Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Messiah: The Living Water, Part 1
Scripture: John 4:1-15
Code: 43-20

Well, turn again in your Bible to the fourth chapter of John. As we return, I want to say thanks to Austin Duncan and Phil Johnson, Nathan Busenitz for stepping into the pulpit and doing such a wonderful job here. Always a joy for us to hear the Word from them. But it's good to be back and to go back to the gospel of John.

Much, of course, in the story of the woman at the well is familiar to you. If you grew up in the church, you heard the story probably at many, many different intervals through your life and Sunday school. You have no doubt read it many times and thought what a wonderful story it is. I'm not here to tell you things that you don't know, or to bring out some kind of hidden realities in the story. The story is well-known. It is a simple story, it is a straight-forward story, it is the story of Jesus evangelizing an outcast woman, of her coming to salvation and then being used by God to bring many in her village to salvation. In fact, we read that sort of the culminating comment on the whole story comes in verse 39, "From that city, many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman."

Here you have as clear a model of our Lord evangelizing a sinner as anywhere on the pages of the gospels. And then that makes it a very instructive portion of Scripture, one that we should be very familiar with for the lessons that it teaches us. We're going to go over those lessons, lessons about how we approach the unbelieving world around us and how we bring them to hear the gospel and understand what it offers and what it demands.

But having said that—and we will look at the story and we will emphasize its wonderful, helpful modeling for us of evangelizing—having said that, I want to remind you that the purpose of John is not set aside here, and the purpose of John is stated again in chapter 20, verse 31 of his gospel: "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name." So while it is about the woman and her conversion, that is the secondary purpose of this section as we would know, being consistent with John's mission. The primary purpose is to unveil Christ. The primary purpose is to declare Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. The primary purpose is to put Him on display. And in this account, His humanity is on display as He is weary and thirsty sitting by a well. That's His humanity, and we'll look a little bit more closely at that.

But His deity is also on display because He meets a woman whom He has never met in His life and He knows her entire history. So we see His humanity and His weariness. We see His deity and His

omniscience. It is then, more than it is anything else, a presentation of Christ. And what makes it unique is that up to now in the gospel of John, John the writer, John the apostle has presented Christ as the Son of God. John the Baptist has presented Christ as the Messiah. The disciples of Jesus have given testimony to the fact that He is the Messiah. So we have the witness of John the apostle. We have the witness of John the Baptist. We have the witness of the disciples. But this is the first time that the proclamation of the messiahship of Jesus comes from His own lips and that we find in verses 25 and 26 where the woman speaks of the Christ, the Messiah who will come, and Jesus said to her in verse 26, “I who speak to you am He.”

So as I say, up to now it’s John the apostle, John the Baptist, and the followers of Jesus. But here is the identity of the Messiah from His own lips. Now what makes this so very unique is that this declaration from the lips of Jesus as to His identity is not given to any significant religious leaders in Israel. It is not given in Jerusalem. It is not given to the religious establishment there. It is given to a woman who is, in every sense, an outcast. This is a woman who is a Samaritan. Samaritans were essentially a corrupted form of the Jewish race. The Jews who remained in the northern kingdom of Israel when the Assyrians came and took them captive in 722—the Jews that remained after the population was removed the land—intermarried with all kinds of pagan, idolatrous nations and so they were a hybrid people who had forsaken their Judaism and committed the most heinous crime that a Jew could commit, and that was to mingle with idolatrous Gentiles. They had done that. They were outcasts.

So this is an outcast woman. More than that, this is an immoral woman. This is a woman who has been married multiple times and is living in an adulterous relationship at this very time. This is an ignorant woman. She doesn’t know anything about the true religion. Jesus even says to her, “You don’t know what you worship. At least the Jews have the full Old Testament.” She is an ignorant woman. She is uneducated. She is also an indifferent woman. She is not like Nicodemus, she is not seeking Jesus. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night because he knew He was a man who was sent from God, He was a prophet from God because nobody could do what He did. And Nicodemus had seen His miracles. This woman had seen nothing, knew nothing about Jesus, heard nothing from Him or about Him. She is religiously indifferent. She is neutral. She has no idea of who Jesus is. She has no idea of who this Jewish stranger sitting on the well is. She is from the dregs of corrupted culture and society. She is a pariah in her own realm. She is an unclean woman. She’s the very opposite of Nicodemus. Nicodemus is moral, he’s religious, he’s an upstanding Jew, he is learned, he is a theologian, he is from the socially elite, he is a prominent leader, he is devout, he is respected by everyone, and it was he who sought out Jesus that he might know the way of salvation, the way into the kingdom.

