

# Exalting Jesus Christ

## "Living Water"

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. Water is sometimes called the elixir of life – because without water we would soon die.
  - A. Scientists tell us the human body is 70 percent water.
    1. And because of that, humans can go a long time without food, but not without water.
      - a. Depending on the temperature, and the amount of physical activity, the average person can only survive from 3 to 5 days without water.
      - b. That's because a typical person will lose from two to four liters of water per day under ordinary conditions – and more in hot, dry, or cold weather.
      - c. Therefore, health experts say we need from four to six liters of water or other liquids every day to avoid dehydration and to keep the body functioning properly.
    2. Water is crucial to life. We all need it.

- B. However, some two-thousand years ago Jesus spoke of the need for a different kind of water.
1. He offered living water to a woman at a Samaritan well – the kind of water that all humanity thirsts for – but not all humanity is willing to drink.
  2. All too often we drink from the springs of love, happiness, success, wealth and fame, only to find that those springs offer no lasting inward satisfaction – no enduring personal fulfillment.
  3. But the water that Jesus offered the Samaritan woman that day was different.
    - a. The one who drinks only one time of this water will forever be free of thirst.
    - b. Not only that, but this water is so transforming that whoever drinks it will find an inexhaustible fountain of life welling up inside them.
    - c. The waters of that hidden spring will never run dry – they will become an endless supply of spiritually refreshing, life-giving water that alone will give eternal life.
  4. Such was the offer to a Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, and such is the offer to all who come to Christ today.

- II. As we continue our series of lessons through the gospel of John entitled "Exalting Jesus Christ," I want us to turn to the fourth chapter of John's gospel.
  - A. It is here where we find Jesus telling this Samaritan woman about the "Living Water" He offers to all who thirst for eternal life.
    - 1. As we take a closer look at this wonderful story, there are four important things we need to consider.
      - a. First, we need to understand something about the setting of this story. There's a lot of background information that helps us understand the significance of this story.
      - b. Second, we need to grasp the full meaning of the conversation Jesus had with this woman.
      - c. Third, we need to consider the reaction of the Lord's disciples, the reaction of the Samaritan woman, and the reaction of the people from the nearby village.
      - d. And finally, we need to understand the important lesson Jesus taught His disciples about the harvest and their role in it.
    - 2. So, let's turn to John chapter four where this wonderful story of the Samaritan woman is told.

**Body:**

- I. As the curtain opens on chapter four, we discover that the Pharisees were getting wind of Jesus' rising popularity over that of John the Baptist.
  - A. When Jesus realized this, He took his disciples and left Judea for Galilee.
    1. **John 4:1-4** – *Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. 4 But He needed to go through Samaria.*
    2. Weary from the long walk, Jesus comes to rest during the noonday heat outside the town of Sychar – a city in Samaria. (**cf. John 4:5-6**)
      - a. More specifically, this was the place known for Jacob's well – a fresh-water well that historians say was about 100 feet deep.
      - b. While Jesus rests, his hungry disciples go into the nearby town to find food.
      - c. It is then that a Samaritan woman from the village approaches the well to draw water.
    3. In those days, women normally drew water at dawn or dusk – the cooler hours of the day.

- a. It was a time to visit with other women, to exchange news, and to idle away a little time gossiping.
  - b. Some commentators have suggested the reason this woman came at noon – the hottest part of the day – was possibly because of her reputation.
    - (1). In verse 18 we read that this woman has had five husbands, and was now living with a sixth man whom she had not married.
    - (2). And in verse 28 we read that she went back into the city to tell the men about Jesus – not the women.
  - c. So, perhaps because of her reputation with men, and her cold-shouldered reception by the women, she braves the noon-day heat to avoid the stares and whispers of the village women.
4. As she approaches the well, she carries an empty waterpot – which some suggest is a telling symbol of her own parched, barren life.

