

## “Lent: Giving up Superiority”

The Reflection Series

### Scripture:

John 4:1-14 (NIV)

Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—<sup>2</sup> although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. <sup>3</sup> So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. <sup>4</sup> Now he had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The 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.<sup>[a]</sup>)

<sup>10</sup> Jesus 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.” <sup>11</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks 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.”

**Subject Question:** What three “thirsts” does Jesus touch on in His dialog with the woman at the well?

**Compliment answer:** The Heavenly Thirst, The Human Thirst, and The Holy’s Thirst.

**Big Idea:** The three “thirsts” that Jesus touches upon in His dialog with the woman at the well are: The Heavenly thirst, The Human Thirst, and The Holy’s Thirst.

**Homiletical Idea:** “I can get some satisfaction...”

**Purpose:** I want the congregation to understand Jesus’ longing, provision, and ability to quench the deep spiritual thirst that we as people all have.

**Introduction:** In Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well in John 14, we now move on to the third in our Lenten trek with Christ. In our first sermon, Jesus gave instruction on dealing with temptation and Satan as we draw close to God. Last week in His conversation with the religious Nicodemus, Jesus explained his life mission and purpose... which boils down to you and me. This week, Jesus converses with an unbelieving, but "thirsty for God," outsider and outcast. What the great lesson here? That all who seek can be satisfied... all, not just the right and the religious, but the down and depressed; both the good and the bad, the righteous and the rotten can find the One thing in life that has a transformative effect that can literally give birth to a different life, a different outlook, a different perspective... and mostly a different heart.

(Pudding is in the Proof)

### **Ground Work: MacLaren's Expositions**

This Evangelist very significantly sets side by side our Lord's conversations with Nicodemus and with the woman of Samaria. The persons are very different: the one a learned Rabbi of reputation, influence, and large theological knowledge of the then fashionable kind; the other an alien woman, poor-for she had to do this menial task of water-drawing in the heat of the day-and of questionable character.

The diversity of persons necessitates great differences in the form of our Lord's address to each; but the resemblances are as striking as the divergences. In both we have His method of gradually unveiling the truth to a susceptible soul, beginning with symbol and a hint, gradually enlarging the hint and translating the symbol; and finally unveiling Himself as the Giver and the Gift. There is another resemblance; in both the characteristic gift is that of the Spirit of Life, and, perhaps, in both the symbol is the same. For we read in one of 'water and the Spirit'; and in the other of the fountain within, springing into everlasting life. However that may be, the process of teaching is all but identical in substance in both cases, though in form so various.

The words of our Lord which I have taken for our text now are His first and last utterance in this conversation. What a gulf lies between! They are linked together by the intervening sayings, and constitute with these a great ladder, of which the foot is fast on earth, and the top fixed in heaven. On the one hand, He owns the lowest necessities; on the other, He makes the highest claims. Let us ponder on this remarkable juxtaposition, and try to gather the lessons that are plain in it.

#### **I. First, then, I think we see here the mystery of the dependent Christ.**

'Give Me to drink': 'I am He.' Try to see the thing for a moment with the woman's eyes. She comes down from her little village, up amongst the cliffs on the hillside, across the narrow, hot valley, beneath the sweltering sunshine reflected from the bounding mountains, and she finds, in the midst of the lush vegetation round the ancient well, a solitary, weary Jew, travel-worn, evidently exhausted-for His disciples had gone away to buy food, and He was too wearied to go with them-looking into the well, but having no dipper or

vessel by which to get any of its cool treasure. We lose a great deal of the meaning of Christ's request if we suppose that it was merely a way of getting into conversation with the woman, a 'breaking of the ice.' It was a great deal more than that. It was the utterance of a felt and painful necessity, which He Himself could not supply without a breach of what He conceived to be His filial dependence. He could have brought water out of the well. He did not need to depend upon the pitcher that the disciples had perhaps unthinkingly carried away with them when they went to buy bread. He did not need to ask the woman to give, but He chose to do so. We lose much if we do not see in this incident far more than the woman saw, but we lose still more if we do not see what she did see. And the words which the Master spoke to her are no mere way of introducing a conversation on religious themes; but He asked for a draught which He needed, and which He had no other way of getting.

So, then, here stands, pathetically set forth before us, our Lord's true participation in two of the distinguishing characteristics of our weak humanity-subjection to physical necessities and dependence on kindly help. We find Him weary, hungry, thirsty, sometimes slumbering. And all these instances are documents and proofs for us that He was a true man like ourselves, and that, like ourselves, He depended on 'the woman that ministered to Him' for the supply of His necessities, and so knew the limitations of our social and else helpless humanity.

