



John 4:8-30

Water – an essential for life, an essential for harvest
TOO LITTLE WATER
TOO MUCH WATER
NOT ENOUGH SANITATION

Today's Harvest theme has been water, because in water is life and we don't get a harvest without it. In this country we don't think too hard about where we get our water from and how much we use. In countries that are drier they do. We were in one of the drier parts of Spain a few weeks ago. It was an interesting contrast to our country, where people are concerned about water shortage. In Valencia, there was water, plenty of water. There were no use restrictions – in fact in the dry summer they use it for crop irrigation!

It was quite unexpected and quite a surprise as it's one of the few sites I've been on abroad where water has not been a problem.
WHAT A SURPRISE!

The story of Jesus this morning was one about water and for the woman arriving at the well to draw water it was also unexpected. It took her by surprise. What's our capacity to be surprised by Jesus?

I laughed when I read this tale of the unexpected this week. It's one of those stories where the proud get rightfully pulled down a peg. It was a real surprise for one American naval captain.

SEA VIEW

“This is the transcript of a radio conversation of a US naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October, 1995.

Americans: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

Canadians: Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

Americans: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

Canadians: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

Americans: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS LINCOLN, THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES' ATLANTIC FLEET. WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH, THAT'S ONE FIVE DEGREES NORTH, OR COUNTER-MEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP.

Canadians: This is a lighthouse. Your call.”

WELL AT SYCHAR

The Samaritan woman's life was a drudge. She had a miserable life – she was an outcast in her own community. We know from her conversation with Jesus of her five husbands etc. If she wasn't a prostitute, she was someone of low status in the community. People didn't want to know her. Women came to collect water at the beginning and end of the day usually, she was left to collect water by herself at midday.

So for Jesus it was socially risky as a Rabbi to speak to her just as a man to a woman alone. But her being alone indicated she had a poor reputation and besides he was a Jew and she a Samaritan – the two races didn't talk.

Why did he go out of his way to talk to her? He knew she had a thirst that went beyond her need to get a drink and he wanted her have living water that would deal with it..

Why are we here this morning? For some of us, we worship regularly. But maybe we've been invited. The message of this story is that Jesus is interested in us, despite who we are. A lot of people have problems with church because they don't feel comfortable about coming before God. They have problems, questions, hangups, sin – things that are wrong in their lives. But they are thirsty to find out more about following Jesus but what about...? We find out from this story and many others in the Bible, Jesus targeted people who had issues in their lives. Why? Because they were thirsty for change so that these things may no longer be issues, that they may find forgiveness, healing, freedom, peace and whatever else.

So how did the woman react to what Jesus said about water? She was interested in what he had to say. But then Jesus bowls something else at her she wasn't expecting – she discovered he knew all the mess she had made in her life – the multiple marriages and her extra-marital relationship. She assumed he was a prophet and now he was coming out with all her embarrassing stuff.

How do we deal with people who come out with embarrassing stuff we don't want to hear? Of course! We change the subject.

So he was some kind of Jewish prophet – just throw out a red herring. The Samaritan red herring was that Jews said that God, who they worshipped also could only be worshipped in Jerusalem, but of course they were excluded because Samaritans were descended from Israelites who had intermarried with other nations. They set up their own worship centres in Samaria. So how could Jesus be talking about him giving living water springing up to eternal life when she and her own race had been excluded for centuries?

But what Jesus came out with was something new. She hadn't heard it before and it was something that was going to change her life: *"Believe me, woman, the time will come when people will not worship the Father either on this mountain or in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans do not really know whom you worship; but we Jews know whom we worship, because it is from the Jews that salvation comes. 23 But the time is coming and is already here, when by the power of God's Spirit people will worship the Father as he really is, offering him the true worship that he wants. 24 God is Spirit, and only by the power of his Spirit can people worship him as he really is." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah will come, and when he comes, he will tell us everything." 26 Jesus answered, "I am he, I who am talking with you.*

That was it. The penny dropped. She saw how it applied to her. He was bringing something to her that she wanted that she thought that she could never have – acceptance by a God who wanted to know her even though he knew all her embarrassing secrets and access to worship and serve Him.

One of the most life-changing things I believe each person should know is that God wants to know each one of us despite our track record as human beings. He wants us to discover that in Jesus we can find forgiveness of our sins, and by God's Spirit we can find the freedom and strength to worship him, to follow him, to serve him, to find meaning in life and for eternity.

TITLE

Someone gave us this oxalis a while back. It was in our lounge and when I went on holiday I forgot to put it out with the other plants so it would get water. When I got home, the soil was dry and the plant wilted. It looked as good as dead. Should I bin it? I took pity and put water on it and to my astonishment it recovered. Water meant life for this plant.

How much more should the water Jesus brings give life to our broken lives, our broken relationships, our broken hopes and dreams.

Jesus brought just that to the woman at the well that day – and he wants to bring it to your life today. If you have never trusted Jesus then he stretches out his hand towards you this morning. Will you accept it. Will you find what you need. Will you be refreshed by His living water?

Maybe you've been a Christian for some time, but you've not allowed him to supply you with water for a while, for whatever reason. He's still got his hand outstretched and the water is still there. Take a drink, let him revive you that you may know his presence, his joy, his power again today.

Prayer

*Preached by Mark Reid
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