II. As she arrived, Jesus initiated the conversation between Himself and this woman with a simple, direct, request.

A. Jesus simply says, *"Give me a drink!"* (**John 4:7**).

- 1. But the woman's immediate response is defensive – and more than just a little sarcastic.

2. **John 4:9** – *"How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"*
  - a. John tells us why she replied this way in the words that follow:  
**John 4:9b** – *For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*
3. There are probably two principle reasons why she reacted this way.
  - a. First, there was an intense racial hatred between Jews and Samaritans, much of it centering on religious differences.
    - (1). The Samaritans, like the Sadducees, accepted only the five books of Moses – Genesis through Deuteronomy – while the Jews, having the entire Old Testament, looked down on the religion of the Samaritans as corrupt and incomplete.
    - (2). And, since the Samaritans were banned from offering sacrifices in Jerusalem, they had their own place of worship on top of Mount Gerizim. Samaritan Jews still worship there today.
    - (3). Because of this animosity between Jews and Samaritans, devout Jews, as you know, would route their travels from Jerusalem to Galilee around Samaria – bypassing it completely – by traveling up the east side of the Jordan River.

b. And the second reason this woman reacted the way she did is because Jesus – a Jew – is not only asking for a drink from a Samaritan well, He also broke all Jewish protocol by actually speaking to this woman.

(1). The social status of women in Palestine during the time of Christ was generally considered just above a slave. In fact, the Pharisees taught that men should never speak to women in public.

(2). One rabbinic saying is: "He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself." And a common Jewish prayer included the phrase, "Blessed are thou, O Lord. . . who has not made me a woman."

(3). And yet, Jesus not only looks at this Samaritan woman, He actually talks with her.

B. But the way Jesus replied seems to have sparked some curiosity in her.

1. **John 4:10** – *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."*

2. Confused and perhaps a little skeptical, she again replies with a bit of sarcasm.

a. **John 4:11-12** – *"Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? 12 Are*

*You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"*

- b. Her "who-do-you-think-you-are" response was a mild attempt to put Jesus in His place.
  - c. Who is this man to think he could offer water that would be cooler and more refreshing than the water from Jacob's well?
3. And so, Jesus replies by offering her a different kind of water:
- John 4:13-14** – *"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."*
- a. The water from Jacob's well is just plain, ordinary life-giving water – the kind of life-giving water that quenches thirst for only a while.
  - b. But Jesus tells this woman He offers a different kind of life-giving water that, with only one drink, will quench thirst forever.
  - c. Not only that, this special life-giving water produces a constant, never-ending spring of thirst-quenching water welling up inside each person to give them eternal life.
4. But this Samaritan woman was only seeing from a human point of view, and she misses His point entirely.



- a. **John 4:15** – *The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."*
5. Therefore, to help her understand the spiritual nature of this living water, Jesus draws attention to her own spiritual life – in effect, He places a full-length mirror in front of her, forcing her to take a long, hard look at herself.
  - a. **John 4:16** – *Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."*
6. No doubt, this sobering glimpse at her life made her flush with embarrassment. But when she tries to skirt the issue, Jesus gently nudges her back to once again face the emptiness within her heart.
  - a. **John 4:17-18** – *The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."*
7. The ability of Jesus to see deep into the dark recesses of her heart not only pricks her conscience but deepens her shame. Perhaps that's why it seems she tries again to skirt the issue by shifting to a more controversial subject.
  - a. **John 4:19-20** – *The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain,*

*and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."*

- b. Have you ever told someone about the need to believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized to be saved, only to have them ask, "Well, what about all those who have never heard of Christ – what about them?"
  - c. Or have you told someone that baptism must be immersion in water, and they reply, "Well, what about all those who have been sprinkled – are you telling me they aren't saved?"
  - d. No doubt her reply is a smoke screen she hopes will hide her blemished soul from the light of the Lord's penetrating gaze.
- C. But it's no use. The Lord's reply pierces right through the veil.
- 1. **John 4:21-24** – *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*
  - 2. Jesus clears away the smoke screen by telling her it's not *where* one worships that matters.

