

We're centering our talks recently around the idea of being filled to overflowing - Romans 15:13, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. We spoke last week of how if you have a glass full of dirty water, turn a faucet on, start to fill it up, the running water will quickly push any impurities out of the glass. The water will run clean in the cup. That is the idea of being filled to overflowing by this God of hope by the power of the HS. That we are filled with the Living Word and in the process we are sanctified - meaning we are changed and transformed by the HS.

We've spoken also of an image of a 5 tiered fountain with the HS filling us up, which then overflows to family and friends, and then into our community and the world around us. Overflow is a natural process of being filled. It is not forced or awkward, it just happens. So, whatever you are filled with overflows to others - which is a pretty exciting or scary thought depending on your situation.

Let's start today with John 4 in which Jesus meets a Samaritan woman - a great example of filling and overflow. In Jesus' day there was an animosity between Jews and Samaritans. We start out with Jesus leaving Judea and returning to Galilee but choosing to go through Samaria.

<sup>4</sup> Now he had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. <sup>1</sup>

Through Samaria was the shortest route to Galilee, but not the only way. The other route was through Perea, east of the Jordan River. In Jesus' day, Jews, because of their hatred for Samaritans, since they considered them half-breeds and heretics, normally took the eastern route in order to avoid Samaria. But Jesus chose the route through that area.<sup>2</sup> Which shows us that Jesus wasn't afraid to engage the despised.

<sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) <sup>3</sup>

Not only would a rabbi not associate with a Samaritan, but he would never speak to a woman. Jews were not even allowed to drink from the same container as a Samaritan (cf. Lev. 15). Jesus engages her. An outcast. A curt Samaritan woman, and we'll find out

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<sup>1</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:4-6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>2</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Jn 4:4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:7-9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

later, immoral as well. And, we'll find that she has a thirst only Jesus can fill.<sup>4</sup> She may have seemed indifferent, but there's a dissatisfaction in her. Some of us come to Jesus through a very immoral lifestyle. Others, like Mother Theresa, come to Jesus experiencing our need for him through the empty efforts of doing good - Mother Theresa did all the good she could, but still experienced the 'dark night of her soul' which revealed her need for Jesus. Jesus answered her need as he does this woman's.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."<sup>5</sup>

Jesus uses this simple context to lead her to understand her need. He uses the term 'living water' which she would know right away he could not get from that well. That well was only a cistern which caught rain water. But...living water would have had two meanings. The first, would be moving, running water like our faucet image, or a stream. Second, it was a term associated with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he's playing on words, using the situation to address her dissatisfaction or thirst. It's not really about a drink, or water, but about how she tries to satisfy the thirst in her soul.

<sup>11</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" <sup>6</sup>

'You can't get this living water here, what are you gonna do?' What we have to understand is Jesus is getting personal right off - he's saying I can give you the Holy Spirit who will continue to satisfy you and fill you to overflowing. But no one likes anyone getting personal when you first meet. And typically we deflect those conversations by throwing out a red herring...

You may be familiar with that term. But there's actually no such fish as a red herring. The term comes from the process of brining a fish which turned it reddish, usually a herring, and the process made the fish smell. They would use red herrings to train scent dogs and try to knock them off the real trail by using this smelly fish. So it was something that was used to divert someone from getting to the truth.

This woman's first inclination is to throw out a theological 'red herring'. Because she is uncomfortable with Jesus going too deep too soon. This is quickly getting personal, and she deflects. It's her first red herring, "Do you think you're greater than Jacob?" But Jesus stays on her scent. He answers her question and addresses her need by continuing with his illustration.

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<sup>4</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Jn 4:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>5</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>6</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:11–12). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”<sup>7</sup>

He answers her question without mentioning Jacob. He knows she has no satisfaction in life. The verb form in verse 13 suggests that you have to come back again and again to drink water from that well, always working to satisfy your thirst - Jacob built a well that can only temporarily satisfy your bodily needs. But the verb form in verse 14, the water Jesus gives, suggests drinking only one time which satisfies thirst, and need from within forever. It's living water like a faucet which has been turned on in your life filling you to overflowing. It fills that longing in her heart which she has tried to fill with other things.

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”<sup>8</sup>

She is looking down at her circumstances, she doesn't get it, but he will get her to look up at him. Who can blame her, she has a difficult life, one which is full of back breaking work. Jesus is going to help her understand that he is speaking of something much deeper, he is speaking of a thirst in her soul. He is speaking of satisfying that thirst in her that has brought her to a life of shame which he can take away. And in the next line he names the source of her shame.

<sup>16</sup> He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”<sup>9</sup> This woman had come alone to a distant well at an unusual time of day because of her social position in the village.<sup>10</sup> In other words, she was not just a Samaritan, and a woman whom Jesus should not be talking to. She was a promiscuous woman, who lived in shame in local community. And she goes to this well at the height of the day because no one else would be there. The other women would go in the cool of the morning. She was an outcast.

By asking her to call her husband Jesus reveals her real thirst. She has a thirst to be loved. She has a thirst to be cared for, to be important and central in someones eyes - she has a hole in her heart. She has tried to satisfy that thirst, or fill that hole through men, but she has been unable to slake her thirst. She goes to that well everyday for water, and in another sense she goes back to the well of men over and over again to satisfy her thirst for true love. It would be simplistic to call her a slut, no one's just a slut. We all react to a deep God given desire for acceptance, love, and relationship which we seek to satisfy in a variety of ways. You may seek to satisfy that in a different way, she

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<sup>7</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:13–14). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>8</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>9</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:16). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>10</sup> Utley, R. J. D. (1999). *Vol. Volume 4: The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John*. Study Guide Commentary Series (43). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

sought to satisfy it through men - if she's a slut, so are we. The question is, what do you seek to satisfy your thirst?

