

## **“Never Thirst Again”**

### **John 4:5-26**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

No doubt most of you remember the infamous beer commercial with “the most interesting man in the world.” It was all about a man doing outrageous, exorbitant, and outlandish things because he was just that cool and smooth doing things that no one else could do the way he did them. The infamous tag line at the end of that commercial was, “Stay thirsty, my friends.” Always be looking for the next best thing—the next thing that would give you that rush of adrenaline or satisfy your desire for finer things. What you have is never enough. You have to stay thirsty for what’s still out there to be wrangled and used to your advantage. That mentality is dangerous, and it is one that your sinful flesh uses endlessly to its advantage.

Because if you stay thirsty, then you are without life-giving water. Physically, water is a necessary part of being alive. You can’t survive more than 3 days without water in a survival situation. Just think about an old western with John Wayne or Gary Cooper (or even the Three Amigos). Almost inevitably, they will end up in a dry and arid land where water is scarce, and the hero would end up wandering the desert, plagued with painful thirst as he rests on death’s doorstep until he finally reaches an oasis, or is found by a trusted companion with a canteen full of water. That’s such a perfect picture of what thirst is all about. It is painful and detrimental to the body, and, in the case of our Gospel lesson, painful and detrimental to the soul. If one seeks to be like the most interesting man in the world and “stay thirsty,” they are choosing willing death over the life-giving water that is freely given so that they may never thirst again.

But that is what sin does to you. Your sinful flesh is constantly thirsty for more things of the world. It wants more money, power, joy-rides, possessions, promiscuity, and on and on it goes. There is no satiating your sinful nature. You can never give it enough to drink to make it content, because its only goal is to drag you down to its level. With all that this world does to tempt you, the vile nature of sin is all around. Because of the old Adam that still dwells in you, those things which the world dangles out in front of you just make you want more. And if left unchecked and allowed to run wild, you will find yourself like the woman at the well in our text.

Her sin had so pervaded her life, that she has had 5 husbands and no longer has one at all. She lives with a man to whom she is not married, reveling in her sexual sins as just a part of her everyday life. Everyone has been there at one time or another. You

justify your sins again and again as just a part of who you are. There's nothing you can do about them, so why even bother trying, right? If your sinful nature were all that dwelt within you, then that may be true. But as one who is in the faith, you are called to battle the sin that seeks your demise. That's the whole reason Jesus calls the woman out for her fornication and debauchery. He is not belittling her or seeking to humiliate and shame her. He is calling her to repentance and faith. He is calling her to no longer thirst after sin, but to thirst after the living water which flows from faith in Christ.

To thirst after the living water of Jesus is to live a life of repentance. John the Baptizer proclaimed in the wilderness, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 3:2)." The reality of the Kingdom stands right before this woman's eyes as He asks her for a drink of water. It's a bit funny how Jesus speaks in this account. He asks her for a drink, only to reveal that He is the one who has the water that she needs. She is so lost in her sin that she cannot see her need for forgiveness, and so she sees no need to repent. That is the danger of succumbing to the world's temptations and the devil's lies. Rejecting the forgiveness that the Lord seeks to give to all is a rejection of His atonement. Jeremiah 17:13 says, "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You shall be put to shame; those who turn away from You shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water."

Forgiveness flows from the Lord like a roaring river. It doesn't trickle like a stream or lie dormant in a well. The water is living—it is ζῶν, which means that it moves and flows constantly, never ceasing. You do not have to seek the water as if you are the one who has to unblock the flow or raise the bucket in order to drink. Repentance is about submitting yourself to the Lord's free gift. His forgiveness is yours because He has said as much, not because you worked hard enough to earn it. Your repentance is itself a gift, just as much as the forgiveness God brings to you is. In Acts 5:31, Peter and the Apostles bear witness to this truth before the council of the Sanhedrin when they said, "God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Jesus gave the woman at the well faith in Him, and the fruit of that faith is repentance. In just the same way, He has given you faith in Him, and the fruit of that faith is the repentance that He has given to you, along with the forgiveness for the sins that plague your troubled conscience.

Because He has given you the water that will keep from being thirsty forever. That water becomes a spring within you that wells up to eternal life. Your faith is that water, and as the author and perfecter of your faith, Jesus has given you all that you need to sustain it. Do not be like the woman before she believed, asking for a drink of this water as if it will give some physical relief or keep you from having to ask for it. Your

faith is welling up within you, bringing in a never-ending flow the repentance and forgiveness which sustains you. When Christ goes to the cross for your salvation, He is pierced, and blood and water flow out from His side. That stream of blood and water is what feeds you and strengthens you in all trials. There is where you find forgiveness—at the cross—as you are covered in the blood and water that flow out for you. And you are given concrete assurance of that as you are baptized into His death with that very water, and as you eat His body and drink that very blood in His Holy Supper.

Don't stay thirsty, my friends. Stay faithful. Drink the water which the Lord Jesus comes here to bring to you in the forgiveness of sins—the water which is the fountain and source of all blessing. By faith it is yours, and by faith you are His. That is what it means to worship in spirit and in truth. It is not sincerity and perfection, but receiving the forgiveness the Father offers and acknowledging Jesus as God of very God. Jesus says later in John 7:37-39:

If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The Spirit has now been given, and so the time for you to worship in Spirit and in truth has come. You no longer seek worship in the temple, because the temple dwells among you in the person of Jesus Christ. It is He who has told you all things, revealing the truth of your salvation in blessing of His Holy Word.

Jesus told the woman at the well where to find her salvation—it stood right before her very eyes in the flesh! He is the drink of water that will satisfy the thirst of those who are wandering in the spiritual desert of sin. Through the washing of water and the Word, He calls people to repentance and to receive the free gift of forgiveness that quenches sinful thirsts by the blood of Jesus. Romans 5:8, from our Epistle lesson, “but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” He is the reason you need never thirst again. By the gift of faith, He has called you to receive His blessing of forgiveness in His means of grace. Through the preaching of His Holy Word and the right administration of His Holy Sacraments, you are made righteous in the blood of the Lamb, able to stand before Your Father as one who is His holy child.

When you partake of His Holy Supper, you are united as one with the purified saints of heaven, made one with your Lord, Jesus Christ, who has given Himself unto death on the cross to give you the water of life which flows from His riven side. In times of spiritual thirst, you need not wander through the desert of this world hoping and

waiting for the water that will save you from certain death. It is yours already by His gracious gift. By the gift of the Holy Spirit, you have faith in Christ, and He sustains you with His life-giving spring. He is the well, the water, and the One who draws it to your lips. He is the source, the means, and the end of your salvation. And because of His vicarious atonement, His substitutionary act at Calvary, you will never thirst again, because He has called you as His own dear child in the water of your baptism and you have received forgiveness by His blood. By the grace of Your Lord, Jesus Christ, and for His sake, you will dwell in the presence of His glory which flows forth from the throne of God in a stream of eternal life-giving water.

As you worship Him in Spirit and truth here in this life, it points to that eternal reality. The living water of your faith in this life breaks forth into unending joy in the presence of Your Lord and Savior when your faith is fulfilled in the perfection of heaven. Sin is no longer your master, and there is no sin before the Lord that is too much for Him to drown. He is the almighty God, and His Son has done all that is necessary to bring you forgiveness, life, and salvation. Stay thirsty for that forgiveness, knowing that it is already yours, and knowing that you will never thirst again in His holy presence. Christ, your Lord, will sustain you until that day—the day you are glorified as His brother, a true son of the living God, to dwell and rule by His side for all eternity. Amen.