



SERMON TITLE: You Won't Be Thirsty
SCRIPTURE: John 4:1-26

DATE: November 3, 2019
PASTOR: Matt Densky

"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his own biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

Something's missing. Haven't you ever felt that way? The thought that says, "If I only had that, I would be complete." We believe it. We pursue it. Only to find acquiring it leaves us wanting. But then we hear the thought again. And again, we pursue. It's a cycle of emptiness, and somewhere deep down, we know this is true.

In 1976 Shel Silverstein published a children's book called *The Missing Piece*. In it, a nearly completed circle is in search of the one piece that will fit him perfectly and therefore make him whole. He rolls along the pages and tries a variety of pieces varying in shapes and sizes before finally finding the one he's been searching for. Upon fitting the part in, he becomes overjoyed and rolls faster than ever before, only to discover he misses his previous life. Nothing, it seems, will complete him. There's something about the simple truth of this book that strikes a chord in our hearts that we know all too well. It's a chord I think Jesus wants to speak to, and it's a chord that is resonating deeply with the woman at the well of John chapter 4.

Jesus is traveling through Israel and is currently in the southern region, but needs to head north. There are multiple ways to reach Galilee from Judea, but John 4 begins with the notion of a "divine appointment." Jesus had to pass through Samaria. This is interesting because, actually, he didn't. Geographically there were other options. So the route he takes seems to be a spiritual prompting. What makes this even more interesting is that there were heated divisions between Jews and Gentiles stemming back 700 years. The Assyrian Empire conquered Israel, removed most (not all) of the remaining Jews, and brought in a melting pot of foreigners to live in the land. Eventually, they would intermarry the remaining Jews resulting in mixed race, religion, practices, worldviews, and values. The result was Samaria.

Jews in Jesus' time hated Samaritans. They saw them as "half-Jewish," misguided, barely religious, mystical, wrong, less than, and unworthy. They would avoid the Samaritans and made it common practice to have no dealings with them (as we see in the text). Samaritans, in turn, were not too fond of Jews either. So for Jesus, a Jewish Rabbi, passing through Samaria was not only unusual; it was potentially dangerous.

As he enters a town named Sychar, near Jacob's well, he sits down around noon, and a woman comes to draw water. Noon was not the customary time to do this. Usually, women drew water from the well in the early morning or late evening, not in the hottest part of the day, and usually not alone. Jesus knows something is wrong. Divine appointment.

He begins to have a conversation with her, breaking all kinds of social and religious barriers, carefully connecting the dots of her heart condition. Since they're at a well, Jesus invites her to drink from the water he offers. Seeing nothing to draw water with, she's confused. He makes the point more clear in verse 14, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become...a spring of water welling up

to eternal life." This, of course, is the most appealing offer she has ever heard, leading to her response in verse 15, "Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

She showed her cards. She—like our almost complete circle in Silverstein's book—has been looking for the missing piece. She has tried many things—mainly men as revealed in the passage—but nothing seems to quite work out like she hoped. Coming to the well in the hottest part of the day signifies that she's intentionally avoiding the other women, or maybe they have made it clear she's not welcome to join them. Coming alone would solidify that hunch. She's lonely, broken, unwanted, outcast, and shamed. She probably felt like she had no value, and she is desperate for the missing piece. Her response to Jesus in verse 15 does not seem to reveal an understanding of who he truly is; instead, her understanding of her own life. "Give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water" is her way of saying, "Give me the solution to my problems so that I don't have to show my face here anymore." She wants Jesus so that she can treat the symptoms, not the problem.

Jesus, perceiving this, takes the conversation further and puts his fingers on the soft spot of her heart. "Call your husband, and come here." The woman has no husband. In fact, she's had five in the past, and she's now with a man who is not her husband. She, like the rolling circle, has tried piece after piece, and it hasn't worked out. Now she's just rolling through life with a hole in her heart. Jesus wants to fill it. Jesus has something permanent. Living water leading to salvation.

As the story progresses, Jesus reveals to her that he is the Messiah. Even the Samaritans, with their blended religion, were waiting on him. This unlikely character is the person to whom Jesus would reveal his true identity. This was the divine appointment the Father had for him. This results in the woman running into town and inviting all the people to see Jesus, the one who recounted my life to me. It was this woman's testimony that would become the spark to ignite the fires of belief for the Samaritans.

I think for the first time in a long time, she felt known, but not ashamed. She felt compassion instead of condemnation.

FOR DISCUSSION:

- What were some things from Matt's sermon that stuck out to you or that you remember?
- "Jesus had to pass through Samaria." Have you ever experienced a divine appointment like this before? How can we be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit in ways that lead us into divine appointments like this in our everyday lives?
- What were the context clues to help us understand that this woman was an outcast in her town?
- In what ways did Jesus show compassion, grace, understanding, and love to the woman?
- Jesus equates the water from Jacob's well as a temporary means to quenching thirst. What are the things we look towards in life as we attempt to fill our cravings, but find they don't last? Why do we continually fall into that same trap?
- What does it mean to worship in spirit and in truth?
- What was the significance of Jesus, revealing that he was the Messiah to this woman? Are there other times, maybe in your own life, when God surprised you with his plan?
- Where do you need to receive living water in your own heart? What missing pieces have you been trying to fill apart from Jesus and need to accept his waters of life?
- Who do you need to share your story with and point people back to Jesus? Would you do that even once this week? With whom?