

March 8, 2025

John 5:26

Last week I said that Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus was one of the most powerful, most theologically dense, important conversations to ever happen, an amazing part of the Bible. Well, *this* conversation Jesus has with this woman is *also* one of the most beautiful, rich, most amazing conversations that happen in the Bible. And this one comes *right after* the other! Nicodemus was a man, this person is a woman. In this culture, it would have been a major taboo for a man to even speak to a woman that wasn't his wife or relative. While Nicodemus was a leader of the Jews, this woman was a Samaritan. Some of you know this, but the Jews and Samaritans *hated* each other. In the 700's BC, the Assyrian Empire destroyed the northern part of Israel and took most of the people away into exile. They left the poorest of Israelites in that area, known as Samaria, but they also introduced a number of different ethnicities who had their own gods and religious traditions. Over a few centuries, a new people were born: the Samaritans- who were both ethnically and religiously mixed. And the Jews HATED them, and they HATED the Jews right back- and this woman was a Samaritan. Nicodemus was a morally righteous figure. This woman was a moral and social outcast- an adulterous woman. And today we see Jesus break the gender barrier, the racial barrier, the moral barrier to speak to her. Why? *Because she was thirsty.* And he wanted nothing more than to satisfy her thirst- because **Jesus is the Water that Satisfies all Thirst.**

Like we said, this interaction broke many cultural norms. If you've ever been to Arizona or Nevada, or an arid desert climate like Israel, you will be told the same thing: "Don't labor in the middle of the day." The sun would have been brutal. But here this woman is, drawing water from a well- strenuous work-- in the middle of the day *by herself- that was abnormal, too.* Middle eastern women would always draw water in groups for safety purposes. But she doesn't. Why not? Because she likely has no friends. No one wants to be seen even speaking to her. But Jesus does. And her response is at the same time surprised and rather snarky. "You, a *Jew*, asking *me* for a drink? Get lost." But Jesus shrugs off her rudeness and says, "You know, if you had any idea what God wants to give you, if you had any idea who I am, you would ask *me* for a drink and I would give you living water." Keep in mind- "living water" was a term they would have used for a spring of water- the water would bubble up from the ground like it was alive: "living" water. "*Huh?*" The woman seems to be getting annoyed and perplexed at Jesus. "What are you even talking about? The well is deep and you have nothing to draw water with. Oh. I get it. Typical Jewish arrogance. You have a spring better than this one. You know what, our father- he's our father too- Jacob gave us this well. You have a better well? What- you think you're better than *father Jacob?*" Jesus doesn't get offended. Instead, he clarifies: "This water can only satisfy your thirst for a while- you're going to have to come back for more. I have water that once you drink it, you will never thirst again. In fact, it will bubble up within you and give you life forever. This water can truly satisfy you and make it so you never thirst - in fact, you'll never die." "Great. Let's have it. I hate having to come to this well. Where is it?" It's hard to tell how

sincere she's being or whether she understands exactly what Jesus is saying. Let's assume the best: She is genuinely interested in what Jesus has to offer. But it still seems like she doesn't quite understand what kind of thirst Jesus is talking about. How can he get her to see?

"Go call your husband." "I don't have a husband." Hm. She wasn't lying, but there was a bit more to the story. She's hoping he doesn't pry and ask, "why?" He doesn't need to. "You're right. You've had five husbands, and the man you are with now is not your husband." What's Jesus doing? Is he shaming her? No. He's showing her the kind of thirst she has been desperately trying to satisfy. We mentioned Nicodemus before- how he was completely different from this woman. But in reality, he wasn't. Deep down, Nicodemus had a thirst- a thirst for righteousness, for acclaim, for the ability to feel good about himself and know that he has done enough, that he is enough, and he used his religious performance to do that. This woman has a similar thirst- she desperately wants praise, she wants to be worthy of attention and affection, she wants to feel beautiful and desired, she wants security, to be wanted, and she's thirsting for it- and she's been trying to quench that thirst by throwing herself into the arms of all these men and giving her body to them hoping that *this time* it would satisfy her thirst. That is the thirst Jesus has come to quench.

If you were having this conversation with Jesus, what do you think he would say to you? Maybe he would say, "Go get your phone and show me your search history." "Show me your credit card bill." "Show me your monetary debt." "Tell me how many times you've lied about yourself to others, or about others." "Let's see what you've done in the last few weeks just to get people's attention- even negative attention." "Let's see what you've done for your friend's approval." Go show me all the times you checked your posts on instagram to see how many likes you have, and how many times you've compared your number of followers to others." "Go show me how many hours you logged into work this past week." "Go call the last person you've slept with." And you might ask Jesus, "well, what does *that* have to do with this?" *Everything*. Everything we do, whether it be moral and righteous, or wicked, rebellious, or plain ridiculous, comes from one thing: *thirst*. We are desperately thirsty. The reason you care so much about the praise of others is because you are thirsty for the praise of the one who truly praiseworthy. The reason you give your body to people who you shouldn't is because you desire to be desired, you want to know that this person won't leave you or forsake you. The reason you slave away for status and money and power is you think that if you have enough money, power, wealth, success, and achievement, then you will be enough. And it will not work. In the same way that ocean water looks so refreshing, but in reality will make you die of thirst, all the things you are trying to use to satisfy your thirst will only make you thirstier. And Jesus comes to you and says, "I have the water of life. I am the water of life." What Jesus offers you is something that, if you have it, you will never thirst again. Do you desire to be loved, to be valued, to be desired? The eternal Lord of the universe loved, valued, and desired you so much that he was willing to endure Hell itself just to have you- he was willing to take on the punishment for evil, just to have you. Do you desire

power, glory, honor, and status? Jesus promises that what he is going to give you in the resurrection of the dead is a new, glorified, perfect, strong body that cannot die. Do you desire beauty? In God's eyes, you are as perfect, as glorious, as beautiful as Jesus himself- the God so beautiful he strikes terror in those who see him face to face- and he will make you like him! Do you desire security and safety? Jesus' resurrection from the dead is your absolute proof that everything he promises is true, and he now reigns and rules over all things for your good. And if he does allow pain to enter your life- you have proof on the cross that he will never leave you or stop loving you. This is the water of life. This is what you are looking for. Stop drinking ocean water and drink the water of life.

That's what Jesus is saying to her. Then she says something odd- "What's with you Jews and the temple stuff?" It may seem like she's dodging the question and that she doesn't want to talk about her sinful personal life. Remember- in the Old Testament, what would someone do if they had sinned? They would offer a sacrifice whose death would grant forgiveness. Where would they do that? The Temple. Where can't she go because she's a Samaritan? The Temple- and the one the Samaritans had built on Mt. Gerezim, which she could probably see from this spot, was destroyed a hundred years earlier. So, she's not simply changing the subject. She's saying, "How can I be forgiven of my sins if you Jews won't even let us have a temple to offer sacrifices in?" And Jesus says, "soon, that won't even matter." And notice what Jesus does- he does correct her. The Samaritans had some real spiritual issues. They thought they were worshiping God, but they weren't because they didn't understand the truth about God- they weren't guided by the Scriptures. Jesus shows that the Jews were indeed being obedient to God in their temple worship in a way that the Samaritans were not- but the time is coming, and it's even here, when that won't even matter. It won't matter? How can the temple not matter? How confusing! The woman seems to be overwhelmed- "When Messiah comes, he'll explain this all." And Jesus says, literally, "I am." Where have we heard that before? Where had she heard that before? When God revealed himself to Moses: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am who I am. I am." How can the temple and sacrifice not matter anymore? Because the true sacrifice has come- the one that would earn forgiveness for all sinners, even this woman, and what will matter is not where one worships, what rituals they follow, but whether they trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. God has come down to die for sinners. God has come to satisfy the thirst of a sinful world.

There's so much we could talk about with this text. I'm going to restrain myself to this one point: *how does Jesus deal with sinful people who are wrong about many things?* Does he shame them? No. Does he affirm all their life choices? No! He also shows how her lifestyle is not only sinful, but also an attempt to satisfy a deep longing and thirst. And he also corrects her on some of her not-so-great Samaritan theology! He proclaims himself as *her* Messiah, *her* Savior, *her* friend, *her* God who would gladly forgive her and give her what she truly desired. When you look at the person constantly drunk, sleeping around, saying and doing obnoxious things for attention,

overcome with greed, betraying and lying, or whatever else is sinful, what do you see? You *shouldn't* see an enemy, someone to be mocked, humiliated, shamed, *or* simply affirmed. You should see someone who is thirsty. My friends, you have that water. Ask them if what they are drinking is really satisfying them, but patiently offer them the precious water of life who can satisfy every longing they have. Jesus and his church do not shame or humiliate sinners- they call them to step away from the saltwater, and invite them to drink the water of life.

There was a man, 1500 years ago, who was the male version of this woman. He was a serial adulterer. He was also an arrogant scholar who studied rhetoric, and desperately desired the praise, acclaim, and applause of his listeners. But after a while, he realized that he had a thirst these things couldn't satisfy. And he became a Christian- his name was Augustine, and he writes: "*Lord, you have created us for yourself. And our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.*" Christ is the living water. Drink up. Amen.