This woman is the opposite and yet it is to this woman that Jesus first in the gospel of John declares His own identity. It’s an amazing thing. And it is a testimony, on the one hand, to the apostasy of Israel. It is a stinging rebuke to Israel that this revelation is not made to some prominent religious

leader there, but rather to this woman. But it is more than just a stinging rebuke of Israel, it is a declaration on the part of Jesus that He has come to save people from every tongue and tribe and nation. It is a testimony that salvation is for all who believe. And that has already been declared in John 3:16 that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. This is the testimony of Scripture. Romans 10, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," whether Jew or Gentile. Galatians 3 says the same thing. Colossians 3 says the same thing. From the very outset, from the very beginning, the gospel was intended not just for the Jews, but the world. Acts 10:34, "Opening his mouth, Peter said, 'I most certainly understand that God is not one to show partiality but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him,' from every nation."

That's why the Great Commission says, "Take the gospel to every nation. Go to the ends of the earth to every creature." So here is a demonstration that God has forsaken Israel in a great measure, and that plays out, doesn't it, as destruction comes in 70 A.D. But it's also a demonstration that the gospel is intended for anyone and everyone who believes, no matter what their ethnic identity, no matter what their place in life. And this is for us to understand as we proclaim the gospel in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Now when you go into a story like this, there are so many deviations that you could take, so many side trips that you could take, so many tangents you can go off on, both in terms of historical background which always makes things rich and as well in terms of sort of expanding spiritual truth. Well, I want to resist doing too much of that. I want to do only as much of that as I feel is necessary for you to relive the story. And as I often say, it isn't about bringing the story into modern times, it's about taking all of you back into this event itself, and letting you live the event. And I need to tell you enough about what's going on so you feel like you are really there. And as we go, we're going to see the glory of Christ on display but we're going to learn from Him how we are to approach people in the world who are indifferent to the gospel. Once in a while in my life, somebody will come up to me and say, "Do you know how I can be saved?" Or, "I'm trying to figure out how to get into the kingdom." Or, "Do you know how I can receive eternal life?" That happens, and I'm always glad when that happens; it's a lot easier if you can start with that question.

But for the most part, through life, you're going to be in the position of the initiation of a conversation with an indifferent person about a gospel they need to hear. And that's what we're going to learn from Jesus. We learn some things from Nicodemus, how to respond to someone who comes and says, "I want to enter the kingdom," and Jesus says, "Well wait a minute, that's not in your power, you need to be born from above." And we understand that. And so you need to pray and ask God for that new birth if you want to be in His kingdom. That's a very rare experience for most of us. It may be most common in our families as our children come to us and ask us those questions and we start with the point that they want to know how to be born again. But for the most part, if we're going to take the gospel to the world, we're going to have to initiate the conversation with ignorant, indifferent people

who are in some way or another victims of the concoction that they call their own faith or their own religion—and we have to take the initiative.

Unlike Nicodemus, who sought out Jesus, here's a woman who wasn't looking for Him at all, didn't know He existed, had no idea who He was. He is an unknown, unsought stranger that she meets sitting on a well who is as far as she is concerned really bizarre, strange. He is saying very strange things, things she can't sort out—at least that's how it starts.

