



JOHN 4:13-18 | Truly Cleansing Water!

Sunday, March 8, 2015 – The Third Sunday in Lent

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ 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."

¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ 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."

Five husbands! Even in today's standards that's something that people gossip about. And this woman was brazen enough to be seen talking to another man—a single man—in public. In middle eastern society, even today, that is a social taboo. The gender gap was prevalent, sometimes for good, and sometimes for bad.

But the woman is courteous and polite; exactly what society demanded of her. She offers the man a drink and offers to give his animals a drink, too. She had no idea to whom she was speaking. But he said some pretty amazing things. He speaks of a water that quenches thirst forever. He speaks of a well of that gives eternal life. Who is this man? Why is he here? What does he want with me?

It's an especially appropriate question considering who this woman was and who Jesus was. This woman was a Samaritan. That's a concept that might be a bit foreign to us. Samaritans were not people with whom Jews associated. Their sordid history went back generations—all the way back to the building of the temple. When the Jews were allowed to return from Babylon to rebuild the temple, they came back and found their land inhabited by a foreign people—Samaritans. These people were a distant remnant from the Jews' relatives to the north, the kingdom of Israel. They had been conquered by the Assyrians a couple hundred years before, and they no longer existed as an official nation. But remnants of people remained; and so did remnants of their religion.

That was why Israel was conquered in the first place. Their religion was no longer in line with what God demanded. False gods, syncretistic tendencies with pagan religions, and a defiance of God's strict orders of worship were blatantly being disobeyed. They no longer worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem. They combined pagan religious practices of idol worship and temple prostitution with the worship of the true God. They "moved" the holy mountain of the Lord, Mount Zion, to a mountain in Samaria, Mount Gerizim. In other words, they removed themselves from the grace and love that their Lord provided for those who loved and worshiped him with their whole heart, mind, and strength.

And so when the Jews came back to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritans, who followed the worship practices of their forefathers, wanted to help. And the Jews refused. They had learned their lesson. They knew that allowing these people with their skewed worship practices into their lives again

would once again lead them off course. So they took every precaution they could. And many bridges were burned between the Samaritans and the Jews from that point forward.

So, the woman to whom Jesus is speaking certainly has some bias—in both her social and religious life. Socially, Jesus was a Jew, someone with whom she did not get along. Religiously he was a Jew, someone with whom she did not agree. Does that sound familiar? Are there people in your life with whom you do not “get along” socially? Are there people in your life with whom you do not see eye-to-eye religiously? In our society, we tend to “pigeon-hole” everyone. A census is taken every 10 years for that very reason. We’re divided into classes of race, income, marital situation, occupation, and so many more. We tend to classify people by the clothes they wear and the car they drive. Even our own address categorizes us to a part of town or an area known by all.

And how do we treat those different than we? So often we look with disdain on difference. We see race and wealth and occupation and family lives not as something to be thankful for, but as a card to play in the rat race of earthly life.



Soli Deo Gloria!

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