

Date: July 28, 2013

Theme: Just as our body thirsts for water, our soul thirsts for God.

Object: Two pictures -- a deer and a lion.

Scripture: ¹“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.
²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...” (Psalm 42:1-2 NASB)

Slide I have a couple of pictures to show you this morning. The first is a picture of a deer. Deer are beautiful and sleek and graceful and run fast, just the way God made them. It is very important that deer are able to run fast. Do you know why? It is because of the animal whose picture I am going to show you next – the lion. The lion is a natural enemy of the deer because the lion wants to have the deer for dinner. I do not mean the lion wants to have the deer “over for dinner.” The lion wants to have the deer for dinner! I sometimes watch the Discovery Channel on TV. They often show a lion chasing down a deer to eat them. During the chase, the deer runs fast and becomes very hot, tired and thirsty. After running hard and escaping from the lion the deer will stop to rest – he is panting for breath and searches for a cool stream of water to refresh himself.

You and I have a lot in common with that deer. The Bible tells us that Satan is our enemy and that he prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat. Yes, it is true the devil wants to destroy us! You and I must be on our guard and when the devil comes we must run as fast as we can, just like the deer and escape. Sometimes daily life can be a struggle and running from the devil can make us tired. Like the deer we want a safe place where we can be refreshed. In the Bible we find God’s word that refresh us, in Psalm 42 we read that God will refresh our very souls, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” This is why we are

here this morning – we come to church because it is safe, God’s words refresh us and we are surrounded by people; people who love and care for us. The Word of God is “living water” that refreshes our souls.

Our Dear Beloved God, we thank you for giving us the gift of “living water” Your words in the Bible refresh us and guide us away from the devil. Fill us Lord with Your “living water” refresh us, may we live lives that bring You glory. Amen

READING – Isaiah 12

John 4:7-14

Slide Living Water

Sermon #21

Open in Prayer **Blank**

We find our Lord Jesus this morning having walked for hours in the dry lands of Samaria with His disciples. Finally reaching Jacob's well at about noon the disciples go on to the nearby village of Sychar (*Suuc-har*) to buy food. Devout Jews would have considered food bought from Samaritans to be defiled. However, certain dry kinds of food were regarded as being less susceptible of defilement. Most Jews would have gone either the coastal road or the road through Perea (*pə'ri:ə*) the Roman district on the eastern side of the Jordan River to bypass Samaria. Jews, if they were pressed and had to journey through Samaria, would have brought food for their journey with them in order not to have to eat defiled food of the Samaritans. However, Jesus and His disciples journeyed into Samaria on their way to Galilee without food of their own and with little water. Jesus sits down to rest at the well and is thirsty, but being God He also knew who was coming.

Our last study of John chapter 4, verses 1 to 6 we saw the foundation and cause of the rift between Jews and Samaritans. Jews considered Samaritans to be half-breeds and defiled. Even beyond this, defilement was intensified with a Samaritan woman. This is found in the Mishnah. Rabbis were the guardians of the traditions of Moses. As such they not only protected the teachings of the Torah, but they recorded the oral traditions in the Mishnah.

The Mishnah is traditionally ascribed to the great Jewish scholar Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi who collected laws and traditions and codified them into the Mishnah. Although earlier rabbis had already compiled Mishnah collections in 70 to 140 AD, it was only

later that the Rabbi succeeded in ordering the halakhoth (**hah-law-khuh**), which is the entire body of Jewish law and tradition comprising the laws of the Bible, the oral law as transcribed in the legal portion of the Talmud. Much of the material in the Mishnah pre-dates the written Mishnah and was practiced as tradition. In the Mishnah, the opinions of approximately one hundred and fifty rabbis are cited. These rabbis came from the era of 70 to 200 AD. Within a generation of Christ's resurrection the Mishnah was begun and in it is the "*Niddah*" the name used for a woman who is menstruating and therefore unclean during her period. Taking this brief period far beyond the 7 days of uncleanness of Jewish women is the Jewish belief that all daughters of Samaritans are in "*Niddah*" from the cradle to the grave and are always in the state of ceremonial uncleanness. Any Jewish man who dealt with a Samaritan woman was therefore defiled.

