

Satisfying our Thirst

Menno Mennonite Church

June 14, 2026

Purpose: to identify with our need to be fed by the revelation of God's good work.

Message: As people seeking God, we are met with what we need by God's grace.

Scripture: John 4:5-15; 25-29 (I will read); Genesis 18:1-5;9 -15, 21:1-7 (please read noting the breadth of the story)

Synopsis: Thirst, real thirst, makes all other scarcities pale in comparison. We can go for quite some time without food, sleep, and other necessities of life. But we know that having our thirst quenched is an utmost need which cannot be long ignored. When we thirst, really thirst, there is little else we can concentrate on, and we cannot long survive without our thirsts being quenched. Yet often we find ourselves denying or avoiding our spiritual thirst, being driven away into the categories of seeking, wondering and wishing that we might be filled. We are shaped by what we thirst after, what ever it is. We are called to fill our thirsts with the real sustenance of an encounter with God.

John 4:4–15 (CEB)

⁴ Jesus had to go through Samaria.

⁵ He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar,
which was near the land Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

⁶ Jacob's well was there.
Jesus was tired from his journey,
so he sat down at the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water.

Jesus said to her, "Give me some water to drink."

⁸ His disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food.

⁹ The Samaritan woman asked,
"Why do you, a Jewish man,
ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"
(Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other.)

¹⁰ Jesus responded,
"If you recognized God's gift and who is saying to you,
'Give me some water to drink,'
you would be asking him and he would give you living water."

¹¹ The woman said to him,
"Sir, you don't have a bucket and the well is deep.
Where would you get this living water?"

¹² You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you?

He gave this well to us,
and he drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

¹³ Jesus answered,
"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,
¹⁴ but whoever drinks from the water
that I will give will never be thirsty again.
The water that I give will become in those who drink it
a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water,
so that I will never be thirsty
and will never need to come here to draw water!"

John 4:25–30 (CEB)

²⁵ The woman said, “I know that the Messiah is coming,
the one who is called the Christ.
When he comes, he will teach everything to us.”

²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I Am—the one who speaks with you.”

²⁷ Just then, Jesus’ disciples arrived
and were shocked that he was talking with a woman.

But no one asked, “What do you want?”
or “Why are you talking with her?”

²⁸ The woman put down her water jar
and went into the city.

She said to the people,

²⁹ “Come and see a man who has told me everything I’ve done!
Could this man be the Christ?”

³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to see Jesus.

Being thirsty, as common as it is, can be all consuming. If you are anything like me, it is not something that I think about with any regularity. When I do and recognize that my body is calling for satisfaction, there isn't a whole lot you can think about BUT that until you get that sacred first gulp. Being thirsty of course is not so much a signal that there is something that needs attention soon but that there is already something going on with you that there is something already well wrong that you need to look at as soon as possible. When you are thirsty, you are usually already in deficit in terms of hydration. It is somewhat difference between the ubiquitous check engine light versus oil pressure indicator. By the time you realize it, you have needed a drink for a while already.

Our thirsts are not only a physical body issue. Our thirsts extend beyond what our body demands but also root themselves deeply in our bodies and souls as well. We are always thirsting for something and have things within us that we wish to satisfy. Some are moderate, needling in the back of our mind. Other concerns demand our attention almost every day with our worries that can be hard to put aside. When I am truly thirsty, usually for a soda or something which is not the best thing for me in the first place, it is all that I can do to keep my mind in the present, and not on that which I desire. This thirst is no less imperative or directive when we find it within our souls. We may not be able to name it, we may not be able to even understand it, we may not be even able to realize that we have a spiritual thirst at all, we often know on an intuitive level that that there is a need, that a spiritual dryness has entered our lives. So much so that in the demands of daily life and living often by the time we are able to articulate our thirst—for God, for fulfillment, for nearness, for healing—whatever it is, our need has already become quite dire. But once we become aware of it, our thirst for the holy, for relief, can be our dominating distraction, blinding us to all else.

We often struggle to acknowledge that we are indeed thirsty for God. We are far more ready to look to our other reasons and realities to explain our wants. Indeed, this very story and Jesus' promise of eternal water within the soul is often used to explain why we shouldn't be thirsty. If you are with God, and if God likes you, then all will automatically be well with you, and you needn't worry about your spiritual thirst again. We know that this is not true. The life of faith often contains periods of struggle, exhaustion, and longing. Even those who we look to as examples of the faith are the ones who have struggled in this way. Mother Teresa whose charity and love inspires many, and who is being fast tracked to sainthood, wrote extensively and

often about the thirst she felt for a sense of the holy. We do not always feel energized for the work of love. We are not always on fire with the passion of life and hope. Sometimes we know what it is to feel the desert around us, and our deepest selves running dry. Most of the time we keep it to ourselves because we have received the notion that this is somehow a failure of the spiritual plumbing within and it is something that is a failing for us as well. But that is where Jesus meets at the well.

