

John 4:5-42
Gimme a Drink

Main idea: Jesus satisfies our thirst.

So we're in the middle of the season of Lent, and the season of Lent is all about sacrifice. As we approach Good Friday, we remember Jesus's sacrifice in giving up His life for us, and we follow Him by giving up something from our lives as well.

We often think of Lent as a Catholic thing, but actually many denominations even after the Protestant Reformation continued to practice Lent. And as we're observing the Church Year this year, I encourage you to go all in and observe Lent as well.

And it's not too late to start! Although the season of Lent started two weeks ago, there are still 3 weeks left. And Lent isn't about being perfect, it's about the process of sacrifice.

So, have you given anything up? Is there something you think you want or need to give up? Or have you given up on giving up?

Well, a lot of things people often give up for Lent have to do with food. People try to eat better, snack less, and drink less. And I think that's a good place to start, because it reminds us that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.¹

So if you've given something like that up for Lent, I certainly don't want to discourage you. In fact, I want to encourage you that even if you've already given up on giving up, it's never too late to try again.

But I also wonder if merely trying to give things up is why we often fail.

I've known a few alcoholics. Some have been what we might call functional alcoholics, because they seem to be able to hide it from most people, and carry on a somewhat respectable lifestyle. Others, however, haven't been able to hide it from anyone, and they seem to be content to not only display their alcoholism to everyone, but even rejoice in it as something we should all accept about them.

Now, I've never been tempted by alcohol. I rarely drink anything at all because it's just not something that's ever really appealed to me. We don't keep any in the fridge, and even when it's free at a wedding, I almost never even get a sip of it because I've never acquired a taste for it and I don't see much of a reason to do so.

I share this not to toot my own horn, or even to say that abstaining from alcohol is even the ideal, but simply to point out that we're all tempted in different ways. Because while I've never really been tempted to drink, I have been tempted by other things. I've been tempted to boast about my accomplishments. I've been tempted by greed. I've been tempted to lust. But no matter what the temptation is, it seems like it almost always comes the same way. Just like alcohol, the temptation whispers to us in the most enticing way, "Gimme a drink."

And so we think, "Just a little sip won't hurt, will it?" "Just a little sip isn't wrong, is it?"

¹ Matthew 4:4

But maybe that's the wrong question to start with. Maybe when we sinfully crave a drink, it's because we haven't learned to crave the right drink. Maybe when we lust after money, or fame, or women in order to be fulfilled, it's because we haven't learned to enjoy the right things that ought to fulfill us. And maybe it's not that any of these things are wrong, but only that we need to enjoy receiving them in the right way as gifts from God, rather than taking them for pleasure for ourselves: like taking fruit from a tree.

Now, our Scripture this morning isn't at all about alcohol, and yet it is about what we look to for pleasure in our lives. Do we look for pleasure in a drink, or do we look to Jesus?

Turn with me to John 4. And please stand with me for the reading of God's word. We'll begin with John 4:5-10.

So he [Jesus] came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." (John 4:5-10)

The word of God for the people of God. *Thanks be to God.*

You may be seated.

According to a traditional Hebrew story, Abraham was sitting outside his tent one evening when he saw an 80-year-old man, weary from age and journey, coming toward him. Abraham rushed out, greeted him, and then invited him into his tent. There he washed the old man's feet and gave him food and drink. The old man immediately began eating without saying any prayer or blessing. So Abraham asked him, "Don't you worship God?"

The old traveler replied, "I worship fire only and reverence no other god." When he heard this, Abraham became angry, grabbed the old man by the shoulders, and threw him out of his tent into the cold night air.

When the old man had hobbled away, God called to his friend Abraham and asked where the stranger was. Abraham replied, "I forced him out because he didn't worship you." God answered, "I have suffered him these eighty years although he dishonors me. Could you not endure him one night?"

Now, that story isn't in the Bible, and yet it is biblical. In our culture today, we tend to divide over just about everything. We divide over religion, politics, sports, and even food. I once even heard about a church that had an argument about whether it was okay to serve deviled eggs at a potluck!

It's crazy. It's like most of the time, we're just looking for reasons to hate each other. We seem to love to divide, exclude, argue, and label people as our enemies, when we ought simply to love.

Our passage of Scripture this morning is often referred to as one of two things. We either call it "Jesus and the Samaritan woman," or we call it, "Jesus and the woman at the well." But neither of these titles refer to the woman by name because we're not told the woman's name. What the text does tell us, however, is that this woman was a Samaritan, and that Jews had no dealings with Samaritans.

And yet Jesus talked with this woman.

There's a lot of history between the Jews and Samaritans, both shared and unshared, but I think that at face value, from this occasion, we can learn at least this: that no matter who you are, or where you live, or what your family background is, Jesus loves you and wants you to find your life's satisfaction in Him.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Jesus Himself is the gift of God, and He was standing right in front of her. Jesus asked her for a drink, and yet if she would have realized who Jesus was, she would have asked Him for a drink, because only Jesus can truly satisfy us.

