

**The Gospel of John (24);
“Jesus and the Woman of Samaria” (2)**

Introduction:

Let us return to John 4 in which we read of our Lord’s journey to Galilee from the regions of Judea. Here we have recorded for us through the Holy Spirit our Lord Jesus’ encounter with this woman of Samaria. The Holy Scriptures recounted that Jesus “needed to go through Samaria.” Yes, it was the shortest route from Judea to Galilee, but it was in the eternal decree of God that Jesus would go through Samaria in order to encounter this woman on this day, at this time, at this well, near the town of Sychar. The result of this meeting with Jesus transformed her life, and through her witness the life of many Samaritans of that region. Her trip to Jacob’s well that day resulted in “a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” within her soul for having met and believed on Jesus Christ. Let us again read the passage before us—**John 4:1-26.**

Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ²(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴But He needed to go through Samaria.

⁵So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

¹¹The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹²Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?”

¹³Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

¹⁵The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”

¹⁷The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.”

Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.”

¹⁹The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

²⁵The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.”

²⁶Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

When we began to consider this account, we gave a general outline of the entire account, which continues past the portion we just read. Here it is again for your consideration:

- I. Jesus arrived in Samaria (4:1-6)
- II. Jesus met and engaged a Samaritan woman in conversation (4:7-26)
- III. Jesus instructed His disciples of the great evangelistic opportunities before them (4:27-38)
- IV. The faith placed in Jesus by the Samaritans (4:39-42)

We have already addressed the first section of this episode, which speaks to the details of Jesus traveling and arriving in Samaria. We began to consider the second section, which tells of the initial meeting of Jesus and this woman. We will continue where we left off.

II. Jesus met and engaged a Samaritan woman in conversation (4:7-26)

In **verses 7 and 8** we read, of His divinely appointed meeting with this woman. “A woman of 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 woman expressed surprise that Jesus spoke to her. First, she was surprised because He was a man and she was a woman. But more striking to her was that He was a Jewish man and she was a Samaritan woman. She said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ (v. 9). And then John provided his readers an explanation for her surprise, “For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.”

That may be almost an understatement, for the Jews hated the Samaritans.

The woman is first surprised that a Jew should ask anything of a Samaritan. She was well aware of the scorn with which the Samaritans were regarded by the Jews, who in the name of the law disturbed even the most natural human relations.¹

There is a reference in a book of the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus², which betrays the contempt that Jews had for the Samaritans:

There be two manner of nations which my heart abhorreth, and the third is no nation: They that sit upon the mountain of Samaria, and they that dwell among the Philistines, and that foolish people that dwell in Sichem (Shechem). (Ecclesiasticus 50:25f)

The Jewish Roman historian, Josephus, called the Samaritans by the derogatory name, Chuthites, which spoke of their origin from the hated Assyrians and also of their tendency to syncretic religious practices—they borrowed from everybody’s religion. Eliezer Hyrcanus, a prominent rabbi of the 1st and 2nd centuries, declared, “He that eateth the bread of the Chuthites is as one that eateth swine’s flesh.”³ There was no love between the Jews and the Samaritans. It is no wonder that this woman wondered that this Jewish man spoke to her, even asking her for water.

She spoke to Jesus initially as though He did not know who she was and what He was doing when He spoke to her. But the real problem was that she did not know who He was that spoke to her.

¹ Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, **The Fourth Gospel** (Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 241.

² Sometimes Ecclesiasticus is known as the Wisdom of Sirach, or simply Sirach. Being in the Apocrypha, it is, of course, not canonical (although the Apocrypha was included in the King James Version). It dates to about 200-175 BC written by a Jew in Jerusalem named Ben Sirach. Although it is not inspired, it does reflect the beliefs and attitudes of Jews toward Samaritans in the early second century BC.

³ Hoskyns, p. 241.

It is not that Jesus does not know who he is (and therefore acting improperly); it is the woman who does not know who Jesus is—and she, therefore, is the one acting inappropriately. His identity is Jewish, and his appearance is one of a thirsty and helpless traveler; yet the truth is that he is the unique Son, the very expression of the love of God.⁴

We next read in **verse 10**, “*Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’*”

