

### **[00:00:00.250] - Speaker 1**

Tonight's scripture is from the book of John, Chapter 4, verses 7-26:

<sup>7</sup>When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"  
<sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman asked, said to him, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."  
<sup>11</sup>"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons in his flocks and herds?" <sup>13</sup>Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. <sup>14</sup>But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

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<sup>16</sup>He told her, "Go call your husband and come back." <sup>17</sup>"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup>The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband." "What you have said is quite true, sir, the woman said, <sup>19</sup>I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup>Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>Yet a time is coming, and now has come, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. <sup>25</sup>The woman said, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." <sup>26</sup>Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you, am he."

### **[00:02:15.640] - Speaker 1**

This is the word of the Lord.

### **[00:02:20.670] - Speaker 2**

This is a fascinating dialogue between Jesus and this woman. And after he reveals himself to her, the passage continues this way. Verse 28:

<sup>28</sup>Leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup>"Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" <sup>30</sup>Then they came out of the town and made their way toward him.

<sup>39</sup>Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. They said to the woman, <sup>42</sup>"We no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

This passage is about evangelism. The gospel writer shows Jesus evangelizing a woman, and then when she figures out who he is, running off and evangelizing her friends, he testifies to her about who he is. She testifies to them about who he is, then they testify to the world. Now, evangelism is Christians talking about their faith with others and then inviting them to embrace the faith for themselves. And one thing I know from after two decades or more in New York City, new Yorkers take a very dim view of evangelism.

### **[00:03:52.010] - Speaker 2**

New Yorkers say, "Look, if it works for you, fine. If Christianity works for you, fine. But please do not hint or propose that other people should drop their beliefs and adopt yours." And yet the whole passage is about evangelism. And so, what I want to do is, I want to look at Jesus offering salvation to this woman. And as I do it, I'm going to try to do a tricky thing. For those of you who take a dim view of evangelism and who are skeptical about it and think it's narrow minded or maybe intolerant or not a good thing to do, I want to show you as we go through that evangelism for Christians is both reasonable and necessary. And on the other hand, those of you who'd say, "I know I'm a believer and I know I should do it," I want to give you more ideas about how and why you should do it. So, let's look at Jesus' offer and let's notice from this passage the freeness, the greatness, the process, and the singleness of his offer.

- The freeness of his offer
- The greatness of his offer
- The process by which he makes the offer
- The singleness of his offer

### **[00:05:01.490] - Speaker 2**

First of all, the freeness. Jews and Samaritans hated each other we're told here. Men in that patriarchal society did not ordinarily even speak to women in public. And this particular woman was a moral outcast, a moral outsider. If you go back to verse six, we didn't read verse six, but verse six of the passage tells us that she came by herself to draw water in the middle of the day. She did not come in the morning with the other women when it was cooler and when you really needed the water, which was early in the day. And all commentators say the fact that she came by herself in the middle of the day was because she was a moral and social outcast, because of the kind of life she was living. But Jesus Christ reaches right through all those barriers, the gender barrier, the racial barrier, the morality barrier and he engages. Respectfully engages her in a thoroughgoing conversation about her whole life. And this is not something that she expected, you see, in verse nine, she was surprised. She expresses great surprise. She says, "You're a Jew and a Jewish man, and I'm a Samaritan woman, and you're talking to me?"

### **[00:06:14.730] - Speaker 2**

She was pleasantly surprised. She was amazed. Why? Because in that time, everybody thought of society and religion, too, as a ladder. And if you were a religious person and a moral person, an accomplished person, a successful person, you were higher on the ladder and you were closer to God. And God blessed people at the top of the ladder because they worked so hard, but people below them or way down at the bottom of the ladder like the woman, they did not expect that people at the top of the ladder would talk to them at all, or if they did, they would only do so in a condescending way. But Jesus is not condescending. He engages her, lovingly, respectfully, and she's amazed and she's delighted, really is pleasantly surprised. But what does this tell us? Here's what it tells us. The salvation that Jesus offers is free grace. It's free. He even calls it, "If you knew the gift of God". It's a gift, it's not a wage. Christian salvation is a gift you receive. It's not a wage that you earn. And what does that mean? Well, think. What disqualifies you from receiving a wage?

