

Sermon for January 31, 2010

BMZ Church

Text: John 4:7-30

Title: "Cups of Sand"

Introduction: Over the past few weeks we have been in this worship series we call "Squint". The idea behind it is that Jesus came into a world of darkness back in 1st Century Palestine and said, "I am the Light of the World." Jesus came to shed some light on Who God is and Who God wants us to be.

In John 8, Jesus said that if you will just remain/dwell/stay in my teachings (don't run away), even though they are kind of bright for us (outside on a sunny winter day), eventually our eyes will adjust and we will realize that what Jesus is teaching us TRUTH. And Jesus said, "... if you remain in my teachings (uncomfortable), eventually you will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free."

The problem is that we don't always like to live out of Truth. We like to live out of what we Hope, Wish, Desire to be true instead of reality. If we ignore the REAL TRUTH, then we can keep living life the way we want to and not have to be responsible for what Jesus said. Living that way usually takes us to some bad places...

Let's Pray! (*God, you know that there is somebody here...*)

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline with fill-in-the-blanks. This will help us follow our learning for today and get us ready for the entire series ... "Squint". When you get home refrigerate this and keep learning from it this week. For those of you who are listening on-line or IPODing, you too can download the outline from our website and fill in the blanks as well. We are glad you are with us.

Background: 720 BC = Assyrian King named Sargon conquered the area of Judea that we are going to be talking about today. He exported Jews out of this area and shipped some Gentiles into this area. Over time they intermarried and became a mixed race. They were no longer pure-bred Jews. This was not acceptable to the traditional Jews and this new race became known as Samaritans. They still lived in the middle of Palestine 750 years later, but they were in a territory called Samaria (MAP). Samaritans were considered by the Jews to be nothing more than dogs or dirt ... they were certainly sub-human (very racist).

Jesus, in our scripture, is leaving the Jerusalem/Judea area and headed back to Galilee up north. He has to leave the area of Jerusalem, because he has already upset the Pharisees because he is getting a lot of attention from the people (many were coming to be baptized by Jesus and His disciples). It's not Jesus time yet to go toe-to-toe with the Pharisees, so he heads back up toward his home area to continue His ministry and to teach the Disciples to change the world.

It says in John 4:4 that Jesus "had" to go back through Samaria. Not true. Most Jews traveled east of the Jordan River and went around Samaria so they didn't have to deal with those 'half-breed dogs'. But, Jesus HAD to go through Samaria on this trip ... Do you know why?

Jesus HAD to go through Samaria so that he could have an opportunity to invite people to meet his Father. Samaritans? Yes, Samaritans. Not just Samaritans, but today

we watch and listen as Jesus meets up with a Samaritan WOMAN ... and this woman had a past. We find out that she had, not one, not two ... but, FIVE Husbands! This is unusual in our society; but, it was VERY unusual in that 1st Century society.

Then Jesus reveals that she is no longer married, but is living with a man who is NOT her Husband! Not such a big deal in our culture, but HUGE deal in hers ... this is a woman with many issues. She not only had a past, but she had a past that everyone knew about ... she lived in a small town! Her life was public knowledge...

Now, we don't know why she had 5 husbands; maybe they had all died. But, in their culture, she would be seen as cursed by God because all of her husbands had died. Again, we don't know.

Maybe her husbands all left her for other women. Then, she would have some pretty serious self-esteem issues, wouldn't she?!?

It could be that her husbands left her because she was unable to have children ... that too would be a curse of God. In her society, she would be worthless because in that culture a woman's purpose was to bear her husband children. Her husbands could leave her if she couldn't have kids, so she went from husband to husband hoping to have kids ... we don't know.

What we do know is that this woman is *damaged goods*. This woman is thirsty ... life, whether by her choices or other people's choices or by life happenings and circumstances, had left her THIRSTY! For her, there has to be something more to life ... there has to be a way to experience life ... better.

Now, John gives us some needed details here in this story. One of the details is that this woman came out to the well, just outside the town of Sychar, to gather water for the day at NOON. Most women went to the well outside of town early in the morning or later in the afternoon when it wasn't so hot. The women often went together for protection and for conversation (women like to talk). But, this woman who had been married 5 times and was now living with a man who probably refused to marry her (remember that women had no status on their own ... she was property now) came to the well at NOON, and she came ALONE!

So, picture it if you would; late morning, she leaves town carrying her heavy water jug and she sees coming toward her a group of men ... as she gets closer she realizes that they are Jewish men ... no eye contact and absolutely NO Conversation. That's weird ... why would Jewish men be in our territory and in our town? On to the well she goes...

