



The Lutheran Hour Sermon Text

"A Well That Runs Deep Because You Need It"

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(Q&A Topic: All Religions the Same?)

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[Q&A MP3](#)

Text: John 4:5-26

5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy some food.) 9 Now the Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed. Hallelujah! He has a water for us tonight to drink deeply. Amen.

Water. I was just thinking about water this last week. You cannot live without water. In fact, I'm thinking more about it now because I've got to get back in shape. How about you?

But when I started reading about this, I realized that water is the key to it all. I mean, you've got to hydrate. I had a friend of mine who always said that when you're working out, you've got to make sure you're drinking lots and lots of water. You can go days and days and days, even weeks without food; but you can't live without water.

Tonight, I want to tell you about a story of a well of water that runs deep. Deep enough not only to take care of your physical needs, and we need that and the Lord takes care of that, but this is a water that runs so deep it takes care of our spiritual needs. There's a well that runs deep; that soul hydrating water and it is here just for the asking.

The story starts at Jacob's Well in Samaria. For those of you who traveled with me over to Jerusalem, and I know some listening in have, that well is still there. Did you know that? The well is still there and you can send down a bucket, all the way to the bottom, and you can pull it up and there's fresh water just for the drinking. You can put a bucket of water in one of the most arid places on the planet and it still will be there to satiate you and to hydrate you.

But this particular story, at that well, was 2,000 years ago. A woman wakes up in the morning. She is not refreshed from her night's sleep. She's actually dreading the daily task

that she has to do but she's got to do it because the jugs of water are dry and they need to be filled.

Now she dreaded this particular thing she had to do not because it was a particularly hard thing to do; she just didn't want to go to the well. She didn't want to face it because...the point was that she had to go at a certain time of day because her reputation was shady. So she couldn't go in the cool of the morning or the cool of the evening; that's when everyone else went. She tried that before but every time she tried to go at those times she'd run into these people who were having these wonderful conversations; laughing and talking and then she got there. Then, the laughter died down and the whispers would start and they knew she didn't belong. She was one of those shady characters.

So she'd been there before. She'd experienced all that before and she'd had enough of that. So, she came in the heat of the day. She came when no one else would come. Why, because she needed the water like everybody else.

But on this day; this is an amazing thing, on this day things were going to be different. Now why is it going to be different? All the same problems, all the same issues, but on this particular day, Someone has determined to meet her at the well, as she is; not to harass, not to disdain; He determined to meet her to bless her.

On this same day, Jesus Himself has decided to meet this woman at the well before she knew anything about Him. Now one of the reasons why she has a problem with this is because she knows how it is. Jews and Samaritans, they don't get along. They don't do that kind of thing. In fact, if you were a Jew at that time, if you were going to Jerusalem, you would just...you made a...you didn't do the direct as-the-crow-flies; you went around Samaria because you didn't want to get tainted with those people.

Samaritans were people who had Jewish heritage but they tended to marry other folks who didn't necessarily believe in Yahweh and they had corrupted their heritage from a Jewish perspective. So, the God-fearing Jewish person said, "We don't want to get anywhere close to those people for that reason." They're trying to avoid contamination. What's wrong with that?

There's no way, on our own terms, any of us can avoid contamination. We're all contaminated. You might say, what? It's just in our water. That was the problem. These Pharisees thought they could somehow avoid it on their own terms without God's grace.

This day was going to be different. Why, because Jesus had determined to meet her that day. In fact, when I looked at the text, it actually was even stronger...it's like Jesus...it wasn't just Jesus happened to be going by and said, "Ah, let's go through Samaria." He determined. He chose. He made a mental note we're going to do it differently than we've always done it. We're going to this particular well. "I've got an appointment with somebody today." So, in her public shame she comes to the well to be greeted by One Who had nothing but new possibilities for her life.

So, let me ask you. Do you find yourself identifying with her just a little bit? Can you understand what she's feeling? Have you felt some of these things in your own life too? Now, no need to raise your hands tonight; I don't want you to embarrass yourself in front of each other. She had to live with her embarrassment. She had to live with it publicly.