### **[00:07:20.430] - Speaker 2**

Just not doing the work. What could disqualify you from not getting a gift? Only pride. Only if you said, I don't want your charity. And therefore, Christian salvation, since it is a free gift, it's not earned or merited, therefore, you have to have humility to even receive it. And once it comes in, it engenders humility. And Jesus is the very embodiment of his message because he reaches out in a way that confounds her, because he just doesn't care about the world's pecking orders of gender or race or morality or class. Because, Jesus is the walking embodiment of the Gospel and the gospel humbles. And point #1, there is all the difference in the world between religious proselytizing and gracious good news-ing. It's all the difference in the world between religious proselytizing and gracious good news-ing. Religious proselytizers are people who think of themselves at the top of the ladder and are talking to people who don't have the same doctrine and they don't have the same practice and they don't have the right beliefs. And when you are the object of religious proselytizing, it is a bitter experience. But when you are, like the woman is, the object of gracious good news-ing it's a pleasant surprise.

### **[00:08:43.190] - Speaker 2**

And so, if you've ever been through what you consider an experience of evangelism one way or the other in which people were very unkind to each other and disdainful and or you felt trampled upon or something like that, that's not what Jesus, that is not the Gospel, that is not gracious good news. And it comes from a heart that knows I'm just a sinner saved by grace. Religious proselytizing is a bad thing, but it's not at all what Jesus is calling us to do. That's point #1 and we get that from, we learn that from, the freeness of the offer. But now, secondly, the greatness of the offer. Verse 13 and 14, Jesus talks about his salvation under a metaphor of living water, living water. And he says to her, I've got a water that if you drink it, you'll never be thirsty again. And what he's saying here is my salvation, what I have, is as necessary to you spiritually as water is to you physically. And since the human body is made of 50% or more water, to be deprived of water is an agony. And to die of thirst, evidently and dehydration, is a horrible agony.

### **[00:09:52.950] - Speaker 2**

And thirst is a physical deprivation because it's something your very body, you're made of water, and therefore, you crave it and you need it. And Jesus is saying, your soul craves for something, and I'm the only one that has it. See, when he says, I've got what is as important to you spiritually as water is to you physically, what he's saying is, if you don't get what I get, what I have, you're dead. And, he also says, because you're looking to assuage your thirst in all these other places, he says, you're actually not finding what you're looking for. You are spiritually thirsty for what I have and you may not recognize it as such, but when you go after sex or romance or money or power and you're driven to these things, it's really thirst and you don't recognize it. Albert Camus (French-Algerian philosopher), in one of his great novels, has a character who speaks in the first person. He's leading a wild life, and he explains why. He says, "Because I longed for eternal life, I went to bed with harlots and drank for nights on end. I slept in bliss, but woke with a bitter taste of the mortal state."

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See, Camus is saying that underneath all of here's, at one end of the city, one end of Manhattan, there's people sleeping with harlots and drinking for nights on end. At the other end of the city, there's people who are staying up all night working on Wall Street, trying to get up the ladder. Totally different people. And yet, what are they after? Why are they working so hard? See, Camus knew it. We long for eternal life. Now, Camus didn't think there was any way to satisfy that thirst. He understood that there was a thirst underneath everything else. But Jesus says, I have what you're looking for. And therefore, when Jesus and then Jesus goes so far, by the way, so far as to say at the end of verse 14, not just, "I can give you something that will satisfy you," but he says, "Indeed". See, he's going a little further with a metaphor, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. He says, "I'll put a spring in you." In one novel I once read, there was a character who looked very careworn on the top, but underneath he was different.

### **[00:12:24.210] - Speaker 2**

And one of his friends was looking at him and he said, in the novel, the character is looking at this person and says, "he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow, but underneath he perceived a great joy, a fountain of mirth, enough to set a kingdom laughing were it to break forth." See, in New York City, in fact, all big cities, there's lots of people which who are on the surface are laughing. but underneath there's an abiding sadness. And Jesus saying, I can change you completely. So that even though on the surface there will be sadness, which is inevitable in life, underneath there's an abiding joy, an abiding joy, a river, a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Now, look at the greatness of this. Christianity is not a philosophy. It's not an ethic, it's not a practice. It's not an experience. So, it has those things, but it's something much more great and radical than that. Jesus is saying, I have got that which every human soul longs for, and I will not just satisfy you with it, but I will change your inside so much that your very soul and heart is a whole new you have a whole new purpose, a whole new joy, a whole new dynamic on your inner being.

