SPRING OF WATER WELLING UP TO ETERNAL LIFE

John 4:1-26
Key Verses 4:13,14

13 Jesus answered her, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

First, “Whoever drinks the water I give him,…” (4:1-14). In the previous passage we learned that Jesus’ ministry was growing powerfully. Everyone was going to Jesus to be baptized. When the Pharisees heard this, they were jealous about his popularity. So Jesus left Judea and went back once more to Galilee because he did not want to have unnecessary conflict with them. Between Judea and Galilee is the land of Samaria. The most direct way from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria. But the Jews usually did not travel through Samaria even though the alternative route took twice as long, six days, because the Jews hated Samaritans. But Jesus wanted to go through Samaria because they too needed the gospel message.

Look at verses 6 through 8. It was the sixth hour, which is equivalent to 12 noon modern time so the sun must have been blazing bright over the Middle East Desert. Jesus’ disciples had gone into the town to buy food. After walking through the desert for his journey, Jesus was tired, thirsty and hungry. There was Jacob’s well, and Jesus sat down by the well. Then, a suspicious looking Samaritan woman came to draw water. This was very unusual because it was not the time for women to draw water. Usually the women went to draw water in the early morning or in the cool of the evening when the sun wasn’t strong. They spent this time as their social occasion. Why did she come to draw water in the heat of the day and all by herself? We can tell that something was wrong with her.

When Jesus saw her, he said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” She responded, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” What a response to a man who simply asked for a cup of water in the desert! It seemed that Jesus had to leave her alone whatsoever. But he said, “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.” Instead of quitting the conversation with and giving up on her, Jesus stirred curiosity and interest within her by using exciting expressions such as, “the Gift of God” and “living water.” But she was a really, really bad sheep. She questioned, “Sir, are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?” How did Jesus respond to this Samaritan woman who looked most unlikely to talk about spiritual things? Let’s read verses 13 and 14 together.

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

So far, it seemed that Jesus was thirsty and that he needed her help. But as we see in these verses, Jesus’ concern was not about quenching his thirst with a cup of water, but her thirst with living water so that she might solve her thirst problem. Here, Jesus alludes to the thirst problem
of mankind. People are thirsty. This thirst is longing of our hearts. Some people long for beautiful romance. They shed tears when they watch a beautiful romance story such as “Titanic” or “Romeo and Juliet.” They dream of how their life will be if they have that kind of beautiful romance. So they come to the well of human love, by looking for their handsome boyfriends or beautiful girls. Some people long for money. Maybe, it is because they have suffered from poverty, and experienced what it means to live without money. They expect that they will not have any problems whatsoever if they have enough money. So they come to the well of money, by studying hard, pursuing a promising career, and working hard, even 80 hours a week, to make more money. Some people are thirsty for fame; so they work really hard to become well known scientists or Nobel Prize recipients. Still others live for political power. Fundamentally, all people are thirsty, looking for something or someone that would make their life truly meaningful and fulfilling. In hope to quench their thirst for true fulfillment, meaning and purpose of their lives, people gather around Jacob’s wells and drink—some people in noble way, and others in ignoble way. But fundamentally, they are the same—they are thirsty, and struggle hard to quench their thirst in various ways. In Genesis, we see Cain’s descendants developing technology, music and huge entrepreneur. It was their struggle to find the meaning, purpose, and fulfillment of their lives in such things. Simply, they were thirsty for a truly meaningful and fulfilling life. Did they find what they had been looking for in those things? No! They were empty; they became wicked, angry, and violent, and their lives became miserable.

