

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

On Sunday we looked at the second half of the story of the Woman at the Well, as we continued our study of dramatic encounters between Jesus and various people in the Gospel of John.

1. Warm-up Question: In Sunday's sermon Jeff asked, "What's your beverage of choice?" Although he meant the question metaphorically – more about that later – let's start by answering literally. What is your favorite thing to drink?
2. When Pastor David was a boy, his parents went out of their way to give him amazing Christmases. One year, after David and his brother had opened a ton of amazing presents, his parents were sure they had hit a home run! Just then David looked around, saw no more presents, then blurted out, "Is that all?" At one point or another, we've all asked that question. Tell us about a time in your life (as a kid or adult) when you found yourself asking, "Is that all?"
3. Jesus dialogue with the Woman at the Well is about our human quest to find true contentment in life. The conversation occurs when Jesus is resting at Jacob's well and a Samaritan woman approaches with a bucket to draw water. Read John 4:7-26.
 - a. In verse 10, Jesus tells the woman that he can give her "living water." Look again at her response in verses 11-12. What do you read into her words? What was her initial attitude toward Jesus' offer of "living water?"
 - b. In verse 13, Jesus said to the woman, "Everyone who drinks of this water [*i.e.*, ordinary well water] will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The water in Jacob's well represents the material blessings in the physical world in which we live. There are lots of good things in this world. Water is one of them. We drink and we're satisfied . . . for a while. But then we get thirsty once more and have to keep going back to the well again and again. What are some of the pleasures of this physical world – good things, blessed things – that you most enjoy?
 - c. There are many wonderful things in our physical world that give us pleasure, but the pleasure is temporary, and once it fades, we find ourselves wanting more. In the process, can be tempted to put more pressure on that source of pleasure than it can bear, asking it to do for us what no material thing can, *i.e.* give us *shalom* (the Hebrew word for peace, contentment, and tranquility). That's when Jeff asked, "What is your beverage of choice?" For the woman at the well, it was men. She'd been through five husbands and was working on her sixth. What's your beverage of choice? In other words, what source of pleasure are you most likely to be tempted to overinvest in?
 - d. When people say, "If only I had more of _____, I would be happy," psychologists call that the "Arrival Fallacy" – the assumption that if I could just

get enough of something, my thirst would finally be quenched. Psychologist Tal Ben-Sharar says that's why so many Hollywood stars go through so many marriages, have so many addictions, and live such tragic lives. Ben-Sharar says, "They say to themselves, 'When I make it, then I'll be happy.' But then they make it, and while they may feel briefly fulfilled, the feeling doesn't last. [So that now] they're unhappy [again, but this time] they're unhappy without hope. Because before they lived under the illusion – well, the false hope – that once they make it, then they'll be happy." Have you ever seen someone fall into this trap? Tell us what happened?

4. Life often leaves us wanting. **The lack always comes back.** So what's the solution? Jesus' answer is found in verses 23-24, when he says, "The hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. . . . God is Spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth." In other words, Jesus is saying that Spirit is where it's at. Spirit is the living water that brings *shalom*. **Our thirst is quenched when we build and cultivate a deep personal connection between our spirit and God's Spirit.** Nothing else can ultimately satisfy.
 - a. Do you buy that? Do you believe Spirit connection with God is the answer? Why or why not?
 - b. What are some things that, for you personally, help your spirit connect to God's Spirit?
 - c. The Bible calls us to "live by the Spirit," Galatians 5:16, and promises that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22. Jeff told a couple stories about how, when we're living in the Spirit, we can experience the transcendent feelings listed in Galatians 5:22 even when our material circumstances are really hard. He gave the example of Andy Crouch saying that worshiping at the bedside of his dying friend was one of the best places he's ever been, and the example of Amy Townsend experiencing deep peace when her car was totaled. When asked where that peace came from, she said it was because she had been filling herself up with Spirit at our church for several years. Have you ever experienced transcendent *shalom* in the midst of great life crisis? What happened? For you, where did that *shalom* come from?
 - d. Isaiah 26:3 (KJV) says, "Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, the one whose mind is stayed on thee." What does it mean to "stay our mind" on God?
 - e. I Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." What does that mean?
 - f. Do you feel you have enough Spirit in your life right now to experience the kind of *shalom* that transcends circumstances? If yes, what do you need to do to maintain that level of Spirit? If no, what more might you do to gain that level of Spirit?

John 4:7-26

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)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 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."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 have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet."²⁰ Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him."²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth."²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will

proclaim all things to us." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."