

# Sermon Outline

## “LIFE IN HIS NAME”: THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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### LIVING WATER (JOHN 4:1-10)

#### I. Introduction

#### II. North to Galilee (Jn 4:3)

- A. By the time John 4 begins, Jesus and his disciples have come under the watchful eye of the Pharisees.
- B. When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard he was “making and baptizing more disciples than John, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee” (v 3).  
—To avoid any unnecessary escalation of conflict with the Pharisees, Jesus takes his disciples back to Galilee from where he came.
- C. Verse 2 gives us some clarification. It tells us that “Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples...”

#### III. “And He Had to Pass Through Samaria” (Jn 4:4)

- A. “And he had to pass through Samaria” (v 4).
- B. Some interpreters believe that this phrase “had to” is significant. Jesus “had to” go through Samaria, because God himself had told him to do so.
- C. This interpretation becomes all the more likely when we consider that...
  - 1. there were other routes between Judea and Galilee (Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 589)
  - 2. devout Jews often bypassed Samaria entirely in their journeys northward.

#### IV. Bad Blood

- A. There was a history of friction and animosity between Jews and Samaritans.
  - 1. The Samaritans were descendants of the northern kingdom of Israel *and* the foreign peoples planted there by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:22-24). They were not “pure” Israelites.
  - 2. The Samaritans rejected many of the books in the Jewish Bible/Old Testament. The only Bible they had were the five books of Moses.
  - 3. When the Babylonian exile ended, the returning Jews rejected the Samaritans’ offer to help re-build the temple (Ezra 4).

4. The Greek empire made their base in Samaria, because they knew the Samaritans would help them fight the Jews.
  5. In 128 BC, the Jews attacked Samaria and destroyed their temple on Mount Gerizim.
- B. By the time we come to John 4, there has been a history of tension and anger between Judea and Samaria. Much is political. Most was religious.
- C. But things were about to change, because Jesus “had to pass through Samaria...” —God has a message for his long-lost children.

## V. At the Well (Jn 4:5-6)

- A. Under the blazing heat of the noonday sun, Jesus and his disciples arrive in the region of Samaria, specifically “to a town of Samaria called Sychar...” (v 5).
- B. Sychar had religious significance.
1. It was “near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.”
  2. “Jacob’s well was there...” (v 6)
- C. These landmarks were loaded with cultural pride and religious significance.
- D. Jesus stopped at Jacob’s well for a rest.
1. In Jesus, God could get tired. God knew what it meant to need a break.
  2. The One who sits by the well of Jacob was the One who showed himself to Jacob in the form of a heavenly Ladder.
- E. While Jesus sits by the well, his disciples leave him to go into the town to get some food (v 8)

## VI. The Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:7)

- A. “A woman from Samaria came to draw water” (v 7)
- B. Two cultural details here.
1. Since drawing water from the well was a woman’s job, wells became places where women would come and socialize.
  2. Given the Mediterranean heat, drawing water from wells was typically done either in the early morning or at dusk (Gary Burge, *John*, 141; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 592).
- C. Why would this particular woman want to collect water at the hottest point of the day when hardly anyone else was around? (Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 592)
1. It is likely that she came to collect water at the time of the day that she did, because she didn’t want to have to meet the other women of the town.
  2. This woman had dark secrets to keep.

## VII. Jesus Initiates Conversation (Jn 4:7)

- A. Jesus is more concerned to obey God than to please men. He is more concerned to truly love people than to keep social customs, the laws and traditions of men.

- B. When the woman arrives at the well, Jesus does what no self-respecting Jewish male would do. *He, a Jewish rabbi and a single man, strikes up a conversation with, of all people, a Samaritan woman.*
- C. Jesus comes to be the Salvation of sinners. He has come to scrape the bottom of the barrel of the world. He brings salvation to people such as these—people like the Samaritan woman, and people like us.
- D. “Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’” (v 7).

### VIII. The Woman’s Surprise at Jesus’ Question (Jn 4:9)

- A. Perhaps judging from his accent, the Samaritan woman knew that Jesus was not from the region.
- B. She asks him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?”
- C. The next line alludes to the historical information that what we talked about: “For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” (v 9).

### IX. The Promise of Living Water (Jn 4:10)

- A. “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’” (v 10).
- B. The term “living water” refers to water that flows (from a spring, river, or stream).
- C. The opposite of living water is still water; water that you would find in a pond—or a *well*.
- D. In Jewish rabbinic tradition, living water was the only water that could be used in ritual washings to cleanse unclean people (Burge, *John*, 143).
- E. The metaphor of living water is used to describe God and his ultimate blessing over the world.
  1. The Lord God refers to himself as the source of living water.
    - Jeremiah 2:13: “for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”
    - Jeremiah 17:13: “O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water.”
  2. Living water is a symbol of ultimate worldwide blessing.
    - Zechariah 14:8: “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.”
- F. While Jesus asks the woman to give him ordinary water from the well, he wants to give her—if *she would but acknowledge her need for forgiveness and cleansing*—the gift

of God: living water to wash away all her sins and make her righteous before God.

G. In John 7, Living Water is equated with the Holy Spirit himself (Jn 7:37-39).

**The living water of God meets the deepest needs of all human beings. All of us have said and done things that we are ashamed of. The Samaritan woman had dark secrets in her life. You and I are no different. Some of us carry so much guilt and shame in our lives that we would rather die than let others know what we have done. But Jesus knows our secret sins—*and loves us all the same!* He wants to wash us with living water that we might truly live in freedom. Here is a Lord who loves us in spite of our wickedness. Let us go to him. Let him wash and set us free. No darkness is too great for him.**