

Sermon for March 8, 2026 – Lent 3

John 4:5–26 (EHV)

Theme: Lord, Give Us the Water We Need to Drink.

- 1) We are Dying of Thirst.
- 2) Only You Have the Water of Life.

⁵So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the piece of land Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there. Then Jesus, being tired from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(His disciples had gone into town to buy food.)

⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰Jesus answered her, "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."

¹¹"Sir," she said, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this living water?" ¹²You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his animals."

¹³Jesus answered her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty ever again. Rather, the water I will give him will become in him a spring of water, bubbling up to eternal life."

¹⁵"Sir, give me this water," the woman said to him, "so I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶Jesus told her, "Go, call your husband, and come back here."

¹⁷"I have no husband," the woman answered.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say, 'I have no husband.' ¹⁸In fact, you have had five husbands, and the man you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true."

¹⁹"Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews insist that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will not worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. ²³But a time is coming and now is here when the real worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for those are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (the one called Christ). "When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶Jesus said to her, "I, the one speaking to you, am he."

Visitors to the Arizona desert are told to drink lots of water, even if they don't feel thirsty. Why? Because sweat evaporates so quickly in the dry heat that many people don't realize they're dehydrating until it's too late. You could be dying of thirst and not know it.

Our world is dying of spiritual thirst and doesn't realize it. People are anxious and burdened with guilt, yet they ignore the true cause of their problems because they can't address it. Thankfully, Jesus can. Only He has the water we need to revive our sin-scorched souls. That is why we pray: **Lord, give us the water we need to drink.** *We are dying of thirst, and only You have the water of life.*

Part One: We are Dying of Thirst.

One day, while travelling with his disciples from Judea towards Galilee, Jesus stopped in a region called Samaria. The people who lived in this area didn't like Jews, and the Jews didn't care for the Samaritans either.

At about noon, Jesus stopped at a well near Sychar, tired and thirsty from his journey. His disciples left him there to rest while they went into town to buy food.

A lone Samaritan woman came to the well at this time – a peculiar act, since people usually fetched water during the cooler parts of the day. Was she avoiding the stares and whispers of others?

Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

Shocked that Jesus spoke to her, ⁹*the Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"*

Jesus didn't see this woman as a hated Samaritan. He saw her as a soul dying of spiritual thirst, needing the water only he could offer.

Therefore, ¹⁰*Jesus answered her, "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."*

¹¹*"Sir," she said, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this living water?"* ¹²*You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his animals."*

¹³*Jesus answered her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty ever again. Rather, the water I will give him will become in him a spring of water, bubbling up to eternal life."*

Clearly, Jesus wasn't talking about physical water, but that which refreshes the soul before God.

Whether or not they acknowledge it, all people look for ways to quiet the guilt and shame they feel in their hearts. Some turn to the mind-numbing effect produced by the flicker of a glowing screen as they endlessly scroll through social media or engage in internet pornography. Others seek the hollow rush of purchasing something new. People bury themselves in work, sports, and entertainment – trying to keep themselves too occupied to think about their spiritual problems. They try to address their guilt through charity, volunteerism, or building a better society - trying to outweigh their bad with good.

But all such attempts to quench their spiritual thirst are like drinking cactus water.

What do I mean by that?

An Arizona park ranger once told me that even though drinking water from a cactus may seem like it would quench your thirst, it will leave you more dehydrated than before. Despite what you may have seen in old cowboy movies, cactus water will make you sick. Cactus water kills!

What the world offers you to address your spiritual problems – raised dopamine levels from screen time, motivating adrenaline during workouts, or happy serotonin after vacations and meditation – is all cactus water to the soul. You feel better after drinking it, but it will leave you worse off than before because it doesn't address the root cause of your trouble. It leaves you dying of spiritual thirst without realizing it; as the Bible says, *“Everything that does not proceed from faith is sin.”*ⁱ

Part Two: Only You Have the Water of Life

Only Jesus has the spiritual water our thirsty souls need. What is it? The Gospel - the good news of what Jesus did to reconcile us with God. Because of Jesus, we don't have to run away from the LORD in fear. We can approach Him in repentance, trusting that He forgives all our sins for Jesus' sake. Yes, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament is the Holy Spirit's tool to create faith in our hearts. Through that faith, we receive the everlasting life He offers.

¹⁵*“Sir, give me this water,” the woman said to him, “so I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”*

The woman's response reveals that she still didn't quite recognize her spiritual dehydration. She considered only her physical needs and how Jesus could ease them.

Like the Samaritan woman, we are often so focused on our earthly existence that we don't recognize our need for forgiveness. Worrying about our finances, health, and earthly goals, we say to ourselves, “If only my life were a little easier, then I could be truly happy.” But do we take to heart that everything on this earth is transitory – that our reconciliation with the LORD is the only thing that truly matters?

