



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 4: 1-15

Winter 2021-22

"The Fountain Of Life"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. If you're visiting we have been in the Book of John. We started the series some weeks back and just finished chapter 3, which is one of the great chapters of the Bible. But now we come to another great chapter. I could say that in each chapter of this book. But chapter 4, and we're going to look at verses 1 through 15. So, John chapter 4, beginning with verse 1,

4 Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), ³ He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. ⁴ And He had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; ⁶ and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹ Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, "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." ¹¹ She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? ¹² You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" ¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw."

John 4: 1-15

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together.

(Message) We're all familiar with the stories of springs and streams and fountains that give health and longevity; from the river Styx, where Achilles was dipped for immortality, to Conquistadors searching for the Fountain of Youth. Just legends, myths, but they reveal what people long for and would sell their souls for—a cup of that water.

Yet multitudes sacrifice their souls by ignoring the fountain in the Bible that gives life forever. In Psalm 36, David praised "the fountain of life." (vs9). In Isaiah 55 the prophet invited people to "come to the waters." (vs1). And in John 4, Jesus promised thirsty people "living water." He promised that to a woman in Samaria who had made a mess of her life. It was a life without much hope when Jesus spoke to her and offered her a new life, a clean and fresh life.

This is the second conversation in the Gospel of John intended to show the need of men and women for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The first is in chapter 3, (which we recently studied and just finished this past week), the Lord's conversation with Nicodemus in which He told him that he "must be born again."(vs7). Here he tells the woman to take a drink that would 'spring up to eternal life.' (vs14).

Jesus' ministry was just beginning, and it was gaining in popularity. That caught the attention of the Pharisees. They weren't friendly observers. And so to forestall a clash with them until the right time, Jesus and His disciples withdrew from Judea and moved north to Galilee, where He would begin His great Galilean ministry.

But between Judea and Galilee was Samaria, through which Jesus chose to pass. Samaria is the modern-day West Bank, which has been the hotbed of Palestinian unrest. It is hostile territory to modern Israel; and in our Lord's day it was unfriendly territory. There's a history to the place and its people that really must be known in order to appreciate the events that follow in this chapter.

Samaria was the name of the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, a name that was later applied to a whole region. When Assyria captured Samaria in 722 B.C. and deported the wealthy and middle-class people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they repopulated the area with foreigners who intermarried with the remaining Israelites and adopted their religion. The descendants of those people became 'the Samaritans.'

When the remnant of Jews from the Southern Kingdom of Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity they looked down on the Samaritans as impure; and their religion as inferior. In response to this rejection the Samaritans established a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim around 400 B.C. The Jews later destroyed it, which only intensified the animosity between the two people.

The Samaritans continued to offer sacrifices on top of Mt. Gerizim and they developed their own religious heritage based on the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses. They rejected the rest of the Hebrew Bible: The histories; 1 and 2 Samuel through Chronicles; they rejected the Psalms and the prophets because those books connected genuine worship with Jerusalem and the temple that was there. Their religion was inferior. Their religion was heterodox. It wasn't orthodox. It was a mixture of some truth with error.

So the two people clashed. The hatred between the Jew and the Samaritan was proverbial; it was intense. But John wrote that Jesus, "had to pass through Samaria." (vs 4).

Now, the necessity of taking that route wasn't due to schedule or to geography. There were actually two other ways that He could have traveled from Judea to Galilee. Scrupulous Jews, such as the scribes and Pharisees, often took the eastern route. They crossed the Jordan River near Jericho and then they traveled north along the east bank of the river that avoided Samaria. And there was a western route along the Mediterranean coast. The central route, through Samaria, was the more direct and faster way to Galilee. But again, the Lord wasn't traveling under the constraints of time or a tight schedule. Now that's clear from the context.

The necessity of this way lies in the nature of the Lord's mission; He had an appointment at a well that made His journey through Samaria a *must*. In fact this word translated, "had to pass through", or "must", as it's often translated, or "must needs go" as the King James version has it, is frequently used by John and the Lord to describe His mission. Later, in chapter 10 in verse 16 for example, the Lord said, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I *must* bring them also.", —same word. Some of those "sheep" were in Samaria, so it was a divine necessity to the way that He went. That's the *must*.