We touched on this last time. Here we see the heart of her problem. She was spiritually ignorant of who Jesus Christ was. Jesus Christ sets Himself forth as “*the gift of God*,” that is, some have advocated that *Jesus* is “the gift.” **Matthew Poole** (1624-1679) had once written, “Many by *the gift of God* here understand Christ, whom God gave to the world; so as the latter words, *who it is...*”⁵ It was **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) who wrote, “Note, Jesus Christ is the gift of God, the richest token of God’s love to us, and the richest treasure of all good *for us*.”⁶ And **John Gill** (1697-1771) gave a very strong argument that Jesus Himself was “the gift.” This is from Gill’s commentary on John:

if thou knewest the gift of God; meaning, not the Holy Spirit with his gifts and graces, as some think, but himself; for the following clause is explanatory of it;

and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink; and Christ is also spoken of in the Old Testament, as the gift of God (Isaiah 9:6) and he had lately spoken of himself as such (John 3:16), and he is, by way of eminency, “the gift of God”; which is comprehensive of all others, is exceeding large, and very suitable to the wants and cases of men; and is irrevocable, unchangeable, and unspeakable: for he is God’s gift, as he is his own and only begotten Son; and he is given for a covenant to the people, with all the promises and blessings of it; and as an head, both of eminence and influence; and to be a Saviour of them, and a sacrifice for their sins; and as the bread of life, for them to feed and live upon; of which gift, men are naturally ignorant, as this woman was: they know not the dignity of his person; nor the nature and usefulness of his offices; nor the way of peace, righteousness, and salvation by him; nor do they see any amiableness, or loveliness in him; and whatever notional knowledge some natural men may have of him, they know him not spiritually and experimentally, or as the gift of God to them...

But others differ from this position that “the gift” is Jesus Christ in this immediate context. There are those who say that “the gift” that Jesus could give this woman was the *grace* of God in salvation. Others argue that “the gift” that Jesus could give this woman was *the living water*. And still others say that the gift which He could bestow on this woman was *the Holy Spirit*. I am of the opinion that the best understanding of “the gift” in this context is that it is *salvation*, that is, eternal life:

Jesus makes clear that she is unaware of “the gift of God” (τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ θεοῦ). This mysterious phrase is given possibilities by interpreters. The term “gift” (δωρεά) occurs eleven times in the NT and always denotes a “graciously offered” gift of God, four times with reference to the Spirit (Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17; Heb. 6:4; cf. Acts 8:17-20). Since the Spirit was prominent in the previous pericope, it is likely that the gift is “of God (τοῦ θεοῦ), with the subjective genitive making emphatic that God the Father is the giver of the gift, then “the gift” is rooted in the Trinitarian identity of God. “The gift of God” is salvation (“eternal life”) culminating in the gift of the Spirit, given by both the Father who initiated this divine action and the Son who serves as the agent of this divine activity.⁷

⁴ Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 238.

⁵ Matthew Poole, **Commentary on the Holy Bible**, vol. 3 (Hendriksen Publishers, 2008), p. 296.

⁶ Matthew Henry, **Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible**, vol. 5 (Fleming H. Revell Company, n. d., originally 1721), p. 901f.

⁷ Klink, p. 238.

Jesus said to this woman, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and **He would have given you living water.**” What did Jesus mean by the expression, “living water”? Jesus was speaking of the life-imparting, life-changing, and life-invigorating power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had the authority to bestow upon people who knew and believed on Him as the promised King, the Messiah of Israel.

Now the Lord drew forth this teaching due to the well that was before Him and her. He was using what was immediately before them in order to illustrate a spiritual reality. “Living water” speaks of running water or water flowing forth from a spring. This idea of “living water” was regarded quite important by some in the early era of Christendom. There were some that believed baptism should be performed in “living water”, that is in a running stream, rather than in still water. We read of this practice in a late 1st or early 2nd century document, the *Didache* (*The Teaching of the Twelve*).

And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, **in living water**. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.

Of course the Bible does not teach or require baptism to be performed in this manner, but that some did indicate the high regard they placed on “living water”, I suspect due to what our Lord said to this woman as recorded by John.

Living water is in contrast to the **still** water within the well. But in our Lord speaking of “living water”, He was also calling forth the Word of God from the Hebrew Scriptures (OT). God set Himself before His people as a spring of living water which gives life to His people. But His people rejected Him as a source for their life, and turned to that which could not satisfy. The Old Testament prophet **Jeremiah** wrote of this:

“Therefore I will yet bring charges against you,” says the LORD,

“And against your children’s children I will bring charges.

¹⁰For pass beyond the coasts of Cyprus and see,

Send to Kedar and consider diligently,

And see if there has been such a thing.

¹¹Has a nation changed its gods,

Which are not gods?

But My people have changed their Glory

For what does not profit.