As she gets closer, she sees a lone figure ... a man. Little does she know that she's about to have a one-on-one conversation with the Savior of the world!!!! Her life is about to change. She's about to experience some hard TRUTH and some TRUTH that she needs in her life ... some TRUTH about God and God's love for us... Why? Because she is THIRSTY! Remember how Jesus said that he 'had' to go through Samaria ... Everything about this conversation feels like it's an APPOINTMENT that Jesus set up!

Now, before I go on, here's my guess: My guess is that there is more than one person here who would, if you were honest, say that LIFE HAS LEFT YOU THIRSTY. Either by the decisions you have made or the decisions of others in your life, you are feeling really DRY right now. My guess is that some of you here have tried a whole bunch of ways to feel fulfillment in your life ... and you've tried them again and it didn't work, so you tried them again and it didn't work... So, you tried something else so that

you could feel good and fulfilled and maybe you felt good for a short period of time, but then it went away and something was still missing, etc.

I don't know what you believe about God. I don't know how you view God, but, as we watch this scene unfold, you are going to see, maybe in a new way, how God views and loves people, and how God views those who are THIRSTY; how God cares about and deals with people who are DRY. Brace yourselves though. There are going to be some VERY BRIGHT LIGHTS ALONG THE WAY!

Let's get going ... starting with Verse 7...

I. **But You Are A Jew** (vs. 7-10)

- A. (vs. 7-8) We know that the disciples were headed into town to get some food for the trip. The important thing here is what Jesus asks ... *"Please give me a drink."*
1. Can you imagine the look on the Samaritan woman's face? A Jewish man asking a Samaritan woman for a drink...
 2. This would never happen in their society ... they wouldn't even talk, much less have a Jew ask a Samaritan for a favor!
- B. (v. 9) "Why are you asking me for a drink?" Do you know what Jesus just did?
1. She's picturing it ... Jesus would have to use her bucket, her water jar... He would have to touch her water jar and drink from the same vessel that she drank from. His lips would touch where her lips touched!
 2. You know what He just said? He just said that he did not feel about her like others did. The Samaritans had been rejected and dealt with as less than tax collectors and prostitutes for generations and she personally had been rejected by everyone she knew...
 3. Jesus = I don't think any less of you because you are thirsty.
 4. Jesus psychology? He went to that well to meet this woman and he was going to have a conversation with her ... he used what was in her hand and where she was in life to connect with her. Good Lesson!

II. **Never Thirsty Again** (vs. 10-15)

- A. (V. 10) Jesus replied, "If you only knew the ... GIFT (not deal, not barter, not 'you owe me'...)... God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would GIVE you living water."
1. "You don't owe me. I know that the men in your life treated you like you owed them something (children, cheap labor, etc.); but not Me!" –Jesus
 2. Now, in this moment, I don't think this woman was 'not smart'. I've heard her portrayed as pretty ignorant ("what's living water?"), but I think she knew that something was going on. You cannot be in the presence of Jesus and not know that something is going on!

3. She was curious. She was in conversation with Someone like she'd never experienced. I think she could see it in Jesus eyes, don't you?!?
- B. (Vs. 11-12) Although she knows that Jesus is different, she has a hard time, like many of us do, differentiating between physical water and "living" water.
1. They are sitting by a well ... Jesus asks her for a drink and then offers to get her a drink of "living" water...
 2. Thinking logically: "You don't have a bucket!
 3. Jesus hasn't told her yet, but kind of leads her on with the "If you knew ... who you are speaking to..." So she kind of goes off of that...
 4. "...besides, do you honestly think you are better than JACOB? You remember Jacob, right?!? 'The God of Abraham, Isaac and JACOB... That's the God you (Jews) believe in and the God WE (Samaritans) still believe in, right?!? You think you are better than JACOB? JACOB used this well. It's GREAT WATER!
- C. (Vs. 13-14) Jesus tells her, "Yeah, My water is better than this water. With this water you have to come back and get more every day. With MY water you will feel complete and fulfilled forever!"
1. She knew that Jacob's water had to be refilled every day. She had been to this well a few times...
 2. Jesus says that the water he offers brings "Eternal Life" = definition: you will know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent (John 17). This is what you will have if you trust JESUS!
 3. I'm sure she knew that there was more to what Jesus was saying than what she could understand, but Jesus, who seemed fairly trustworthy, was offering her a gift and she wanted in on it...
- D. (Vs. 15) You're offering a gift; I'll take it!! BUT, she's still thinking physical water ... she is getting along with this Jewish Man, but she is still not quite caught up to what He's offering...
1. She wants to have it easy ("...I won't have to come here to get water")... many of us think that if we just trust Jesus and follow Jesus and go to worship once a week, Jesus will make sure our life is easy ... NOT what Jesus was offering!
 2. Then, Jesus does something that seems so insensitive. He says something that if I said it to one of you, you would storm out of my office and not come back...
 3. Remember, she is starting to soften up a bit and be in conversation with Jesus. The problem is they are still talking about the weather and the water... Time to go DEEP!
 4. Grab your sunglasses!!!!

