

## THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AND THE GIFT AND THE GIVER

"Jesus answered and said unto her. If thou knowest the Gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee. Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked Him, and He would have given thee living water," John 4:10.

John has two characteristics seldom found together, deep thought and vivid character drawing. Nothing can be more clear-cut and dramatic than the scene in the chapter before us. There is not a work of description of this Samaritan woman. She paints herself, and it is not a beautiful picture.

She is apparently of the peasant class, from a little village nestling on the hill above the plain, come down in the broiling sunshine to Jacob's well. She is of mature age, and has had a not altogether reputable past. She is frivolous, ready to talk to strangers, with a tongue quick to turn grave things into jests, and yet she possess, hidden beneath masses of unclean vanities, a conscience and a yearning for something better than she has, which Christ's Words awoke, and which was finally so enkindled as to make her fit to receive the full declaration of His Messiahship, which Pharisees and priests could not be trusted with.

We remember how the conversation began between this strangely assorted pair. The solitary Jew, sitting spent with travel on the well, asks for a draught of water, not in order to get an opening for preaching, but because He needs it. She replies with an exclamation of light wonder, half a jest and half a sarcasm, and challenging a response in the same tone.

But Jesus Christ lifts her to a higher level by the words of our verse, with awed levity, and prepared for a fuller revelation. "Thou dost wonder that I, being a Jew, ask drink of thee, a Samaritan. If thou knowest who I am, thy wonder at My asking would be more. If thou knowest what I have to give, we should change places, and thou wouldest ask, and I should bestow."

SO THEN WE HAVE HERE THE GIFT, THE GIVER AND THE WAY OF GETTING WHICH THIS "WOMAN IN MY LIFE" TAUGHT ME. **Ignorance hinders asking.**

First we see through her the gift of God.

Now it is quite clear that our Lord means the same thing, whatever it may be, by the two expressions, "The gift of God," and the "Living water." For, unless He does, the whole sequence of our text falls to pieces. "Living water" was suggested, no doubt, by the circumstances of the moment. There, in the well, was an ever-springing source, and, says, He, a like supply ever welling up for thirsty lips and foul hands, ever sweet and ever sufficient. God is always ready to give, to any Samaritan.

We can remember how, all through Scripture, we hear the tinkle of these waters as they run. The force of the expression is to be gathered largely from the Old Testament and the uses of the metaphor there. It has been supposed that by the "Living water" which God gives is here meant some one specific gift, such as that of the Holy Spirit, which sometimes is expressed by the metaphor. But as true as that is, I think that the "Living water" is eternal life.

"With thee is the fountain of life." And so, in the last resort, **the gift of God is God Himself. And nothing else will suffice us. We need Him, and we need none but Him.** "Let everyone who thirsteth come ye to the waters."

Our Lord, in the subsequent part of this conversation touches upon the great metaphor, and suggests one or two characteristics, blessings and excellencies of it. "It shall be in Him." It is something that we may carry about with us, in our souls, inseparable from our being, free from all possibility of being flinched away by violence, being rent from us by sorrows, or even being parted from us by death.

What a man has outside of him he only seems to have. **Our only real possessions are those which have passed into the substance of our souls. All else we shall leave behind. The only good is the inward good,** and this water of life slakes our thirst because **it flows into the deepest place of our being, and abides there forever.**

If you are seeking your satisfaction from fountains that remain outside of you after all your efforts, learn that all of them, by reason of their externality, will sooner or later, "Be broken cisterns, that can hold no water." If you want rest for your souls, and stilling for their yearnings, look for it there, where only it can be found, in Christ, who not only dwells in the Heavens to rule and to shower down blessings, but enters into the waiting heart and abides there, the inward, and therefore the only real possession and riches.

"IT SHALL BE IN HIM A FOUNTAIN OF WATER." It is "springing up" with an immortal energy, with ever fresh fullness, by its own inherent power, needing no pumps nor machinery, but ever welling forth its refreshment, an emblem of the joyous energy and continual freshness of vitality, which is granted to those who carry the Lord in their souls. And therefore can never be depressed beyond measure, nor ever feel that the burden of life is too heavy to bear, or its sorrows too sharp to endure.

"It springs up into eternal life," for water must seek its source, and rise to the level of its origin. And this fountain within a man, that reaches up ever towards the eternal life from which it came, and which it gives to its possessor, will bear him up towards the eternal life which is native to it, and therefore native to him.

No man is so poor, so low, so narrow in capacity, so limited in heart, **but that he needs a whole God to make him restful.** Nothing else will. To seek for satisfaction elsewhere is like sailors, who in their desperation, when the water tanks are empty, slake their thirst with the treacherous blue that washes cruelly along the battered sides of their ship. A moment's alleviation is followed by the recurrence, in ten-fold intensity, of the pangs of thirst, and by madness, and death. Do not drink the salt water that flashes and

rolls by your side when you can have recourse to the fountain of life that is with the Lord.

Some say, "Yes, preacher, commonplace, threadbare pulpits, rhetoric. It will never be too threadbare to be dinned into your ears until it has passed into your lives and regulated them."

Now notice how this Samaritan woman presents to us the Giver. Jesus Christ, the Giver, blends in one sentence, startling in its boldness, the Gift of God, and Himself as the Bestower. This man, exhausted for want of a draught of water, speaks with parched lips a claim most singularly in contrast with the request which He had just made. "I WILL GIVE THEE THE LIVING WATER."

No wonder this woman was bewildered, and could only say, "The well is deep, and Thou hast nothing to draw with." She might have said, "Why then dost Thou ask me?" The words were meant to create astonishment, in order that the astonishment might awaken interest, which would lead to the capacity for further illumination.

Suppose you had been there and not this Samaritan woman, and you saw this Man that she saw, and had heard the two things that she heard, and you knew no more about Him than she knew, what would you have thought of Him and His Words? You might have been more contemptuous than she was. See to it, that since you know so much that explains and warrants them, you do not treat them worse than she did.

Jesus Christ claims to give God's Gifts. He is able to give to that poor, frivolous, impure hearted and impure lived woman, at her request, the eternal life which shall still all the thirst of her soul, that had often in the past been satiated and disgusted, but had never been satisfied by any of its draughts.

And He claims that in this giving He is something more than a channel, because He says, "IF THOU HADST ASKED OF ME. I WOULD GIVE THEE." We sometimes think of the relation between God and Christ as being typified by that of some land-locked sea amidst remote mountains, and the affluent that brings its sparkling treasures to the thirsting valley.

**But Jesus Christ is no more vehicle for the conveyance of a Divine gift, but His own heart, His own power, His own love are in it, and it is His gift as much as it is God's.** Now here is a claim from Christ that we must think about. If you know anything about Jesus Christ at all, you know that He spoke in this tone, not occasionally, but habitually. You can't pick out other parts of His character or His actions and admire them and ignore the characteristics of His teaching on the subject, that He claims for Himself.

And if Jesus Christ ever said anything likes the words of this text we are studying, and if they were not true, what was He, a fanatic who had lost His head in the fancy of His own inspiration? And if has spoken these same words, and they are true, what is He then? Only that which the Gospel of John insists from the beginning to its end, that He was the eternal Word of God, by whom all Divine revelation from the beginning has been made, and who at last, "Became flesh" that we might, "Receive of His fullness," and therein "Be filled with all the fullness of God." There is no other alternative.

But you can't avoid the connection here between these human needs of our Saviour and His power to give the Divine Gift. Why did He not simply say to this woman, "If thou knowest who I am?" Why did He use this periphrasis of my text, "Who it is that saith unto thee," "Give Me to drink?" Why? But because He wanted to fix her attention on the startling contradiction between His appearance and His claims.

On the one hand asserting Divine prerogative, on the other, forcing into prominence human weakness and necessity, because these two things, the human weakness and the Divine prerogative, are inseparably braided together and intertwined. **He is the unique Person of the universe, the God-man.**

Some of you will remember the great scene in Shakespeare where the weakness of Caesar is urged as a reason for rejecting His imperial authority.

"Ay! and the tongue of his, that bade the Romans,  
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,

Alas! It cried, Give me some drink,  
Like a sick girl."

And the inference that is drawn is, how can he be fit to be a ruler of men? But we listen at our Caesar and emperor, when He asks this woman for water, and when He says on the cross, "I thirst." And we feel that these are not the least of His titles to be crowned with many crowns. **They bring Him nearer to us, and they are the means by which His love reaches its end of bestowing upon us all, if we will have it, the cup of salvation.** Unless He had said the one of these two things, He never could have said the other. Unless the dry lips had petitioned "Give Me to drink," the gracious lips could never have said, "I will give thee living water."

Unless like Jacob of old, this shepherd could say, "In the day the drought consumed Me," it would have been impossible that the flock, "shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more.... for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water."

And notice how this woman depicts how to get this gracious gift. Christ puts it together, as if they were all but contemporaneous, "Thou wouldst have asked of Me," and "I will have given thee." The hand on the telegraph transmits the message, and back, swift as the lightning, flashes the response. The condition, the only condition, and the indispensable condition of possessing that water of life, the summary expression for all the gifts of God in Jesus Christ, which at the last are essentially God Himself, is the desire to possess it turned to Jesus Christ. It is not strange that men should not desire? **Is it not strange and sad that such foolish creatures are we that we do not want what we need, that our wishes and needs are often diametrically opposite?**

All men desire happiness, but some of us have vitiated our tastes and our palates by fiery intoxicants that the water of life seems dreadfully tasteless and unstimulating, and so we will rather go back again to the delusive, poisoned drinks that glue our lips to the river of God's GRACE and pleasures. But there is in this not enough that there should be **the desire, it must be turned to Him.** In fact, that asking of our Scripture, so far as you

and I are concerned, is but another way of speaking the great keyword of personal, private relationship of Christianity, **which is faith in Jesus Christ as personal Saviour.**

For they who ask, know their necessity, are convinced of the power of Him to whom they appeal to grant their requests, and rely upon His love to do so. These three things, the sense of need, the conviction of Christ's ability to save and to satisfy, and of His infinite love that desires to make us blessed, these three things fused together make the faith which received the Gift of God.

We must remember in asking, that there are other Scripture expressions for the act of trusting in Him, which is really raking and not asking. You do not need to ask, as if for something that is not provided. What we all need to do is to open our eyes to see what is there, if we like to put our hands out and take it. **Why should we be saying, "Give me to drink," when a pierced hand reaches out to us the cup of salvation, and says, "Drink ye all of it," "Ho everyone that thirsteth come and drink," without money and without price.**

**There is no other condition but desire turned to Christ, and that is the necessary condition.** God cannot give men salvation, as veterinary surgeons drench unwilling horses, forcing the medicine down their throats through clenched teeth. **There must be the opened mouth, and wherever there is, there will be the full supply.** "Ask, and ye shall receive," take and ye shall possess.

Notice in closing, as we study this "*Woman in My Life*," an outcast woman, that ignorance prevents us from asking. Jesus Christ looked at this poor woman and discerned in her, though, as I said, it was hidden beneath mountains of folly and sin, a thirsty soul that was firmly longing for something better. He saw her positive volition. And Christ believed that, if once the mystery of His being and the GRACE of God's gifts were displayed before her, she would melt into a yearning of desire that is certain to be fulfilled.

In some measure the same thing is true of all of us. For surely, if only you saw realities, and things as they are, some of you would not be content to continue as you are,

without this water of life. Blind, blind are the men who grope at noonday as in the dark and turn away from the Lord Jesus Christ. If you knew, not with the mind only, but with your whole soul, **if you knew the thirst of your soul, and the sweetness of the water, and the readiness of the Giver, and the dry and parched land to which you condemn yourselves by your refusal, surely you would change your mind and fall at His feet and ask, and get, the water of life.**

But there is a worse case than ignorance. There is the case of people that know and refuse, not by reason of imperfect knowledge, **but by reason of averted will.** And as you read this see if this is not your condition.

Remember the Giver says, "Whosoever will, let him come." And He said, "You will not come unto Me that ye might have life." I am sure there are people in this world who are not Christians, who are as certain, deep down in their souls, that the only rest of the soul is in God, and the only way to get it is through Jesus Christ, as any saint of God's ever was. But the knowledge does not touch their free will because they like the poison and they do not want the life.

The instantaneousness of Christ's answer, and the certainty of it, are as true for each of us as they were for this woman. The offer is made to us all, just as it was to her. We can gather round that Rock like the Israelites in the wilderness, and slake every thirst of our souls from its outgushing streams.

Jesus Christ says to each of us, as He did to her, tenderly, warningly, invitingly, and yet rebukingly, "If thou knewest... thou wouldest ask... and I would give." Take care lest, by continual neglect, you force Him at last to change His Words, and to lament over you, as He did over the city that He loved so well, and yet destroyed. "If thou hadst known in thy day the things that belong to thy peace. But now they are hid from thine eyes."

**The Samaritan woman was thirsty. Are you?**

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life," John 4:14.

Eternal life in Christ is a springing fountain.