Slide Now that we have set the stage we are ready to begin in verse 7 of what I believe is an exciting story. "**There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.'**" The fact that this woman is coming for water in the heat of the day is interesting. Women traditionally went for water in the morning or evening when it was cooler and they went together in groups. As we discover later in the story she is living with a man who is not her husband, she may have come to the well alone in the heat of the day to avoid the other women. Even among the Samaritans, who the Jews considered unclean, she was unclean in her own village for living in sin with a man. It was shocking that Jesus, as a Jew, would even acknowledge the presence of a Samaritan woman. But not only does He acknowledge her, He speaks to her and asks for a drink of water. Jews did not eat Samarian food if they could help it nor did they use Samarian vessels, which in this case was the only way Jesus would be able to have a drink of water. Furthermore, men did not speak to women in public, not even openly to their wives. Jesus is

breaking a number of traditions in this encounter. In verse 9 this unnamed Samaritan woman responds to Jesus by saying, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” She was able to tell Jesus was a Jew by His dress. Her tone is not welcoming or polite or inviting and she dismisses Jesus as a Jew and hater of Samaritans. It is ironic that later on in the scriptures, Jews will dismiss Jesus as not being Jewish, but Samaritan. In John chapter 8 Jesus is talking with a group of Jews who imply they are not Samaritans because they are not born of fornication and then ask Jesus, **Slide** “Do we not say rightly that You (Jesus) are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (John 8:48 NASB) Jesus is assailed from all sides as Satan works to keep people from knowing the long awaited Messiah. Jesus went to Samaria through a dry and hot land to pursue a woman with no name that she might be brought back to God the Father and turn from a life of sin. Let me ask you my brothers and sisters have you ever pursued someone for the sake of the gospel? Have you ever grown tired and hot and thirsty in the pursuit of someone so that they might know Jesus? This is what Jesus showed by coming to the well to specifically seek this woman. Should we do any less than our Lord and Savior? **Blank**

Is this not always how it is in the spiritual realm? Jesus comes to people first. If it were up to us we would leave Jesus sitting on the edge of the well forever and if it were up to the world they would throw Him in. But, praise the Lord, Jesus does not leave us to ourselves. Instead, Jesus seeks us out and He asks the first question. He asks questions about the true meaning of life, not life in general, but concerning our lives specifically. Jesus uses all and any means to break through to our hearts of stone and then makes them into hearts of flesh. Sometimes, like with the woman at the well, he asks a question, sometimes He intervenes directly like with Saul on the road and sometimes it is through someone Jesus sends, but it is always from Him. How did Jesus reach out to you?

Jesus responds to the woman's suspicious question without retaliating, but by making a statement to penetrate through the wall of stone around her heart, He says, "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 **Slide** living water." Jesus offers her "living water", but what does "living water" mean to a Samaritan and to Jews? What does the offer of "living water" mean to us today? For the woman at the well she took Jesus' statement literally, just as Nicodemus had understood the words of Christ about being "born again" literally. In both Jewish and Samaritan language "living water" meant water that was flowing, like water in a river or stream, as opposed to water that was standing still, as in a cistern or well. "Living water" was considered better water, healthier water and more refreshing water. Therefore, when Jesus said that He could give her "living water" she thought He meant water that was flowing and she naturally thought of a stream. She wanted to know where Jesus had found a stream. By the tone of her remarks it is evident that for a stranger to have found a stream nearby was highly unlikely and also was the implied claim of being greater than her ancestor Jacob, which she took offense by. Had Jacob been able to find a stream nearby he would certainly not have gone to the trouble to dig a well, a well at least hundred or more feet deep. So, at this point this is where the woman's thought process is – on the physical. She is thinking concerning Jesus, "Oh, come on who do you think you are?" If she knew the Old Testament scriptures, which she may have or may not have, she would also have known what God had said about the Jews and "living water" in Jeremiah, **Slide** "For My people (Jews) have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me (God), the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:13 NASB) **Blank** Just as the Jews felt they were superior to the Samaritans and were God's chosen people, which they are, the Samaritans felt

superior to the Jews for God had said the Jews were disobedient people spiritually drinking stagnant water, and their cisterns are broken and cannot even hold water – they have no “living water” and they need the “living water” Jesus offers. We can sit back from our perspective today, having the complete Word of God, both Old and New Testaments and say that God is the only source of “living water” and redemption. We have the advantage of God’s revelation, “Then He said to me, **Slide** ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.’” (Revelation 21:6 NASB) A little later in Revelation we read, **Slide** “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (Revelation 22:17 NASB) If the woman at the well could only have related God’s promise in the Old Testament concerning the coming new covenant, **Slide** ²⁵“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” (Ezekiel 36:25-27 NASB) **Blank** The Old Testament not only taught the Jews that they were God’s people and what was required of them as His people, but it prepared them for the new covenant. Much of the Old Testament is filled with pictorial religious language revealing the thirst of the soul and that only God can satisfy - not physical thirst of the body, but the spiritual thirst of the soul. The prophet Isaiah wrote the words of God, saying, **Slide** “For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land* and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants.” (Isaiah 44:3 NASB) Samaritans also read and studied the Old Testament and should have

known the promises of God for the future new covenant. **Slide** “Living water” is the Holy Spirit that dwells in all believers that accept Jesus as the Messiah or Christ and believe in Him as their Lord and Savior, for the Holy Spirit or “living water” is a gift of God. Jesus is saying it is He, God incarnate that is the source and the giver of “living water” that feeds the soul.