Jesus dismisses her indifference. It's not a barrier. He dismisses her ignorance. It's not a barrier. And He dismisses, this is important, her immorality. I know we tend to get very, very self-righteous when we look at our immoral world. And it's very easy for us to have resentment toward people, very easy for us to resent homosexuals, advocating for gay marriage, corrupting our culture, corrupting our young people. Very easy for us to resent those who are sexually immoral, very easy for us to resent Islamic terrorists because of the damage they do, the destruction they do. But that's the mission field. That's not the enemy, that's the mission field. And all sinners are in the same situation headed for the same hell, even if they're not homosexuals or they're not Islamic terrorists. They're alienated from God and it's our responsibility in this world to go to them. They are the sick who need the physician. They are the unrighteous, the sinners.

So having said that, as we go through this story, keeping in mind that Christ is magnificently on display, we're going to learn some principles for approaching people with the gospel that we see our Lord using here and they're very, very helpful. But before we do that, let's begin with the setting in verse 1.

"Therefore," and that's an important connection with the previous passage as you'll see in a minute. "Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus Himself was not baptizing but His disciples were, "He left Judea and went away again into Galilee." Simply stated, Jesus leaves Judea. What's He been doing in Judea? He's been preaching. Preaching what? Preaching repentance, preaching the kingdom. He has been doing what John the Baptist did. You remember their ministries had an overlapping period of time. Jesus launches Himself by showing up at the Jordan where John is baptizing. John baptizes Him and says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"; points to Christ. John tells His disciples, "Follow Christ, He's the Messiah, Go after Him, I must decrease, He must increase." And the transition is taking place.

But John then moves north, as we learned at the end of chapter 3, he goes up north and he begins to preach there in a new area and baptize people, declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, and also preparing people for His arrival, for confronting Him. So he's doing the same thing in the north. Why did he go north? Because he wanted to give room for Jesus to come in where he had been in the most populous area. So Jesus is now in Judea and He's getting big crowds, bigger crowds, we might

assume, than even John. It seems to be what it's saying. Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John. They're coming, being baptized. Jesus has an added feature that John didn't have. Jesus does miracles. John did no miracles. Jesus has already begun to do His miracles and the attraction is profound and He is baptizing.

What baptizing is it? It's that proselyte baptism in which Jews came and said, "I'm no better than a Gentile, and I want my heart cleansed," and they symbolize the desire for heart cleansing to prepare for the arrival of Messiah by going through an external immersion into water. That's what Jesus is doing. It says there in verse 1 that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples. And then verse 2 appears to be a sort of an edit by John the apostle, the writer, by saying, "Jesus Himself was not actually baptizing, but His disciples were." And that would be for obvious reasons.

If Jesus baptized you, that might go to your head. If others were baptized by the apostles and you happened to be baptized by Jesus, so Jesus defers and delegates that responsibility. But it comes out in the same way, in the general sense, as being a baptism by Jesus because it was done by His delegated representatives. Also important to remind you that baptism does not depend on the baptizer. The baptizer adds nothing to the baptism. Paul said, "I'm glad that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius." It is the baptism itself. It is the heart of the one being baptized that is the issue, not the baptizer. Judas even baptized people, we must assume, when he became a part of the discipled group.

So Jesus' ministry is flourishing but this creates problems. The Pharisees already hate John the Baptist. Why do they hate John the Baptist? Because when the religious leaders came down to the Jordan where John was baptizing, and he saw them—you can read about it in Matthew chapter 3—John welcomed this with this: "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And then He pronounced damnation on their heads.

John was not popular with them. Jesus was even less popular because Jesus had the same message about their apostate religion, but Jesus had come into the Temple and wreaked havoc. And these men, these Pharisees, were essentially the watchdogs for all things religious. And they were watching over their religious turf and hatred was mounting and building against Jesus. And so Jesus wanted to avoid a premature confrontation. There wasn't time for that. There was much ministry yet to do before this thing escalated. And so He left Judea, verse 3, and went away again—again because He had come from Galilee and from Nazareth. He went back home and back to Galilee where He would minister for well over a year, far from Jerusalem, far from Jerusalem.

It was never necessary for Jesus to sort of test His enemies. In chapter 7, verse 30, they were seeking to seize Him and no man laid his hand on Him because His hour had not yet come. In chapter 8, verse 20, He spoke these words in the treasury as He taught in the Temple, and no one seized Him because His hour had not yet come. He was on a divine schedule and He took steps to

avoid that both naturally and apparently occasionally even supernaturally. They tried to kill Him in Nazareth, and He just disappeared, we don't know how, right out of their midst.