The first thing I want you to notice about John 4 is that it follows John 3. I know: it's a terribly insightful bit of textual analysis on my part and rather easily overlooked. But the connection here makes more sense when I remind what the contents of John 3 happen to be. That is where we have Nicodemus and all the questions he brings to Jesus. Questions about the nature of faith, of being born again and the way that God's love comes into the world to redeem the world from within. Jesus and disciples were telling of the light of the world, and showing it more, and the movement was underway, so much so that they needed to move on from where they were as they were to someplace new. Now we are given Jesus sharing that same reconciling and restoring mission with a new audience in a new place; a place where even the disciples thought him radical to be sharing with a Samaritan Woman of all things. They were still being taught what the kingdom of God was to be and that its citizenship could not be contained by any bounds that they themselves might place upon it.

They and we are a lot like Nicodemus before us: we don't always comprehend Jesus' way and means of sharing the good news of what God is up to and do not always appreciate the well spring that is being offered us. Here is where I think that Jesus' use and adaptation of the ordinary things of his world to explain the big ideas of the life of the spirit and the calling of disciple leaves us in the dust. In our modern North American context, accustomed as we are to receive clean, healthy water in here-to-fore unheard of abundance with the mere twist of a tap, we find ourselves distanced to the assumptions that were at work here. For Jesus some 1900 years before the advent of indoor plumbing, and the woman seeking her daily water and so much more, water always took intention. Life revolved around water—where to get it, how to maintain it, and all the rest. It is no small thing to have a reliable and historical proven well to draw from. Society organized itself around sources of water. A good well, one that could be counted on in quantity and quality, was something to be jealously guarded. But there was always work, always practices, always intention to access even the best water. It was what took

persistent practice to come and draw from the well. Day in; day out there was the walk, the drawing of the bucket and the long, careful progress back to use the water in daily life. That was taken for granted and the piece that we miss with our extension to our Spiritual selves.

Because the same is true of our spiritual wells. We must tend them. We must visit them. We must maintain our practices, drawing on our wells. This water of eternal life is present friends. It bubbles forth in places where, often, we least expect it and we most need it. It flows deep, steady, and coolly, and is always there if we but visit the well to draw from it. We have to draw from the well to drink from the well. Jesus does not pressurize and purify it for us to never give it another thought. We must develop the practices in our lives that give us access to God's life giving waters. For some of us it is a practice that has been long developed over time and discipline that connects us with the divine. Sometimes it is a space or a place which has come to be a touchstone out of which the spring of life often flows. But whatever that practice is, we maintain it expecting to be met by God, trusting that we will be nourished by God's good waters that run deep.

But there is more here than us simply finding our wellspring of God's grace and maintaining it for our sake and our own thirsts. We are invited to far more than that. The woman who encounters Jesus at the well does not stop with merely finding a life giving well that she finds in this odd conversation with an odd man, but she shares the well with those around her. She is met by what she needs and one who knows her completely so she can then in turn share that with others. Again, it is not accidental that the well is often the feature around which a community is organized, dwelling at the middle of the life of the group. A source of life to meet the needs of all must be shared.

We must share that Jesus is indeed our source of life that others might know the waters and be fed. That is how we grow the kingdom in this world. But we also need to share this that we might tell of where we have found water that others might share it too. We need to share those places of life giving holy encounter with our community, with our family, as an invitation to all who would thirst and require a drink accepting that thirst in all its forms is part of life and that we can share the seeking for water together. We need to share our wells, our points of access to the holy as a way of offering for others new and different ways of accessing the living waters that we all need. Not in a "this is the best place and brand of water that you will ever taste and you would be fool to do anything else" but rather: "the thirst is real. This is what has worked for

me. Let me walk with you to find what works for you.” You know: doing the work of way finding in community that we all might find what we need most.

I need to share my well, and encounter the wells of others because the more ways we have to come and access the flowing waters beneath the surface, the better we can find new ways to quench our thirsts. It might be speaking of practice that works for us. It might be noticing and appreciating that there are those around us who are often running dry for a time, offering to come along side for a time. It may be simply finding the words to begin to wonder at the thirst we are carrying and where it might be filled. We may just need to offer the cup of spiritual water that is most needed by those seeking to quench their thirsts. But we are invited to our wells both in visiting and in sharing as an invitation to the generosity of grace which visits us all. We do this because we are body gathered, we are part of one another, and no dry time in our lives can ever change that.

Jesus meets us like the woman at the well: embracing us for who we are and calling us as we are to come and follow. In following, our thirsts, our soul drying realities, are quenched when we seek, find, and share the wells of life- giving water graciously supplied to us by our creator who brings water to his people, even in the wilderness.

May we drink deep, love fully, and quench our thirsts in God’s life-giving stream.