Not understanding the spiritual, the Samaritan woman asks Jesus, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 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?” She expects Jesus to give a negative answer to her question and she is skeptical of this stranger’s ability to provide the promised “living water.” The woman’s inability to understand the spiritual leads her to be wrong twice. First, the “living water” Jesus is offering; does not come from an ordinary well and secondly, Jesus is in fact far greater than the patriarch Jacob. It is also implied in the text that she does not understand that Jesus will not be defiled by what is unclean, but Jesus sanctifies whatever He touches. The woman at the well is unclean, but this is not a problem for Jesus for He is not ordinary. If people touch a leper, they become unclean; Jesus touches a leper and brings healing. In Matthew we read, Jesus was walking down from the mountain among a large crowd **Slide** “And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

(Matthew 8:2-3 NASB) **Blank** Jesus is the Messiah for all peoples - to a religious male Jewish aristocrat like Nicodemus, and to an untrained female Samaritan peasant who had made a mess of her life and is living in sin. Jesus seeks out all and speaks with them freely and here we read in the Gospel according to John that both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman break social and religious taboos and seek

truth, eternal truth through Jesus.

In verse twelve the woman says, “You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself?” She is thinking in her mind; the answer to her question is a definite “no” and that Jesus is probably some kind of charlatan. Least you think this doubt is only found in the Samaritans, we read in John chapter 8 that Jews were questioning Jesus and they said to Him, **Slide** “Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?” (John 8:53 NASB) Despite all the evidence that Jesus is God very God what doubts do you have? **Slide** Back to the woman at the well, Jesus again does not directly challenge her statement, but answers saying, “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.” Have you ever seen a well “spring up?” No. Jesus is speaking of spiritual water that should overflow a believer’s life and quench the spiritual thirst of all we meet just as He does for the woman at the well.

Jacob was rightly given honor among both Jews and Samaritans. Yet, as Jesus pointed out, everyone who drank of the water from the well of Jacob would be thirsty again. Here Jesus sat before her; Jesus the “living water” of spiritual life that her parched soul desperately needed. As the Psalmist wrote of God, **Slide** “I stretch out my hands to You; my soul longs for You, as a parched land.” (Psalm 143:6 NASB) **Blank** Unfortunately her mind set is still locked into the physical need. Whatever this “living water” was - she wanted it, especially if it would eliminate her daily trip to the well in the heat of the day and somehow also would give her eternal life. Jesus’ words, “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” echoes a string of prophecies from the Old Testament that tell of new hearts within God’s children. God calls for the exchange of failed ritual for a new religion – a religion of the heart that experiences God directly and His glory and creates a hunger within people to do God’s will. In Jeremiah God has the prophet write, **Slide** ³¹“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD. ³³‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴‘They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’” (Jeremiah 31:31-34 NASB) The prophet Joel was inspired to write, **Slide** ²⁸“It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. ³⁰I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. ³¹The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ³²And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered.” (Joel 2:28-32 NASB) Considering what the prophets wrote and the words of Jesus to the woman at the well brings to my mind the words of the prophet Isaiah, ¹“Ho! (Isaiah is demanding attention) Every one 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. ²Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. **Slide** ³Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." (Isaiah 55:1-3 NASB)

Blank The Samaritans who limited the canon of their scripture to the Pentateuch might not have appreciated such allusions of God's coming new covenant by the prophets we just read, but in Samaritan liturgy that has come down to us for the Day of Atonement (which would be a whole teaching on its own), it is said of the Taheb, meaning "He who returns," and is the Samaritan equivalent of the Jewish Messiah. The Samaritan version of Numbers 24:7 reads that "water shall flow from the Taheb's buckets." The concept of water as a living agent of God and the Holy Spirit was familiar with both Samaritans and Jews. The woman at the well will have to get beyond the physical and begin to understand the spiritual.

In closing, my beloved, I ask you, are you looking to God more concerned for your physical needs, which are mortal just as the woman at the well? Her concerns were for the physical need up to this point in the dialog with Jesus. Or, have you been able to quench your spiritual thirst with the **Slide** "living water" Jesus gives freely to those who believe in Him? Jesus gives spiritual "living water" that will bring you beyond this life to the life to come – living in the presence of God forever! If you have not given your life, your very soul to Jesus – then now is the time – for Jesus seeks you and wants to give you "living water."

Next week, the Lord willing, we will explore a life, the life of the woman at the well that was be lived in ruin and Jesus turns her life into a life lived for Jesus' glory.