? In the country of Niger, just to the west of Lake Chad, the region-wide drought has contributed to the famine conditions that put millions at risk. One of the contributing factors of famine and genocide is the disappearance of their prime source of

water, Lake Chad. And this is happening all over our world.

In his prophetic book, The End of Poverty, Jeffery Sachs, former special advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General, says that not only is our water supply in countries shrinking, there is another equally potentially deadly issue—safe drinking water. Millions are dying of dysentery and disease because of a lack of safe drinking water and its difficult access to it. Is this not an issue for the church?

Our children believe it is. Our girls' mission organization in their study of Zambia have found that Zambia is one of the poorest countries in Africa, where two-thirds of its people live below the national poverty line. Our CBF missionaries in Zambia, Fran and Lonnie Turner, have expressed that one of the great needs are wells, wells of clean, cool water. Our children have taken the initiative and at each of our water fountains are containers for contributions for the purchase of a well. Each well costs approximately \$2000.00. I think that together we can help our children purchase at least one well.

And this past summer Trudy Hatton and I took our youth girls to attend a national mission conference. It was the worldwide lack of clean, cool water that captured their hearts and imagination. They, too, are leading the way to provide wells in their mission organization. In your *Together* you will find this article written by Lydia Michelle Cronk, one of those youth, appealing to us on behalf of thirsty people. This is what she says:

Women and children in Africa walk

as much as ten miles a day just to get a few buckets of dirty water. They use this water for cooking, cleaning, drinking and bathing. Those with HIV/AIDs are dying faster from drinking this dirty water. You may be wondering "What difference can I make?" We can make a difference. One dollar provides one African with a year's supply of water. So please help us raise money for the water needs of parts of Africa.

How can you and I meet spiritual needs without first meeting physical needs? May the church lead the way. Our children have carved the path for us to follow as we help alleviate physical thirst so that a greater thirst of the spiritual kind can be met.

Our story today first portrays physical thirst. Jesus was thirsty. Being fully human he experience human thirst. And we will hear him again call for water from the cross. *I thirst*, he will plead. But on this occasion Jesus uses his physical thirst to draw a woman into conversation who has thirst of deeper kind, a kind much more necessary for life.

Jesus, a Jew, has not only crossed forbidden territory, through Samaria, to get where he is going, from Judea to Galilee, he also dares to talk with a Samaritan, despised by the Jews who called them "dogs," "half-breeds." And not only does Jesus dare to talk with a Samaritan, he dares to talk with a Samaritan who is a woman. Conventional rabbis did not waste their words of wisdom by attempting to teach theology to a woman and Jewish men were strictly forbidden by law to engage a woman in public conversation.