¹²Be astonished, O heavens, at this,

And be horribly afraid;

Be very desolate,” says the LORD.

¹³“For My people have committed two evils:

They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,

And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jer. 2:9-15)

God is set forth in other places as the source of living waters.

Jeremiah 17:13. “O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You shall be ashamed. ‘Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, **the fountain of living waters.**’”

Psalm 36:9. “For with You is **the fountain of life**; In Your light we see light.”

Salvation in the Old Testament is set forth as people coming to God from whom they may receive life-giving waters. We read in **Isaiah 50:1-3**, “

**“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
²Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.
³Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.”**

The blessing of receiving salvation illustrated by coming to God who is a fountain of waters is also found in the New Testament. We read in **Revelation 7:6** this description of the redeemed:

⁹After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying:

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever.
Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴And I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. ¹⁶**They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;** ¹⁷**for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.** And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

And then we read in **Revelation 21:6**: “And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. ***I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.***”

Thus, the “living water” in the context of Jacob’s well on a sun-beating day is rest and satisfaction—eternal life—rooted in the Trinitarian God—Father, Son, *and Spirit*—and mediated by Jesus Christ, his person and work. It is inclusive of everything the prophets could foretell and the Apocalypse (Revelation) could describe. It is the perfect provision from God, with God, and for God. It is what Calvin summarizes as “the whole grace of renewal.” Even in his human fatigue and thirst, Jesus

was fully satisfied. It was the Samaritan woman, competent enough to gather water for Jesus, who was the one in true need.

There was a sense of peace, well-being, satisfaction, even sabbath rest within the heart of Jesus, even in His weariness and thirsty condition. But she could draw water all day long and every day long and yet never enjoy a sense of peace, well-being, satisfaction, even sabbath rest, unless she receive the living water that Jesus was able and willing to give her.

Now more specifically, the “Living Water” is a reference to the **Holy Spirit** that Jesus, as the promised King over the Kingdom of God, would bestow on each and upon all of His kingdom citizens. This is made very clear in a later passage of John’s Gospel.

In John 7 the Lord Jesus was again in Judea, in the city of Jerusalem. He had come up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast recalled and celebrated God’s provision for the Israelites when they had traveled through the wilderness of Judea for 40 years, after God had delivered them from Egypt, but before He brought them into the Promised Land. The festival was seven days in length, the longest in the Jewish calendar, which immediately followed the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) and the Jewish New Year.⁸ At the end of the feast there was a ceremonial water drawing out of a well and also a ceremonial lighting of a lamp, which symbolized the Shekenah Glory of God that guided Israel. The drawing of water before the gathered worshippers commemorated God having provided the Israelites water in their desert journey (Cf. Numb. 20:2-13). It was this ceremony which led Jesus to stand before the crowd and make a pronouncement. We read in **John 7:37ff**:

³⁷On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹But *this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

The time of this event, of course, was on the Day of Pentecost, when He baptized His church with the Holy Spirit. The disciples were infused with the presence of God, they were empowered with the fulness of the Holy Spirit, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, being utterly transformed and formed into a single body of Christ in which the life of Christ dwelt. It was a transformative event which demonstrated and proved the enthronement of Jesus as Lord over the Kingdom of God, for He had ascended, was seated, and the first kingly edict was the gift of the Holy Spirit that He gave His people. By this gift King Jesus enabled His disciples to go forth and advance and expand His kingdom throughout the world.

Our Lord was revealing to this rather insignificant, fallen woman, that He was the promised King of the long-awaited Kingdom of God, who would one day on the Day of Pentecost infuse His people with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. They would never be the same, and the world would never be the same. But even as Jesus spoke to her of this event, He told her that He had the ability and was apparently willing, to grant the Holy Spirit to her in bestowing salvation to her, if she but knew who He was that was speaking with her.

We next read of her response to Jesus’ words. In **verses 11 and 12** we read, ¹¹*“The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹²Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?’”*

Nicodemus had responded to Jesus’ great declaration of the new birth in John 3:4 with a rather ignorant question. “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” He was clueless. And so this woman, who in response to this profound declaration and amazing offer Jesus set before her, is also clueless. Both Nicodemus, the educated, religious leader of Judaism, and this woman, the ignorant, errant, and sinful Samaritan, could not see anything of spiritual truth.

⁸ The Jews observe the annual Feast of Tabernacles to this day. In fact, in 2018 the seven day feast began last Monday and will end tomorrow, Monday, October 1.

