

“Never Thirst Again”

John 4:1-18

Preached by Minister Jason Tarn at HCC on July 29, 2012

Introduction

- ❖ Imagine if you never felt thirsty again, if the sensation of thirst was completely removed from you. So you could go out in the Texas heat and run a 5K this afternoon and have no desire for water. You literally have no thirst.
 - ▶ Now you would think this ability to never thirst would pay off especially if you were wandering about in the Sahara. Your friend next to you would be dying for a drink of water but you don't feel a thing. You're fine. No thirst.
 - Now that seems like a pretty cool advantage, until you realize that both of you will still die of dehydration if you don't find water. The only difference is that your friend knows and feels he's dying, while you think you're fine because you don't feel thirsty.

- ❖ There is actually a medical condition called *aprosia*, where you lose the sense of thirst. It's a symptom that results from another condition or disease. So in and of itself, *aprosia* is not deadly, but if you don't know you have it, then you probably won't take in enough fluids, which leads to something deadly. So to not feel thirst is not really a gift. It's more of a curse.
 - ▶ Well in the spiritual realm there is something similar. It could be described as **spiritual *aprosia***. It's a spiritual condition where you have lost the sense of thirst for God. Your soul doesn't feel thirsty for him.

- ❖ Now people who have this condition might be tempted to see it as an advantage. Unlike religious people, they don't feel the incessant need to always “get right with God”, “to get my sins forgiven”. They can live their lives freely without carry around such guilt and fear. It must be to my advantage to not feel that thirst – that need for God and his forgiveness.
 - ▶ But like the two guys in the desert, both the religious and the non-religious are dying. One knows and feels he's dying without God. The other continues wandering oblivious to the fact that he's dying on the inside.

- ❖ Friends, in this morning's passage Jesus addresses this thirst of the soul. We'll be looking at the second of Jesus' Seven Significant Sayings in the Gospel of John. Today's saying comes out of chapter **4:14** where Jesus says, "*whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.*" Come and drink of Jesus, and you will never thirst again.
 - ▶ That sounds like a wonderful offer, but is this another kind of spiritual *aprosia*? Is this a promise to numb your spiritual senses of any thirst for God? Because that won't do us any good. **No, Jesus offers something better. Not to eliminate your soul's thirst but to quench it. Not to remove something of your senses but to implant something in you that will satisfy forever.**
 - Go back to being lost in the desert. Jesus is promising to give you a kind of water that upon drinking will perpetually flow through your veins like a spring of living water so that you never thirst again. Not because your senses have been dulled but because now you are truly satisfied!

Do you feel a thirst for God?

- ❖ This is amazing news, very good news. But it's really only good for those who recognize this thirst in their souls. **This is only good news if you know you're thirsty.** So I have three questions to raise this morning. The first is this: ***Do you feel a thirst for God?***
 - ▶ Now some of you have a clear sense of your own spiritual thirst. You feel the longing of your soul for God. And your life reflect this. You're known as someone who is driven by a thirst to know and experience God in a deeper and more intimate way.

- ❖ But I think it's safe to say that, for the majority of us, we don't feel this. We don't feel much of a thirst for God. **It's not that our souls don't thirst. It's just that they thirst for other things.** We feel a stronger thirst for things like **approval** – the approval and acceptance of perhaps a parent or supervisor or someone you're attracted to.
 - ▶ You don't need to ask me if I feel a thirst for **success** in my studies or career or if I thirst for **recognition** of my accomplishments. I know I do. All of us do. And we're all very conscious that we crave **intimacy** and **relationships** – to love and be loved. **We all have many thirsts, but we don't feel much of a thirst for God.**

- ❖ ***Or do we?*** Let me throw out a proposition. **I'd argue that every thirst of the soul – regardless of the present object – is ultimately a thirst for God.** In other words, all our various thirsts and desires – whether for virtuous things or sinful things – are all expressions of our soul's deep thirst for God – *just in disguise*.
 - ▶ G.K. Chesterton once wrote, ***“Every time a man knocks on a brothel door, he is really searching for God.”*** We could modernize that and say, “Every time a man clicks on pornography, he is really searching for God.” He is seeking something in pornography to fill the emptiness and longing for intimacy in his soul, but really he is searching for something only God can fulfill.

