

Living Water - John 4—Pastor Dave Amstutz

As the passage opens we find that the Pharisees are up in arms because they receive word that Jesus is gaining followers and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist. (we learn it's actually Jesus' disciples doing the baptizing). So Jesus is now going to travel away from Jerusalem, and Pharisees to the northern part of Israel, Galilee, about 120 or so miles. a possible hike in 4 days but more likely 6 days, it's not a flat trip but winds through the dry hills and valleys of central Canaan.

Before we moved to Almont we lived in Gladwin MI, one of the places to shop there was West Branch. Now many of you know about the exits off of I75 there, because it's a convenient stop. Maybe you remember the water tower with the big smile face West Branch is know as the Gateway to 'Up North'. There are other routes you can take but I 75 is the most direct way toward the Bridge and the rest of 'Up North' and it goes right by West Branch. Well Jesus is also taking the most direct route to Galilee 'Up North' and stops at a frequented stop.

Now I want to tell you about Bill, he was a year older than me we are in Jr. High, though smaller he had polio when younger overcame it and was as tough as nails and for some reason, I still don't know why, he hated me and always tried to bully me into fighting him. For me to go to the church or the part of town I most wanted to I had to pass in front of his house, so many times I would travel out of my way to not come in contact with Bill. That's the same type of thing Jews would travel way out of their way to go around Samaria because of the bitterness between them and the Samaritans.

So now we find Jesus going thru the middle of Samaria stopping at the 'West Branch' of his day on probably the middle of the third day. He is tired, hot, and thirsty, if he had a canteen it was dry as a bone. He stops at a well, know as Jacob's well, which is on the first land bought to live on in the promised land. He later wills it to his son Joseph. It's a deep well- needing a long rope and provides clean cool water from a deep spring. It is the only one in the area, other wells around there are brackish. This is the place that was known that, God kept His promises, and took care of Jacob.

Now the stage is set. Now comes a lady, that's using the term loosely with her water pitcher. She was probably attractive, more about that in a bit. But she is coming at the wrong time of the day to get water, almost everyone else would come before the sun got high in the sky, or after it started to go down. (She doesn't want to be seen! Or greeted! She is ashamed, and outcast). Jesus breaks taboos at once and asks her to help him with a drink of water. One, men usually didn't address a woman on the street, and Two- Jews didn't talk to Samaritans. Three he drinks from an "unclean" cup. Samaritans were a mixed race that fused Jewish worship with pagan worship. The mount of Gerizim had a temple which they used to worship with a false priesthood, they were unclean.

Now I want you to note what is taking place here. This is a dialogue that has been contested for hundreds of years between Samaria and Jews about worship. The 'who' and the 'where' get to worship and have the deliverance by the Messiah. That frames the conversation around the woman's spiritual needs.

This woman was on her way to tie Marilyn Monroe with her number of marriages. Usually to snare that many different men there had to be attractive qualities. But like Marilyn, had not learned how to be in a lasting relationship, There were some inherent flaws in her person. And she knew that her present relationship didn't help her to not be an outcast in either the Samaritan or the Jewish cultures. Now let's get to the meat of the conversation.

She asks "How can you ask me for a drink?" then Jesus responds "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."

Her response is sharp, she comes indirectly—"You don't have a rope or bucket where can you get this living water? Are you better than Jacob?"

Jesus—"any one drinks this well water gets thirsty, but those who drink the water I give will never thirst, because it will well up in them to eternal life."

"Sir give me this water so I don't have to keep coming back to this well." Jesus said, "Go call your husband to come back here." WHOA "I have no husband". Jesus says, "You are correct you have had five husbands and the one you are with is not your husband." Jesus shows her He knows everything about her, a prophet!

Jesus goes to the heart of the woman's life's problems, personal short falls.

But she side steps his statement and brought up the conflict of where and how to worship that was between Samaritans worship on that mountain, and Jews in Jerusalem.

Now Jesus doesn't let her off the hook, he brings the issue back to her personally, and saying a time is coming that 'she' will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, Then the big revelation takes place.