This, of course, underscores the truth, “That which is born of flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). And just as Jesus could enable Nicodemus to be born again so “and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”, so He could do so for this woman. In fact He must do so or she would remain in her fallen, lost condition.

There seemed to be a measure of indignance in her words, even as she was totally unaware of just how ignorant she was.

In verses **11** and **12** the woman shows no sign of understanding what Jesus is talking about and, like Nicodemus (3:4) and the disciples later (vs. 32f), clings to the literal meaning of Jesus’ words.⁹ After all, “living” water was what one called *running* water, such as flows from the spring that feeds the well of Jacob and makes it so important for the people living near it. The woman’s answer, though couched in respectful terms (“Sir”) and in the form of a question, shows some annoyance. How can he give her water from the well, which is very deep, with nothing to draw the water up with? Or – and this seems even more absurd to her – does he think perhaps he can get running water from some other source than this well? The first possibility simply does not make sense to her (v. 11), and her self-awareness as a Samaritan rebels against the second (v. 12). Does Jesus, a stranger, imagine that he is greater than “our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle”?¹⁰

By the way, John recorded the question of the woman in verse 12 in a specific way. It was a rhetorical question she posed to Jesus, to which she expected the answer, “no, of course not.”¹¹ It is as though she said, “Surely you are not saying that you are greater than our father, Jacob?” Here again, a note of indignance on her part is conveyed. She was not inquiring; she was challenging Jesus. At this point she did not believe that Jesus was greater than Jacob.

We then read of our Lord’s response to her in **verses 13 and 14**:

¹³Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Matthew Henry gave an extended description of the blessing of this “living water” which I thought would be helpful for us:

Christ answers this cavil, and makes it out that the *living water* he had to give was far better than that of Jacob’s well (v. 13, 14). Though she spoke perversely, Christ did not cast her off, but instructed and encouraged her. He shows her, *First*, That the water of Jacob’s well yielded but a *transient* satisfaction and supply: “*Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again*. It is no better than other water; it will quench the present thirst, but the thirst will return, and in a few hours a man will have as much *need*, and as much *desire*, of water as ever he had.” This intimates, 1. The *infirmities* of our bodies in this present state; they are still *necessitous*, and ever *craving*. Life is a *fire*, a *lamp*, which will soon go out, without continual supplies of fuel and oil. The natural heat preys upon itself. The *imperfections* of all our comforts in this world; they are not lasting, nor our satisfaction in them remaining. Whatever waters of comfort we drink of, we shall *thirst again*. Yesterday’s meat and drink will not do to-day’s work.

Secondly, That the living waters he would give should yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss (v. 14). Christ’s gifts appear most valuable when they come to be compared with the things of this world; for there will appear no comparison between them. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the

⁹ Take note, they both had a “literal hermeneutic”, of which many say we should restrict ourselves.

¹⁰ Herman Ridderbos, **The Gospel of John; A Theological Commentary** (William B. Eerdmans, 1997), p. 155. In a documented footnote, Ridderbos also indicates that this well of Jacob was the deepest of all wells in Palestine.

¹¹ The rhetorical question begins with the Greek word, *μή* (*may*), indicating that she was assuming a negative answer to her question.

comforts of the everlasting gospel, *a.* He shall *never thirst*, he shall never want (need) that which will abundantly satisfy his soul's desires; they are *longing*, but not *languishing*. A *desiring* thirst he has, nothing more *than* God, still more and more *of* God; but not a *despairing* thirst. *b.* Therefore he shall never thirst, because this water that Christ gives *shall be in him a well of water*. He can never be reduced to extremity that has in himself a *fountain* of supply and satisfaction. (*a.*) *Ever ready*, for it shall be *in him*. The principle of grace planted *in him* is the spring of his comfort; see ch. 7:38. A good man is *satisfied from himself*, for Christ *dwells in his heart*. The anointing abides in him; he needs not sneak to the world for comfort; the *work* and the *witness* of the Spirit in the heart furnish him with a firm foundation of hope and an overflowing fountain of joy. (*b.*) *Never failing*, for it shall be in him a *well of water*. He that has at hand only a bucket of water needs not thirst as long as this lasts, but it will soon be *exhausted*; but believers have in them a *well of water*, overflowing, ever flowing. The *principles* and *affections* which Christ's holy religion *forms* in the souls of those that are brought under the power of it are this *well of water*. [*a.*] It is *springing up*, ever in motion, which bespeaks the actings of grace strong and vigorous. If good truths *stagnate* in our souls, like standing water, they do not answer the end of our receiving them. If there be a good treasure in the heart, we must thence bring forth good things. [*b.*] It is springing up *unto everlasting life*; which intimates, *First*, The *aims* of gracious actings. A sanctified soul has its eye upon heaven, means this, designs this, does all for this, will take up with nothing short of this. Spiritual life springs up towards its own perfection in eternal life. *Secondly*, The *constancy* of those actings; it will continue springing up till it come to perfection.