### **[00:13:50.890] - Speaker 2**

The greatness of this is astounding. And that, again, bears on the subject of evangelism. Why? In this way. If you knew, think of this, as I said many times, New Yorkers say, "Well, look, if Christianity works for you, fine, but don't insist that everybody else has to believe it." But the very statement, if Christianity works for you, shows that you don't understand Christianity. To say something works for me is something I can hold and move around and use as an instrument to meet my ends. But when you say it works for you, oh, my goodness, the Gospel doesn't work for us. The Gospel isn't something I can hold. The Gospel is something that holds me and you. It's something that transforms us and sweeps us up. The claims of Jesus here are so great and so magnificent. And you know what that means, how that bears on the subject of evangelism? Imagine a group of people who decided that they had found the cure for multiple sclerosis, MS. Right now, there's no known cure for MS. It devastates people. It's a terrible disease. But what if there was a group of people that through their research and through their testing and maybe through personal experience, some had family members with MS and they took the remedy?

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What if this group of people became convinced that they had the cure on the base of their testing, on the base of their research on the base of their personal experience, and they decided, I've got the cure. And then they went public and they wrote a book and they made a public declaration. Now, if you see people do that, what do you think? Well, you'll think they may be right, or you think they may be wrong, but you're not going to look at them and say, how narrow minded are you? No, of course not. Because of the greatness of the claim, it would be so wonderful if it was true. So, they may be right, they may be wrong. But to claim that they have the cure is not narrow. It may be right, wrong, but not narrow. But don't you realize it's the same thing with Christians. When Christians see this and when Christians experience the living water and they say, this is what every human soul is longing for. Now, if you're an outsider to the Christian faith, you ought to say, well, they may be right or you may be wrong. But it would be completely irrational to say that they're narrow.

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Because if you really feel that you found this, if you feel like you found the cure for MS, then to not share it with the world is both unloving and unreasonable. And if you believe you found the living water, then not to share it with the world is both unloving and unreasonable too. But it's not narrow. Even if they're right or wrong, you meet even from the outside, you can't call this narrow. It's not narrow. See the greatness of the offer and why it makes evangelism both necessary and reasonable.

Number three, I want you to see the process of the offer. Look at how he does it. It's not easy in one reading through to get all the nuances. It's really something. First of all, in the very beginning, you know, starting up at verse ten to 15, I would say Jesus is giving her the good news. You notice he gives her a wonderful metaphor the living water, living water. What a sparkling metaphor it is. How attractive, how intriguing. And he's trying to get her interest, and he finally gets her to the place where she says, "Sir, what is this water?"

### **[00:17:33.570] - Speaker 2**

Give me this water." I think at this point, she's probably thinking, maybe he's crazy, but what have I got to lose? Show me this water. What is it? What are you talking about? What is it? And then he comes back, starting in verse 16, and he changes things, rather. She says, "What is this water? Give me this water." And he says, "Go get your husband." Now, at first sight, this is a rude non sequitur. He not only brings up a rather sore subject, but he seems to be changing the subject. She says, "I would like to have this water. What is this water?" And he says, "Go get your husband." What? She says, "I don't have a husband," right? He says, "You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with right now is not your husband." Now, what's he doing? Many, many times in the past, when I first started to get to know this passage, I thought he was changing the subject, but he's not. Let's give him some credit. He's not. See, she says, "Where's the living water? What is this living water?" And he says, "Okay, let's talk about your sex life."

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He's not changing the subject. He's saying, "Let me tell you what this living water is. It's what you've been trying to find in men, but you haven't found it." See, it's a brilliant move. It's a bold move. It's a risky move, but he's not changing the subject. He's helping her understand. He says, "Okay, living water, a wonderful spiritual kind of interesting metaphor, let me talk to you about what it is. You know what it is. You're trying to find it in men." See, whenever you're sharing the faith with somebody, there's good news and there's bad news. So, you've got to get to both. You've got to get to, what's wrong with this? Why do we need this? On the other hand, there's the good news. Look what Jesus offers. Now, what is she going to do? And by the way, I actually think that there's probably no good way to understand the almost comedic nature of this exchange at this point. Jesus is relentless. He's being brilliant, and he's sticking with her, but she is doing what she can to kind of get out from underneath some of what she considers a rather uncomfortable subject.