Most of us have some of those same feelings in our hearts and we are trying to cover it up. We don't want anybody to know. If you won't admit it publicly, admit it privately in your own heart. We all got them. In fact, I know it's true because we can't even get the physical water

stuff right in our life, right? We don't even drink enough of that. I know we're not drinking the stuff that really matters. I know that we need His satiating blessing.

Come with her then. Come with her to this well tonight because here is a woman who is coming looking for purpose and looking for meaning, but she looked in all the wrong places before. She looked in relationships that were bad; money, success, alcohol, drugs, selfishness, pride; she probably looked in some of those places like you and I have looked. But come with her. Come in that same shame but come to the Lord Who is here to bless. So if that is you, if you're starting to walk a little bit in her shoes with her, come to the well with her today because I've got good news for you. Jesus is waiting for you.

Like He waited for her that day He is waiting for you and me no matter who you are, no matter what you've done, how good or bad you feel, how many times you have failed; Jesus, if I understand this text correctly, Jesus makes an appointment to come for people like you. And if you are listening in with me today on the radio, I'm telling you Jesus has made an appointment to be with you here today. Let me be even more candid. He already knows who you are. He already knows exactly what you're like.

In fact, I get a kick out of this. I think this woman thought Jesus was just like every other holy man. You know, she probably thought like people think today, holy people come for holy people, right? In fact, holy people come for those who deserve to have a holy person in their midst. She was probably thinking, "yeah, Jesus, He comes for the people that go to church. He comes for the people that pray. He comes for the people that do everything right. He surely doesn't come for a person like me." In fact, she probably is thinking as He's talking to her, He's going to play me off. He's going to listen just for a minute, but then He's going to get on to the important people.

You and I both know that's not the message of the gospel. That's not the message of Who God is in the Scripture. The Bible has a completely different message. It says there aren't any holy people on our terms; and Christ comes for us all just as we are. All have sinned. All have fallen short of the glory of God. All should be coming to the well in the heat of the day. You've got to understand something. God doesn't want whatever you're going through; He's come to rescue you. He's come to redeem you. He's come to restore you.

So the main point of the message is not about our need. It's not about our public shame. It's about a Jesus Who is waiting at the well just for you. Now what's amazing too is maybe you're still a little nervous to come to the well. You're like "well..." She was too. When she got there, it wasn't just that she was apprehensive to go in the heat of the day, she was also a bit frightened; because when Jesus starts talking to her, she gets real nervous. She knows there are rules and there are rules you do not break no matter how nice the guy is. When Jesus starts to engage her in a conversation, she's partly saying, "How do I play this Guy off and get away from Him because I could get in big trouble." And yet, Jesus keeps coming.

I guess, again, I ask the question; are you willing to come with her to the well in repentance even if you're a little bit afraid? Are you willing to say? "Jesus, I'm here. What will you do with me?"

Now I wish people understood that the root of their fear; the root of their apprehensiveness; it's not in Jesus, it's in our own sin. It's in our own rebellion; our own unwillingness to realize that it's God Who loves us. So, again, as we struggle with those things, don't let simple bravado get in the way; even if you're a little bit coming with fear and trepidation. Come to this well in Jesus' Name.

Now it's amazing to me that Jesus has a special word for her that day; but He has a very special word for people like us who come as we are saying, "Lord, You know what I'm like. Here I am. What will You do with me?"

Jesus says something incredible, here it comes, ready? He told her, "If you drink from this well, you will be thirsty again. However, if you drink of the water that I offer you, you will never thirst again. It will spring up like a well of living water welling up to eternal life."

Now how would you have answered if Jesus said something like that to you? Drink this water, right? Give me this water, right? Actually, her response is a little bit underwhelming. She's kind of like "I'd like that water. How about You give me a year's supply of that water so I don't have to come here and get any of that stuff anymore?" She was kind of playing Him off a little bit. She was basically saying, "Jesus, I like what you're talking about but let me see if I can kind of receive it on my terms. Let me see if I can receive it just to get rid of the issues I think are important to get rid of in my life."