Thirdly, The crown of them, eternal life at last. The living water rises *from* heaven, and therefore rises *towards* heaven; see Ecc. 1:7. And now is not this water better than that of Jacob's well?

When Jesus said to her in verse 13, "**Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again**", He was essentially saying that everything within this physical world can never be a source of true and lasting satisfaction in this life. We have emphasized this before, in fact, many times, for it is so *foundational* to the Christian life. Yet it needs to be repeatedly emphasized, for it is so *foreign* to our natural way of thinking.

Yes, thankfully, our God is "the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy", as Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:17). The Old Testament "preacher" (Solomon) once wrote,

Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. (Eccl. 5:18).

But "all things" can really, truly, and lastingly be enjoyed only when we see them as having been graciously given to us and governed by God to us, by the living God. When we look to the things severed from God who gave them and who directs us how to use them, then they become decaying and rotting things that bring no true and lasting benefit or enjoyment.

In Jesus Christ alone is life; therefore,

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and ***your life is hidden with Christ in God***. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:2 ESV)

The things that He has made and given us can only be enjoyed richly as He intended them for us when we see them as His gifts to us and they are used or employed in the manner and for the purpose which He intends. When we ignore or forget Him, and begin to see value and importance in those things in and of themselves, they are emptied of true value and benefit to us.

Consider the manna that God had so graciously given to the Israelites to enjoy. That wonderful provision was only good for them and to them when it was seen and used according to God's will. When some gathered manna and sought to store it, which they were forbidden to do, it was immediately spoiled to them. "It bred worms and stank" (Exod. 16:20). Ultimately that is what happens to everything that we begin to value and use contrary to the manner in which God gave it. And when we begin to build our life on things

of this world, no matter what it is, it will be spoiled to us in time, and more often than not, sooner than later. For life, true life, is in God and in His Son, in whom alone is life. And the things that He has given us are only truly good for us when they are seen to be from His hand and that they are to be used as He has determined for us.

We will later see in our passage that this woman had sought to obtain a meaningful life through her relationship with a man. I could well imagine her thought processes. She thought her happiness would be obtained through what a man could do for her or provide for her. But one after another the men who came into her life left her disappointed and dissatisfied. She forfeited her name and her dignity in her continual but fruitless pursuit. She eventually abandoned the hope and value of marriage, perhaps from having learned through experience she would see to it not to get “burned” again. I do not expect that she had a very high regard for men in general, when she met and spoke with this Jewish man on this occasion. But He opened up before her the way of true life, true fulfillment, and true happiness. True life was to be found in the spiritual life that He and only He could impart to her.

When we look to the things of this life as the source of our happiness, happiness by those things will ultimately be elusive to us. And if we look to a human relationship primarily as the means by which we are going to receive “what I need” or “what I want from it,” we will be unable to develop and maintain a true, significant, and enriching relationship. At best you can have an “economic” relationship. “I will give to you as long as, and to the degree, that I receive what I need (want) from you.” I suspect you will be disappointed in that relationship, as this woman no doubt had been disappointed and eventually disillusioned with her previous five husbands, and, I suspect, with the man she currently had who was not her husband. However, when we see that in Christ we already have fullness, richness, satisfaction, and contentment, then we are able to give to another in a relationship regardless, or even in spite of, what may be coming our way from that relationship. This is how our Lord has loved us and this is how we are to love others.

When anything that one can “see” or anything temporal is set as the object of supreme affection and devotion, that person has set himself up for a most certain fall. For when we take anything and separate it from God who gave it, and place it as the sole object of our attention and affection, we have made an idol of it. It becomes a deadening thing to us. It provides no true lasting satisfaction. And we are very adept at fashioning idols, are we not? **John Calvin** famously said, “The human heart is an idol factory... Every one of us from our mother’s womb is an expert in inventing idols.”