She tries to side step again, says that she believes the Messiah is coming and will explain everything to her. And Jesus tells her "I am the One".

We now see that all the layers like an onion has been peeled back of how she tries to keep the Lord from bringing the goodness of God into her life. He doesn't let her deflect her personal need of Living Water.

She then gets it! Here is the Messiah, she can't hide her heart from him.

She then leaves her water container, (a most prized object) and then goes and tells the whole village, the very people she is estranged from that she thinks she has met the Messiah. They all follow her back and unlike the Pharisees they believe when they meet Jesus because of her.

Some of you are thirsty— your life is dry.

You may be continuously making poor choices , could be marriages, or a whole host of issues. You could have many layers of the onion. Life under your power is weak and places you at the well at high noon.

You know you need to come to Jesus but you try to keep side stepping the issue!! The preacher, the music, the other Christians, any and everything excuse to keep you from facing the issue you need to confess your sins and seek the spiritual life that Christ can well up in you!.

You need to surrender to Him now! "Now is the appointed hour".

YOU Can't hide from the Messiah.

A preface or an addendum to the message.

A friend said this reflection has to be really good. Repeat a theme, make it funny, and grab them. My Dad, Rev. Paul Amstutz, told me when I was ordained, "Dave, a pastor has to be able to Preach, Pray or Die on The Spot. Hope not the die part too soon."

Preach—Share the Good news of Jesus' love: Preached to 3 folk on a snowy morning ; a Catholic congregation of well over a thousand. Preached; funerals with hundreds in attendance or like the one with funeral director, the vault guy, and the deceased. Preached to a little boy and his mom in a camp ground service. Preached a Valentine day wedding with 600,000 viewers on TV, and Shared Jesus' with a tiny wedding of four in attendance. Preached in season and out of season in tux, robe, shorts, ripped jeans, suit and winter coat (furnace went out). Preached with a cat rubbing around my ankles; another time with a bat dive bombing overhead. Also preached in swim trunks; the youth sermon that included being tied and chained and thrown into a swimming pool. Remember the passage about being a fool for Jesus Christ? Preaching has been the most humbling and blessed experiences.

Pray- Oh- not counting the thousands of prayers during the regular church events or the times the words of the Lord's prayer escaped me and my wife had to bail me out: I have been blessed as a pastor to lift the Lord's name blessings boats, classic cars, houses, and bicycles: in planes, trains, busses, vans, boats and backseats of horrendous drivers. Prayed at; graduations, band concerts, softball games, and bowling alleys, Service organizations, City and Township halls, court house, jail and prison. Prayed on hill sides, mountain tops, riversides, pool sides, street side, courtyards, in ERs, delivery rooms, morgue, gravesides, even of the neighbor kids pets. Prayed on; radio, live TV and cable. Like the postman -prayer in the rain, sleet, snow, wind, and heat. Prayers; with the suicidal, the seeking and the lost. There were prayers answered by miracles of God (to my amazement): medical healings, water from a well, even held off rain ten minutes once! Oh, yes there were prayers for the Bishop and the cabinet not to blow my next appointment.

Now for the **'die on the spot'** part. The unexpected DS worship service visit and I can't pronounce Habakkuk to save me. There was the moment I realized the communion steward had us serve moldy green grape Juice. Or the morning—observing I have preached for ten minutes with my shirt tale out my fly. There were mornings that my sermon notes vanished between my study and pulpit. Then there was the wedding where I used the bride's sister's name (a twin) instead of hers, twice. Cardiac arrest when I discovered I forgot the briefcase with all the VIM team passports and trip money (thousands in today's money) in the Haitian tap -tap. Oh yes, the Christmas Eve service, when my six year old son stormed the platform with his new turquoise plastic out of tune guitar, that had a giant cartoon platypus on it. Determined

to accompany the congregation singing "O little Town of Bethlehem" while playing the guitar over his head like an 80's rock star.

"It has been an honor to Preach, Pray, and Die on The Spot for Christ!" Dave Amstutz