

The latest issue of *Reader's Digest* has revealed that the water you drink may not be as clean as you think. Although I already kind of knew this, apparently a lot of the bottled water that is sold at stores is not taken from clean springs, but is nothing more than filtered tap water. Look at Dasani or Aquifina, for example, and you will discover that this is the case.

Other bottled waters are taken from natural sources that are contaminated as well, but the regulations on bottled water are not very restrictive and tight. Still, for other bottled waters, the plastic can leak dangerous toxins into the water, if the bottle gets too hot. This is not to scare you from ever buying bottled water, of course.

But I wonder: could it be that not just our bottled water is contaminated, but also those things which we drink in every day? Could it be that we are searching for that “water” that will truly satisfy and just about everything we do take in leaves us still thirsty? And could it be that the water that the world offers us, which too many times we partake of, are the bitterest of waters?

I would like to invite you to open the pages of your Bible this morning to **John 4** as we look at a story that details one of the most unlikely Nameless Heroes. It is here that we read a most interesting story that shows us just how close our heavenly Father has come to mankind.

This story, indeed, has so many things we could talk about that I suppose we would be here all day if we wanted to address them. As I read this story and prepared for this sermon my heart just overflowed with joy once again.

The context of this story tells us that Jesus and His disciples had just been baptizing many people in Judea but were forced to leave because the Pharisees were beginning to hear about Jesus' adventures. So John tells us that "**He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.**"

For those of you who are familiar with geography—and even those of you who aren't—let me ask you a question: if you wanted to take a trip to Portland, Maine from Barre, Vermont, which way would you go? The logical answer would be to go through New Hampshire, right, if you wanted the most direct route? It only seems logical and timely to me.

What if I told you that some I like to go drive all the way up 91 to Quebec, travel through Quebec and into New Brunswick, only to come down route 95 to Portland. The trip would, no doubt, take a lot longer to go that route than to simply go through New Hampshire, wouldn't it? But why would anyone drive all the way to Canada just to get to Maine? What would your explanation be?

Well, what if I told you that the reason I don't drive through New Hampshire is because I don't like the state nor the people who live in the state? Please don't be offended! There

isn't anyone from New Hampshire here, is there? This is simply for illustrative purposes; I love New Hampshire and the people from it. But this crazy notion was precisely like the custom for those living in Palestine in Jesus' time.

When traveling from Galilee to Judea, or vice versa, the most direct route would have been to go through Samaria. But the Jews despised the Samaritans! You remember the story of the Good Samaritan? What made the story so remarkable to Jesus' listeners? It was the fact that the hero of the story was a Samaritan man. To Jews these were the most despised people—a mixed race who practiced pagan religions. Jews wanted nothing to do with Samaritans and would avoid them at all costs.

Thus, when traveling between Judea and Galilee, Jews would travel all the way down through the Jordan Valley instead of going through Samaria, much like traveling through Quebec to get to Maine.

I'm not sure what we could compare the Jews' disdain for the Samaritans today since the United States is such a melting pot of different cultures and races. We generally have openness to people from all places. We may not particularly like some different places, but we don't avoid talking to them like Jews did with Samaritans.

There is one particular country that I could probably mention here, but I've already upset people from New Hampshire and I don't want to offend anyone else in fear that I'll alienate everyone during this sermon!

The remarkable thing about this story is that Jesus went against the grain. He made it a point to travel through Samaria. This is how near Jesus has come to us—He would associate with a despised people. His whole ministry was ministering to the outcasts and low-lives. And He soon found Himself beside a well, weary from His long travels.

This is the same Being of whom Isaiah declared, “**The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary.**” The beauty of the Gospel tells us that God has drawn so near to us that He made Himself subject to the same problems we face. The same God who is never weary became man and was exhausted from a long day’s travels.

So here is Jesus, sitting by the well, weary and thirsty. And when a person is thirsty, what do they want? Water. But Jesus does not indulge Himself by miraculously drawing water from the well. The Man who created the universe could have easily stooped down and made a bucket out of the sand and drawn water for Himself. But nowhere in the Bible will you read a story about Jesus performing a miracle on His own behalf.

As we talked about last week, many people like to point to Jesus’ divinity and say, “You see! Jesus had an advantage over me. He was God and He could have easily said a word and gotten Himself out of a bind.” But that’s precisely the point. Jesus was divine but He denied His divinity in favor of humanity. As He declared when He was in the Garden, “I could pray to My Father and He would send down twelve legions of angels to rescue

Me.” But the Savior wanted to be in our shoes; He wanted to empathize with the plights that we find ourselves in.