But then a wearied and thirsty man is nothing of much importance. But here is a Man who humbled Himself to be weary and to thirst. The keynote of this Gospel, the one thought which unlocks all its treasures, and to the elucidation of which, in all its aspects, the whole book is devoted, is, 'The Word was made flesh.' Only when you let in the light of the last utterance of our text, 'I that speak unto thee am He,' do we understand the pathos, the sublimity, the depth and blessedness of meaning which lie in the first one, 'Give Me to drink.' When we see that He bowed Himself, and willingly stretched out His hands for the fetters, we come to understand the significance of these traces of His manhood. The woman says, with wonder, 'How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me?' and that was wonderful. But, as He hints to her, if she had known more clearly who this Person was, that seemed to be a Jew, a deeper wonder would have crept over her spirit. The wonder is that the Eternal Word should need the water of the well, and should ask it of a poor human creature.

And why this humiliation? He could, as I have said, have wrought a miracle. He that fed five thousand, He that had turned water into wine at the rustic marriage-feast, would have had no difficulty in quenching His thirst if he had chosen to use His miraculous power therefore. But He here shows us that the true filial spirit will rather die than cast off its dependence on the Father, and the same motive which led Him to reject the temptation in the wilderness, and to answer with sublime confidence, 'Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God,' forbids Him here to use other means of securing the draught that He so needed than the appeal to the sympathy of an alien, and the swift compassion of a woman's heart.

And then, let us remember that the motive of this willing acceptance of the limitations and weaknesses of humanity is, in the deepest analysis, simply His love to us; as the mediaeval hymn has it, 'Seeking me, Thou satest weary.'

In that lonely Traveler, worn, exhausted, thirsty, craving for a draught of water from a stranger's hand, is set forth 'the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth.' A strange

manifestation of divine glory this! But if we understand that the glory of God is the lustrous light of His self-revealing love, perhaps we shall understand how, from that faint, craving voice, 'Give Me to drink,' that glory sounds forth more than in the thunders that rolled about the rocky peak of Sinai. Strange to think, brethren, that the voice from those lips dry with thirst, which was low and weak, was the voice that spoke to the sea, 'Peace! be still,' and there was a calm; that said to demons, 'Come out of him!' and they evacuated their fortress; that cast its command into the grave of Lazarus, and he came forth; and which one day all that are in the grave shall hear, and hearing shall obey. 'Give Me to drink.' 'I that speak unto thee am He.

### Pulpit Commentary

Verse 14. - But whosoever shall have drunk of the water which I will give him (of which I am speaking) shall not (by any means, οὐ μὴ) **thirst again forever**. How different from the words of the son of Sirach (Ecclus. 24:21), "They who drink of me," says Wisdom, "shall thirst again"! They will experience neither continuity nor completeness of enjoyment, but periods of incessant and recurrent desire. Jesus speaks of a Divine and complete satisfaction. The spiritual thirst once slaked, the heavenly desire once realized by appropriating the gift of God, is fundamentally satisfied. The nature itself is changed. How closely this corresponds with the idea of birth into a new world! and how nearly akin to the promise of living water in John 7:37, etc. (see also the language of John 6:35)! But the water that I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water leaping up (welling, bubbling up and forth) into eternal life. This is the explanation of the full satisfaction of desire. I do not give a simple "drink of water," but I cause a spring, a perennial fountain, a river of Divine pleasure to issue and flow from that inward satisfaction which follows a reception of my gifts; and it is so abundant that it is enough for everlasting needs. The water that I give becomes a fountain, and the fountain swells into a river, and the river expands into and loses itself in the great ocean of eternity. The beauty of the image is lost if, with Luthardt and Moulton, we attach the εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον to πηγή rather than ἀλλομένου (ἀλλέσθαι is not elsewhere applied to water, and this use of it gives the metaphor all the more force). The imagery is not without its difficulty. We are tempted to conclude from it that the Divine life, once given, becomes consciously a self-dependent force within the soul; but this would not be justified by all the analogy of the Divine working in humanity, which, though abundant, efficacious, and satisfying, never repudiates its Divine source, but continually proclaims it. If the desire for what God alone can supply is eager and quenchless, and if God meet the craving, then the desire is absolutely satisfied. There is a superfluous fullness in the gift of God which will transcend all the needs of this life, and be enough for eternity.