- ❖ Or we could say, **“Every time you seek the praise and recognition of others, you're really seeking for God's praise and recognition.”** Most of us are driven in our work and even our play to fulfill a deep longing to hear the words, *“Well done.”* We want to know we've done well, that we made a difference. And we long to hear it whether from a parent or lover or boss. Now we may not realize it, but what we're really searching for is God – to hear him say, *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”* (Mt. 25:21)
 - ▶ **My point is that your soul actually does thirst for God – you just called him by another name:** Approval, acceptance, success, power, influence, intimacy, relationship, comfort, security, etc. The list could go on. **You may not call it God, but whatever you're thirsting for is something only God can ultimately fulfill.**

- ❖ If you're still not convinced, then let me show you this in Scripture. Consider this Samaritan woman that Jesus meets at the well. ***Did you notice how thirsty she was?*** I'm not talking about her literal thirst for water. I'm sure she was parched. It was the sixth hour (noon). The sun was at its highest. She was probably really thirsty for water.

- ▶ But her thirst ran much deeper. **It wasn't just her mouth that was parched. It was her soul.** She was thirsting for God but without knowing it, that is, until Jesus confronted her with the hard but necessary truth.

- ❖ Look with me at our passage. Let's read starting at v7. *"⁷A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸(For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)"*

- ❖ In case you're unfamiliar, the Samaritans were descendants of ancient Israel who in the past had intermarried with foreigners. **So to a Jew, a Samaritan is a half-breed, and what's worse they were heretics.** The Samaritans eventually constructed their own temple on Mt. Gerizim rivaling the one in Jerusalem on Mt. Zion. They also rejected most of the Jewish Scriptures except for the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses. For these reasons, Jews and Samaritans did not get along. So that's reason enough for this woman to be shocked that Jesus is talking with her.
 - ▶ But there's another reason to explain her surprise. **She was not just a Samaritan woman. She was a Samaritan woman with a past.** At this point we don't know what it was, but you get a hint by the fact that she came to this well by herself at midday. Women would usually fetch water in groups for safety and usually in the morning or dusk when it was cooler. So being at this well by herself at the sixth hour suggests that she is a social outcast. That gives added meaning to her question in v9, *"How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"*

- ❖ Notice in v10 what Jesus says in response, *"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."*
 - ▶ Now at this point the woman is still thinking about the heat and about the thirst in her mouth. So this Jewish man is saying he can give her some living water. That term *"living water"* could have been interpreted to simply mean fresh water, the kind that flows out of natural springs. She would love some of that, but this man has no bottle or bucket, nothing to draw water with. Is he just messing with her?
 - *"¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."¹³"*

- ❖ Jesus replies in vv13-14 and basically says he's not talking about literal water or literal thirst. *"¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."¹⁶"*

- ▶ So you can tell she is still thinking about the thirst in her mouth. She has spiritual *apostasia*. She's just excited at the prospect of never having to come here to this well to draw water. It's so embarrassing. Coming here by herself everyday is a daily reminder of her status as an outcast in society.
- ❖ So here in **v16**, Jesus graciously does her a favor. He treats her spiritual *apostasia* by confronting her with her real thirst, her soul's thirst. Look at what he says, "*Go, call your husband, and come here.* ¹⁷*The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.'* Jesus said to her, "*You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';* ¹⁸*for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.*
- ❖ Do you see what Jesus is doing? As commentator Bruce Milne puts it, "***Jesus was bringing to her awareness the relational desert in which she was living.***" He was pointing to the deep thirst in her soul that she's been trying to satisfy with men, with relationships. She's feels this thirst to love and be loved, and she's tried five times to quench it with a husband. And now she seems to be losing hope of ever finding satisfaction. She's living with a sixth man right now, but she didn't even bother getting married. What's the point? It doesn't seem to quench.
 - ▶ What the Samaritan woman doesn't realize is that her thirst for men, for relationships, has always been a thirst for God. What she hoped to fulfill through her marriages could only be fulfilled through a relationship with God.
 - And that is why Jesus offers her a living water – a kind of water that will actually quench this deep thirst in her soul.

What does Jesus offer to quench that thirst?