So He denied Himself the enjoyment of quenching His own thirst. How ironic that the Man who created the earth found Himself relying on someone He had created. As inspiration has pointed out, **“He who made the ocean, who controls the waters of the great deep, who opened the springs and channels of the earth, rested from His weariness at Jacob’s well, and was dependent upon a stranger’s kindness for even the gift of a drink of water.”**

What a beautiful picture we see in this story. Imagine having Jesus coming by your house and saying, “Please . . . could you just give me a cup of water? I’m terribly thirsty.” This woman had the opportunity to minister to Jesus, to help Him out. And yet, in so many varied ways Christ does come to each and every one of us, asking for help. He doesn’t need our help—He could have the rocks cry out if He wanted to, or even a donkey—but, as Paul writes, He **“has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.”**

We should also note that Jesus’ goal in life was to minister to people. And had He miraculously hydrated Himself instead of asking the woman for a drink, He would have missed an opportunity to minister. This was His whole purpose of this adventure. He was looking for an opportunity to witness.

Sometimes the Lord makes us weary and thirsty so *we* can minister to others. Perhaps, instead of begging the Lord to simply bring us through the trials and tiresome times we can view them as an opportunity to minister for Him. This is the desire of a Christian, right? To uplift our Savior to the world and, through our trials and tribulations, glorify Him.

So what does Jesus say? “**Give Me a drink.**” Perhaps John simply forgot to write that Jesus said “Please.” And the woman’s reaction was of total shock, declaring what we have already established to be true. “Wait a minute . . . you’re talking to me, a Samaritan—and a woman at that—and *you’re* a Jew.” How did the woman know Jesus was Jewish? Perhaps by the way He dressed or the way He talked. Who knows? But she could identify Him as a Jew.

It’s very interesting to note that when the disciples returned they marveled, not because Jesus was talking with a Samaritan, but that He was “talking with a woman.” So, too, this woman said when Jesus asked her for a drink, “How is it that you are asking me for a drink . . . a Samaritan woman?” She could have just said, “A Samaritan.” But she described herself as a “Samaritan woman.” So she had two supposed “strikes” against her, but Jesus did not allow that to interfere with His desire to minister to her.

Of course, Jesus then goes on to say, **“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.”**

The woman is utterly confused. This Man standing before her has no bucket to draw the water and yet He has said that He can give her the **“living water.”** Then the woman takes offense at the thought that Jesus had better water than their very own father Jacob, though their thoughts on the idea that they were descendants of Jacob was highly unlikely. It’s almost as if the woman is saying, “No way! We have the best water around. Where can you find better water than that in which our father provided for us? You think you’re better than Him?”

But Jesus was not talking about literal water. He was talking about spiritual water. That which quenches the thirst of every human soul, though most do not realize it. Jesus declares, **“Whoever continuously drinks of this water will thirst again.”** And that’s just the marvel of it all. We are constantly trying to quench our thirst with other things—it’s a continual process.

But Jesus comes along and says, **“But whoever drinks of the water that I give, even once, will never thirst again.”** If we have but one sip of Jesus’ water we will find satisfaction to last a life time. Though in our English translations we read that Jesus said, “Whoever drinks” the same way in reference to the literal water and the living water, the Greek usage is not the same. The water that the world offers we are constantly drinking,

yet we are not satisfied. The water that Jesus gives us we have to drink but once and it truly satisfies.

The Samaritan woman is probably still thinking that Jesus is speaking of literal water, so she says, “**Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.**”

So right here we could stop the story and wonder just how Jesus would give the “**living water**”. What does this water look like? I’m sure many people around here believe that the “living water” comes in little bottle with a pink label that says, “**Vermont Pure.**”

Those from another New England state would argue that it comes in a bottle with a green label, saying “**What It Means to be From Maine.**”

Some would probably insist that Jesus never gives her that living water that she requested. But would Jesus ever deny a person’s request to receive this “living water”?

No. Jesus grants her request. And notice how He gives it to her: He subtly points out an area in her life that needs to be changed. Now, Jesus doesn’t go right after her and say, “Hey, woman . . . you’re leading a sinful life and you need to shape up or ship out!” He subtly says, “**Go, call your husband and come here.**”

Thus, Jesus wanted to make sure that the issue was addressed, though He did not want to be condemnatory about it. Ashamed, the woman responds, “**I have no husband.**” The woman spoke the truth. But she didn’t speak the whole truth. Jesus knew her life; He

knew what was going on. **“You’re right!”** He proclaimed, **“You have had five husbands and the one you are with right now you are not married to.”**

Most people would agree that this statement either implies that she was living with this man, though not married, or she was having a sexual relationship with him that was not appropriate.