Well, Jesus actually cuts through that. That's kind of an underwhelming response; so Jesus comes back at her even harder and He says, "Listen, I know who you are. I know why you are coming here. I know your sins and everything." And He tells it to her straight. And then He says, "Now do you want My water?"

Now what does she do next? Do you remember? This happens to me as a pastor all the time. She gives Him a theological question; because what she's saying is, "I really don't want to go there with you, Lord. I'm not sure what You are doing with me but let me give You a question about the Jews and the worship and all that. I'd like your opinion." Jesus cuts through that to no diversions. He said, "I'm here to ask you, will you put your faith in Me no matter what?" Wow!

No diversions. She gets the point. She finally says, "Okay, I get it. I know Messiah is coming and I know that when He comes, He will explain all these things to us." And Jesus says what? "The One Who is speaking to you right now; I am He. I am the One and I came for you." Wow!

Well, this woman's eyes were opened. She suddenly realized she could trust Him. She could entrust her life to Him. She could rejoice in His presence. She could be herself in His presence and she even trusted Him when He spoke the truth to her because she knew He cared.

You know I love the commercial...it's a little girl, she's...I think it's a Kodak commercial; and she goes to the pool with her dad. It's one of those commercials where the dad's trying to teach...like a daughter or a son...trying to teach them to do something they've never done before...so he takes his daughter to the pool and they go to the diving board. She climbs up on the diving board and she gets out there...and, you know, it's way up there...and she gets to the end and he's trying to...he's saying, "You remember, you bend your knees and you put your arms up and you bounce and you jump and you go and you'll be just fine." Well, she gets to the end of the diving board and she does what? She looks down and now she's scared to death. Then she looks at her father and then she looks down again. Dad's down there going, "Come on, honey! Jump! Jump!" Have you ever had that kind of experience with your kids where you knew it was going to be great, you knew that it wasn't going to hurt them and you were just trying to get them but they were so afraid they just wouldn't do it? They wouldn't do it.

There's all kinds of different ways as a father, as a parent, where you're trying to get them to trust me. "If you just trust me, it's going to be great. I wouldn't ask you to do something

that I knew would hurt you or harm you." But sometimes as a child they just don't get that just yet, right?

Well, in this particular commercial, it doesn't end there. One more time she does this, she looks down but then she looks at her dad and the dad's going, "Honey, it's going to be great. You can do it." She takes one bounce. She jumps in. She hits the water. She comes back up with a big smile and what does she say? Do you remember that commercial? "Let's do it again, daddy. Let's do it again."

That's the glimpse of tonight. You come to the well. You may be afraid. There may be trepidation. You may realize, "Lord, I'm being really vulnerable now and You can see me as I am." But He is there waiting for you and when we jump in, because we trust Him, there is a tremendous joy, there's waters of grace, there's waters of blessing. There is a joy to be in His presence following Him because that's just Who Jesus is.

Today's the day that Jesus made an appointment just to be with this gal. But He makes that same appointment with you and me every time He comes through His Word and sacrament. He's basically saying, "Trust Me. Follow Me. I'm the One Who came for you. Don't just drink deeply of My Word, jump in and realize that I have a life for you to live."

One last thought, Christianity is not a religion. It isn't. Religion is you doing something or you not doing something to get God off your back or maybe to get God to do something because you don't think He cares. Christianity is a proclamation of a God Who did all things well for you and is come and Who has lived and died and risen again so that you might have His life as a gift. And when He invites you to drink deeply of His water, He's basically saying, "Trust Me. This Word of grace that I give to you, it will change your life."

Today a Samaritan woman reminded us that you know you've got to drink water in this world. Today Jesus is saying, "Drink the water that I give you and you will never thirst again." Come to His well today, His Word; drink up, jump in, put your faith in the One Who made an appointment with you today just so that you could have His blessing, His grace, His forgiveness, and His peace.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and all of God's people said, "Amen." Amen.