Jesus describes all these people’s struggle to find the meaning, purpose and fulfillment of their lives as drinking water from Jacob’s well, and he says, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,…” The expression, ‘thirsty again,” shows that in these things, no one can find the truly meaningful and fulfilling life – no lasting meaning, or fulfillment of their lives, but temporary, and after a short period of happiness, comes deep sense of meaninglessness, worthlessness, and disappointment. When you are thirsty in the hot scorching summer day, you come to the water fountain, and drink from it; or you go to a convenient store and buy a bottle of Gatorade. It looks like a practical way. But soon you become thirsty again. The Samaritan woman in the passage had five husbands. How happy she must have been when she first married a handsome husband. But that happiness probably lasted only few days. Soon she divorced him, and remarried a rich husband. She experienced this cycle five times so far, and now she was working on the sixth very carefully so that she might not make another mistake. Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,…”

When Jesus says, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,…” he implies that we must not try to quench our thirst with the water from Jacob’s well because it never works. Coming to Jacob’s well to quench our thirst is nothing but waste of our time, energy, and life. See how many people pour out their strength, time, and even entire life, to purchase the water from Jacob’s well; this woman in the passage already spent most of her life, talent and energy, and now after spending so much of her own assets, she was broke – she became literally like a prostitute in the town. God says in the book of Isaiah, “Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?” (Isa 51:2) God says in Jeremiah 2:13, ”My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.” Trying to find meaning, happiness and satisfaction of our life by finding prince charming, by making tons of money, by becoming men or women of renown, or even by becoming the President of the USA, is like
trying to fill broken cisterns with water. The satisfaction and happiness which comes from fulfilling what we have desired lasts only a few days at best, or only a few minutes in most cases. After this short moment of happiness comes tons of disappointment, argument, burden, headache, responsibilities, and a sense of meaninglessness. That’s why all the prince and princess stories of Disney, such as Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, and the Little Mermaid, all end in a wedding ceremony scene with the line, “they lived happily ever after” without talking about the true stories of the reality of life after the wedding. That’s why so many men of success who made tons of money became almost mental patients even going crazy. That’s why so many men of fame and honor have committed suicide after achieving remarkable things in the world. God says in Jeremiah 2:13 that such a life of pursuing meaning, purpose, and fulfillment of life in these things is a sinful life. Jesus says, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.”

Then, isn’t there any way for us to be truly satisfied? Yes, there is! Jesus says, “But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” It is to drink the water Jesus gives. It means that when you are thirsty for human love or money, don’t pursue it, otherwise, you will be thirsty again. Instead, come to Jesus, pursue the water he gives, and your thirst will be quenched and your soul will find satisfaction. After bringing out the Israelites from Egypt, God brought them into the desert, and had them wander in the desert for forty years. One day, they could not find water. They were thirsty and weary. At that time, in the desert where there was no water, when all people were thirsty, God gushed out water from the rock and quenched their thirst. To these thirsty people in the desert, the water that gushed out from the rock was God’s blessing, and it was the gift of God for them. Actually, our life in this world is like the Israelites’ journey through the desert. We are thirsty for many things. For these thirsty people in the world, God gave us his gift, the gift of God – the living water that can quench our thirst really, that can give us true meaning, purpose and fulfillment to our lives, that makes us truly satisfied and glad. We must pursue Jesus, and we will be truly satisfied.

About seven centuries before Jesus’ coming, God invited all thirsty people to Himself, saying, “Come, all you who are thirsty,...Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me,...and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.” (Isa 55:1-2) God does not want us to spend our labor, our strength, our zeal, our passion, and our time on what does not satisfy such as money, or romance, or recognition. Instead, we must eat what is good, which Jesus gives, and our souls will delight in the richest of fare. We will be satisfied. When we come to Jesus, we will have a beautiful testimony, saying, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.” We will express our satisfied hearts, by saying, “My cup overflows.” Instead of looking for more things, we will say, “I have all I need.” How can we quench our thirst? Not through drinking the water from Jacob’s well, not through securing and grabbing what we have desired, but through coming to Jesus and drinking the water he gives. Let’s accept God’s invitation and come to Jesus asking him for living water, and he will satisfy us; our souls will find rest.