(Pudding is in the Proof)

- A. The Heavenly Thirst. (Vs.7-9) <sup>7</sup>*When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"* <sup>8</sup>*(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)* <sup>9</sup>*The 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.<sup>[a]</sup>)*

- B. This is one of the most compelling and revealing scriptures in the entire Bible. Oh really? Think about it... as MacLaren points out: He could have brought water out of the well. He did not need to depend upon the pitcher that the disciples had perhaps unthinkingly carried away with them when they went to buy bread. He did not need to ask the woman to give, but He chose to do so. We lose much if we do not see in this incident far more than the woman saw, but we lose still more if we do not see what she did see. And the words which the Master spoke to her are no mere way of introducing a conversation on religious themes; but He asked for a draught which He needed, and which He had no other way of getting.
- C. Could it be...? As much as we as Christians understand that only in Christ is our thirst for the eternal found and quenched—He satisfies! And it is! Amen. But maybe the biggest surprise is found in the possibility as this verse points out... that perhaps the opposite is true as well... only in our lives, in you and me, is the eternal thirst of heaven satisfied and quenched. O think about it—As with any true lover who forgets him or herself in the presence and for the good of His or her treasured love: His joy is found in only in our joy, His delight in only in our delight, His satisfaction, purpose, meaning is all tied to and literally dependent upon our delight, satisfaction and purpose and meaning... Just as our lives as Christians should have Christ at the center of or lives... isn't it humbling to think that in heaven plans, in heaven heart, we are ever at the center of His life.
- D. You might be wondering, does it have to be this way... Are you saying that Jesus can't live without us..? Yes and NO. Like you and I, yes, we can exist without Christ, just as he could choose to live without us... but, no, He can't and so we really can't **live** life to the fullest... As uncanny as it seems; as incredible as it sounds, this verse points out that there are some things that only we, you and me, as finite, mortal creatures can supply to the immortal eternal God. If that is so, maybe we can see begin to get a little more insight of many of Jesus saying such as what Jesus meant when they asked Him, *Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*” *Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. ...* Maybe if they would have pushed him a little further on this question He might have replied... This is also the greatest commandment in heaven... *Love those, the men and woman, boys and girls... the Lord your God has given you with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This my Son is the first and greatest commandment. ...to you!*

(Pudding is in the Proof)

- A. The Human Thirst. (Vs.10-12) <sup>10</sup>Jesus 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.” <sup>11</sup>“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”
- B. Can we then not appreciate the *quid pro quo* in Jesus words, Satisfy, Jesus tells the woman and us... quench my thirst and I will satisfy and quench yours? In other words, “I have asked you to please me, now you can ask me to please you.” And of course she does what we all do... try to rationalize. *Where can you get this living water* “How are you going to do that?” “Where are you going to get this so-called living water?” But did you notice how quickly she moved from substance to Source. From “how” to “Who.” From “**where** can” to “are **you?**”
- C. And so it is with lot of people who live life hearing about Jesus... ”how can he possibly change my life...” Cynically they conclude, I’ve been dipping in my own well of happiness for so long... Sadly, I’m not too awfully certain that I want a different source to dip into” Until of course, they come into the presence of Jesus... and that’s the key. You see, Jesus has a way of showing up in the strangest places on one’s life... maybe in a church service like this, maybe in a conversation with a Christian friend, maybe in a quiet moment of silent desperation... and just as quickly as the woman at the well, the conversation, the attention soon shifts from “substance” to “Source”... from how, or when, or why, to Who. There IS something about the nearness of Christ that awakens a dry and arid heart... that compels us to want to drink from the eternal... That allows us to feel the parched state of our eternal souls...
- D. To which Jesus whispers... Accept me, try me, trust me... and miracle of miracle, you’ll find that long ago I longed for you, thirsted for your company, ached for your friendship! Satisfy me by letting me be your Savior and Lord and I will satisfy you with all you ever secretly desired; real love and real joy and lasting happiness, a real peace of mind and full and tender heart, a lasting hope, an assurance of heaven, and something far greater than dying for, or better yet, something and Someone worth living for.

(Pudding is in the Proof)

- A. The Holy's Thirst. (Vs.13-14) *<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks 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."*
- B. The Pulpit commentary pens an explanation: The spiritual thirst once slaked, the heavenly desire once realized by appropriating the gift of God, is fundamentally satisfied. The nature itself is changed. How closely this corresponds with the idea of birth into a new world! And how nearly akin to the promise of living water in John 7:37, etc. (see also the language of John 6:35)! But the water that I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water leaping up (welling, bubbling up and forth) into eternal life. This is the explanation of the full satisfaction of desire. I do not give a simple "drink of water," but I cause a spring, a perennial fountain, a river of Divine pleasure to issue and flow from that inward satisfaction which follows a reception of my gifts; and it is so abundant that it is enough for everlasting needs. The water that I give becomes a fountain, and the fountain swells into a river, and the river expands into and loses itself in the great ocean of eternity.
- C. Maybe the Apostle Paul had this in mind when he wrote in the fourth chapter of Ephesians:  
*<sup>4</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family<sup>[a]</sup> in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*
- D. O Holy One, consider as well, Peter's admonition to you... 1  
Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* Holy One's this morning, are you thirsty. Chosen children, when was the last time you drank deeply from of the living water that Christ offers? Come He says, meet me at the well. Here is where we both find our thirst's quenched!

(Pudding is in the Proof)