Verse 11.

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:11-14)

She asked Jesus, "Are you greater than Jacob?" Jacob was someone that both the Jews and the Samaritans honored. He was one of the patriarchs of their faith. He was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. In fact, he was the one who wrestled with God and was given the name Israel. He was a pretty significant man in their shared history! So she asked Jesus, "Are you greater than Jacob?" And, using just a few more words, Jesus basically responded, "Yes."

Jacob's well couldn't give eternal life. Jacob's well couldn't forgive sins. And Jacob's well certainly couldn't satisfy you for a lifetime. But Jesus can.

No matter what well you keep going back to, whether food or drink or pornography, that well can't satisfy you. But Jesus can.

We think we need so many other things in life, and yet God has already given us His Son. But until we see who He is, we're going to keep on going back to that old well. We're going to keep on going back to whatever it is that we think we need, whether it be sin or not. We're going to keep on drinking from the well of accomplishments, or greed, or lust. But when we see how good Jesus is, then we'll turn to Him and say, "Gimme a drink."

Verse 15.

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." (John 4:15)

At this point, the Samaritan woman didn't yet understand what she was asking, and yet she was on the right track. At the very least, she was asking the right person.

I think I'm often way off in my prayers. I pray for what's on my mind. I pray for what makes me anxious or fearful, and that's good to do. The Bible tells us to do that. But when it comes down to it, I don't really know what the best course for my life or the world is. I pray for things I want, but maybe God has something even better in mind, and if He gave me just what I asked for, then I'd actually be missing out.

It's like if your teenager asks if they can have your old beat up car for their sixteenth birthday, but they didn't know you had just bought them their own brand new truck. God usually has something even better for us than we can ask or think.

You see, I think the main reason it's good to pray about anything and everything we think we want is so that we would bring our wants to Jesus, talking to Him, and trusting Him to give us what we actually need. So even though the Samaritan woman didn't know what she was asking, she was definitely asking the right person.

After this, Jesus and the Samaritan woman engaged in a theological discussion that appears to have had the purpose of convincing her of who Jesus is. Because at the end of the discussion, we read this. Verse 25.

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." (John 4:25-26)

Like the Jews, she had faith in a coming Messiah, and yet He was standing right in front of her.

How often do we miss things that are right in front of us? More importantly, how often do we miss Jesus, who's always right there with us, because we're engaged in a theological discussion?

I wonder if many of our denominations could unite back together if we'd just realize that Jesus is right there with us. I think maybe we'd stop arguing so much about theology, and start simply worshipping the Savior. And I'm not saying our theological distinctions don't matter. I think they do. I don't think we should baptize infants, or speak in ecstatic utterances, or have a pope. And yet, if we all realized that we're in the presence of Jesus, we would all come together to worship Jesus, who is the Savior of the world.

Verse 28.

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him. (John 4:28-30)

Skip to verse 39.

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." (John 4:39-42)

Samaritans were believing in Jesus. Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with each other, and yet the Samaritans were receiving Jesus, a Jew, as their Savior.

I think at least these Samaritans were starting to see what Paul wrote about in Galatians 3:28, that in Jesus:

There's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, and not even male and female, for are all one in Christ Jesus.

Let that sink in. There were huge differences between Jews and Greeks! There are huge differences between being a slave and being free! And of course, there are huge differences between being male and female. And yet, in Christ, we are united together, as one Body, because Jesus is far greater than any differences we may have.

You see, so many of the things that we let divide us, the things that we think are so important in this life, fade away when we begin to rest and rejoice in Jesus.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "If you only knew who I am, you would say to me, 'Gimme a drink.'" And the same thing goes for people today. If you really knew who is Jesus, you'd stop looking to alcohol, or money, or sex, and you'd start looking to Jesus for your joy.

Even many of us who confess to be Christians need to see this more. We say that we have abundant life in Jesus, but then we act as if we're searching for abundant life here. We look for it in entertainment, or tv, or food, or whatever else, but if we really knew Jesus, we'd say to Him, "Gimme a drink."

Our whole world right now is in panic mode. The scare of the coronavirus has seemed to cause a lot of people to lose all rational thought. And while I do think we ought to be aware of it and take sensible precautions against it like we have, I also don't think we need to be afraid of it. And I say that not because I don't think there's a chance it will affect some of the people we know and love. I don't know if that will happen or not. Really, none of us do. But we can know this: if you have Jesus, you have everything you need.

I think what I'm saying is that Lent, or even Christianity, is less about giving things up, and more about receiving. If we think of the Bible about a list of "do nots," we miss that it's primarily about receiving Jesus. And while it's true that there are a lot of rules in the Bible, the rules are not there to take away our pleasure, but to show us how we might have the maximum joy possible in God.

Have you put your faith in Jesus? If not, I hope that this morning, you'll say to Him, "Gimme a drink."