

Beloved in the Lord,

The evangelist, John, gives us a good accounting of time, place and event. While Jesus and John the baptizer were working together, John's disciples had already noticed that many were flocking to Jesus, and John the Baptist's work was ending. We saw that Satan was driving a wedge so that this bothered them, but how John made clear that Jesus was the one who must become more significant and he, John, less. John made clear that whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life, but whoever does not believe will not see eternal life but is under the wrath of God. It is no surprise that the Pharisees came to hear about Jesus since they were already concerned about John and his following. Jesus then takes the initiative; he decides that this is not the time for conflict, and he leaves the area, heads north and goes back to Galilee after a time of successful ministry. John, the evangelist, makes clear that Jesus was not the baptizer but that his disciples were baptizing for him. Jesus is continuing the revival work of John the Baptist, and now that work will be taken into Samaria. Jesus will begin baptizing in earnest after Pentecost, where the disciples baptize in the name of Jesus— that is, on his behalf. Jesus works with John the baptizer and then with his disciples, leaving John to begin on His own.

The inspired John, the evangelist, wrote this story of the conversation between Jesus and the woman by the well that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. So, if you know the gift of God, then you will ask Jesus for the gift of living water. Hear the call of Isaiah: Come, all you thirsty, come to the waters: ***Give ear and come to me; hear me that your soul may live.*** I bring you the Word of the Lord under the theme:

Jesus Reveals Himself as Christ to the Samaritan Women
1. Living Water and 2. Living Worship

Living Water: Now, much has been made about Jesus going through Samaria, and if you have studied this portion of scripture, we realize three surprising things, namely that Jesus speaks to a Samaritan, that he speaks to a woman and that he speaks to this kind of woman who it seems has a sinful past and present. Josephus tells us that strict Jews would head north to Jericho and then cross over the Jordan, move along shores of Jordan and then

cross over once more to get to Galilee. This the strict Jews did because the Samaritans and Jews were hostile to each other, and it wasn't always safe, but more, the Samaritans were considered half-breed and impure and, as such, could defile the Jews. However, less strict Jews would head through Samaria because it was the straightest and quickest way, and there were plenty of places to get water. It was a lovely journey in terms of scenery.

A little about the history of Samaria may help put this event in perspective. In I Kings 16, we read that Omri, the father of Ahab, built the city of Samaria to be the capital of the Northern Kingdom. Soon the whole area was called Samaria. Israel's Kings and the people living in Samaria broke the covenant with their worship was false and impure. In II Kings 17 and 18, we read of the fall of Israel to Assyria under Shalmaneser as God had decreed made known by the mouths of the prophets. The Assyrian empirical policy was to remove the healthy out of an area and repopulate with people removed from their area.

Five nations of polytheistic Gentiles moved in and mixed with the remaining Samaritans through marriage. Josephus recalls that the Samaritans claimed Jacob as an ancestor unless it meant danger when they would plead their case by appealing to the other nations as ancestors. You can imagine then that this mixed race of Jews and Gentiles and this disloyal behaviour drew the wrath of Judean Jews. After the Judeans returned to Jerusalem under the guidance of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Samaritans offered their help to rebuild the temple, which was refused. This was the beginning of open hostility. The Gentiles also mixed religiously with the Samaritan Jews, who embraced monotheism and mixed some rituals of paganism with the Jewish religion. Among other things, they received only the Pentateuch as the Bible and rejected the Psalms and the Prophets. This, in turn, led them to misinterpret Deuteronomy 12:4-5, which says, ***“You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. ⁵ But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place, you must go.”*** They interpreted this text as saying that God had chosen this place as Mount Gerizim because Abraham had worshipped on Mount Gerizim. After all, the law and the blessing were to be given from Mount Gerizim, according to

Deuteronomy 27:12, after the people had crossed the Jordan. Thus, Gerizim and not Jerusalem was the place God had chosen for worship, causing even more hostility. Yes, the Devil had driven another wedge! By the time of legalism of the Pharisees had come to fruition, you can imagine the friction and enmity between the Jews and Samaritans.

More can be said, but there in Sychar, near Shechem, Jesus, at around noon, in the heat of the day, human as he was, was tired and thirsty after a long strenuous walk. In Genesis 33:18-10 you can read how Jacob purchased the land, and in Genesis 48:21-22 you can read how he willed that parcel of land Joseph, and in Joshua 24:32, you can read that the Israelites buried Joseph's bones there in Shechem, and we know that the grave is some 30 meters away from Jacob's well. This was important land for both Jews and Samaritans. Now our information gathering is complete. Now let's listen to this well-known conversation. Can you see that it was no little thing for a Jew like Jesus to go through Samaria and talk to this Samaritan woman at the well?