It's not an easy route. It's hilly and rough in that region with winding roads. But He journeyed through it until He arrived at the place called Sychar, where He sat down at a well to rest. [It was an historical site. The ancient name of the city is Shechem. It is between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. The well had been dug and owned by the patriarch Jacob. It is still in use today and it was near the place where Israel had buried the bones of Joseph—so this is a very historical area; very important area in Israel's history.] Well, this occurred at the sixth hour when Jesus arrived, which is about noon—in the heat of the day. And He sat down, tired and thirsty.

What a picture that is, especially in this book, in this fourth Gospel which stresses the Lord's deity: Whose theme is the main subject of this book, the deity of Christ as the eternal Son of God. And yet John here gives us a glimpse of the Lord's humanity. He is, as John said in chapter 1, (*verse 14*), 'the Word made flesh. He was a true man, a genuine man, with a true body and a reasonable soul, who shared our human experience.

He shared our limitations in His humanity, which allowed Him to be our great high priest, as described in the Book of Hebrews, who 'sympathizes with us in our weaknesses.' (Heb 4:15).

He knows what it is to be exhausted. He knows what it is to work hard and to be worn out, to live by 'the sweat of one's brow.' And He prays for us when we are in that condition—and He prays with sympathy. He understands; understands better than we do. And so He gives "help" to those in "time of need" to all, as the author of Hebrews says, who "draw near...to the throne of grace." (Heb 4:16). He knows how best to give it, and He gives it wisely to us. He's experienced what we experience, in all areas except in those areas where we sin and fail. He was without sin.

Well, He was tired in His human nature and His human body. He was thirsty, resting by this well when a woman approached it to draw water. She was alone and had come in the heat of the day—which is unusual. In those days, drawing water was a chore for women. But usually they came from the village together; and they came at a time when the sun was not so fierce. And so the circumstances suggest that there's something odd about this woman—that she avoided the other women, or she was shunned by them.

The Lord knew all about her; her reputation, her immoral behavior. But He didn't shun her. And when she arrived at the well, "Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' " (vs7). And with that He began a conversation with her, the second conversation that shows people's need of salvation—and shows it to be a need that is universal. Christ came to save all kinds of people, a world of people. And that purpose is seen in the contrast between the two to whom He spoke: in chapter 3 and now in chapter 4.

The difference between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman could hardly be greater. Nicodemus was an educated man, a scholar. The woman was unschooled. He was a powerful man; he was a ruler of the Jews. She was without influence. Nicodemus was respected; a man of high moral standing; he was orthodox. He was a Pharisee; he was "the teacher of Israel." (Jn 3:10). The Samaritan woman was of low reputation. She

was despised by her own people, the member of a sect and a moral outcast. Two very different people.

And yet, very similar because both Nicodemus and the woman shared a common condition; both were equally lost and equally in need of a savior. And the Lord's conversation with them shows that both were welcome—that no one is kept from Christ because of his or her sex, intellect, race, or social position. He is no respecter of persons: He is the Savior of the Samaritan as well as the Jew; of the morally wayward as well as the morally upright. James Boice wrote, "If Nicodemus is an example of the truth that 'no one can rise so high as to be above salvation', the woman is an example of the truth that 'none can sink too low.' "

Jesus came for both. He came to seek and to save the lost, so much so that He even wearied Himself and became thirsty in His search for this woman. That is the kind of Savior that we have, a seeking Savior; One who comes to us first, who takes the initiative always, who opens the conversation with us. Which He must do because, as Dr. Boice went on to say, "If we were left to ourselves, we would leave Him sitting on the edge of the well forever."

This woman would have. From the Lord's clothing, or maybe His accent, she recognized that He was a Jew and answered His request for water by saying, "How is that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" John adds the comment, "(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)" (vs9). More specifically that means, Jews didn't share vessels, such as a pitcher or a cup, with a Samaritan out of concern not to become ceremonially defiled.

The Lord has no bucket of His own to draw water, or cup, which meant that He would have to use her utensil, her cup, if He were to have a drink. So she could not imagine what would possess a Jewish man to ask her for a drink, (not knowing that Jesus touched lepers and made them clean, that He gladly broke social taboos in order to draw outcasts to Himself.)

