

Sermon preached by Pastor Ben Kuerth on March 12, 2017 at Victory of the Lamb on John 4:5-26.

Series: Like Us In Every Way

Today's Focus: Our Guilt

"Meet Jesus. He Came to Meet Your Deepest Needs."

You ever have one of those days where you've been on your feet all day and you just long to sit down? You ever have one of those weeks where you keep wishing you could just catch a nap because you're been pushing it pretty hard trying to balance a lot of heavy responsibilities and you're physically and emotionally exhausted? Or you're dealing with some chronic pain that prevents you from feeling refreshed? Or the kids have been sick, again, and you can't seem to catch a break *or* a good night's sleep...and you're just tired...so tired? Anybody here ever feel like that?

The truth is Jesus knows what that feels like. Being tired that is. Needing a break. Exhausted even. He was always fully God. God has no needs of his own. But Jesus was also fully human. Christians believe according to the Bible that Jesus is the eternally begotten Son of God. He is without beginning or end. He is the uncreated Creator. All the stars and the far away galaxies, he made them and flung them out there. But in the fullness of time he became incarnate in the womb of the virgin Mary and was born a fully human creature just like us. The immortal God humbled himself and wore our flesh and blood as his own.

Practically this means something very profound. God himself understands what it's like to walk in our shoes. Your shoes. I don't think we can ever exhaust what a limitless reservoir of comfort that provides. God himself has real, not imaginary, empathy for each of us. Jesus was like us in every way. And in fact to this very day he continues to understand what it's like to be one of us. That's why today I want you to **Meet Jesus. He Came to Meet Your Deepest Needs.** From John chapter 4...

⁵So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

So we meet Jesus. He was tired after a long walk. He was hungry (his disciples had gone into town to buy food). He was thirsty. He was human. Then a woman meets Jesus. She too was thirsty. Manually drawing water from a well in the heat of the day, every day, I'm guessing she too was tired. And that's not even the half of it for her. You see most people didn't draw their water from the well in the heat of the day. It seems likely that she did because of the reputation she had. You see, she was thirsty. Her whole life was a tiring quest for what she hoped would quench her thirst. And I'm not just talking about thirsty for a cool drink of well water to quench her physical thirst. For that Jesus just could've invented Gatorade and given her a lifetime supply. Rather, there was a much deeper thirst that she felt in her parched soul.

You feel it in yours? What is it that you think you need so badly that it hurts to imagine how you will feel if you never get it? What is it that you are restlessly pursuing because you think "This, when I just get this, then I will be finally happy" but the pursuit of which leaves your soul feeling parched? What is that you are

thirsty for that perhaps never quite seems to satisfy you even when you think you've found it? What do you long for that leaves you feeling unfulfilled?

You see to any other tired traveler, the Samaritan woman who approached Jacob's well might have seemed like just another person in the work-a-day world seeking water, H₂O in a dry and weary land. But the Lord Jesus, before whom our hearts are an open book, saw much more. When he met her at the well he saw someone whose soul was thirsty and whose life was a sad commentary on how futilely sinful human nature seeks to quench that deep down thirst. So Jesus doesn't get side tracked with her attempts to get into an argument. He doesn't get side tracked with her diversions. He doesn't chase the decoys. He pursues her heart. He wants her to see that only he can meet her deepest needs. Do you see how nothing and no one but Jesus alone can truly meet yours?

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "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."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Again, Jesus won't be distracted. It would be a decoy to get into a silly argument that would sidetrack this conversation. He's not trying to win arguments though. He wants to win her soul. **¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks 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."**

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

She still thinks Jesus is talking about her need for physical water to quench her ongoing physical needs, doesn't she? So now Jesus helps to reveal her real thirst and her deepest need—her need for a Savior. **¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."**

¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶ Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

What would you say the Samaritan woman was restlessly seeking in life? What was her heart thirsty for? Wasn't it for unconditional love? She had spent her life seeking the answer for the thirst of her heart in one husband after the next, none of whom, in a pitiful combination of their sinful weakness and her own, had brought peace to her heart or satisfied her deepest needs. None of whom he had brought her the happiness she yearned to have. How many hurts and regrets she must have felt! And now, in what we might consider a very contemporary twist, she was continuing to seek the answer to her thirst in a man in her life while giving up on the concept of “husband” altogether and deciding just to live with him outside of God's blueprint for marriage. How long do you think it would be before they would each become a profound disappointment to each other too in this relationship?

Friends, what are you thirsty for? What needs are you trying to meet your own way, maybe apart from God's way? Now maybe the first thing that comes to mind is something like, “Well, Pastor Ben, I've got some needs. Like I need to go to the grocery store again church or at least stop at Kwik Trip.” Or “I need to get those chores done around the house this afternoon.” Or “I need to figure out how to get this kid here and this kid over there.” “I need to figure out how to pay some of these bills.”