<sup>17</sup> "I have no husband," she replied. Which was not the full truth. She does what we all do, she only answers enough to seem honest, but not divulge the whole truth because she is reacting out of years of shame heaped on her by others. She does not need some Jewish man making her feel worse about herself, she already feels it. But Jesus is a hound dog on her scent...he has lovingly cornered her in a tree, he will not shame her, but he has to go there to reveal her true thirst. Which she does not yet realize is for his love and acceptance.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." <sup>11</sup>

He knows all about her without ever meeting her before this. He sees right into the very core of her personal darkness confronting her on her failed life. However, although he does not condone her actions, he does not condemn her. Notice he is not showing her why she can't be in his company, but why she needs to be! He is speaking to her when all others probably would not. He is saying when everyone else shuns you, I accept you; I know you are just trying to satisfy a deep thirst for love. And he loves her as only he can.

But as we said before, when someone gets close to our heart, it hurts, and she again throws out her second red herring. She brings up an age old argument between Jews and Samaritans starting with a compliment. Hopefully that will throw him off!

<sup>19</sup> "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."<sup>12</sup>

She refers to a theological argument as to where God (YHWH) should be worshiped. The Jews emphasized Mt. Moriah while the Samaritans emphasized Mt. Gerizim.<sup>13</sup> This would be the equivalent today of speaking with someone about what Jesus means to them, and when the message starts to become to personal, they say, "Well, how can God be loving if there is so much suffering in the world?" She expected him, as a Jewish man to start arguing from his side of the fence, to say that the Samaritans don't know what they are talking about, but he doesn't. He gives an answer which surprises her.

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<sup>11</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:17–18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>12</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:19–20). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>13</sup> Utley, R. J. D. (1999). *Vol. Volume 4: The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John*. Study Guide Commentary Series (44). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

<sup>21</sup> “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus is saying, It is not ‘Where’ you worship, but ‘Who’! And ironically the ‘who’ is sitting right there. With Jesus the time came for a new order of worship. To worship in truth is to worship God through Jesus. To worship in Spirit is to worship in relationship with him. Everyone is a worshiper (Rom. 1:25).<sup>15</sup> Her worship centered around men, hoping they would satisfy her need.

Yet she is a Samaritan. And as such she was told to look to Mt Gerizim; a place, a concrete, objective thing, to wrap her thoughts around. *But God is looking for us to go beyond the objective place of worship to the subjective relationship with Jesus which gives true meaning to those objective things; beyond the trappings of religion to the person of Jesus. Objectively, we can know a person - So & so is 5’ 6” tall. They have brown hair, etc. However, subjectively is to have emotional connection with them - to explore who they are as a person which is a bottomless and expansive well.*

*And that’s what this woman is being confronted with - she has known the objective concept of God, she points to Mt Gerizim, and that has left her wanting for more. Just like coming to church would leave you wanting more until you go beyond that and are truly filled by the free flowing well of Jesus which will give meaning to the objective things you experience. In her mind, God is for the religious. She is just a woman trying to get by, left feeling empty & used filling that thirst with man after man. But now she is being faced with, not only the objective Jesus sitting before her - but she is hearing his heart beside a well! And it’s not the usual message of shame she knows so well, but of love, acceptance, and hope!*

*Maybe it sounded too good to be true and to assure herself of what she is hearing, she says...*

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” <sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”<sup>16</sup>

And there it is...I am God made flesh, I am that Messiah. I am not a religion but a person and I want to be in relationship with you. I am here to fill that thirst you have

<sup>14</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:21–24). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>15</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Jn 4:23). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>16</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:25–26). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

tried to satisfy your whole life! Even you, a promiscuous Samaritan woman whom everyone else rejects, I accept! I am here for you, a Samaritan woman, shunned and living in shame. Jesus satisfied her thirst, and he can ours as well. He waits at the well to draw out a drink of living water that will meet all our needs. Do we allow him to flow so freely to us? Or, do we keep running back to the well of our idols, worshipping those things which keep us going back and forth to fill our water jars over and over again? It is back breaking tiring work which never fully satisfies.

This woman did not seem to be seeking, but Jesus engaged her. He placed himself right next to the well of what she thought satisfied her. He lovingly confronted her on her need. Jesus will place himself right beside that well you are drawing from and offer you a different drink. Will you take it?

This story concludes with this, <sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" <sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way toward him. <sup>17</sup>

So as she is filled, she naturally overflows that out to those closest to her. She had probably never heard the word evangelist, but she unwittingly became one. She did not have a seminary degree, but she introduced people to Jesus out of her overflow. And the result was... <sup>39</sup> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. <sup>41</sup> And because of his words many more became believers. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." <sup>18</sup>

She was filled by the person of Jesus. She overflowed to them. They were filled and I imagine overflowed to others - if it were possible to trace back our spiritual heritage, I wonder if any of us were a direct result of this encounter?

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<sup>17</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:28–30). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

<sup>18</sup> *The New International Version*. 2011 (Jn 4:39–42). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.