She couldn't see that. All she could see was a tired traveler, a Jew, needing something from a Samaritan. And she thought that she was self-sufficient and she could

supply what He needed when He immediately raised the conversation to a higher level and offered her water of His own. "Jesus answered and said to her, "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." (vs10).

Now this expression, "living water", is capable of two meanings. It can simply mean 'running water'; or 'a spring of water', the water of a flowing stream, (as opposed to a pond or standing water). In the Middle East, where much of the land is arid and the sun beats down, water is truly a gift. Maybe that's a little difficult to appreciate in wet climates, but in a dry climate, water is a great blessing. It is a necessity. Of course it's a necessity in every climate, but especially in a climate like that, one appreciates it: It means *life*—and so the Lord's statement raised the woman's interest. It was intended to do that in order to lead her on to the blessing of which "living water" was just an illustration.

The prophets were filled with such illustrations. In fact in Jeremiah chapter 2, verse 13, God spoke of Himself as "The fountain of living waters." As water sustains life, the Lord God gives spiritual life. He is a running supply of life; of faithfulness and goodness to His people—to all who look to Him. And the Lord Jesus was speaking here of that; of spiritual life, the eternal life that is in Him alone; and of His transforming power.

But the woman was still in the dark about His meaning. She was still thinking in material terms and was skeptical about any living water that He could produce. "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep..." (vs11a). [Well, as I said, it's still in use today. In fact, I drank out of it almost 50 years ago. It was over 100 feet deep then, and it was probably deeper back then, than it is today.] And so, she asked, "...where then do You get that living water?" (11b). And His claim to her seemed to be impossible. He had nothing with which to draw water from that well. He has no utensils. There's no way in which she could see he has access to any kind of water at all. And so she asked that.

She's incredulous, but also she may have seen His statement as being somewhat irreverent: Verse 12, "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" Now that question is stated in such a way that it anticipates a negative answer. What she's saying in effect is, 'Certainly You are not greater than Jacob! And certainly You cannot give better than he gave. We're talking about Jacob!'

Well, it's a little reminiscent of Nicodemus' comments about the new birth. He could only think in terms of physical birth; and the impossibility of entering a second time into his mother womb. And this woman can only think of this gift of 'living water' as physical water. But the very fact that she would ask if the Lord considered Himself to be greater than Jacob, showed that she's beginning to consider who He is; which of course, is necessary in order to 'hear' the Gospel—because the Gospel is Christ. Later in chapter 14, verse 6, He'll say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." He is the Gospel. He is salvation.

And so she's beginning to think about Him, consider who He is; and Jesus answered by giving her the Gospel. It wasn't physical water; He was offering something far better than what Jacob gave. As He says in verse 13, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (vs 13-14).

Well, I mentioned that I drunk from that well; and the cup of water that I had was cool, it was clean, it was good. It was *especially* good. Maybe I was just psyched out because I knew what this well was; but I remember thinking, "Oh, that is really good water." I drank it out of a paper cup and really liked it—but it wasn't my last cup of water; it wasn't my last drink. It was a hot day in June and I was thirsty again before too long. —And, of course, that's not surprising.

But I think the Lord was doing more than stating the obvious here about physical thirst; and being thirsty again and drinking again, and that this water won't satisfy for long.

What He's saying here really applies broadly; it's true of everything material in this world. Satisfaction is temporary and we always thirst for more. Nothing in this world can satisfy our thirst, our longing, our hunger for something—and of course the reason is, man is more than material. He, she, is also spiritual. But people try to fill the void, satisfy the desire for some elusive thing with money or material goods, so they work harder, they work longer to get happiness or security. But it doesn't satisfy—it can't. There's always something more to reach for. They're always thirsty, still.

Well then, there's also the scary reality that time is short and running out— isn't long before youth is spent. I read where someone said, "We're always 17 in our mind." And I thought, "You know, that's right." I remember being 17. I remember it well. That sounds like I'm singing a Frank Sinatra song, *'It Was A Very Good Year.'* I think it was 1966. And I can remember thinking, "I'm 17 years old. I'm a junior in high school." Well, and I thought, "Someday I'm going to be 21, but that's way out there." Next thing I know, I'm 21, and then I'm 30, and 40, and it goes by like that. (*one finger 'snap'*).

