

There is a thirst in the human soul. You have felt it, and so have I. It's a kind of thirst that comes from the core of your being. It's not something that can be quenched with regular water or any other beverage.

Only God can satisfy that thirst. But all too often He's the last one we turn to.

Psalm 42:1-2 (NIV)

As the deer pants for streams of water, so *my soul* pants for you, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

The woman at the well is a classic passage about the living water that is offered to us through Christ. She came to Jacob's well to get water; she left with after a personal encounter with JESUS Christ, knowing Him as the Messiah.

She came as one who had a superficial understanding of the God of her fathers, she left with a new appreciation for true worship.

This woman came to that well as a social outcaste, she left knowing that she belonged to a greater community than she ever dreamed of.

I'm dividing up this message in three parts, representing the three kinds of thirsts of the human soul. The quest for transcendence, the search for significance, the need of community.

The premise is simply this: Only a saving knowledge of JESUS Christ can satisfy the thirst of the human soul.

I may have already lost some of you. What is this talk of the soul? We have a body; which functions because of the mind, which produces thoughts, emotions and actions. What is the soul?

A simple and elementary definition of the soul is that part of you which will last for eternity.

The Hebrew word is *nephesh*. It has various meanings in the OT. It can refer to life, breath, heart, or spirit.

Genesis 2:7 (KJV)

And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The Bible does not elevate the soul over against the body, but it does make a distinction between the two. The body was made from the dust of the earth; the soul was breathed into man by the breath of God.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 (KJV)

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

The soul is that part of you that longs for its origin; it desires permanence, refuge and peace.

Psalm 116:7 (KJV)

Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

The soul, the heart or the spirit of man corresponds to your emotions, but it isn't limited to your feelings which are subject to change. Your soul seeks to understand the reason for your existence. It responds to truth, goodness and beauty.

Psalm 107:8-9 (ESV)

Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies *the longing soul*, and the *hungry soul* he fills with good things.

When things are going well, nobody questions the reason for their existence. When you face severe trials, setbacks and disappointments, that's when even a person of faith will have a crisis of the soul.

Psalm 77:1-3 (ESV)

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. ² In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; *my soul* refuses to be comforted. ³ When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, *my spirit faints*. Selah

In the NT the most prominent word for soul resembles to the English word **psyche**. It refers that the essence of a human being. It's what makes you unique. Every person has a body; and bodily parts can now be transplanted from one body to another. But not the soul.

Matthew 10:28 (ESV)

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

This is where people of faith will look at the soul differently than those who are not believers.

Just about every human being understands that there's a part of their being that makes them unique. Nobody else can read their minds or fully understand their thoughts or motives.

Even a trained psychologist can't fully understand everything about your psyche.

But the Bible teaches that God knows. He not only knows what's going on inside us, He holds us morally responsible.

Mark 8:36 (ESV)

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

We are accountable to God for everything that we do and everything that we are. JESUS said that the greatest of all the commandments is this:

Mark 12:30 (ESV)

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all *your soul* and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

Now let's get back to our text. The woman at the well who met JESUS for the first time, came to Jacob's well with a physical thirst, but her encounter with JESUS brought to light a deeper thirst.

The soul is on a quest for transcendence. There must be a more profound reason for your existence than just your years on this earth.

Transcendence refers to otherworldliness. Something or someone must exist outside of this world to give ultimate reason for everything that exist in this world.

Every character in a story is there for a reason. The reason is known by the author of the story. The reader of the story is dependent on the author to make that purpose known.

The author knows why each character is in the story and how they fit into the big picture. God is the author of life. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows how and why you fit into the big picture.

Verse four in our text says that JESUS **had to** pass through Samaria. One of the reasons that he had to go that route was that in the providence of God, JESUS was to meet with this woman.

When the woman at the well met JESUS, she became aware of something important beyond herself. It was a transcendent moment.

When she came to the well that by herself, she met JESUS who promptly asked her for a drink.

She was startled by this for at least two reasons. JESUS was a Jew, and she was a Samaritan. JESUS was a man, and men didn't interact socially with women. She said why in the world would you ask somebody like me for a drink?

John 4:10 (ESV)

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."