It was not every day that a woman would be alone at noon, no less to gather water, and since she lived in the city of Samaria, there were likely other wells nearby. That leads many to think she is an outcast, and they point to her lack of marital status and sinful life, so she would not want to be with other women. But that would also be to miss the providential activity of God here. The sense of Jesus heading through Samaria is that this was not just the quickest way but that he needed to go this way: "He had to go!" Remember the Spirit came upon Him when He was water baptized and was moving Him as Redeemer to seek the lost, and the Father ensured the lost came.

So there at the well of Jacob, the woman showed up. The well, by the way, was a spring-fed well of excellent water some 30-40 meters deep. She comes and sees a tired Jew. That Jesus was a Jew, and we recall a law-abiding Jew that He was Jew would be evident by the colour of the fringes of Jesus' shawl, blue as opposed to the Samaritan white. It is unsurprising to us that Jesus and woman are there. But she is a little shocked when Jesus asks her for a drink of water. The disciples had headed off to the city to get something to eat, which tells us Jesus was not as rigid about these Pharisaical

social mores as they were not covenant law and sent the disciples to get some food. Our Lord and Saviour, the Son of God, is tired and hungry. And He is thirsty. He and the Father will now work together in that woman's life and do not miss the humiliation for the Lord of Lords and King of kings, the Son of God who became man.

Remember that Jesus might have called the angels to help him. Or God could have provided water as he did for His man Elijah, and Jesus could have performed a miracle and quenched his thirst. But he did not, and he asked the woman for water. This is not just a conversation starter or the beginning of the light overcoming the darkness but also because Jesus is thirsty.

So then, who was this woman, and what was she like? Some think her to be brash and uncouth, others irritable. Some say that she was a prostitute. We do not know because the text does not tell us; the text gives us words but not facial expressions, body language or tone of voice. The text reveals her reaction to Jesus' command to fetch some water as engaging in what it tells us about Jesus. She wonders about Jesus asking her for a drink of water, for she is a Samaritan, and He is a Jew. Our English Bible says that the reason that Jews do not associate with Samaritans in older manuscripts is better translated as: "do not share the same drinking vessels." And then we consider this for a moment, and we realize that even if it were true that a Samaritan could somehow contaminate a Jew, it could not be accurate in the case of Jesus. Jesus cannot be contaminated by speaking with a Samaritan woman who is a sinner, let alone drink from her pot, let alone be contaminated by speaking with sinners like you and me! When Jesus touches the impure, they become pure, and he remains pure. This is a marvellous sight. Jesus, who so comfortably speaks with Nicodemus, is bright, rich, and orthodox, contrasted with the Samaritan, unlearned, unorthodox and poor, and Jesus is no less gentle and comfortable.

Jesus gets to the heart of the matter. There at Jacob's well is the Son of Jacob, the gift of God. The Greek word that John uses for "gift" (*doros*) is used only here in the whole Bible. The names Dorothy and Theodore (theos-God and doros-gift) are derived from this phrase, "gift of God." If she knew this, she would ask Jesus for a drink of living water. Living water was moving,

springing water, fresh, full of oxygen, like the water from this spring-fed well. Jesus is playing on words. She has a sense he means something more by it. She is correct.

When the temple leaders heard Jesus say to destroy the temple and I will build it up in three days, they had no clue what he was talking about. They took it literally and materially. It was strange talk since it took 46 years to build the temple. Nicodemus heard about rebirth; he took it literally, and thus, the question was strange to our ears. A man cannot enter his mother's womb for a second time. So, the Samaritan, a woman so utterly different than the temple leaders and Nicodemus, answered in so much the same way. Jesus has a way of levelling the playing field, doesn't he? Jacob had to dig this well. Jacob was a great man. This well is good. Is Jesus saying he is more significant than Jacob and will dig some well with new living water?

Now just a note, and that is the irony of John. Again, we are confronted with this irony. Jesus, the Son of God, is audacious to think He is more significant than Jacob. Nicodemus, we recall, did the same sort of thing when he addressed Jesus as Rabbi as an equal. This is Jesus, but he is not received with the eyes of faith. The Word is not believed.

Jesus then speaks those beautiful words of living water that spring up in a man. Jesus makes people like that well. Jesus provided living covenant communion with God almighty. He will bring new life and faith, and purity. He gives the knowledge of God and the Spirit that keeps life solid and vibrant. As water is a gift of God unto life in the dry land of Palestine, Jesus alone provides the living waters of eternal life to be lived with God. These words recall the words of Isaiah 12:3 "***With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.***" And recalls the words of Jeremiah 2:13, "***My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.***" This is what Jesus speaks of eternal life lived with the almighty God. The thirst for communion with God and the knowledge of God can be found in Jesus; the Son God gave, the gift of God to save the world! He is right there at his father's well. And yes, He is more significant than Jacob!