- ❖ So what is it? What is this living water he's talking about? This leads to our second question: ***What does Jesus offer to quench that thirst?***
 - ▶ To answer, let's read **v10** again. "*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.'*"
 - In other words, if we knew what's being offered and who it is that is offering it, then we would be pleading for it. So let's first consider who is offering this living water.
- ❖ When we studied Jesus' seven signs, we noted the common point in all his signs was to reveal more of his identity as the Christ, the Son of God. And in his seven I AM statements, he was equating himself with the Great I AM of the Old Testament – the LORD God. **Well in our passage, in promising to give living water, Jesus is once again equating himself with the LORD God.**
 - ▶ If you read through the Old Testament, you'll find passages where God is depicted in one way or another providing water to his people. God supplied the thirsty Israelites in the wilderness with water gushing from a rock (Num. 20:8-11). God miraculously supplied the prophet Elijah with water in the wilderness (1 Kg. 19:6).

- ❖ And then there are prophecies that point to a future day of salvation that speak of living waters flowing.
 - ▶ **Zechariah 14:8**, “*On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem*”.
 - ▶ **Joel 3:18**, “*And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Valley.*”
 - ▶ **Isaiah 12:3**, “*(In that day) With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*”

- ❖ So the predominate belief was that there would be this great final day of salvation at the end times where all faithful Jews would rise from the grave in resurrected bodies to live upon a new earth filled with joy and plenty as symbolized by flowing water and wine.
 - ▶ But now here comes this man, speaking as if he was the LORD God himself, promising to give this kind of life – filled with this end times joy and plenty. You can experience this life in the here and now – if only you drink of his living water.

- ❖ ***What is this gift of living water?*** We’re actually told what this gift is later at the end of **chapter 7:37-39**. Turn there with me. This takes place in Jerusalem during a week-long festival called the Feast of Booths, where a water-pouring ceremony was performed daily on the temple grounds. Every day the priests would draw water from a nearby pool and pour it out at the base of the altar.
 - ▶ Well it says in **v37**, “*On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’*”
 - Now in **v39**, John identifies this ‘living water’ for his readers. “*Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*”

- ❖ **So the living water Jesus offers to those who drink of him – who believe in him – is the Spirit of God.** This is only fitting. If the deep thirst of our souls is for God, then the only gift that could quench that thirst is the gift of God himself.
 - ▶ We’re told that the Holy Spirit is a life-giving spirit (Jn. 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6). Just as water is a necessity for physical life, so the Spirit is a necessity for spiritual life. Without the Spirit, you have no life. You’re spiritually dead. But if the Spirit resides in you, he will perpetually satisfy you and sustain you with life forever. It’s like he becomes within you “*a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*” (4:14)

- ❖ It’s often said that we have a God-sized hole in our hearts. We are always trying to fill it with earthly things and earthly pursuits. But only God can fill it. Only God can complete what is lacking in us. As **St. Augustine** famously cried out to God, “***You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.***”

- ▶ Our hearts restlessly pursue deeper relationships & better sex, bigger salaries & impressive portfolios, higher degrees & fancier titles, more toys & newer gadgets. But you've probably learned by now through experience that these things never satisfy. We can always imagine a better lover, a better job, a better upgrade.

- ❖ No one put it better than **C.S. Lewis** in *Mere Christianity*. *"Most people, if they have really learned to look in their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of a foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning can really satisfy. I am now not speaking of what would ordinarily be called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones. There was something we have grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality. I think everyone knows what I mean. The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent, and chemistry may be a very exciting job; but something has evaded us."*

- ❖ Now Tim Keller says once you realize this, there are four ways you can respond. **1) You can blame the things that are disappointing you and try to move on to better ones.** You can blame your spouse for an unfulfilling marriage and move on to another one. You can blame your job for not fulfilling you and look for a new one. But you're just setting yourself up for more disappointment, and you're failing to address your thirst.
 - ▶ **2) You can blame yourself.** "Everyone else seems happy and satisfied with their marriage or their job. There must be something wrong with me." But this option leaves you hating yourself and always measuring up to others.
 - **3) You can blame the world.** You can blame the very institution of marriage or the economy. But you'll just end up as a hardhearted cynic.

- ❖ **4) Or you can take Lewis' advice and realize that the deep thirst you feel was never meant to be quenched by earthly things.** *"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."*
 - ▶ Friends, perhaps the reason why you continue to thirst, why you feel dissatisfied and restless in life is because you're trying to quench that thirst by drinking of created things when only the Creator Himself will do.