Action in Ministry for March 19, 2017

Guest: Dr. Richard Marrs

ANNOUNCER: You're listening to The Lutheran Hour and this is Action In Ministry, a call to action in response to all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We're back in the studio now, once again, with Pastor Seltz.

SELTZ: Yeah, it's great to be here.

ANNOUNCER: We heard again today the story of the Samaritan woman at the well; how her community avoided her, but Jesus spoke to her and gave her what she truly needed.

SELTZ: Mark, He still does the same for us today. He allows us to drink spiritually from that well of His that never runs dry.

ANNOUNCER: Right. Even when we experience setbacks and disappointments in our life and sometimes those setbacks can lead to depression. We have a print resource titled: Depression. Understanding the Pieces, and here to talk with us about it is Dr. Richard Marrs of Concordia Seminary. He's a licensed psychologist and works in the area of pastoral counseling.

SELTZ: Dr. Marrs, thanks for joining us.

MARRS: Very good to be here with you.

SELTZ: How is depression different from what we might consider a bad season of grief?

MARRS: Probably many people are genetically predisposed towards it or there's some sort of chemical imbalance going on and it's not just a brief sadness; it's an ongoing sort of sense of hopelessness, despair. I mean, even things like weight loss and just having a sense of being mentally in a fog; go along for weeks, sometimes months or years for people who are suffering from major depression.

SELTZ: And you can't just get out of it.

MARRS: Very few... well, some people do but many people; yeah, it takes extra help to... and they need to seek out that help from other Christians, from other people.

ANNOUNCER: What are some of the most common misunderstandings or misperceptions regarding depression?

MARRS: Some, if they just pick themselves up by their own emotional bootstrap, they'll somehow get out of it or just give a little more time. For some people that does, but again there's a large percentage of people that time doesn't work to their advantage. They just stay depressed unless they go and get medication for it, unless they seek counseling for it, unless they see their pastor for it.

ANNOUNCER: Now you've touched upon the spiritual aspect of depression. A person might begin to question God; is He really there, is He listening to my prayers, how come things aren't improving for me. Take us into that counseling session and talk about how you would address this question spiritually from a biblical perspective.

MARRS: Yeah, well one thing is to not say things like, "Well, if you would just pray harder, if you just read the Bible more, then you'll get better." That's actually mixing law and gospel which we Lutherans don't want to do.

SELTZ: Thankfully.

MARRS: Yeah.

SELTZ: Well, because it actually destroys your ability to actually receive the help that you need.

MARRS: Exactly. Exactly. Now we need to focus on Jesus still loves you even through this depression.

SELTZ: Listen, I appreciate how this booklet addresses both the individual who might be struggling with depression but also the one who is caring for someone who is depressed; a

loved one or a friend, and different situations but both need to be handled with care, right?

MARRS: Yes, very much. And again, the author of this, Bev Yahnke, is a noted Christian psychologist in our circles. A very wonderful... she's the Executive Director of Doxology and just does some excellent work...

SELTZ: Ah, yes.

MARRS: ...out there in the Lutheran church helping pastors to be better at giving pastoral care and congregations to be better at giving pastoral care to their members. She's very helpful and wrote a very good piece there for you.

SELTZ: This really is a good booklet, Mark, to keep on hand especially if you know someone who struggles with this in the area of depression or if you're struggling with it too personally, this is here for you because Jesus comes to us in our weakness like we've been talking about. He's not afraid of our illnesses or the stigma we attach to it, but He comes to heal and give hope.

ANNOUNCER: Dr. Richard Marrs, once again, thank you for joining us today helping us to better understand depression and also pointing us once again toward the hope we have in Christ.

MARRS: Thank you very much for having me.

SELTZ: That's our Action In Ministry segment today; to bless, to empower, and to strengthen your life in Christ for others.

ANNOUNCER: To read or download this resource, go to lutheranhour.org and click on Action In Ministry. Or call 1-855-john 316. That's 1-855-564-6316. Our email address is info@lhm.org.

LUTHERAN HOUR MAILBOX (Questions & Answers) for March 19, 2017

Topic: All Religions the Same?