Second, “Go, call your husband and come back” (15-26). Look at verse 15. At Jesus’ invitation to true satisfaction, the woman said, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty
and have to keep coming here to draw water.” Jesus already promised that if she asked him for the gift of God, he would give her. Now, she asked saying, “Sir, give me this water!” So, Jesus had to give her living water as he had promised. How was he going to give her this living water, welling up to eternal life? Look at verse 16. “Jesus said, “Go, call your husband and come back.” This means that she has to bring her husband to Jesus so that Jesus can give her living water. Jesus had a burning desire to give her the living water, which would give her true satisfaction and joy. That’s why he did not mind having a long Bible study standing under the hot scorching sun in the desert area. Now in order to give her living water, Jesus commanded her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

To this Samaritan woman, her husband was the object through whom she tried to find the meaning, purpose and fulfillment of her life – the object of her satisfaction. As we see in this passage, she had five husbands, and now she was living with the sixth. In the conservative society of those days, certainly it was not usual or easy for a woman to marry five times and divorce five times. This shows how hard she struggled to find happiness through having an ideal husband. Jesus’ instruction shows that as long as she pursued happiness and fulfillment of her life in her husband, as long as she struggled to drink the water from Jacob’s well, she had no chance to drink the water Jesus gives. She must repent of her life of pursuing happiness and satisfaction in a husband and bring this problem to Jesus. What does it mean to bring this matter to Jesus? It means to bring this thirst matter to Jesus, confessing and admitting her wrong way of life and asking him for the water he gives. It means to turn away from the life of pursuing happiness and fulfillment in a husband to the life of pursuing happiness and fulfillment in Jesus. Jesus commands all thirsty people to bring their false objects of happiness and fulfillment to him. For her, it was her husband. For a young rich man in Mark’s gospel, it was his money. So, Jesus told him to give all his money to the poor and then, come and follow him. For Levi, who pursued money, Jesus told him to follow him, instead of following money. For some proud and brilliant students, it is their dream of success in the world. In the Old Testament, God invites all these people, saying, “Come, all you who are thirsty... Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?...Listen, listen to me,... and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Come to me that your soul may live.” (Isa 51:1-3) Now in the New Testament, Jesus invites all of us to come to him for a truly satisfying life, saying, “Go, call your husband and come back!” We must bring this husband matter, this false object of happiness, meaning and fulfillment of our life to Jesus, and he will give us the water that will become in us a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Look at verses 17 and 18. When Jesus commanded her to bring out her husband problem, she was startled and said, “I have no husband.” She was embarrassed; she had never imagined that this Jewish man would ever mention about her husband problem - it was the least topic she wanted to talk about. Her words, "I have no husband," shows us how self-conscious she had felt about her life thus far. When she married and divorced continually, it seemed that she didn't care about how others would think of her; it seemed that she was wild and totally out of control. But actually, she was not! She felt so shameful about her sinful life; she too, like all others, wanted to be honored and recognized as a good person, but her sinful desire had carried her away thus far. No one knew or understood her agony that now she was labeled as a sinful woman.
Jesus understood her deeply. So he said, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quiet true.” Jesus, here, emphasized the truthfulness of her words two times, saying, "You are right,..." and "What you have just said is quiet true." Jesus did not judge her based on her outward appearance. Instead, he understood her agony deeply and accepted her just as she was - a lost, thirsty and struggling child. When Jesus accepted her this way, she must have been so relieved and moved. Indeed, no one had touched her heart as Jesus did. But at the same time, Jesus still brought out her husband problem to the light even publicly because it had to be done and because he really wanted to give her living water.

At this, she said to him, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” So far, she was sarcastic, arrogant and insincere about this Bible study. But now she acknowledged Jesus as a man of God, showing respect and honor to him. She became very sincere and responsive. Then, she brought to his attention the question of worship that had been hidden in the depth of her heart. How did Jesus answer her? Look at verse 21. Let's read this verse together:

21 Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

Her question was about where to worship God, whether in Jerusalem or in Samaria. Which is the right place to worship God? Will God accept me if I attend this church or that church? Jesus said, “Neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.” This is really shocking - God does not give you any credit even if you attend worship service in the Jerusalem temple! Worship service in the Jerusalem temple was the most authentic and awesome looking worship service in the whole world - officiated by the high priest who came from Aaron's line, wearing beautiful priestly robes, using Hebrew language, using the Hebrew Bible, with beautiful hymns based on Psalms, in such a big and beautiful and authentic building. But Jesus says that attending this temple worship service does not mean to worship God really. Some people insist to use KJV in worship service, saying that, then, the worship service will be right. Even some people say that we must use the Hebrew Bible - all these people are just proud and self-righteous, denying all the marvelous works God has done throughout the world based on other Bible translations. Jesus says, "Neither!" Worshiping God is not the matter of this place or that place; it is not the matter of using this translation or that translation. If you ask God, "Lord, should I use KJV or NIV in our worship?" What would God say to you? "Neither KJV nor NIV!" Also, some people say that reciting the apostles' creed must be in the worship program. Some others say that worship service must end with the Lord's prayer. Some people talk about baptism or communion. Some people proudly say, "I attend Billy Graham's worship service." "I talked with Chuck Smith." Jesus' answer about all this kind of questions and suggestions is: "Neither!" Adding one program or skipping another program does not make any worship service real. Worshiping God is not the matter of adding this program or that program. Worship of God should be real; it is not about ceremony or program.

Then, Jesus pointed out the problem of the Samaritans, saying, “22 You Samaritan worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.” The Samaritans thought that they were worshiping God when they were worshiping cast idols in Samaria. This woman so far had worshiped her husbands, and became miserable. Such devotion
and loyalty must be given to God not to human beings or worthless things of the world. Why did they become idol worshipers despite their desire to worship God? Jesus says, “for salvation is from the Jews.” This is God's principle - He chose the Jews to be his partners in fulfilling his world salvation plan and revealed Himself to them by giving them the Bible. Only through them, only through the Bible given to the Jews can people come to know God. Only when people follow this principle set by God can they come to know what God wants them to do and how to worship God. But the Samaritans did not follow this principle of God; instead, they did what they saw fit in regard to their life direction and how and where to worship God. At that time, when they didn't base their life and worship of God on the Bible, they ended up getting lost, becoming idol worshipers instead of God-worshipers. The Samaritan woman became lost because her life direction was not based on the Bible, but on her cursed desire for a husband. We must study the Bible and see what God wants us to do and how we must live our life. Only when our life is rooted and built up in the word of God, it will go on in the way God desires and we will live this one life very successfully without any regret.

Now then how should we worship God? Let's read verses 23 and 24 together:

23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Jesus teaches us that we must worship God in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. What does it mean to worship God in spirit? It means to worship God wholeheartedly. God says in Numbers 14:24, "But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it." While other Israelites followed God casually or half-heartedly, Caleb's attitude toward God was different; he followed God wholeheartedly. So, in God's eyes, Caleb stood out among 603,550 people; he showed God a different spirit and God accepted him and blessed him. 2Chronicles 16:9 shows us what kind of people God seeks, saying, "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” When your hearts are fully committed to him, you are the one who worship God in spirit and God accepts you. We must worship God wholeheartedly, offering ourselves to God completely and pouring all our time and energy, and even life for Him - this is how we must worship God and this is what the Bible teaches. We must love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.

Worshiping God in truth means to worship and serve God according to the truth, the word of God - it is the opposite of worshiping God in our convenience or in our own style. Even if it may cost a lot, even if we may have to shed a lot of tears, we do what God wants us to do, instead of doing whatever we like to do. Only when we worship God in truth, there is sincerity, respect and honor to God; there is self-denial and true submission.

After hearing this, the woman said that when the Messiah came, he would explain everything to her. Amazingly, she was the one who had been waiting for the Messiah. Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.” As the Messiah Jesus explained everything to her about man’s life and purpose. Jesus was the very one she had been waiting for, who explained
everything to her. Life became clear to her – what to do, where to go and how to worship God. She was a daughter of God, who must worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

In conclusion, in this barren world like the desert, all people suffer from thirst. No matter what they do, this thirst does not go away. People wander here and there endlessly only to increase the pain of their souls. Jesus proclaims, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.” Jesus is the only one who can quench our thirst and bring to us deep peace and rest. Jesus gives us true satisfaction we have longed for. Jesus is the gift of God. May all of us come to Jesus, the spring of living water!

**One Word: Living Water Welling Up To Eternal Life**