So He goes to Galilee, and He's going there for the great Galilean ministry, which you know about if you've been with us in our gospel studies. Now in order to get there, He had to pass through Samaria. Well, technically speaking, you don't have to pass through Samaria, you can take the coastal route. You're going to Galilee in the north, you're in Jerusalem Judea in the south. You could go to the west and go up the coastal plain and go that way and avoid Samaria. Samaria is a strip of land in the middle. Or you could go the eastern route by crossing the Jordan River going up through an area called Perea, and then cross back over the Jordan River and you will have gone literally around Samaria, or you can go through Samaria. If you are a severely fastidious and sort of orthodox Jew, worried about defilement, you either take the coastal route, or you take the eastern route across the Jordan River because you don't want to go through Samaria. But here He had to pass through Samaria.

Literally in the Greek, it was necessary, it was required for Him to go through Samaria. We could argue that it was the shortest route and so that laid the necessity on Him. He wanted to get out of there. And He didn't want to prolong His trip. He wanted to get to Galilee as quickly as possible so He took the shortest route. But I think we would have to go beyond that and say He had to go through Samaria because there was a sovereign appointment, that it was established for Him with a woman by a well and that had been ordained before the foundation of the world. And it was going to lead to her salvation and the salvation of an entire group of people from a local Samaritan village. He had to go that way.

It was the shortest route, but there was more than a geographic compulsion—there was a divine appointment, a spiritual necessity foreordained. The machinery, you might say, of divine sovereignty, of supernatural purpose, was in motion and headed toward one surprised, sinful woman.

So He came by going through Samaria to a city of Samaria. Now Samaria originally was the name of the capital city of the northern kingdom. When the kingdoms split after Solomon—Solomon was the last king of the unified kingdom (Saul, David, Solomon, and from Solomon's sons)—the kingdom split, ten tribes went north, two stayed south. The south became known as Judah. The north as Israel. That's historic.

When the kingdom was established independently in the north, Omri, who was one of the kings of the north...and by the way, all of them were evil, all of them were wicked, all of them were unrighteous, there was never a good king in the north. But Omri, according to 1 Kings 16, identified Samaria as the capital city. Well, it didn't take long for the word *Samaria* to extend from the capital city to the whole region, so it all became known as Samaria.

In Samaria, somewhere along the way, is a village called Sychar. So we read there that He came to this place, a city in Samaria called Sychar. Probably modern Askar, still around, and located on the slope of Mount Ebal, opposite Mount Gerizim. Do you remember Ebal and Gerizim from Deuteronomy 28? The mountains of cursing and blessing where God warned the people, “If they obeyed they’d be blessed, if they didn’t, they’d be cursed?” That area. Now not just near this village, and by the way, the best estimate would be that if you started in Bethany, maybe He was staying with the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, we don’t know. But let’s assume Bethany, which is right by Jerusalem, somewhere in that area. It’s about a twenty-mile hike and when I say hike, I don’t mean it’s a flat walk, I mean it’s an exerting kind of hike, up and down and up and down and a rigorous walk, 20 miles would take it to where the modern town of Askar is, if that’s close to where Sychar is—a twenty-mile walk that day.

He came to this place, which is also further identified by letting us know that this is a place where Jacob purchased land and dug a well and then bequeathed that land and well to his son Joseph. And Joseph, of course, was even later buried there after the land was conquered by Joshua post-captivity. So this is just identifying our historical, geographic location, which the Bible loves to do because it is a real book about real people doing real things in real places. So Jesus goes the twenty miles and He arrives near Sychar, and some suggest that Jacob’s well—they know where that is today. It was probably between a half a mile and a mile away from the village of Sychar. Askar is about a half a mile or so away.