The Lord Jesus was turning this woman away from all that she had set before her, all that she had regarded as most important for her happiness, and directed her attention to Himself, who could truly satisfy her soul. The Scriptures tell us that in Jesus Christ alone is life. We saw it in John 1:4, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Jesus Himself said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, **and I will give you rest**. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls**” (Matt. 11:28f). Paul wrote of “**the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding**”, which “will guard your hearts and your minds **in Christ Jesus**” (Phil. 4:7). This woman had never known experientially what Jesus could give her freely, a source and basis of life that would result in her forever being satisfied, forever at peace, and forever content. And that which Jesus offered her is offered to us as well, in that this same Jesus has this eternal, unending well-spring of living water ready to satiate the thirsty soul.

What must we do? Abandon all thought and hope that this living water could be found in anything or anyone else. In Jesus Christ alone is life and that more abundant. We are to seek Jesus Christ as Solomon encouraged his children to seek wisdom. He declared, “Get wisdom! Get understanding!” (Prov. 4:5). And we say, “Get Christ! Get understanding of Him and from Him!” Solomon said,

Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.
And in all your getting, get understanding. (Prov. 4:7)

And we say,

Jesus Christ is the principle thing;

Therefore get Christ.

In all your getting, get understanding of Him and from Him.

Jesus Christ is wisdom personified. As Paul wrote, “And because of Him (God) you are in **Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God**, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). We are to pursue Christ, “in whom are hidden all **the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**” (Col. 2:3).

The book of Hebrews speaks of true faith as centered and focused on (1) “unseen” things, in other words, non-physical things, (2) “eternal things”, that is non-temporal temporal, (3) and the things that God had promised, but that His people had not yet received. To the writer of Hebrews that which is physical is the shadow; that which is unseen is the reality. He set forth the faith of the Old Testament saints in this way:

In Old Testament times, he points out, there were many men and women who had nothing but the promises of God to rest upon, without any visible evidence that these promises would ever be fulfilled; yet so much did these promises mean to them that they regulated the whole course of their lives in their light. The promises related to a state of affairs belonging to the future; but these people acted as if that state of affairs were already present, so convinced were they that God could and would fulfill what He had promised. In other words they were men and women of faith. Their faith consisted simply in taking God at His word and directing their lives accordingly; things yet future so far as their experience went were thus present to faith, and things outwardly unseen were visible to the inward eye.¹²

The Scriptures describe people of faith as ordering their lives according to unseen things, which are actually the only eternal realities. The faithful of chapter 11 lived their lives in this manner. The time will come when only the unseen things will remain; all that exists of this physical creation will be “shaken”, that is, removed. The writer then gave the exhortation, “Therefore, since we receive **a kingdom which cannot be shaken**, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:28, 29).

Please do not misunderstand. We are not saying that coming to understand and embrace this spiritual reality in Christ solves all of our problems and longings. It will not do so. But it will place all matters into **proper perspective** and **proportion**, thereby enabling us “to sail” quite well through them.

Consider the Apostle Paul. He wrote of his own trials, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). He could describe his difficulties in life in this way:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For **our light affliction**, which is **but for a moment**, is working for us a far more exceeding and **eternal** weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but **at the things which are not seen**. For the things which are seen are **temporary**, but the things which are not seen are **eternal**. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

Were his trials of great difficulty and long duration? Of course they were. He recounted what he had endured for Christ when he compared himself with others who claimed to have more authority than he:

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. ²³Are they ministers of Christ?-- I speak as a fool-- I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness

¹² F. F. Bruce, **The Epistle to the Hebrews** (Eerdmans, 1964), p. 277.

often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- ²⁸besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. (2 Cor. 11:22-28)

But how, then, did he describe the manner in which he felt while enduring these trials?

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, *yet not crushed*; we are perplexed, *but not in despair*; ⁹persecuted, *but not forsaken*; struck down, *but not destroyed*-- ¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So then death is working in us, but life in you. (2 Cor. 4:7-12)

And so, when we see this reality of our life wholly and solely in Jesus Christ alone, the burdens of life--the load, though heavy, will seem much lighter, and sometimes, it will seem to be not a burden at all. It will be perceived as a burden that your Lord Jesus is bearing up alongside of you. Again, as Jesus said,

Come unto me, *all you that labour and are heavy laden*, and I will give you rest. ²⁹*Take my yoke upon you*, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (Matt. 11:28, KJV)

Your heavy laden burden becomes His yoke, which makes it much easier, even pleasing to bear, when you know it is the means by which you are serving Him. Others about you will wonder how it is that you are unflappable, when they see what you are enduring. But the glory of Christ will be manifested through you before others, which will bring great delight to your soul.

May the Lord grant us grace and success in our pursuit to seek Him, to find Him, and to enjoy Him forever.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20f)