### **[00:19:54.330] - Speaker 2**

So probably the best way to understand verse 19 is to have a pause. Okay, "Give me this water, sir. What is this water?" "Well," he says, "Go get your husband." "I don't have a husband." "You're right. You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with right now is not your husband." "I see you're a prophet." Got to have a pause there, or you're not really figuring out what she's doing. How does he know this? "I see you're a prophet." Let's talk theology. And then what she does is she brings up an extremely interesting though this is definitely misdirection, she's still trying to change subjects. She's trying to get him away from an area of her life that she doesn't, that is painful. She doesn't want to talk about it, so she says, "Where do we worship?" And the background for this, to understand this is that the Samaritans had pieced together a kind of mishmash religion, which had part Judaism in it and part paganism, and the Jews utterly despised it. And the Samaritans had their own temple on Mount Gerizim, and they said, this is the place you worship God. Of course, the Jews said, no, the temple, the true temple, is in Jerusalem, and that's where you worship God.

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So, she's trying to get out from underneath the incredible gaze of this man who seems to be seeing right into her heart, and she says, "I see you're a prophet. Let me just ask. I'd love to have your opinion. Do you worship God in Jerusalem at that temple, or do you worship God at Mount Gerizim in that temple? And what Jesus says and he says, well, the temple in Jerusalem is the true temple. But then he makes some statements that completely lose her. And at that point, she throws up her hands and says, "I know when Messiah comes, he'll explain everything." And Jesus looks at her and says, "you're talking to Him." Now, what do we learn from this process? What do we learn from the way in which he does this? Look, first of all, oh, my goodness. John, the Gospel writer, puts John 4 and John 3 back to back. Why? Last week Jesus is evangelizing Nicodemus. But, oh, my goodness, the two approaches could not be more different, could they? I mean, when Jesus talks to Nicodemus, Nicodemus opens his mouth and just begins to talk, and right away, Jesus goes, boom,

### **[00:22:30.500] - Speaker 2**

"You must be born again." Right away. With the woman, he's much more indirect. He takes a lot more time. He's much more patient with her. Not only that, with the metaphor that Jesus uses for salvation is living water, much more attractive, intriguing. But the metaphor he uses for salvation with Nicodemus is, you must be born again. It's much more confronting. You got to start over. Nothing you've done counts. You've got to become a little child. Why? Because Nicodemus's problem is his pride. He's a man. He's an accomplished religious man. And Jesus has to break through his religious pride and his moral pride. But this woman already feels like a moral failure. And look how tender he is with her, though direct, and yet look how gentle he is, and look how he brings her along. What do we learn? Only this, evangelism, the way Jesus is telling us to do it is absolutely personal. It is deeply personal and relational. There is not just one kind of template, one set of talking points. There's no procrustian bed by which we just and we force every person we ever talk to into it, regardless of their personality, their temperament, or their background.

### **[00:23:44.930] - Speaker 2**

Oh, not at all. I am not saying that there aren't some things you have to believe to become a Christian, that there are not certain there's content to the Gospel, but I am saying there absolutely is no one way to do this. There are as many different ways to talk to people about Christianity as there are people. And I think this means this evangelism is simply loving people around you and being involved in relationships and at the same time being courageously, transparent about what Jesus means to you. Now, did you hear that? Two things. It means being very involved in loving relationships with the people around you, and at the same time simply being transparent, courageously transparent about how much Jesus has done for you. See if you are involved with people's lives, but you're cowardly and you don't let people see just how much he means to you or if you identify yourself as a Christian, but you're really not really deeply involved in long term relationships in which you just love people and care for people and serve people regardless of what they believe. If you don't have the relationships and you don't have the courageous transparency, this doesn't happen.

### **[00:24:53.630] - Speaker 2**

But if you have them both, it just happens, and it happens in a million different ways. But the other thing I want you to see from this process of Jesus is, in the end, he gets to Himself. He's talking about this, and she's trying to go there, and he brings her over here, and then he's talking here, and then he brings her. He's always getting, but in the end, what does he come back to? He doesn't get back to the water. He doesn't get back to some experience. He doesn't get back to some kind of approach to life, he gets back to Himself, me. There is living water because it comes through me. Salvation is by grace because of me. And when she runs off to tell her friends about what she's found, she doesn't say anything about the water. She says, "Come see a man, unlike any man I've ever seen or met before in my life." Jesus says it all. Salvation is all happening because it comes through me.

And here's the third thing I want to say about why evangelism is necessary and even reasonable, even when it's unpopular. Because of this, every other religion has a founder who points away from himself.