So Jesus has a Bible study with her and tells her how sinful she is. No, not at all! He doesn’t pull out His big Bible and start rattling off verses for her. He doesn’t pull His Ellen White books out and beat her over the head with quotations on how she was going to hell. The woman knew her guilt. She knew what she was doing was wrong. Do you think that she needed someone else to point that out to her?

Please don’t misunderstand me: there is a time and a place for loving correction. But there’s a way of doing it. Before we feel qualified to correct our brethren, may we take note of how Jesus did it, both with this woman and the woman caught in adultery. He did not beat them over the head with the Ten Commandments—the two women knew what they were doing was wrong. Instead, her encouraged them into righteousness.

To the woman found in adultery He said, **“I don’t condemn you! Now go and sin no more.”** Thus, in this one statement we see Jesus’ grace yet His clear acknowledgment of her sin.

This woman was, indeed, searching for “love in all the wrong places.” She was trying to quench her thirst with worldly things. Can you imagine being married five times? Elizabeth Taylor has been married eight times. You think these people are missing something in their lives that they are constantly searching for? Constantly trying to quench their thirst.

It got so bad that she, perhaps, gave up on the whole marriage thing and just decided to either live with or have sexual relations with this last man. You think she needed the “living water”?

Jesus knew this woman’s sin and He could have easily overlooked it and moved on, but He wanted to address it in a way that wouldn’t be judgmental. He wanted her to come to a self-realization. And instead of simply demanding outward conformity, Jesus wanted to point out to this woman what the root of her problem was.

It was not the five marriages or the co-habiting. She could have easily changed on the outside yet still been lonely on the inside. No, Jesus wasn’t simply concerned with what was going on in her outward actions; He desired to point out to her that her actions were simply an attempt to quench her thirst. And her thirst could only be quenched, not in the arms of six different men, but in the arms of her Savior.

Do you think we need the living water? Maybe we haven’t, like this woman, been divorced five times. Or maybe we aren’t living with someone who isn’t our spouse. Who

knows, maybe we are. But the fact is, we all have things that we are holding onto, trying to quench our thirst with.

I'm not here this morning to point anyone's sin out; that's the Holy Spirit's job. He's been working on all of our hearts for a long time. But I am here this morning to acknowledge the fact that we are all crying out for the living water. Whatever it is we're holding onto is simply the result of trying to quench our thirst with something other than our ultimate Lover, Jesus Christ.

What did Jesus say? **“But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”**

And how did Jesus give this woman that “living water”? By subtly pointing her sin out to her. He's doing the same for us.

Do you have sin in your life that you're holding onto? Are you like the woman at the well who has tried to fill the void with one marriage after another? Or are you now living with someone who isn't your spouse? Perhaps you have a problem with pride. Or perhaps you have anger issues. I don't know what it is that you are trying to quench your thirst with.

But Jesus declares, **“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”**

Jesus wants to quench your thirst. He wants to give you the “water of life.” He invites you to come.

I happened upon an episode of *60 Minutes* recently, and I was intrigued by one of the people they were interviewing on the show. Probably one of the most successful persons in his industry, the man admitted that life wasn’t quite as satisfying as one would have thought. Listen to his words, which are extremely sobering:

Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, “Hey man, this is what is.” I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think: God, it's gotta be more than this. I mean this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean I've done it. I'm 27. And what else is there for me?

And who said this? Tom Brady, quarterback of the New England Patriots—winner of three football championships, and very likely a fourth in another week. Yet he has realized that there is something missing from his life. Though he has won three Super Bowls, he has all the money in the world, he is dating a Super Model, he still feels as though there is something missing.

When the interviewer asked him what the answer was and what he was missing, he was left wondering, **“I wish I knew, I wish I knew.”**

Friends, we can search all of our lives, hoping to find that something that truly satisfies. But only *Someone* is that water that causes us to never thirst again. Do you long for that water that truly satisfies?

You know the part of the sermon I love the most? I had never seen it before but I noticed it yesterday. After she realizes that this person whom she is talking with is the Messiah, verse 27 tells us, **“The woman then left her water-pot, [and] went her way into the city”** to tell her friends. Did you catch that? She left her “water-pot” behind. What was at one time an instrument to draw her earthly water in attempts to quench her thirst, she left behind because she had found a Savior who could give her the true living water.

Would you like to leave your “water-pot” behind and come to Jesus? He’s inviting you to come.