No, it doesn't last. Time is short. Time is fleeting. And that is, as I said, a scary kind of thing to us, that youth is spent quickly. It can't be restored. And the end is approaching, it's approaching rapidly. Nothing can stop it. There's no Fountain of Youth. And it wouldn't satisfy if there were.

Only Christ can do that. Augustin understood that after a life of seeking satisfaction in pleasure, and then in philosophy, and then in a brilliant career. He finally came to the end of himself. He broke down in tears when he came to Christ in that garden in Milan. He put the problem well in the first paragraph of his famous *Confessions*. All of the Confessions are written as prayers to God; and in that first prayer he says to the LORD, "You have made us for Yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in You." I think that can almost become a kind of cliché with us, a truism. But it is true, it

is reality: And O that people could understand that very basic reality. But they don't, and they can't unless grace opens the eyes of their heart.

The Lord has taken up a conversation with a very restless woman—a woman whose inability to find peace and joy, and whose restless search for that peace and joy had made a wreck of her life. Christ will come to that in their conversation, and at the end of it, she will find in Him what she could not find in the numerous relationships that she had had. Only Christ can do that.

Now some would politely dismiss that and say, "Well, that's fine for her, and that's fine for you. In fact, if Jesus makes you happy, I'm happy for you. But I'm looking for something else." And I think that's probably a typical response today. "I don't want to offend you, I'm just not interested in what you're talking about."

But the Lord doesn't allow for that by illustrating the life that He alone gives with this illustration of water. Describing it as "living water", He opens up a whole range of lessons for us; not only that His life satisfies but also that it is suited to everyone: And it's not optional for anyone. Water is a necessity. We cannot live without water. That's universally true. Water is life.

And if a person would live forever, then he or she must have that life that Christ offers that is only found in Him—that only He can give. It is water for the soul; and without it there is no hope. Everything else is a fable. Water is necessary,

And water purifies; not only gives life, it gives pure life. Water cleanses and the life that Christ offers is clean life, one that brings cleansing and purity to a person. It gives new life. And it does that for all who drink of it, who have it; it does that in abundance. The Lord said that the waters He gives "will become...a well, (*or stream*), of water springing up to eternal life." (vs14b). So it's not really a well, it is a fountain. It's a vigorous, forceful stream of water that gives power.

Out in the Judean desert, south of Jerusalem, there is a place called Wadi Qelt. Very popular place, (at least when I lived there), for students to hike. An interesting hike;

got some interesting stories about that hike. But you begin at Wadi Qelt—and it's a place where fresh, clean water comes gushing out of the rocks. It's a waterfall—an abundance of water. And in the scorching sun of the Judean desert you can stand under it and be refreshed. You can drink from it and be satisfied. It is literally a fountain in the desert.

The spiritual gift Jesus was offering this woman is like that. Her life was spiritually dry as dust. She was dead. He was offering her life. He was offering her water of the very best kind, clean and fresh, a spiritual fountain of living water. Not a fountain outside, but inside. It shall become in him, or her, a well of water springing up, an inner fountain. That's the life that the Holy Spirit produces.

Now that's not said right here, but as you put together the Lord's teaching throughout the book that becomes very clear. Because later in chapter 7, Jesus is at the great feast. He stands up in the midst of this great multitude, and in a loud voice he calls out to all who are thirsty and says, "Come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." (vs38). Then John explains that, 'He was speaking of the Holy Spirit.' The Holy Spirit gives an ever flowing, an overflowing, abundance of life. He is a river to us. He is powerful and abundant.

Leon Morris wrote one of the best commentaries on the Gospel of John. He said, "The life that Jesus gives is no tame and stagnant thing." That is true. It's living, it's vigorous. It is "springing up."

There's a good example of that "springing up" in the Book of Acts; in Acts chapter 3, when Peter and John healed a lame man who was a beggar. They entering into the temple, and there he is, this beggar who's there every day; and everyone knows him. And Peter said that he could not give him silver or gold but in the name of Jesus, he commanded him to walk. And he did. His feet and ankles were strengthened. And Luke wrote that, 'with a *leap* he stood upright and walked; and it was immediate.' (vs6-7). That word, *leap*, is an intensive of this word. But this word is also used in our verse; *leap* is the word "springing up". And this work of the Spirit of God caused him to do that, *to*

leap. That's powerful. In fact, the lame man continued 'leaping about and walking and praising God.' (vs8). That's what the Gospel produces. It's no tame life. —It's a life of energy, it's a life of joy.

