Jesus – the giver of living water

1. Introduction

a. As we come to our passage for today in John 4 I am amazed how the Lord's timing makes this passage all the more significant. As we are aware we are in the Hebrew month of Elul, the month when "the king is in the field". We have set this time leading up to Tabernacles as a time to meet with the Lord believing that he is inviting us to spend time with him in his field. A place described in Song of Solomon 6.

SoS 6:2-3 *My beloved has gone to his garden, To the beds of spices, To feed his flock in the gardens, And to gather lilies. 3 I am my beloved's, And my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.*

b. In our passage today we find Jesus in a field in Samaria ready for an appointment with a Samaritan woman. Jesus has come into her everyday life ready to invite her into an eternal relationship with God. This is so similar to the invitation he gives us during Elul that I believe this message, which was planned for today many weeks ago, is clear confirmation of the invitation he offers to us 2000 years later!

John 4:1-15 *Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), 3 he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. 4 And he had to pass through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

7 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings 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 nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but 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." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

c. Many Jews when travelling from Judea to Galilee would choose a longer route to avoid Samaria because they thought the Samaritans were unclean. Politically Samaria was part of the Roman province of Judea in Jesus' day. Nevertheless, culturally there were ancient barriers that divided the residents of Samaria from the Jews who lived in Galilee and Judea.

d. Wicked King Omri had purchased the hill on which he built Samaria as the new capital of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 16:24). The name Samaria eventually came to describe the district in which the city stood and even the whole Northern Kingdom. After the Assyrians captured the city and terminated the

kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., they deported most of the citizens and imported foreigners who intermarried with the remaining Israelites. Most of these foreigners continued to worship their pagan gods (2 Kings 17-18).

e. The Jews who returned to Jerusalem after the Exile regarded the residents of Samaria as racial half-breeds and religious compromisers. The Samaritans resisted Nehemiah's attempts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 4:1-2). They built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim opposite Shechem about 400 B.C., which they dedicated to Zeus Xenios.

f. These actions all resulted in continued hostility between the two groups. The Samaritans continued to worship on Mt. Gerizim and accepted only the Pentateuch as canonical. A small group of Israelis who claim to be able to trace their ancestry back to the Samaritans survives to the present day

g. But John said that Jesus "*had to pass* through Samaria." Is this because he had an appointment to keep? Most students of this passage have believed that one of the reasons Jesus took this route was to minister to the Samaritans. His meeting with the Samaritan woman was not some coincidence but a divine appointment.

2. The Samaritan woman

a. What we have here is ethnic, racial, and religious issues that made Jews feel disdain for Samaritans. They were ceremonially unclean. They were racially impure. They were religiously heretical. And therefore, they were avoided. Hence the woman's response when Jesus asks her for a drink.

John 4:9 *The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)*

b. This woman is not only a Samaritan but, as we discover later, also an adulteress. She comes to the well at the hottest time of the day all on her own, probably to avoid having to mix with the other women who probably looked down upon her. This is a glorious picture of Jesus' desire to meet with those who everyone else has rejected.

c. No matter who we are Jesus invites us to meet with him. In this season of Elul this is so important to grasp. The king has come into the field and no one is excluded from meeting with him no matter our background or our sin and shame.

d. Jesus sat on the well to be fully conspicuous and unavoidable and asked a woman — whom he knew was an unclean, impure, heretical, disreputable Samaritan — for a drink. Not for permission to get a drink, but for a drink from her bucket.

e. Jesus is pursuing this unacceptable relationship. God is pursuing this woman. He means to have her in heaven. This is *graciously* relational. Everything is intentional. This is not just happening. This is design.

John 3:17 *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

f. in this text, God, in Jesus, means for us to feel graciously pursued. God is seeking a gracious relationship with you. That's what this well scene means. He is graciously purposeful, and he is graciously relational.

g. So Jesus does not respond to her question since by his behaviour he has demonstrated that there are no barriers between him and her. He has smashed that wall with his own behaviour, and he is on to more important things in verse 10.

John 4:10-11 ***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 nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?*

h. Just like Nicodemus in the previous chapter who could not grasp what Jesus meant when he told him he needed to be born again so the women here does not see the significance of what Jesus is saying because she is only aware of the natural. Like many of us she becomes defensive because she does not understand and so she challenges Jesus assuming he is claiming some sort of superiority.

John 4:12 *Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."*

i. Jesus responds, as he did with Nicodemus, to assert his superiority and offer her that which she needs. He is superior to Jacob and his gift is superior. His water and his well are superior and his sons and daughters are superior — they never die.

John 4:13-14 ***Jesus*** *said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14** but 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."*

3. The offer of living water

a. There are five things to note about the water that Jesus gives and offers us today.

i It's the gift of God (verse 10: "If you knew the gift of God").

ii It's living water (verse 10: "He would have given you living water").

iii If you drink it, you never thirst again — that is, it's always there to satisfy you when your longing soul is thirsty (verse 14: "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again").

iv This water becomes a spring — a well of water (verse 14: "The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water"). That's why you never get thirsty again — not because one drink is enough, but because one true drink produces a well for an eternity of drinks.

v This water gives eternal life (verse 14: ". . . a spring of water welling up to eternal life.").

b. But she still doesn't see it.

John 4:15 *The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."*

c. All that this water means to her is that it would save her the trouble of coming to the well in the heat of the day. But Jesus does not give up. Seemingly out of the blue Jesus changes the subject!