But I'm not talking about that—the list. I'm talking about the deep, restless part of your soul where the list is your heart's desire. What needs are you looking to someone or something in your life to meet but which can never actually come through for you to the degree you want? I'm talking about your longing for things like approval, for satisfaction, for affirmation, for fulfillment, for contentment, for respect, for peace, for happiness, for pleasure, ...to be unconditionally loved by somebody with no harsh strings attached. Friends, who or what is causing you to feel disappointed, weary, and dry?

I want you to consider, whatever that is or whoever that is...if they're making you feel that way...part of the reason is because you've put it or them in place of God. You've placed on them expectations for meeting needs which they were not ever designed to, and hence cannot, fulfill. You see ever since the fall into sin, we human beings try to quench the deep thirst of our souls by seeking satisfaction in the Creator's gifts, his good gifts, rather than in the Creator himself. The result of this hopeless endeavor is that you're always thirsting, yet never feeling fulfilled.

And the thing is all our attempts to mask or numb our heart's deepest thirst are futile too. They all leave our hearts thirstier than when we began. Unwinding from a frustrating conversation by losing yourself in mindless no-demands-on-you travels through the vast sectors of the internet universe, including those which you would hope no search history ever reveals. Or dealing with another frustrating day at work by emptying the contents of the entire Doritos bag or draining an embarrassingly large part of a six pack in less than an hour. Or by losing yourself in a few hours of binging on Netflix or zoning out playing video games, numbing the disappointment your church family or with your own real life family or job, while, of course, simultaneously deadening the painful reality of what your own sinful heart has contributed to the situation. Or maybe when it comes to things that didn't go right you try assuring yourself that if you just work harder or smarter or longer you will figure it out on your own. You will find what quenches your thirst. You think, “If I can just fix him (or her) then I'll feel better and fulfilled.”

And if you're thinking, “O my goodness, how does he know this about me?” remember it's because, my dear friends, I'm not exempt from this either. And in this world the sinful hearts of others join our own in trying to make us thirsty yet again. Because we all have a dual status of sinner/saints, it's a struggle, a

constant daily struggle, until we remember that only the living water Jesus provides can quench our heart's deepest thirst. Friends, **meet Jesus. He came to meet your deepest needs.**

Fortunately for that woman at Jacob's well, her Creator, clothed in flesh and blood simply had it as a necessity on his calendar to meet her that day. She was found by the One who, although he knew everything about her...he didn't kick her to the curb, send her away, abandon her, physical or emotionally abuse her...but stuck with her and sought to fulfill her deepest need. And how wonderfully so! In the midst of her seeking things and people that wouldn't and couldn't ultimately satisfy...he sought for her to provide what only he could. Her need for a Savior. Her need for forgiveness. Her need for unconditional love. In his merciful seeking love, he poured out living water that transformed her into a well of living water bubbling up to eternal life! He took away her guilt and as the world's Messiah he took it all away for all of us at the cross of his suffering and death where he cried both, "I thirst" and "It is finished."



There's a place where you can literally read a book while floating on your back in the water without any flotation device. Who know where I'm talking about? The Dead Sea in Israel. Water from the Jordan River flows into it but it has no outlet. As a result it's stagnant. Water evaporates here quickly so its salinity level is so high you can literally float in it. As a result people go there all the time to experience this. But even though while floating in it and having some fun, and you're surrounded by water... if you're thirsty... would you want to drink from it? No! Because you know what happens if you drink salt water, right? Your kidneys have to work harder to filter it. So you actually get dehydrated faster. You feel thirstier. Drink enough, you will die.



But here's another picture. This one is from the headwaters of the Jordan River up north at Tel Dan which flows down south. This water comes from one of the springs which feeds the river which eventually empties into the Dead Sea. In other words this water is at the source. And as you can see it is fast flowing, cold and pure. It is ever replenishing. Now if you're thirsty...which water do you want to drink from given the choice?

Friends, Jesus comes to us in the midst of our daily thirst inducing temptations. He comes to us in the midst of our thirst-worsening ways of coping with the sins of our own lives and the sins of others. He meets us right where we're at in a world where we are surrounded by many things that end up being salt water to our thirsty souls. And even when the bitter or salty taste of that which does not satisfy is still wet on our lips, he says to us: **"Ask of me, and I will give you living water!"** "Instead of running to that which does not satisfy, give me whatever it is that burdens your heart. Hand over whatever it is that's making you thirsty. Other people may have let you down, but I will never let you down. Other things and other people may have come and gone, but I will never leave you or let you go. You might feel like you will never know what it's like to be fully known and yet completely loved, but I will never stop loving you and I want you to know this." **"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks 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."**

Dear Friends, it is my absolute joy and privilege to share this living water with you. It is only our Savior who can quench our souls. He alone can save us from that which does not satisfy and supplies us with that which does both fully and forever. **Meet Jesus. He came to meet your deepest needs!** Amen.