Let's bring this closer to home. I don't pretend to know all of the reasons why you are here this morning to hear this passage expounded upon.

I do know that if you have an encounter with JESUS through His Word and by the Holy Spirit, you too will be a bit startled.

Why would JESUS ask you for anything? Who are you that you should gain the attention of this Rabbi from Nazareth? But of course, He's more than a Rabbi.

He is the Word of God who became flesh. He is the source and giver of life. Through JESUS, you can experience a second birth, a spiritual understanding of who you are and how you fit into the big picture.

Your soul longs to know that there is a reason for your existence. Christian conviction states that knowing JESUS is the only way that you can come to grips with the meaning of your life.

The woman at the well could have run away from JESUS in fear of her life. How was she to know his motives?

You can know the motive behind this passage of Scripture and your encounter with JESUS Christ this morning.

JESUS is speaking to you in order to quench the thirst of your soul. He wants you to know the author of life and the reason that you are here on earth.

Our catechism lesson this morning combined the first question of two great statements of faith. (WSC & Heidelberg) **What is the chief end of man, and what is your only comfort in life and in death?**

Not everybody deals with those great issues on a conscious level, but they are always there. When you meet JESUS, they come to the forefront.

What is your primary purpose in life? What is your only comfort in life, and in death?

JESUS asked the woman at the well for a drink. A simple request. Not too much to ask. What is He asking of you this morning?

- ***Are you thirsty? Will you give me a moment of your time? I know you've got a lot going on, but would you put away your phone, and listen to me?***
- ***Will you consider who it is that you've come to worship this morning?***
- ***Will you listen to my Word to you today?***

You may have had several reasons for showing up here this morning, but there's a deeper purpose for your being in this place.

When JESUS Christ speaks to your soul, you know that there is something beyond yourself that gives ultimate meaning to your existence.

Throughout this conversation that the woman at the well had with JESUS, she reveals that she really didn't understand what He was talking about.

That didn't stop JESUS. He didn't write her off as dense or not worth spending time with. He did press her to go beyond her past and her present understanding. He showed her that there was a different way to look at her life.

Is JESUS doing that with you now? Maybe the spiritual side of life has never really made sense to you. Perhaps you view the Gospel as just a bunch of rules and regulations, and not the living water that JESUS mentions here.

JESUS isn't looking for theological astuteness from you. He is looking for those who recognize the thirst in their soul. He invites you to ask Him for the living water that can quench that thirst.

John 4:10

“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.”

Will you do that now? Ask Him. He wants you to ask Him for what only He can provide.

Closely connected to the soul's quest for transcendence is the search for significance. What makes your life worthwhile? Why would the Savior of the world be interested in speaking to you in the first place?

The woman at the well didn't have a pristine, unblemished life. She had been married five times, and the man she was living with at the time was not her husband.

Whether by death, divorce or abandonment, this woman had experienced more than the loss of several husbands. She had lived through a whole series of major disappointments.

When life doesn't go the way you dreamed it would, there are all kinds of questions and issues that come to mind.

- *What's wrong with this world?*
- *What's wrong with me?*
- *Why did God allow these things to take place?*
- *Does God really care about what goes on in my life?*

The search for significance is the search for an earthly consequence to your life. The soul longs for the eternal, but while we're in this temporal world, we need to know that our lives matter.

When you have people depending on you, you know why you're here. Somebody has to provide for the young. Somebody has to be responsible for those who can't take care of themselves.

That does give significance to your earthly existence. But what happens if nobody is dependent on you? What if there's no one who needs you to be around?

Some people find their significance through their work; others through their creativity. Some pursue pleasure. Most of us find significance through our closest relationships.

Close relationships were not a strength for this woman at the well. What success could she point to? What noteworthy accomplishment had she achieved in her life? Why would anybody consider her to be "special"?

Her existence revolved around the routine tasks of taking care of her daily needs. She came to the well at about the sixth hour, in the heat of the day. It was the most difficult time of day to do that kind of work.

The search for significance always comes at the hardest time of the day. For some of you, it's the morning. Finding a good reason to get out of bed takes real effort.

For others, it's those long nights, when sleep would be welcomed, but it alludes you.