He arrives at that place and we read this: “Jesus being wearied from His journey was sitting thus.” What does “thus” mean? Wearied, in a wearied condition; He sat in a slumped, wearied condition by the well. It was about the sixth hour. The day began at dawn, which means it began say around 6 A.M. and sixth hour puts it at noon. It is high noon; it is the middle of the day. The sun is at its peak and He has walked 20 miles, a rigorous, rigorous walk that morning. And He’s exhausted. The word “wearied,” *kopiao*, means to be to the point of sweat and exhaustion. It’s an extreme condition. He is worn out. He is spent. And at noon, under the blazing sun, He sits down on the edge of the well.

The stage is set for this amazing encounter that is about to happen. And again there you see the humanity of Jesus, don’t you? You see His humanity. He understands all that we suffer as men and women because He was one of us. He knew what it was to be weary, to be thirsty, to be worn out, to be exhausted, which contributes to Him being a sympathetic high priest who learned from His own experiences how to sympathize with us. That kind of thing brings shame on those who say that only the Virgin Mary or the saints can sympathize with us. Jesus walked in our flesh. He understands even our physical weariness. And there He is by the well.

Now we come to the encounter and I want to give you some points as we go through. We’ll take maybe the first half of this little list today, and then next week the latter half. The first thing that I want

you to focus on as we look for a model for personal evangelism—the first thing is unexpected condescension, unexpected condescension. And what I mean by that is Jesus takes the initiative and comes into her world.

Verse 7, “There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.” Now I have to stop there for a minute. Drawing water was women’s work. Men worked in the field and did the hard work; women drew the water. That’s supported by all kinds of historical data. They did it every day. They did it every day because they needed water every day. Water was scarce in that part of the world, as you know. Wells were visited every day. That was a common meeting place; it was a common meeting place for the women who came to draw water.

What is fascinating is that they came at dusk, typically. They came when the day had cooled down in the evening. Why is she coming at noon? Why is she there at twelve? Well, we can’t be certain about it, but it would be a reasonable thing to assume that this woman was a woman in town who had a very bad reputation—five husbands and living in adultery. And oh, by the way, the Samaritan religion was based upon an understanding of the Pentateuch which contains the Ten Commandments and a whole lot of other things that have to do with marriage and divorce and adultery, the five books of Moses. This is a scarlet woman, to borrow a little from Nathaniel Hawthorne. She would normally come at dusk if she was like other women, but if she was a woman of shame, maybe she came at noon because she knows nobody else is going to be there. And maybe she’s avoiding the confrontation and the stigma that she bears. And why this well? Because there’s some information historically that there were wells closer to Sychar. Why go this far? Why pass other wells? And the answer might be the same, that she avoided the very convenient places in the normal time of day to avoid the scorn of other women that she would have to face. She is not a respectable person.

Consequently by all expectations, she is not a woman worthy of attention from the Son of God. She is not a woman who is elevated. This is condescension. And how does He begin? He takes the initiative. He says to her, “Give Me a drink. Give Me a drink.” J.C. Ryle says, “This is a gracious act of spiritual aggression on the sinner, a gracious act of spiritual aggression on the sinner.” We don’t think about aggression in terms of evangelism, but we should, we should. It’s a shocking thing, really, very shocking. Not so much in our culture, obviously, but in that culture it’s a shocking thing for Him to do because men don’t speak with women in public. That’s a breach of religious etiquette. And especially rabbis don’t speak to women in public. In fact, I remember reading years ago, a group of Pharisees and rabbis who were called the bruised and bleeding Pharisees and the reason they were bruised and bleeding was because every time they saw a woman they closed their eyes and they kept running into buildings. Jewish men didn’t talk to women. Do you know that Jewish rabbis were not supposed to talk to the women of their own family in public.

So here Jesus, a rabbi, a Jewish man, not only talks to a woman, but He talks to a woman who is an outcast, despised woman, who is a half-breed pagan and worse than that, she is by every measure a

well-known adulteress who probably has been an adulteress for a long, long time, hence so many divorces. 'Cause if you look into the Law of Moses in the Old Testament, you will find that Moses did grant a divorce, but a divorce, as we know—because Jesus reiterated it—for immorality. This is an immoral woman. It's a shocking breach of everything Jewish for Him to say to this woman, "Give Me a drink." And somebody might say, "Well, why doesn't He have the disciples get Him a drink?" Well, can't because verse 8 says they had gone away into the city to buy food; so He's there alone. Why is He there alone? Well, because they needed food. How many disciples does it take to get food? All of them? No, but dismissing them was beneficial to the conversation, let's put it that way. He wanted to be alone with the woman.