But a life without trials, a life without setbacks and sorrows? No. No, it would be wrong to suggest otherwise. Later in chapter 10, verse 10, Jesus talks of 'giving the abundant life.' He gives a life of joy, but that doesn't mean we don't have trials and difficulties. In fact, the more we mature in the faith, the more trials we will have. They're a necessary part of our life. It's difficult to undergo that, but that's part of the sanctifying process. No, we will go through difficulties; and that should not surprise us.

But it is a life, a life of power within that enables us to pass through those difficulties and grow through the trials—and it brings us into eternal glory. The Holy Spirit, who is the source of this vigorous life, is more than sufficient for every circumstance of life—for every trial of life. He gives vitality so that we are also able to overcome temptation, as we walk by faith; to produce a very fruitful life within the believer.

One of the products, again, of water is life. Where it flows, things grow. Even out in the desert. Grass, flowers, trees...amazing! You go to a place like Israel, (you can see it in the hill country, I think, here in Texas), the rains come in the spring and suddenly these barren places are fruitful with flowers—and that's what rain produces. It makes the dry ground fruitful; and the Holy Spirit produces fruit in the lives of the believer.

And Paul talks of that in Galatians 5, verse 22 and 23. He speaks of "the fruit of the Spirit", which is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control": Great virtues, all exemplified in the Lord Jesus Christ. Having the fruit of the Spirit born in our life is being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. He gives a new heart, a new disposition, and new desires. He creates in us affection for God and the things of God; a love for God, a love for His Word, and a love for His people.

These are things that will be evident in our life. We will have this living water. We'll love one another. In fact, He creates within us a thirst for those things as He did in

the psalmist who expressed it in Psalm 42, 'Like the deer pants for the water brooks, so his soul,' he said, 'panteth for the Lord God.' Do you want to pant for the Lord God? Well, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ it's in you to do that.

That's characteristic of the new life you have and the new heart you have; that's the bent of it. But to feed it and to develop it we must "Abide" in Christ, (as He will say later in chapter 15), and feed that life with the Word of God. We cannot emphasize that enough. Study the Word of God. Know the Word of God and we will grow in our love for the LORD; and we will pant for Him like a "deer pants for the water brooks."

Well, all of this really gets ahead of the account in John 4. The woman at the well listened intently to the Lord and she was intrigued by what He said; and so she asked for this water in verse 15, "The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.' " So she was still not clear about what Jesus was saying. She was still like Nicodemus, confusing the material with the spiritual.

But the Lord was awakening something in her. She wasn't resisting; she was asking for this water. And that illustrates what we must do. And if she had known the prophets, which the Samaritans rejected, she might have understood what Jesus was offering.

Isaiah also spoke of spiritual life as "waters", in Isaiah 55, verse 1. He gave that open invitation, "Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."

It's spiritual life that He was offering, it's eternal life He was offering—and it is free for the asking. It is free because Christ paid the cost of it at the cost of His own life when He died in our place and paid for our sins. It's that simple. That's the Gospel. It's ours through faith, and faith alone.

So, if you're here without Him, the offer of Isaiah and Jesus is for you. Christ is living water. He gives cleansing from sin. He gives order to life. Only He gives a satisfying life—and He delivers from the wrath to come. If you have a thirst for that, if you have a

thirst for Him, then respond. Come to the waters. Come to Christ. Drink of Him. Believe. It's all one must do. Come. He's done everything. Simply receive it through faith; faith alone. May God help you to do that, and help all of us to grow in this new life that He's given us through faith, and faith alone.

LORD, what a fountain it is, a fountain filled with blood, and yet one that cleanses us and makes us white as snow. Thank You for that. Thank You for the sacrifice You made for us, and the sacrifice of Your Son. And in this life, we can only speak of it in stammering ways, but we will continue throughout this life to sing of its power to save. Thank You for saving us through faith alone and the work of Your Son. And the day will come when we'll be able to sing with great clear voices all about Your grace and the salvation we have in Christ.

And now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name. Amen.

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