John 4:16-19 *Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." **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 now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." [19] The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

d. She doesn't want to come here every day because this is the place where her shame is exposed, in the public meeting place. But here is where Jesus is and he is about to deal with her shame. He is not here to help her avoid her shame but to deal with it.

e. Jesus knew already that she did not have a husband and was living with her boyfriend. He knew that when he asked her to go get her husband. That means Jesus is intentionally exposing her sin. Not to everybody at the well, but to herself and to him.

f. He is moving into her inner life and forcing her to deal with the inside — the secret places — of her life. The living water that he had offered is for the inner person. This is not water you drink with your mouth; it's water you drink with your heart. He was dealing with her deep, inner life and need, and she wouldn't let him. It may be that she couldn't go there because it was locked and sealed. So he puts a prophetic key in this door. She cannot open herself to the living water because her inner life is locked up against everything that might expose it. It is too painful and too dirty.

John 3:20 *For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.*

g. Jesus knows that her blindness and hardness to the inner spiritual meaning of living water is compounded by the effect of years of sexual and relational sin. So he is intentionally exposing her inner life. God means to have this woman as a worshipper in spirit and truth. But in her present condition, she doesn't even have a living spirit. She is dead and hard and blind. And Jesus understands this condition perfectly. He will not stay on the surface of things.

h. However, having exposed her sin in verse 17–18, he doesn't follow through when she changes the subject to worship. Jesus never comes back to this issue of her adultery. He doesn't go anywhere with it. This means that he didn't bring it up to get closure. He didn't bring it up to condemn her. He didn't bring it up to rehearse the details. He brought it up to expose the thirst that she doesn't even know she has.

4. Living water for the thirsty

a. He had offered her living water — water that if she drank it in her heart by faith would become a well of water springing up to eternal life and joy and satisfaction. This water is for her soul, not her body. It's her soul that's thirsty. And she doesn't know it. So Jesus is going to show her.

b. No woman goes through sexual relationships with six men without either starting desperately thirsty or ending desperately thirsty. There is in this woman, it seems, a cavernous void of longing, thirsting. Either she can't find in a man what she craves — and so moves from the one to the other, desperately believing men are the water she is thirsty for — or they can't find what they are craving in her and one after the other drops her. Or both. In either case, she is left with a deep, deep emptiness and sinfulness that is so painful and so rebellious that she seals it up. And there is no

entrance to her heart at all. It is locked in darkness. That is what Jesus knows and so he moves into that inner darkness.

c. Like this woman many of us move on from one relationship, one situation, one addiction, one distraction to another trying to quench the thirst within us. One of the evidences that we have not drunk the water of life, or that we are quenching its spring, is that we are unstable like this woman, and always moving from one thing to the next seeking to fill the void that Jesus promises to fill.

d. Rather than face her thirst she seeks to distract Jesus with questions about worship and Jesus is willing to go with her to her topic, but not to her issue. Her issue is: "Where do we worship?" Her whole life is one of externals. She is dead on the inside, and all she can relate to now are superficial externals. Her distracting question only deals with geography.

John 4:20 *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."*

e. Jesus won't deal at that level. He has gone into her heart, and that is what he will deal with.

John 4:21 ***Jesus*** *said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.*

f. The issue is not in this mountain or that mountain, but spirit and truth. What she needs is a spirit that is alive and a mind in love with truth. Instead of *where* we worship, Jesus focuses on *whom* we worship and *how* we worship. In the following verses Jesus establishes that true worship is not about Jerusalem but the Father.

g. Jesus avoided the temptation to abandon discussion of living water. He told the woman that the real issue was not where God's people had worshipped Him in the past but how they would worship Him in the future. This was the more important issue since Messiah had come and would terminate worship as both the Jews and the Samaritans knew it. Jesus urged her to believe Him because she had already acknowledged him as a prophet. This command was an added guarantee that what He said was true.

John 4:23-24 *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* [24] *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

h. She had started by being concerned about their earthly fathers but Jesus redirects her to a spiritual relationship with a heavenly Father. In this statement he announces the coming of the Messiah, the one who will lead his people into truth. The one who is the giver of living water.

5. The gift of living water

a. So we have seen that by believing in the Messiah we open up the way to receive living water from him. But what is this living water? For that, we must go to another passage of Scripture. In this case, Jesus is in the temple surrounded by a throng of worshippers.

John 7:37–39 *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.* ***38*** *Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"* ***39*** *Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

b. Here Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the living water. External influence of the Spirit had always been given in the conversion and sanctification of the Old Testament saints and prophets, but the gift of the Spirit who would indwell believers had not yet been received (Acts 10:44–45). So, though many people say that Jesus is the living water, Jesus Himself intended the phrase to mean the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers and seals them for salvation (Ephesians 1:13–14).

c. It is the ministry of the Spirit, flowing out of a heart redeemed by God, that blesses believers and, through them, brings life and light to the world. It is this flow of living water that releases true worship to the Father and enables us to see the truth. This water is eternal, it has no end. As we allow the Holy Spirit to flow through us so we enter into eternal life and are able to worship in spirit and in truth.

John 4:14 *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."*

6. Conclusion

a. It doesn't matter who we are or what shame or guilt we carry we can come out into the field and meet with the giver of living water. As we allow him to unlock the door to the true nature of our hearts and come into agreement with him then he will release the living flow of his spirit to bring healing, joy and eternal salvation and we shall thirst no more.

b. As we take our eyes off the externals and focus on the one whom we worship and allow him to remove all barriers so he will transform us more and more into his likeness that we may reflect his glory and live in the joy of our eternal salvation. That his flow of living water would flow to us and through us into a world that is dark and thirsty.

2 Cor.3:18 *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*