Ezekiel spoke of it when he wrote,

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:25-26)

He also writes in chapter 47 of the water flowing out of the temple, representing the Spirit going out into all the world. And we have seen the connection between the water of purification by means of water baptism and Jesus' baptism of the Holy spirit and the purification of Jesus's blood that the water at the wedding turned into wine represented already in John's Gospel, and so it is all coming together there at Jacob's well! So, we have seen water into wine, the water of baptism, a man needs to be born again by the water and the spirit, and now we have the water of life. Yes, the Lord our Shepherd leads us by the still waters for his name's sake. Purification, revival and reformation are found not in the symbols but in Christ! He must die on the cross. He must suffer a horrible death, and His bloody death on the cross must cleanse us. The sword will pierce His side, and His blood will flow like water from His side. We must believe. You must believe that there is forgiveness to be found in the washing of Jesus' blood, and God has given Christ to give the spirit that all who believe will be forgiven, be purified and live eternal life!

Well, our fiery Samaritan woman is now struggling, isn't she? She asks that Jesus get her some of this living water so that she does not need to return to the well anymore. Like Nicodemus, she takes it all so literally. He a Jewish man in the night and she a Samaritan woman at high noon. But all must understand and Jesus must give that. She speaks of the material, and Jesus will gently guide her to see her need for the spirit and the truth.

Living Worship: Is it strange now that Jesus tells her to get her husband? Well, the woman needs to learn that she is the one who is thirsty in the soul, and Jesus is in the body. An exciting pair there! Jesus, the Son of Abraham, is a blessing for all nations! She answers honestly and says she has no husband but keeps the other information to herself. Jesus though the Son of God, even there as a thirsty son of man, tells her about five divorces and a typical law relationship. Was she an adultress or a victim of the lax divorce laws of those days? She is now living common law with a man. Her

sin is before her now. She is duly impressed and calls him a prophet. She asks a question that may seem strange because now she wants to know about Jesus' view of Gerizim and Jerusalem. But remember that this was a burning issue for the Samaritans, and since their idea of the Messiah was the restoring prophet greater than Moses, she has the sense to ask a prophet about the truth of the matter. See, the Jews were waiting for a Messiah that was the son of David from Jerusalem, but the Samaritans, one greater than Moses as per Deuteronomy, in part because they only accepted their edited version of Torah. Where should we worship? Whether she understands it or not, Jesus will show that the living water, which gives life to God, demands truth in worship, and if she is sincere, that is what she is getting at too. But she is so utterly material, as were the temple leaders and Nicodemus.

The answer is interesting. First, Jesus says that the Samaritans do not know whom they worship, and that is, of course, because they do not receive all of God's word. Therefore, they worship in the wrong place. The Jews, however, worship God. They do know the Word has been given to them, the covenants, and salvation is from Jews. Jesus, of course, would be of the tribe of Judah, the son of Jacob, but the promises made to David make this connection to the Messiah more clearly beyond just a royal nation of the promise made to Judah. However, says Jesus, the time is coming and has come where worship will not be judged purely based on the place but based on spirit and truth in a more profound way. For the faithful Jew also worshipped in spirit and truth. By the way, it is in spirit and truth as one entity, not in spirit and truth as two separate things.

Worship in Jerusalem through the symbols was to be replaced by the real thing, Jesus Christ. He is the one who establishes communion with God. He restores the soul; he baptizes with the Spirit and makes a new man. He gives the water of life to God so that the man finding God knows God. He will make it so that people will become temples of the Holy Spirit. No longer will there be a need for Jerusalem or Gerizim!

See, God is spirit, not material, and he is not like us. At all. The Belgic Confession helps us nicely here:

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God, and that He is eternal,

incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, reasonable, and the overflowing fountain of all good.

Moreover, the father notes that not just the Father of Jesus or the Jews but the Father seeks such worshippers that he creates them. He gives them new birth! He gives the Spirit. Father, Son and Holy Spirit make a man new and alive, and that man worships are spirit and truth, in Christ and faith. Do you see? Remember?

To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' From the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another. The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

It is too much for her now. She will wait for the Messiah, and he will make it clear. Jesus does, doesn't he? Woman, I who speak to you, am he? He speaks, and we must listen and believe. Repent and believe the Kingdom of God is at hand. Worship God in Christ, in Spirit and truth and drink deeply of the water of life. Amen