### **[00:26:10.610] - Speaker 2**

Really, every other religion has a founder that says, I'm here to show you how to find God. I'm here to show you how to find God. But only Christianity was founded by a man who said, no, I'm God, come to find you. Look at that, and see, look at that claim. And if it's true, if he actually is God come in the flesh, then of course he'd be the superior way to salvation into God. And therefore, Jesus is either the way to God or he's no way to God, but he cannot be a way. He doesn't leave that option open because of statements that he makes. He's either the way, if he's right, or he's no way if he's wrong, in which case he's just crazy or he's a charlatan, but he can't be a way. And therefore, when Christians find Jesus Christ bringing the living water to them and they turn around, they have to say, this is the way to be saved. And so many people say, "Why do you have to always say, you have to believe in Jesus?" Either he's the way or he's no way, but he's not a way.

### **[00:27:14.330] - Speaker 2**

Don't say, "if it works for you, but don't tell everybody you have to believe in Jesus." That shows you have no idea what he's saying. That shows that, look, if you want to reject Christianity, you can, but you need to know what you're rejecting, otherwise there's no intellectual integrity in that. Christians have to say, if we believe he's brought the living water to us, "there is no other name under heaven by which we might be saved." Now, lastly, why is Jesus so insistent on himself? Why doesn't he say, well, God's just a gracious guy, so go out in the forest and just meditate, and you'll feel God's love. Why does he say, you got to come through me? And the answer is, go back to that little place where he lost her about the temples. She says, should we be worshipping in this temple or should we worshipping in that temple? And what does Jesus say? First, he says, "well, the temple in Jerusalem is the true temple." Okay? He says, "that's the right one." He says that. But then he says, "the time is coming, and now, is when there will no longer be need for temples.



**[00:28:20.050] - Speaker 2**

You'll be able to worship God everywhere." And the translation we have printed for you, the new international translation, translates that the time is coming and now is. But what he actually says in the Greek is, the hour is coming and now is. And in the book of John, in the Gospel of John, whenever Jesus talks about his hour, he's talking about the hour of his death. You know what he's saying? When I die, it's going to get rid of the need we've always had for temples. You're not going to need priests, you're not going to need sacrifices, you're not going to need temples. Why? Because in the past, the priests and the sacrifices were there to bridge the gap, because God is holy and just and we are sinful and we have done things wrong, and we need atonement and we need pardon, but when I lay down my life, that will be the ultimate sacrifice. So, with the end of the need for sacrifices, and that'll be the end of the need for temples, the end of the need for priests, or to put it in the terms of this particular account, when Jesus Christ was on the cross, he cried out, I thirst, I thirst.

**[00:29:32.070] - Speaker 2**

Why? It wasn't just physical deprivation. He was experiencing utter spiritual deprivation. He was being cast away from his Father's face. He was losing the source of all joy and love in the universe. He was experiencing hell. He was burning up spiritually. He was dying of thirst. Why did he go through it? So that he could say to this woman or to anybody, I don't care who you are, I don't care what you've done. I don't care whether you've had five husbands, I don't care if you've been a hitman for a mob. It doesn't matter who you are or. What you've done. This water of life is for you by grace freely. Why? Because I experience ultimate thirst. I experience the ultimate thirst you deserve so that you can have the water of life, the living water. And that's the reason she goes running off. And she says to her friends, not, come read a book. Come see a new set of moral values. She doesn't say, Come to a seminar, 'Ten Steps to a New You'. She doesn't say, here's self-improvement, here's a moral code. No, she says, "Come see a man who told me everything I've ever done."

**[00:30:54.830] - Speaker 2**

What a strange way to testify. No, what she's saying is he saw me at my worst and he still offered me the living water. I've never met a man like this. Here's a man who doesn't care about race or gender or morality or any of the world's values. He loves me. He cares about me. He offered this to me. He's seen me to the bottom, at my worst, yet he's loved me to the skies. She was a very effective witness. And you know, she knew that somehow the water was coming through Jesus, but she had no idea really what he was going to do. But you do. You and I know far more than she. What's our excuse? Go and tell. Let us pray.

Thank you, Father, for giving us the living water. And thank you for bringing it to us through your Son, the Messiah. And thank you for the ways in which you have patiently offered us your salvation until we

recognized you for who you were. And thank you that it doesn't matter who we are or what we've done. It doesn't matter our track record. It doesn't matter how much we've messed up our lives.

**[00:31:59.030] - Speaker 2**

It's ours. Thank you for the freeness and the greatness of this salvation which comes singly through you and only through you. And we thank you for that. And we pray that you would help us be true lovers of our friends and our neighbors. Help us no matter what, no matter what the situation, no matter how slowly or how quickly people respond or how positively or how negatively, teach us how to say, come and see a man who saw me at my worst and loved me. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.