Without them there to get Him a drink, and without any instrument to get a drink, He says to the woman, "Give Me a drink." It's just absolutely shocking. And by the way, just a footnote, Jesus never did a miracle to quench His own thirst, satisfy His own hunger, or provide anything for Himself, never. There's no record in all four gospels that Jesus ever did any miracle to feed Himself, provide for Himself, and thus He honored work, and He honored effort, and He honored care, and He honored sacrifice, and He honored giving and all the things that we do in life to sustain ourselves. This was also part of His commitment to humanity. We get what we need through either our own work, and our own effort, or somebody else's work and somebody else's effort. He didn't do those kinds of miracles that would supply His own wants.

The woman then responds in verse 9. "Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, 'How is it that You being a Jew ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?'" And then John adds, parenthetically, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." And by the way, just to take that out of English and put it in Greek, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Literally the verb there is, "They don't use the same utensils." Literally, "Use not anything together with Samaritans." They don't use the same things. They don't drink out of the same cup. Very specific. She's saying, "I know Your culture, I know what You think about us." And by the way, Jesus has shattered that because that was non-biblical tradition. That kind of hatred toward the Samaritans that came from the Jews was wrong, it was illegitimate.

Again, that should have been the mission field, but now we've got a nation of Jonahs, don't we? We've got a nation of Jonahs who don't want to take the message to anybody else any more than Jonah did. There are the Samaritans and instead of telling them the truth, instead of trying to draw them to the true knowledge of the true God through the true Scriptures, they treat them with scorn and disdain. And so, the woman knows that and she knows that they don't share anything. And she says, "How is it that You being a Jew?" How did she know He was a Jew? Probably from His clothing; probably from His clothing. Jews had distinctive clothing and they had tassels, you know, on the edges of their garments, according to Numbers 15. And certainly a rabbi most likely would have those. There was nothing in His appearance that made Him look like some, you know, medieval painting of Jesus with a halo over His head. He was just a man like any other man who was a Jew.

Again His humanity is on display. He has violated all expectations by talking to her. And listen to this, listen to how indifferent Jesus was toward all the non-biblical traditions. He sent the disciples into a Samaritan town to buy...What?...food. They were going to eat Samaritan food bought out of the hands of Samaritans. Jesus didn't care at all for tradition, only revealed truth. And when they created these kinds of traditions, and therefore shut the Samaritans off, they were in violation of God's will and God's heart. God had to send His Messiah to do what the people would never do, what the religious leaders would never do. The religious leaders of Israel weren't even interested in converting their own people, let alone Samaritans.

John adds, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." They don't use the same utensils. In fact, the Jews in John 8:48 said, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" That's what they said to Jesus. You're nothing; that was one of their epithets. "You're a demon-possessed Samaritan." Terrible scorn for the Samaritans.

Now again, you go back to 720, 722 B.C., Assyria captures the northern kingdom. Transports everybody out. You can read the story yourself in 2 Kings 17. Takes everybody into captivity, leaves a few people there, a few of the Jews from the ten tribes, and into the district come Babylonians, people from Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, Sepharvaim. They're even listed in that chapter of 2 Kings. They come in, they intermingle, they bring their gods, they get married, they lose their racial purity. This is a gross time in the eyes of the Jews. They concoct some bizarre form of their own religion, they build a temple on Mount Gerizim and they carry on their own kind of worship. We'll see more about that later.

The bitterness is profound after the Jews in the southern kingdom, Judah came back from captivity. Remember they came back from their captivity. After they came back and rebuilt, you remember, it was Samaritans who tried to help them. Do you remember at the story of Nehemiah? The Samaritans wanted to help them and they refused to let them help. And so the Samaritans then tried to stop what they were doing and the bitterness got deeper and deeper and it lasted, and it lasted, and it lasted.