The search for significance is most profound when nothing comes easy, and the going is tough. You wonder about your significance when you feel like you've been used and discarded.

When you've grown used to be ignored or rejected, you think about your lot in life, but not too deeply. Who wants to deal with the despair that comes when you aren't sure about your own worth?

When this woman met JESUS, she may not have been pondering about her existential existence. But she left Jacob's well with a whole new understanding of her significance. **That's what happens when you meet JESUS.**

She said that she wanted this living water so that she wouldn't have to work so hard going out to this well every day (as if that's what's offered in the Gospel).

JESUS then raised the issue that probably ate at this woman more than anything else. **"Go, call your husband and come here."**

She said, "I have no husband."

That's the kind of issue that JESUS will raise with you. Not whether you're married, widowed or single, **but what is it that you lack that is keenly missed?**

JESUS didn't bring up the matter of her multiple marriages to ridicule or demean this woman.

On the contrary, **what is it that you think will give your life significance? Where has life disappointed you most?** That where you'll find the relevancy of the Gospel.

Religion and matters of faith aren't just for outward show. They are meant to deal with the core issues of your life.

It was the woman who brought up the matter of religion. She was concerned about the place and style of worship. Isn't that pertinent to church life today among evangelicals?

John 4:19-20 (ESV)

The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."

JESUS was talking about living water to quench the thirst of the soul. This poor woman brought up where her people worshipped and by implication the kind of worship they were involved in.

The LORD wants to deal with much deeper issues than place, style or differences in traditions. The Gospel is relevant to every culture, every generation, and every background.

We complicate matters when we bring up secondary issues that have little or no eternal weight to them.

What's the lesson here? When you have an encounter with JESUS, don't try to change the subject.

JESUS will go right to the point. What is it that gives your life significance? Is that enough? Do you need something beyond what could be achieved in this life?

JESUS doesn't probe for your weakest link in order to exploit it. He searches for your greatest need, and then He meets it.

JESUS fulfills your search for significance.

If this life is to make any sense at all, it will always come down to the matter of true, sacrificial love. You are loved by the God who created you and the Savior who died in your stead.

What parent here hasn't said or felt that they would gladly give their lives in order to save their child.

That's what JESUS did for you. That's how much you mean to Him. Anyone who is loved that much has far more value than they could ever earn on their own.

Our final point is just an introduction to what we'll be covering next week: **the need for community**.

The soul is on a quest for transcendence. Each of us seeks to find significance in life to confirm that our lives have worth and value.

These needs are met in Christ alone. But we are not just individuals looking for solitary peace and serenity. We need community.

This woman who came to Jacob's well came there by herself for good reason. She either had no one who would come with her, or she choose to be alone.

Either way, it's lonely to be by yourself. Those of you who have lost your life's partner know that all too well.

Those of you who wonder if you have anyone who would consider you to be a friend, you know that as well. It is not good for man or woman to be alone.

It's been said that the social media of today exists to fill a void. We are social creatures. We need interaction with other people.

It's my premise that social media does as much to create a void rather than fill one.

Why have personal interaction with a few when you can converse with multitudes in a virtual world out there?

Could you imagine what it would be like if this woman at the well was on Facebook?

See Sally Samaritan post a selfie at Jacob's well. See Sally Samaritan in a relationship. See Sally Samaritan out of a relationship, again. See Sally Samaritan post another selfie at Mount Gerizim (by herself of course).

Next week we'll see how this unnamed Samaritan woman changed after this encounter with JESUS.

Let me close by asking you if you feel like an outcast? Do your failures in life define who you are in the eyes of others, or in your own eyes?

You need Christ, and the Body of Christ. JESUS died on the cross for sinners. He comes to you now to quench your thirst.

There are people sitting all around you right now who are just as needy as you are. I'm one of them. That's why I come to the fountain of the Gospel, with others who are just as thirsty.

Remember in chapter three how Nicodemus, that astute and respected teacher of the Law came and sought JESUS out by night? **That was good.** To seek out JESUS is a very good thing to do.

This is even better. JESUS had to come to Samaria to seek out this woman.

He comes to you now. *Come thou fount of every blessing. Tune my heart to sing Thy praise.*