- a. Mountain tops, or temples in Jerusalem – ornately decorated houses of worship, or in a simple cliff-side cave in Caesarea Philippi – it's not *where* one worships that matters; it's *how* and, ultimately, *who* one worships that is important.
  - b. God desires those who worship Him to worship in spirit – with their whole heart and spirit involved in all they say and do.
    - (1). Not the ritual, habitual worship of hearts that are far from Him.
    - (2). But the worship of those whose hearts are centered on Jesus Christ.
  - c. And God desires those who worship Him to worship in truth.
    - (1). We must worship in keeping with the truth of His Spirit-given Word.
    - (2). We must worship according to the way He wants to be worshipped.
3. How sad our Lord must be when He sees His people make such a fuss over adorning church buildings with such beauty and architectural appeal, and yet see these same people routinely go through worship with no real thought to what they are doing or saying.
    - a. Don't get me wrong. I'm not opposed to having a nice building in which to worship.

- b. But it's not the building that makes a church – it's the people.
  - c. I often hear brethren say people from the community won't come if we don't have a nice building. While that may be true for some, it's certainly not true for most.
4. I can assure you, when people visit this congregation for the first time, they're not looking at the building – they're looking at you.
- a. They're looking to see how sincere you are in your worship.
    - (1). They're watching you sing and pray.
    - (2). They're observing how you partake of the Lord's Supper.
    - (3). They're taking notice of whether or not you give when the collection plate is passed.
    - (4). And they're watching how well you pay attention to the sermon.
  - b. They're looking to see how friendly you are toward others in this church – whether or not there is real love for one another.
  - c. And they're looking to see how interested you are in their presence – whether or not you care enough to introduce yourself and welcome them here.
  - d. Bottom line, they're watching to see whether you worship in spirit and truth – whether your heart is really in what you are doing, or whether it's all just for show.

5. So, let's never forget that *who* and *how* we worship is far more important than *where*.
- D. The reply Jesus gave to this Samaritan woman apparently ignited a fire in her soul that made her suddenly realize this is no ordinary man.
1. **John 4:25** – *The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."*
    - a. Here stands a Samaritan; a woman; and, to top it all off, a woman of low morals and ill repute.
    - b. To any faithful, orthodox Jew, she would be the farthest from the kingdom of God.
    - c. But because of this Man she knows simply as "a Jew" (**v. 9**), then as "Sir" (**v. 15**), then as "a prophet" (**v. 19**), this Samaritan woman suddenly finds herself standing on the brink of discovering this Man's true identity.
    - d. No doubt she wondered He was the Messiah – her statement seems to indicate she wanted to know one way or the other.
  2. To which Jesus replies: **John 4:26** – *"I who speak to you am He."*
- III. Just as this dramatic, cliff-hanging moment unfolds, guess who shows up with food? The disciples! Notice the reactions!

- A. No doubt this is an awkward moment for everyone – everyone except Jesus.
  - 1. The disciples are more than a little perplexed. But they didn't dare question the Lord's motives.
    - a. **John 4:27** – *And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"*
- B. Notice the reaction of the Samaritan woman.
  - 1. **John 4:28-29** – *The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"*
    - a. Undeterred by the shame of her past or the curious stares of the twelve disciples, this woman has one mission in mind – to tell others about Jesus.
    - b. Ironically, she left the waterpot behind that she had come to fill. She was obviously more interested in a different kind of water – being filled with the living water of which Jesus spoke.
    - c. If anyone could fill the emptiness in her heart it would be this Man and the message He brings.
    - d. No matter how empty her life had been, she knew it was about to change – and she wanted others to have the same privilege.

C. What was the reaction of the men of the village?

1. **John 4:30** – *Then they went out of the city and came to Him.*
  - a. How many times have we talked about simply bringing people to Christ by inviting them to come and see for themselves – just like Andrew did with his brother Simon Peter, and like Philip did with Nathaniel.
  - b. The men of the village didn't realize it at the time, but this woman whom they had known for her immorality and worldliness was essentially inviting them to church.
  - c. They were about to come face-to-face with Jesus – and they were excited to see if the things she said about Him could possibly be true.
  - d. If this Stranger's words would ignite a spiritual fire in such an immoral woman, what could His words do to their lives?