A renegade Jew, actually, it was a renegade Jew named Manasseh, who married a daughter of the Samaritan Sanballat. You remember he was the enemy of Nehemiah. This renegade Jew named Manasseh, who married the daughter of Sanballat, he's the one that went up into Samaria and built the temple to sort of be their temple because they couldn't be a part of the new temple being built in Jerusalem. So this rivalry had gone on. Here we are four or five hundred years later and the attitudes are bitter and deep.

And so, Jesus starts the conversation with an utterly indifferent, immoral woman. That's the first point again, unexpected condescension. That's where this begins. Second point: unsolicited mercy, unsolicited mercy is offered. Verse 10, "Jesus answered and said to her," and He doesn't say anything about this conflict between Jews and Samaritans. He ignores that. "But He answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would

have asked Him and He would have given you living water.'"

This is unsolicited mercy, using physical thirst and water as the contact point, He reverses the situation. He starts out thirsty, asks her to give Him a drink. Turns the table. Identifies her as the thirsty one and He the source of water. She doesn't know where He's going with this. But here is mercy. It is pure mercy because He says, "If you knew the gift of God," the *dorean*, the free gift of God. And this is where evangelism starts. You inaugurate the conversation, you find your way in at a common point of interest, and then comes the reality that you are offering the sinner without regard to morality, okay? It is mercy with no regard for morality. It is mercy with no regard for religion. It is just mercy. It is just grace.

It is the gift of God. This is the unique glory of the gospel. In opposition to all religion, all religion says, "Do this, do this, do this, do this, and God will give you this." The gospel says, "In whatever state you're in religiously, and whatever state you're in morally, here's a gift." It is the gift of God. It is a gift of grace. It is a gift of mercy. *Dorean*, the word here, is "free gift." Paul loves that word. Paul uses that word in Romans. He uses it in chapter 5, the free gift, the free gift. And that's where our Lord starts with this unsolicited mercy being offered.

"If you knew the free gift, and if you knew who it is that said to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have"...What?..."you would have"...What?..."asked Him." What did we say when we were going through regeneration in John 3? Regeneration is a work of God. You can't participate in your own birth. All you can do is ask. All you can do is ask. There's a gift from God. I'm here to give it if you only ask, and if you would ask Him—speaking in the third person concerning Himself—He would have given you living water. And with that statement about living water, He takes the conversation in a strongly spiritual direction, a strongly spiritual direction.

We're not exactly talking about the water that we started talking about, living water? She might have assumed living water was what was in the well. Why? Because that well was spring-fed, a hundred feet deep, spring-fed, constant water from Jacob until then. But if you only knew what God is offering you of living water, you would have asked. And if you knew that I was the only one who could give it, and here I stood, you would have asked Me, and I would have given it to you.

What is the gift of God? What is the living water? Well, it's salvation, clearly. Everything that's in salvation—mercy, grace, pardon, forgiveness, justification, flowing and flowing and flowing and flowing and flowing—and endlessly flowing, flowing, flowing.

Now I make an obvious point here and it's this. When sinners come before the judgment of God, the Great White Throne—and they're all brought to that judgment in the end—when they're all brought before the tribunal of God, based on what our Lord says here and elsewhere, they will be sent to hell not because of all the lists of sins. But they will be sent to hell because they failed to ask for the gift.

James says, “You have not because you ask not.” Jesus says, “You will not come to Me that you might have life.” Jesus says, “Because you don’t believe in Me, you’ll die in your sins and where I go you’ll never come.” This is a gift. This is a gift. If you knew the gift, if you could grasp the gift, and who it is who is standing before you, you would have asked and I would have given it to you. This is mercy. This is the uniqueness of the Christian gospel. It is the free gift to the one who asks. “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” “Whoever” (Romans 10).

