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Sermon: March 8, 2009  
Beverly ECC, Chicago, IL

**“COOL, CLEAR WATER”**  
John 4:5-42

- ☑ **All day I face the barren waste**  
**Without a taste of water**  
**Cool water**  
**Old Dan and I**  
**With throats slate dry**  
**Our spirits cry for water**  
**Cool clear water** {“Cool Water,” Joni Mitchell}

Recently I was flipping through the TV channels and came across an image that has burned itself into my brain: a group of young, scrawny boys crouched around a puddle, taking drinks. Some cupped their hands. Some put their faces in it. One filled a plastic bottle and took a swig.

The water was sludgy and brown. Not clear, like tea; opaque, like the water in a tub would be after you soaked 10 pairs of mud-caked blue jeans in it. It also stank. When the reporter got a whiff of it, he gagged.

Through a translator he asked one of the boys how they could stand to drink it. The boy answered, **“When you get thirsty enough, you will drink anything.”**

Bodily thirst is the sensation of dryness in our mouths and throats caused by a need for liquid. It is our bodies’ way of “crying” for water.

Then there is spiritual thirst, the craving for inner satisfaction that is caused by our need for God. It is our *soul’s* way of “crying” for spiritual “water”.

When we don’t get enough, we suffer spiritual dehydration. This can damage and even kill the human soul, so as uncomfortable as spiritual thirst can be, it is a gift.

Please turn with me to John 4. Jesus is travelling through Samaria with The Twelve. At Sychar they go to buy lunch while Jesus rests at Jacob’s well.

☐ A woman comes to draw water. To her shock, Jesus starts up a conversation with her. In vv 13-14a He declares: **“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst.”**

☐ In v 15 she answers: **“Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”** Every day this woman fills her jug, hoists it onto her shoulder, and lugs it home. It can take several trips to meet her household’s daily needs. She knows the urgency of thirst and the high cost of satisfying it. What she does not see is that Jesus is talking about thirst of the *soul* and *spiritual* water.

- ☑ **Keep on movin’ Dan**  
**Some devils had a plan**  
**Buried poison in the sand**  
**Don’t drink it man**  
**It’s in the water**  
**Cool clear water** {“Cool Water,” Joni Mitchell}

The stuff I saw those boys drinking isn’t just muddy; it is contaminated. {Lennotech} About 1.2 billion human beings do not have access to clean, safe drinking water. In really bad years up to 5 million are killed by the protozoa, parasites, bacteria, viruses, and toxic chemicals they are compelled to swallow. They cannot live without this water, but how can they live with it?

Our water is safe. We will not catch a fatal illness from our faucets. Yet, people all around us are drinking from polluted *spiritual* wells, and if they keep

going back it will kill their souls. But who can blame them? They are thirsty, and they see no other alternative.

Like them, the woman at the well is drinking contaminated water. Listen to what she says...

□ In John 4:12 she tries to wow Jesus with her family tree: **“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?”**

⊙ From her point of view Jacob is her ancestor, but not his. She is drinking from the tainted well of social status as determined by ethnic heritage.

□ In v 15 she says: **“Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”**

⊙ She is drinking from the tainted well of material security. She thinks that maybe *things* (like water) will meet her deepest needs.

It sounds shallow, doesn’t it? But isn’t false reliance on money and possessions the underlying cause of the current economic crisis. And I sometimes catch myself thinking that just a little more money in my account would do the trick. What about you?

□ In v 17 Jesus tells her to **“Go, call your husband and come back.”** “I have no husband,” she replies. He says, **“You are right. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.”**

⊙ She is drinking from tainted wells of human relationships and sex. Don’t get me wrong: both of these are incredible gifts from God. However:

- 1) Even at their best, mortal relationships and sex cannot provide total fulfillment. They are not meant to. And,
- 2) Corrupted by sin, the damage they can inflict is equal to the blessing they can bestow.

□ In vv 19-20, the woman says, **“Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”**

⊙ By appealing to her worship traditions, she shows that she is drinking from tainted wells of religion. Religion leaves us with blind eyes, a darkened mind, and a cold heart. Jesus does not give religion; He gives life {Jn 10:10} **“to the full.”**

The woman is trying to satisfy her thirst with social status, material security, human relationships, sex and religion. Who can blame her? She sees no other option. Still, these are polluted wells. If she keeps going back, her soul will be nothing more than **“dry bones and sand.”**

☑ **The shadows sway**

**They seem to say**

**Tonight we pray for water / Cool water**

**And way up there / If you care**

**Please show us where / There’s good water**

**Cool clear water** {“Cool Water,” Joni Mitchell}

God does care! He answers her prayer.

△ 1<sup>st</sup>, Jesus extends αγαπε love to her. I cannot adequately express how “out there” this is!

✦ A) She is a Samaritan. Jews and Samaritans share a hatred that is venomous and frequently violent. The bitterness is so intense that while Jewish authorities allow even the most depraved Gentile idol-worshipper to convert to Judaism, they have officially damned every last Samaritan to hell.

✦ B) She is a female. One of the first things a Jewish man of this era does in the morning is give thanks to God that he was not born a Gentile, a female, or a dog. Righteous Jewish men do not greet

strange women in public. Many won't even speak to their wives, daughters or sisters outside the home. One group is called "The Bruised and Bleeding" because they sometimes walk into walls when they shut their eyes to avoid seeing women on the street!

✦ C) She is notoriously immoral.

The well is the main social center for women. Most come in groups for gossip, laughter, and support; this one comes alone.

Most come in the morning, while it is still cool; this one comes at midday. Why? She's had five husbands, and now she is living with a man outside of marriage. Decent Samaritans shun women like her.

Jesus knows this and still He approaches her as a neighbor. He: 1) initiates a conversation; 2) treats her as fully human; 3) speaks the truth about her sin without justifying or condemning her; and 4) communicates that she is not a lost cause.

△ 2<sup>nd</sup>, Jesus offers her salvation, the abundant life and satisfaction that only He can give.

□ V 10: **"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."** This is an invitation.

□ V 14: **"Those who drink 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."** This is an invitation.

□ V 26: He says, **"I am he,"** the Messiah. This, too, is an invitation.

△ 3<sup>rd</sup>, He offers her true identity and community.

□ Look at vv 21. Jesus says: **"Woman...believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."**

□ Next, v 23: **"a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth."** And then get this last phrase: **"for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."**

In other words, God the Father is seeking worshipers like you. Believe in me. Come, be a true worshiper, who worships **'in the [Holy] Spirit and in truth.'**

This woman is thirsty. She has been drinking from wells that do not meet her need, tainted wells that will, in the end, kill her soul.

☞ Jesus could choose to avoid her as a disreputable contaminant that endangers his good Name, dismiss her as a hopeless case that is too far gone to be saved, or reject her as unworthy trash that deserves the coming judgment.

† But He does not. Instead, Jesus sees her thirst, takes compassion on her, and offers her deep, eternal satisfaction in relationship with him.

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God does care.

He has shown us where there's good water.

What are we doing with it for ourselves? What are we  
doing with it for our neighbors?