

There is an urgency to physical thirst that is easy to understand. In very cool temperatures, the outer limits of how long you will live without taking in any water is about ten days. Raise the high temperature to 100 degrees and you're looking at 5 days, maximum. There is no life without water. It's as simple as that.

Jesus says, "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." He said these words to a woman that he met at the town well. Even though Jesus had asked her for a drink of water, it turns out that she was the one with the thirst, and the truth is, she stands for all of us. We all have a thirst for something, and sometimes we let our cravings control us.

Maybe you try to quench your thirst in relationships. You crave attention and affection, praise and appreciation. You love being loved. You'll go to great lengths to get that feeling. But the thing is, people have a way of disappointing you. They don't appreciate you quite as much as you would like. They don't love you the way you wish they would. You try on one relationship after another, hoping this next one will hit the spot, but you're still thirsty.

Maybe you try to quench your thirst through achievement. By striving for excellence and success, you believe you can fill yourself up. So you work hard, you work long, you become successful, you hit each goal you set for yourself. You enjoy the fruit of your labor. But even so, when it's just you and the silence, there's an itch that you can't scratch; something gnawing at you; a thirst that your talent can't seem to touch.

Maybe you try to quench your thirst by "getting stuff." Sure, I've got dumpsters full of things that I thought would do it for me, but maybe this next one will be the one, and I can finally be satisfied. That's what the commercial promised.

And maybe you've even tried to quench your thirst by turning to religion—and by "religion" I mean the religion that human beings have invented; religion that says if you do something for God, He'll do something for you in return. Religion that says that if you start going to church, maybe bad things will stop happening to you the rest of the week. Religion that says, "God, just get me out of this predicament, and I'll do whatever you ask." But then God doesn't hold up his end of the bargain, He doesn't answer your prayer the way you asked him to; You played the game and said the words and put a few bills in the offering plate, but the thirst is still there, and you're wondering, what more am I supposed to do?

I don't think I can say it any clearer than this: your desperate thirst of the soul will never go away until you drink deeply of Jesus Christ. He is the source from which you must draw if you want to finally be quenched and healthy and whole. Now that's beautiful poetic language, all this talk of water and thirst and so forth. But what does it really mean?

It means that you receive Jesus on His terms. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, He is nothing less than the Messiah. The Messiah came to wage war against evil. He came to save sinners from the hellish consequences of their sins. He came to suffer and die on a cross and rise from His grave, and in so doing to dig a well that would overflow with forgiveness. To drink deeply of Jesus, then, is to humble yourself and to admit all the bad places your thirst has taken you and finally, to drink from His well of mercy. It means to guzzle the fresh water of God's forgiveness like there is no tomorrow, because life with Him depends on it. There is no life without water, and Jesus pours it out with extravagant generosity.

The apostle Paul, writing to the church in Rome, said it like this: "...God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Life-giving water spills from the baptismal font. Jesus pours himself into us in his holy Supper. Jesus' words saturate dry hearts and that's not all. Jesus says something fascinating in John chapter 4. He says, "The water that I give...will become in [you] a spring of water welling up to eternal life." When you receive the life-giving blessings of Jesus in faith, the source of those blessings makes a home in you. Did you catch that? You don't have to go looking for the spring of water to fill your bucket. Jesus puts the spring in you. You can access it any time. You can learn to preach the gospel to yourself. The living water of Jesus keeps bubbling up as you remember his Words and actions.

And when you do, you'll see your thirst for relationship quenched in brotherhood with your Savior and Lord. You'll see your thirst for success quenched in Jesus' victory over death. Your thirst for getting stuff will be quenched in Christ-like contentment and thankfulness for the gifts you've been given. A thirst for escape will be quenched by a confident embrace of reality in which Jesus is truly there, moment by moment with you. And your thirst for a religion that "works" will be quenched by a person...a person who loves you, a person who sacrificed everything for you and will never leave you.

The Samaritan woman stands with us. She had it right when she said, "Sir, give me this water." That is our prayer today.