

REFRESHMENT FOR THE SOUL

John 4:4-29

TIME FOR A COOL DRINK

VV4-15,27

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

⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹The 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.)

¹⁰Jesus 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."

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

¹³Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink 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."

¹⁵The 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."

²⁷Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" [TNIV]

It was time for a cool drink. The road had been hot and dusty. And the last hill was enough for the moment. It was the middle of the day – time to have a break. So when Jesus and the disciples came near the town of Sychar, Jesus sat down by the well which was one kilometre outside of town. The disciples went into town to buy provisions for the day.

As Jesus sat, a woman came to draw water from the well.

Now, everyone knows that the proper time to draw water is either in the morning or in the evening. Only women who have a bad reputation and are shunned by their community would draw water in the middle of the day.

Jesus asks her for a drink of water.

A harmless enough request, it seems. Except for the fact that she is a Samaritan, and Samaritans and Jews hated each other. And she is a woman, and she is on her own, which means Jesus would be breaking the social laws to even talk with her, let alone ask something of her. And she has a bad reputation, which means anyone associating with her would have her badness rub off onto him.

But then, Jesus is wooing her, courting her; not with the goal of marriage in mind, but with the goal of eternal life in mind.

When the disciples returned they were absolutely mortified to see him talking with this woman.

But it's time for a cool drink. And not for Jesus. He only needed water. No, this woman needed a cool drink for her soul! For too long now, her life had been burning up: burning with shame, and burning with sinfulness. But now it's time for a cool drink for the soul.

And you: Do you need a cool drink for your soul? What shame do you bear in your life? What burns inside you, that might consume you completely – lost forever?

Think of what Jesus has done here with this woman, and put yourself in the picture in her place:

The sinless Son of God comes into your life. He asks for a little bit of your attention. But who are you to dare have anything to do with him? He is the Lord, the Son of God, God Almighty! You are like a despised Samaritan. But Jews – God's people – do not associate with Samaritans. Yet this true person of God – this impeccable Jew – is associating with you who is no better than a Samaritan!

While you sit here in church listening to God's Word, receiving his grace in the Sacrament, can you comprehend what God is doing here in your life? Can you understand or measure the love that brings the Creator down from heaven into your life: to sit with you, just as Jesus was there for that scorned, sinful Samaritan woman?

Christ is here, like he was for the Samaritan woman, giving you life-giving water for your soul! So what if other people might call you 'hypocrites' for acting so pious on a Sunday morning! We don't come here because we are so good, but because our Lord is so good to us!

Are you thirsty?

Come and drink! For this spring will never run dry.

HE KNOWS MY HEART!

But be warned! This Lord can see into the deepest corners of your heart! And he will not rest until everything is swept clean, and your whole being belongs to him. He is a very jealous Lord. Having him second best in your life, or slotted into your busy schedule, even at the top, is not enough. He

must be Lord of everything you are and do and speak, or he is Lord of nothing.

Are you willing to have such a Lord? He is the King, and must rule over all.

Jesus aimed to drive this truth home to the Samaritan woman. So he talks to her about what lies hidden at the corner of her heart: “Go, bring your husband,” he says, knowing full well that she is living in a de facto relationship. But by reading her heart, he helps her understand who he is: a prophet, and more than a prophet – the Messiah, the King himself!

VV16-26,28-29

¹⁶*He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”*

¹⁷*“I have no husband,” she replied.*

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸The 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.”

¹⁹*“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”*

²¹*“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³Yet 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. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”*

²⁵*The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”*

²⁶*Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”*

²⁸*Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” [TNIV]*

How would you feel if you came across someone who could look into your eyes and know your inmost thoughts? Whether we like it or not, God can! How does that make you feel?

The Samaritan woman tried to divert such a piercing gaze into her life by bringing up a topic of dispute between Samaritans and Jews, namely the matter of which mountain – Zion or Gerizim – is the true place to worship God. That argument went back four hundred years!

And don’t we do the same when we feel we’re in the hot seat? We try to divert the attention onto something or someone else?

But it didn’t work. The ‘truth’, Jesus told her, will be a surprise for both Samaritans and Jews! For the *place* of worship will not be important, and

any ethnic questions that go along with it. What will be important is the *heart* of worship.

Finally she tries to brush the whole matter aside: “It’s all too hard for us humans to work out. We’ll just have to wait until the Messiah arrives to tell us what’s what.”

Her attitude seems all too modern. Far too many people believe that religious truth is only a relative matter. No one religion can claim to have the absolute truth. Some may be clearer than others; but that’s all we can claim. Now, I’ve heard good Christian folk say that.

But, dear friends in Christ, it is a load of lies. There is no room for ‘wishy-washiness’ when it comes to what you believe is your salvation. For there is only one name by which we are saved; and that name is Jesus Christ [Acts 4:11-12].

And that was, in effect, Jesus’ reply to the Samaritan woman. “I am the Messiah you seek!”

How would she react to such a claim?

We’re told that she went into town, and told the people: “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

For her, Jesus’ knowing her, though it was scary, was also wonderful and liberating. For if he was the Messiah, then he hadn’t rejected her for he had taken a drink of water from her, and he had talked with her with respect, for she wasn’t treated like a disgusting creature deserving damnation, but a daughter of God needing acceptance, recovery and renewal.

This woman had not been “put in her proper place”, but had been treasured by her King! Rather than being boxed in by her life, Christ had set her free. Free to be an entirely new person in God’s kingdom.

Now, Jesus knows your heart too. It may be scary to let that truth sink in. But it also means our King treasures us dearly, and has set us free. Free to belong to him!

It means for us, in fact, a true refreshment for the soul!

Amen.