ANNOUNCER: Aren't all religions the same? That'll be our question today for Pastor Gregory Seltz. I'm Mark Eischer. We see this referenced on bumper stickers. It's a very popular idea that can't all religions just coexist because they're really all the same, aren't they?

SELTZ: Yeah, Mark, that question certainly is relevant today. We are living in a pluralistic society. In fact, people want to choose a religion that fits their philosophy of life. If they can't find an existing one that meets their needs, they feel like they can even create one.

ANNOUNCER: Some would say that all religions have a moral code, of sorts, which basically follows the Golden Rule- you do unto others as you would have them do unto you- and yet the Christian faith is more than that because it's based on a Person.

SELTZ: Right, and that's an important difference right off the bat. Unlike Mohammed, Buddha, or the founders of popular religions, Jesus claimed to be God. Over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament foretold the coming of the Messiah- the One Who would pay for the sins of the world with His death and Who would rise again from the dead to

prove that He was God.

ANNOUNCER: Would you say the life of Jesus here on earth was totally different from the founders of other religions?

SELTZ: Yes, indeed it was. Everything He did was to show that He was God; He was Man, Who came to die for the sins of the world! In fact, He came to be the world's Savior.

ANNOUNCER: That means even at its core, Christianity is different from other faiths because of that.

SELTZ: Yeah, at the heart of it, it is different. All other religions, and even philosophies, teach that one obtains a relationship with God, or harmony in your heart, by you earning it.

ANNOUNCER: But, Christianity proclaims that only God in Jesus Christ could accomplish that.

SELTZ: Right, because we are all sinners. We should be able to do that but we are ultimately incapable of reaching that kind of godly perfection. So the Bible says it very clearly, "All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God" and "All are saved, then, through grace, by grace through faith!"

ANNOUNCER: We should also point out that other religions make different claims as to who god is. In Hinduism, they believe the divine is in everything and therefore there are many gods. Islam believes Jesus was only a prophet but not God. In Buddhism, there is no god; we are all part of the divine.

SELTZ: I'd say that the most popular religions see god as something or someone out there but not really involved in what is happening now.

ANNOUNCER: In other words, like an impersonal, powerful force, impossible to reach, requiring followers to earn favor by doing good works.

SELTZ: And again, the Bible proclaims the exact opposite of that. The Bible speaks about the mystery of God; yes, namely He is One, and He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He's beyond anything we could create, think, or make up. But even more; God has a Name. He is Yahweh. We can know Him. He came among us at Christmas, saved us on Good Friday, and rose that we might live forever. It's personal with Him!

ANNOUNCER: We find that even in the account of creation; God took personal care in creating everything. He created us in His image in order to be in a relationship, a personal relationship, with Him.

SELTZ: Yeah, and that's why Adam and Eve's fall into sin was so damning. They threw it all away. And now all of us are marred with sin, with that rebellion, separated again from God's presence. But, again, like you said, it's personal, and the Bible says that God, out of love, had a plan to reinstate all of us. He reached down to us, rather than had us reach up to Him. He sent His Own Son into the world to pay for the sins of the world to make it possible again to have a personal relationship with Him as our Father.

ANNOUNCER: All of which makes Christianity unique.

SELTZ: It is the only religion that shows our God for Who He truly is. He's a God of love, who desires all to be saved and to understand that we were created and redeemed to live

with Him forever!

ANNOUNCER: What I'm hearing you say is that the main difference is that Christianity is ultimately all about Jesus Christ, Who He is and what He has done!

SELTZ: Yeah, there's no other religious founder who suffered and died to pay the penalty of man's sin. And unlike any other founder, Jesus rose from the dead to give the world His gift of life.

ANNOUNCER: That's the real difference.

SELTZ: It is. Ultimately, Christianity, then, is not an ethical ideal among sinners, though Jesus taught, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The main difference is the good news of John 3:16, that "God so loved the world that He gave His Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

ANNOUNCER: That is good news indeed.

SELTZ: Indeed.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you, Pastor Seltz. This has been a presentation of Lutheran Hour Ministries.

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