To get the woman to realize this, ¹⁶*Jesus told her, “Go, call your husband, and come back here.”*

Then it hit her.

¹⁷*“I have no husband,” the woman answered.*

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say, ‘I have no husband.’ ¹⁸In fact, you have had five husbands, and the man you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

Understand that Jesus wasn't trying to disgrace the woman, but to get her to recognize her actual need. It was as if he was saying, “Look how thirsty you are, dying spiritually because you have not kept God's commands. Instead of putting on a show of self-reliance, repent of your sins and find in me the true water of forgiveness you desperately need.”

Just as Jesus lovingly brought this woman's sin into the light, so He does with us.

But our sinful flesh does not want our sins to come to light, so we rationalize them away, doing our best to convince ourselves that they aren't that big of a deal.

Therefore, God comes to us with His Law, exposing the painful truth. There is no excuse for our sins. They are selfish, damnable, and have separated us from God. We are not as good as we imagine ourselves to be. We cannot earn God's favour. We are helpless. We need a Saviour.

The Samaritan woman felt her thirst for reconciliation with God but didn't know how to quench it.

¹⁹“Sir,” the woman replied, “I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews insist that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

The woman knew that worshipping the LORD was important – that only He could grant her the forgiveness she needed - but conflicting voices were telling her what needed to be done. How could she know the truth?

Many people ask similar questions today. One church teaches one thing about the Bible, another church down the road something different. How can we know which one is correct?

²¹Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will not worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews.

Salvation is from the Jews. That is to say, God instituted every outward facet of the Old Testament Jewish religion to separate them from the rest of the world so that his Saviour might come through them. Now that He has come, God wants us to focus on Him, and not on the laws and customs that prepared the people for His arrival.

Therefore, the worship God desires is not found in a proud heart that boasts about what it does for God. Rather, it is found in the humble heart that repentantly looks to God for mercy and trusts in His Christ for salvation, as King David once confessed:

For you do not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices God wants are a broken spirit. A broken and crushed heart, O God, you will not despise.ⁱⁱ

Let's apply Jesus' answer to our own time. When looking for a church home, the outward forms of how it conducts worship (such as whether it uses modern or traditional music) are not what's important.

The essential question to ask is this: Are they teaching the truth about God, centred in Christ and according to His Word? As Jesus himself says:

²³*But a time is coming and now is here when the real worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for those are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.* ²⁴*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.*”

This invites the question: where do we find the truth about God and our relationship with Him?

We find this truth only in the Bible. As Jesus said on another occasion: *“If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples. You will also know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*ⁱⁱⁱ And again: *“You search the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them. They testify about me!”*^{iv}

To tie it all together, the worship the LORD desires does not say: “Look at me and what I do for you, O God.” Instead, He desires repentant hearts that cry out, “LORD, be merciful to me, a sinner!”^v The worship God desires is that we listen to His Word, trusting in the Christ He sent, and then, in the peace of His forgiveness, do what God’s Word says to the glory of His name.^{vi}

Taking to heart what Jesus said, the woman at the well replied, *“I know that Messiah is coming” (the one called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.*

Jesus was pleased to announce to her: *“I, the one speaking to you, am he.”*

Isn’t it amazing whom Jesus chooses to reveal Himself to? Not to the religious elite in Jerusalem, but to a person the religious elite considered unworthy of salvation: to a weary, ashamed woman in Samaria! That’s good news for us, for if He came to her in grace, He certainly comes to us too.

The Bible tells us that the woman was so overjoyed to hear Jesus say this that she left her jar of water and ran back to town to tell others she had met the Messiah. She wanted her entire community to get the same water of forgiveness she had just received from Jesus.

We too have drunk from the same well as the Samaritan woman. May this living water overflow into our mouths and hands so that we, with the same zeal as the Samaritan woman, invite others to meet Jesus.

Therefore, we pray: “Dearest Jesus, give us your Gospel water to drink. Sin has so parched our souls that we are dying of thirst and rarely realize it. Only your forgiveness can refresh us into eternity. Move us to repent of our sins and recognize you as our Saviour. Teach us your ways and keep us from wandering away from you. Move us to be like the Samaritan woman – calling all our friends, family, and neighbours to come with us to receive from you the living water we all so desperately need. Amen.”

ⁱ Romans 14:23 EHV

ⁱⁱ Psalm 51:16,17 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ John 8:31-32 EHV

^{iv} John 5:39 EHV

^v Cf. Luke 18:13

^{vi} Cf. James 1:22ff