

March 12, 2023

John 4:4-26

# “He Came To Rescue Those Dying Of Thirst”

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In an old Peanuts cartoon Linus confesses to his sister Lucy that he wants to be a doctor when he grows up. Lucy is shocked and cries out, “You, a doctor! That’s a laugh! You could never be a doctor! You know why? Because you don’t love humankind!” Linus instantly responds with: “I do too love humankind! It’s people I can’t stand.”

That’s not too far off the mark is it? We love to act like we love but we can’t stand people. Albert Schweitzer once wrote, “We are all so much together, but we are all dying in loneliness.” Isn’t that the truth?! It’s a hard business dealing with individuals. It’s hard work initiating and preserving personal relationships. We want to be a part of it but, then again, we might prefer not to be bothered. It’s a good thing that Jesus didn’t think that way. He came for the world. He came for people. He came for me. He came for you! **He Came To Rescue Those Dying of Thirst.**

And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

By the time of Jesus the conflict between Jews and Samaritans was centuries old. The Samaritans were a mingling of Jewish and Gentile blood. Consequently, the Jews saw Samaritans as people to be avoided at all costs. It is no wonder why the Samaritan woman is surprised by Jesus. Paul E. Kretzmann states: “The evangelist explains this by saying that there was no communication between Jews and Samaritans, the hostility going as far to exclude even all courtesies...”

Above all, we must understand that this was no accidental meeting. Jesus enters into the life of one considered to be the lowest and most rejected of people. And do we see where that leaves us? We’re not Samaritans but we might as well be despised as they were despised. And it is good to be the nobodies. How wonderful it is to consider these words from the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, “.. God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

Imagine that! Of all the people, he chose you and me. It wasn’t a coincidence, chance, luck, or the so-called “draw of the cards.” God’s Word through Paul stands in front of us in Ephesians 1:4-7, “... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ...”

Could we ever find that Scripture passage tiresome? Not in the least! And Jesus answered the Samaritan woman saying,

“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

Everything of this world is but for a brief moment. We’re not surprised at the woman’s request: “Sir, give me this water to drink.” We know how life down here works. We keep running to the down here for a drink thinking that it will somehow quench our quest for happiness, heal our loneliness, grant us peace and security. But the thirst is never quenched. There’s always something missing.

But Christ is the water of eternal salvation. He’s the water that will never run out. He is the water that quenches our thirst. He is the one who fills us with incomprehensible love. He is the water that washes away all our filthy ways. It is the Lord who says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you (Jer. 31:3).” Look at how Jesus loves the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband,” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; For you had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband (4:16-18).”

This woman had quite a history. You can’t say that living together out of wedlock is okay. But we better be careful not to look upon her with scorn. Everybody here has a history. We try to forget or laugh off that history but it follows us around. Luther called it the little black dog of regret who goes around with us wherever we go. We all share a common truth with the Samaritan woman. We are sinful people in need of Jesus. The Samaritan woman tries to change the subject. She starts to talk about the different worship practices between Jews and Samaritans. We always want to change the subject when it comes to our sin.

Jesus won’t let her off the hook. He points out another sin problem: “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Did you catch those words: “... worship the Father in spirit and truth ...” Jesus did not come into this world to make it a better place and fulfill our earthly dreams of health, wealth, success, and happiness. It is amazing that so many folks want to believe that. But think about it for a moment. Does this down here really look any better than it did since the time our Lord walked the earth? Jesus clearly tells us, “In the

world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world (Jn.16:33).” As the Lord moves this world to its last moment, Jesus has warns us:

“... many will fall away ... many false prophets will arise ... lawlessness will be increased ... the love of many will grow cold ... for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now ... And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other ... (selected statements from St. Matthew 24:10,11,12,21,31).”

Do we hear anything about a heaven on earth? Not in the slightest. The Samaritan woman said to him, “I know the Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When comes, he will tell us all things” Jesus said to her, “**I** who speak to you **Am** he (vv. 23-26).”

“**I Am** he.” Recall this word of God to Moses some 3,500 years ago when he appeared to Moses on the mountain: “The Lord [I Am], the Lord [I Am], a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation (Exodus 34:6-7).” And here is Jesus, the I AM, the One who speaks the truth to the Samaritans gathered in this sanctuary - all of us - and quenches our thirst for real life and joy - eternally! As Jesus says, “... whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” We humbly thank and praise God for Jesus, the One **who came to rescue those dying of thirst.**

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott