

# Quenching Our True Thirst

## Fr. Dan Gehler, St. Anthony

It is a good to recall our own encounters with the Lord. Ultimately, we are thirsting for God and his love, it is a time to return to the well in order to satisfy that thirst, accepting no substitutes.

Israelites were thirsty and fed up. They rebelled against Moses, who is afraid they'll kill him, and almost everyone rebels against the Lord. They question whether God is even there. That shows the thirst they really have for God; His presence, his attention, his aid. They don't perceive his presence, just their need, and their hearts have become hardened by their experiences and frustration.

Sometimes we thirst for something more, but we seek to quench our thirst in the wrong way. That is a recipe for dissatisfaction and a hardened heart. Paul reminds us that our true thirst goes beyond just seeking the fulfillment of material needs. The Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts.

God's love satisfies our true thirst. When we are filled with his love and his grace we are at peace. No grumbling. Everyone thirsts for love, but not everyone realizes that the love for which they thirst is the love of God. Yet, if there is an issue the problem is us, not him: Our Lord offered his love for us even when we have no idea or desire for his love, while we were still "enemies" due to sin.

The Samaritan woman epitomizes someone who was looking for love in all the wrong places. Yet love came to meet her unexpectedly. She knew the religious traditions of her people, so she had an idea of the importance of God in her life, yet something had not clicked. She knew her religion, but she also experienced rebellion in her heart against God's will regarding marriage, which is why she starts to give Our Lord some attitude. Where does this Jew, and a Jewish man no less, get off talking to her and asking for a drink? When we hear the voice of the Lord we must not harden our hearts like the Israelites did. The Samaritan woman's experiences hardened her.

The Lord has a great thirst for our faith and our love. The Samaritan woman has a thirst for real love. Our Lord today knows he is dealing with a hardened heart frustrated after a long time looking for love in all the wrong places. Therefore, he knows when to be tactful, addressing her true thirst, but also blunt, telling her the mistaken ways she tried to slake her thirst.

He comes to meet her at her level. The Lord often avoids the Messianic titles of his time because his contemporaries see the Messiah as someone simply social and political, but when the Samaritan woman asks him if he is the Messiah, he responds without hesitation: "I am he, the

one speaking with you.” The Samaritan woman has found that for which she was truly thirsting, and has to share the news.

Society at large has insisted a lot on being sure to drink lots of water daily for good health. Many people tote a bottle with them now wherever they go. In the past, it was because people had no better option. Today people have so many beverages—sodas, coffees, teas, juices—that they neglect something as essential and vital as water. Many individuals in the world today don’t have a reliable source of water.

Water is vital to life. Eliminate a community’s water supply, and you eliminate that community. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “It is impossible to give a brief explanation of the wealth of this Gospel passage. One must read and meditate on it personally, identifying oneself with that woman who, one day like so many other days, went to draw water from the well and found Jesus there, sitting next to it, ‘tired from the journey’ in the midday heat” (Angelus, 2/24/2008).

Through meditating on this passage, you can open your heart so that the Holy Spirit can refill it with God’s love: “like the Samaritan woman, let us also open our hearts to listen trustingly to God’s Word in order to encounter Jesus who reveals his love to us and tells us: ‘I who speak to you am he’ (Jn 4: 26), the Messiah, your Savior” (Angelus, 2/24/2008).

Wells are not meant to be used just once. Like the kitchen faucet, we go to them over and over, because our thirst for God is continuous in this life. If we neglect that thirst our spiritual life will shrivel up. So, let us work to get closer to our Lord by honestly reviewing our lives and so giving us the chance to quench our thirst that the Lord’s well.