Why is it described as living water? Because they’re at a well. That’s a great analogy, right? But it also has some Old Testament foundations. Jeremiah 2:13 talks about disobedient Israel being guilty of foolishly forsaking God, the fountain of living waters, to hue for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. I mean, they lived in a world where water was life, crucial, essential. Jeremiah 17:13, Jeremiah warned that all who forsake the Lord will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down because they have forsaken the foundation of living water, even the Lord. Psalm 36:9, “God is the fountain of life.” Isaiah 12:3, “The redeemed in Him will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation.” Isaiah 55:1, “Ho! Every one that thirsts, come and drink water.” Water is life. You draw your life from God.

God wants to give you the gift of life. This is running water, flowing water. In John 6 and verse 35, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life, he who comes to Me will not hunger. He who believes in Me will never thirst.” And then in John 7:37, “On the last day, the day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said’”...and this is from Isaiah...“‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” And that’s what Jesus says here. You would have asked and He would have given you living water. In fact, in verse 14 He says, “It will become in you a well of water springing up to eternal life.” It’s a water that once you receive, you’ll never thirst. There’s the perseverance of the saints. There’s the security of the believer. Once you receive this water, once this water is placed in you, it flows forever and flows forever, and flows forever. It is a well of water, springing up eternally.

This is the gospel. Again, mercy without regard to morality, mercy without regard to religion. You just ask. It’s the gift; it’s the gift.

Well she’s trying to figure out what He’s talking about. Verse 11, “She said to Him, ‘Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where then do you get that living water?’” This is sarcasm. This is a kind of scorn, kind of mockery. This woman is very used to defending herself. “You’re not greater than our father Jacob, are you? Who gave us the well and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?” Who do you think you are? You’ve got something better than this? How are you going to give me water when you don’t have a bucket? How you going to drop the rope a hundred yards, or a hundred feet rather, pull up the water? Do you have some other well? Are you greater than Jacob? Genesis 33:18 and 19, “Dug the well.” This is skepticism, mockery. Again, mercy responds kindly, patiently. Verse 13, “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst

again. But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst, but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." There's the eternality of salvation. Wow.

That leads us to a very brief third principle in evangelism. First you have an unexpected condescension, and then you have an unsolicited mercy offered. And then you have unparalleled blessings promised, unparalleled blessings promised. In verse 14, our Lord promises an endless supply of satisfying water forever and really gets specific—we're talking about eternal life. This is the fountain of youth. This is the fountain of eternal life. Now His point is unmistakable, unmistakable. This is permanent, consistent, full, satisfying, everlasting mercy and blessing from God to the sinner who asks. The analogy has now moved to its point. The doctrine is the doctrine of eternal life. He's offering her eternal life which is a spiritual reality—the gift of mercy, the gift of grace for all who ask. What is it? It's living water. It's satisfaction forever, soul satisfaction forever.

She responds in verse 15, "Sir, give me this water so I will not be thirsty or come all the way here to draw." She still doesn't get it. Give me this water. And all I can see in her is incredulity, who is this man and what is He talking about? What is she talking about? Does she get some of it? Maybe. Is she starting to think in terms of spiritual things and eternal things? Maybe. Or is this just more mockery? Or is it mingled? I don't know at what point she is, as the Spirit of God works on her heart through the words of the Savior. I don't know.

But it all comes clear in the next section, next week. All right? Let's pray.

We've been greatly blessed, Lord, with the experience of our Lord with this woman and so much more to come. We see His seeking heart. We see His condescending grace and mercy. We see His easy promise of blessing and salvation to the unworthy sinner who simply asks, who simply asks. "We have not because we ask not. If we ask, You hear and You give life to the one who asks." But it's not just that simple, for there is the matter of sin and how we face that as we will see next time. Help us to learn from this and to be better able and more faithful to proclaim this glorious message as You give us opportunity.

Father, now we look to You to take what we've learned today and give us opportunity to use it, to be seekers of the lost, as the Savior is, and to bring to them that unexpected condescension, that unsolicited mercy, and those unparalled blessings of the gospel. Thank You for giving us the time together today to worship You and to fellowship with each other, and may we be enriched to Your praise and glory, we pray in the Savior's name. Amen.

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