

## Living Water for a Thirsty Soul

You can go to Israel today and take a journey to Samaria to the town of Sychar. Not many people live there, about 300, and they still consider themselves Samaritans. The primary structure in town is a kind of cellar, which houses a well, the only source of water for miles. Archeologists estimate its date upwards of 4,000 years. Weary travelers have quenched their thirst there since the time of Jacob. But even more fascinating than its archeological significance is the fact that this place historically validates for us the precise location where the Samaritan woman had an encounter with the Christ. It's hard to believe but the authenticity of the well is undisputed. Samaritans, Muslims, Christians, Jews all agree that this is the place where the story took place.

It was noonday at Sychar. The disciples of Jesus went on into the village to buy food. Jesus stopped at the well on the outskirts for a brief respite from the sun's blistering rays. When a woman of the village walked up Jesus says, "Woman, give me a drink." She was taken back because men did not publicly speak to women and she was a Samaritan and Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus had crossed both a gender and a racial line by speaking to this person. She replied, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of water from me, a woman of Samaria?" Jesus says, "If you had known who was asking you for water you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." Jesus is, of course, speaking theologically, which is the only significant way to speak, but the woman cannot get beyond the literal. "Oh, go on," she snips. "This is a deep well and you haven't even got a bucket. In a sudden change of direction, Jesus startles the woman and asks her to go get her husband. With this one question he has exposed her dark side. We all have a dark side. You see, by any standard of ethics this woman was living an immoral life. Of course, we already have a hint of that because she has come to the well by herself at noon. The village women come to the well together in the coolness of the morning. She does not come with them because she is not welcome. The woman replies: "I have no husband." Now listen. She's honest. She doesn't try to hide her immoral behavior. She owns up to it and that is **the first step in finding living water for a thirsty soul**. We must give an honest confession about our lives.

In addition to be real about our sin we must recognize and accepting Jesus. Watch what the woman does. She abruptly leaves her water jar and runs back to her village to tell the people what she had experienced. You can't evangelize and tell the story until you first believe the story. You can't be convincing unless you are convinced. She stirs up the entire town and Jesus sees this throng of people coming and he says to the disciples: "You say that there are four months left unto harvest. I say to you lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white unto harvest." Jesus is saying to these twelve do not draw boundaries around the kingdom of God. Don't limit its scope. No people, no race, no gender, no sinner is exempt from God's grace. The time is now and the people are all around.

Once we have filled our cups the living water spills out all around us. We bring the living water with us wherever we go. The grace we have received changes us, makes us reach out, empowers people to move beyond their normal habits. It is interesting to note that ***in her enthusiasm to tell her story, she lost the shame of her sin***. She came to the well in solitude; she returns in congregation. She came to the well as one disgraced; she returns as one graced! The villagers ask Jesus if he will remain with them. Many villages in Galilee ask Jesus if he would leave, this one asks him to stay. And he did remain for several days, we are told. In time the townspeople say to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard him ourselves and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the World. It is no longer second hand; it is a firsthand witness. It is the strongest witness in the world. No one can argue against it.

The pages of history have not changed the village of Sychar too much. At night there is still the same howling, lonely, wind that blows against the blistering sand. The well is still there too. There is something else that has not changed or vanished with the ages either. That is the living water that is offered to you and to me this morning. Drink from it and you shall never thirst.