- ❖ **When you drink deep of God, when he becomes your satisfaction, your all-sufficient joy, then you are finally free to enjoy earthly things without placing unrealistic expectations on them** – without expecting them to do for you what only God can do.
 - ▶ It's unfair to expect your spouse to complete you. You're setting up your marriage for failure. It's unfair to expect your kids to fulfill you. Don't be surprised if they grow up to rebel and throw off the weight of your expectations.
 - It's unfair to expect that degree, that graduate program, or that job to make you happy. You'll be disappointed.

- ❖ You were made for God, and your heart will always be restless until it find its rest in him, until you drinking deeply of his Spirit. And then, when you do, you're finally free to pursue and to enjoy all those things in life in proper perspective – where God is your all in all.

Why do we refuse to drink it?

- ❖ This is wonderful news. God satisfies our every hunger and quenches our every thirst. This is amazing stuff. But at the same time, for most of us, this is not a new message. We've heard this before.
 - ▶ Don't get me wrong. It's great to be reminded that God is all-satisfying. But we already knew this, and yet we still refuse to drink deeply of him.
 - Why? Well that's the big question. We know our souls are thirsting for God. We know Jesus offers to quench it. Yet for some reason we hesitate. ***Why do we refuse to drink what Jesus offers?***
- ❖ **The simple answer: Because our hearts are sick.** Scripture says our hearts are desperately sick (Jer. 17:9). They're sicken by what the Bible calls sin, which has stricken our hearts with stupidity. Our sinful hearts are always making foolish decisions like refusing Jesus' amazing offer of living water.
- ❖ Let me show you this in Scripture. Listen to the words of the LORD through the prophet Jeremiah, calling out the nation of Israel for their spiritual adultery, for forsaking the LORD and chasing after foreign gods and idols.
 - ▶ This comes from **Jeremiah 2:12-13**, *“¹²Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, ¹³for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”*
- ❖ The fountains of living water were referring to natural springs out of which water would constantly flow. It was fresh, cool, and plentiful. Now compare that to a cistern, which was basically a big hole dug out of a slab of limestone and plastered. It was designed to catch and hold rainwater, but sometimes the plaster would crack causing the water to seep out.
 - ▶ So here God is comparing dirty, brown, stagnant, and inconsistent rainwater verses the clear, cool, refreshing water out of natural spring. ***Now why would anyone want to drink from a broken cistern when a fountain of living water is readily available?***
- ❖ **And yet that is exactly what we do when we turn away from God and look to people or things in this world to satisfy us.** God must be speechless as he watches his people constantly pass up living water, only to get on their hands and knees in the muck and mud and drink like dogs from broken cisterns filled with dirty rainwater.

- ❖ This is what sin-sickness does to you. Not only do you end up forsaking God, but you end up choosing lesser things and in so doing you're making a statement. You're telling everyone that these things are more valuable and more satisfying than God. But this is a great insult to his glory and worth. This is evil. This is sin.
- ❖ So on one hand, we need a Savior. We're told Jesus took up our sins as he took up his cross. He paid for our sins with the sacrifice of his life. If I trust in him, all my sins are forgiven, including my sinful inclination to choose broken cisterns over him. Hallelujah what a Savior!
 - ▶ Yet I need Jesus to be more than a Savior. **I need him to be a Sender of the Spirit so that my sinful inclinations might not only be forgiven but completely changed.**
- ❖ I can stand up here and argue for why God is more satisfying than anything else in the world. I can prove it to you in Scripture. But that's not enough. You can know all that to be true, and yet if your heart is still sick it would still prefer dirty rainwater. **You can intellectually know that spring water is more refreshing, yet if you hate the taste of it you'll refuse to drink.**
 - ▶ That's why you need God to do a supernatural work in you that give you a new heart with new spiritual tastes. You need to be born again of the Spirit. You need your old heart of stone replaced with a new heart of flesh that has new inclinations, that has a new preference for living waters.
- ❖ Friends, we are being called to Jesus to drink deeply of these waters, to drink deeply of God's own Spirit. So let me leave you with a challenge. Think about a deep thirst you presently have. What are you pursuing to quench that thirst? If it's not God, then commit to praying each day this coming week for two things.
 - ▶ **1) That God helps you see more clearly who he is – the all-satisfying, all-sufficient Living Water for your soul.**
 - ▶ **2) That God helps you choose him – that he changes and matures your heart so that you actually prefer him over anything this world has to offer.**
- ❖ You're basically asking for eyes to see the truth and a heart that actually love the truth – to be able to see Him and more importantly to prefer Him.