

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “A Thirst for Something Real” (from the “Cross Culture” Lenten sermon series)

Scripture: John 4:4-26

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of John, we find Jesus passing through Samaria on His way to Galilee. Samaria was a place avoided by the Jewish people during this time, primarily due to their having mixed Gentile blood and different style of worship than that of the Jews.
- While in Samaria, Jesus encounters a woman at a well and asks her for a drink of water. The woman was thrown off by Jesus’ request since Jews did not associate with Samaritans. What is interesting during their conversation, is that the woman would ask direct questions to Jesus (such, “How can you ask me for a drink?” and “Where can you get this living water?”), and His replies to her address everyone’s needs in life and not just her immediate concerns. This is important because His ministry is to bring people into repentance and begin a new life in Him.
- In verse 10, the term “living water”, according to the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible commentary, is “an idiom for flowing water (see Jeremiah 17:13), which was superior to normal well water. But “living water” can also be a wordplay for the water of life.” Plays on words were commonly used by John as well as writers during this time. For example, recall the idea of being “born again” in John 3:3, when Jesus was telling Nicodemus what it takes to see the Kingdom of God.
- In verses 16-18, some argue that this section is meant to highlight the Samaritan woman did not fully understand what Jesus meant by “living water” and then turned the conversation to her need as a sinner to highlight His point. Others point out that this section highlights Jesus’ ability to know everything about who He is interacting, as we have seen earlier with His conversation with Nathanael (John 1:48-50; 2:24).

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- In today's text, we see Jesus having conversation with a questionable woman at a well in Samaria. The reputation of Jesus among the religious leaders was suffering due to His willingness to talk with and minister to those they would deem unsavory.
 - Jesus is more concerned about relationships than He is of reputation.
- The beginning of today's text explains that Jesus *had* to go through Samaria. Jesus went out of His way to go through the land of Samaria, which was usually avoided by the Jews from Judea. Jesus' pathway does not avoid human need but leads right to it!
- On the way, Jesus and the disciples rest in Sychar in Samaria (location of Jacob's well). The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman begins with Jesus asking for a drink, which confuses the woman because Jews were not to speak to Samaritans and men were not to be alone with a woman.
- The Samaritan woman comes to retrieve water in the afternoon (and not the customary morning hours to retrieve water) because she thought nobody else would be there. She had a bad reputation and shunned from her community. Feeling rejected by society she went to the well during a time of minimal use and chose to live in isolation and avoid people.
- There is a loneliness epidemic, and sense of rejection, plaguing our society.
- Towards the end of the conversation, the Samaritan woman leaves her bucket at the well. She forgot the whole reason as to why she came because her actual *thirst* was quenched! She runs home to tell her neighbors about Jesus. She was not looking for Him...but Jesus was looking for her.
- The Samaritan woman yells a question to the townspeople: "Can this be the Messiah"?
- Story by Fred Craddock about a family adopting a stray kitten they found during a Sunday drive...Love makes all the difference!
 - "It was not too long ago when God reached out His hand to bless me and my family, and when He did, I looked at that hand. It was covered with scratches."
 - Such is the hand of love...extended to those on the side of the road, or at the well, for sinners like you and like me.
- There are some things that we do because we *want* to. There are some things because we *have* to. Sometimes, by the grace of God, my *have* to becomes my *want* to...to the glory of God, and it makes all the difference for all of us!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What does the phrase “living water” mean? How does this nourish our souls?
- In verse 24, we read “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” How are we to worship God that honors this statement?
- What attributes of God do you see in this text? In other words, in what ways can you discern the nature of God from these verses?
- Compare and contrast Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus in John 3 with that of the Samaritan woman at the well.
- What is the significance of Jesus asking the Samaritan woman for a drink at the well?
- Why do you think that social isolation is increasing?
- How can we create and sustain meaningful relationships?
- Toward the end of the sermon, Rev. Dr. Chappell states: “There are some things that we do because we *want* to. There are some things because we *have* to. Sometimes, by the grace of God, my *have* to becomes my *want* to.” What do you think this means and how can we align our have to with our want to?