IV. As far as the Lord's disciples are concerned, they had only one thing on their minds – food!

A. But they were about to get a lesson every disciple needs to hear about the harvest.

1. **John 4:31-32** – *In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."*

- a. Jesus uses this occasion to teach His disciples about a more important kind of food.

B. But the disciples didn't understand:

1. **John 4:33** – *Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?"*
2. **John 4:34-38** – *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. 35 Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!  
36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.  
37 For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."*

C. How simple can it be.

1. Jesus defined His mission by saying, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."*
  - a. Jesus thrived on fulfilling His mission – doing the will of God, and finishing the work of redeeming the world.
  - b. He had already taken the first step of redeeming the world by coming into the world, but much more lay ahead.



- c. He still needed to shed His blood on a cross to redeem all mankind from sin.
2. But in the meantime, the Lord's disciples needed to understand they also had a mission to accomplish – a mission that would work hand-in-hand with His mission.
- a. They needed to get their eyes off themselves and look at the fields that were already ripe for harvest.
    - (1). Some have suggested that Jesus may have said this at the very moment the men from the village approached.
  - b. Jesus had not chosen these twelve disciples to merely follow Him. He had chosen them to be laborers in His vineyard – to gather the harvest from what the Lord would plant.
    - (1). There are great rewards in bringing lost souls to Christ – eternal rewards.
  - c. But even though these twelve disciples would experience the glory of bringing souls to Christ, they needed to understand they would merely share in the glory.
    - (1). Others had labored long before them to plant the seed of God's word in the hearts of men and women.
    - (2). No doubt Jesus is referring to the prophets of old, and to the more recent work of John the Baptist.

- d. But, regardless of the planting that had been done before them by the prophets and by John, the Lord's disciples would share in the joys of the harvest.
- e. And that same opportunity still exists. You and I as the Lord's disciples can still share in the glory of bring the lost to Christ.
- f. Just *"lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"*

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. How much we all need to be like this Samaritan woman.
  - A. Her value to the Lord wasn't in her past – in fact, the Samaritan woman had no past that was worthy of praise.
    - 1. Her value to the Lord was in the present and in the future.
      - a. She saw her own sinful life and was ashamed for the way she had lived. But she also saw a chance to change all that.
        - (1). She saw an opportunity to drink of the living water which would forever quench her thirst and bring her eternal life. And she seized that moment.
      - b. She also saw the need for others to hear about Jesus.
        - (1). And despite all the social barriers and handicaps this woman had to overcome to tell others about Jesus, she didn't hesitate.

(2). If He could change her life, He could change the life of anyone. And so, she brought others to Christ.

B. It doesn't matter about your past, or how empty your life may be, there is One who can erase that past and fill that void – and that's Jesus Christ.

1. The sinners greatest need is the free gift of salvation.
  - a. If your past is filled with sin, and your life is empty, then be like the Samaritan woman – accept the incredible gift of eternal life.
  - b. It all begins by taking that first step of faith, truly repenting of your past sins, and being baptized into Christ to have all your past sins washed away – forever.
2. And for those of us who are already disciples of Christ, we also have a need – and that's to understand and do the will of God.
  - a. Like the Lord's disciples, you and I are given the incomparable opportunity to work with Him side by side, receiving the laborer's reward and sharing in the joy of the harvest.
3. What an incredible Savior we have! He not only gives us the grace and mercy we need to receive Him, but He also gives us the dignity of serving with Him in ripened fields.
4. So, what about you?

- a. If you're ready to come to Christ and receive the free gift of eternal life, then here is your opportunity.
- b. And if you've been neglecting your work in the Lord's vineyard, now is the time to make that right.