III. **Here's Your Thirst** (vs. 16-24)

- A. (Vs. 16) OUCH! Talk about grabbing the scab and ripping it off! Talk about throwing salt in the open wound!
1. This is the subject that this woman has spent months and years practicing making up excuses for and justifying and ignoring, convincing herself that she had reasons for the decisions she made; that she did the only thing she could do...
 2. But, Jesus knows that in order to quench a THIRST, you first have to recognize your THIRST!
 3. Jesus just put the desert/dry part of her life front and center!
- B. (Vs. 17-18) She responds with the truth ... "I don't have a husband..." and Jesus lays right into her...
1. "Let's go ahead and identify your THIRST and where it came from!"
 2. You've had 5 husbands and the man you are with now is not your husband! How's that going for you?!?
- C. And she pulls the tactic that so many of us use if we are willing to open up as much as this woman did. If anyone ever gets close to where we are vulnerable; if anyone gets close to our real THIRST in this life, we try this... (Vs. 19-20)
1. "Wow! You must be a prophet to know all that about me! Let's talk about something else ... let's talk about Jews and Samaritans and God, okay?!?"
 2. So, you Jews think Jerusalem; we think Mount Gerizim ... let's discuss...
 3. What a great tactic that we all use. "Let's talk about anything else besides what I feel so vulnerable about... because if I had the time, I could tell you what happened with each of those relationships and how it was not my fault and I can tell you how I justify my actions to myself ... it's not the TRUTH, but I'm hoping if I tell myself long enough it will become TRUTH..."
 4. We do it don't we ... in relationships, with our time, in our work ... we defend and justify and explain and try to make it look better than it is...
- D. And then, check this out ... Jesus lets her get away with it. He follows her trail and talks to her about worship and how the time is coming when we'll all realize that it doesn't matter what race you are or where you decide to be physically when you worship; what matters is that you worship with a right attitude and a right heart. What matters is that we truly come back to God to give thanks sincerely and worship like we recognize the Lordship of Christ!
1. It doesn't matter where you worship.
 2. It doesn't matter what you wear to worship.

3. All that matters is that your spirit is connected with the Spirit of God ... a right heart.
- E. At this point in the story, she has the water she needs and she really does not want to get back on THAT subject ... she wants to keep it light, so she throws out her closing statement for her meeting with this “Jewish prophet”...

IV. **She Left the Water Jar** (vs. 25-30, 39)

- A. (Vs. 25) This is her “End of Discussion” statement... “When the Messiah comes, he will explain everything to us. Okay, see ya’ ... gotta go now! Bye!”
- B. And Jesus locks eyes with her as she’s trying to walk away (v. 26) and says, “I Am the Messiah!”
1. She can’t walk away now! She’s stuck. And she’s had enough conversation with Jesus that she has no more questions. She is convinced that Jesus is telling her the TRUTH!
 2. She and Jesus are so locked in that they don’t realize that they have company... the disciples are back...
- C. When they unlock eyes and take notice of the confused disciples; she bolts! She drops her water jar (she doesn’t need that like she used to!) and runs back to town!
1. (V. 29) I’m sure they were thinking / saying, “So what? EVERYONE knows what you did!”
 2. There must have been something in her eyes or in her demeanor that gave it away, because they went (V. 30)...
- D. Do you know what happened because Jesus set up an appointment with a very thirsty Samaritan woman? Let’s skip down a little bit (v. 39). They believed! This woman, who was so thirsty and so lost and had so much ‘past’, became the evangelist that helped many SAMARITANS come to Jesus!

V. **Drinking Sand**

- A. Around age 16-19 we discover that we have a THIRST inside of us that is not about water... So, we try to quench that thirst with everything the world has to offer... (*Cups of Sand?*)
1. Relationships (this one didn’t work, I’ll try another one, that one didn’t work, wait! That guy was a jerk too ... maybe the next one will be the one if I just try harder ... wow! He was worse than that other one. Maybe I should go back, etc.
 2. Success ... this business deal didn’t go right, so I’ll try again ... okay, now I’m making some money, BUT it’s not enough so I have to do more and I have to do more and “sorry honey, I just have to do one more deal... and then I’ll be able to relax some...” Wow! I made money there, but it still isn’t enough, etc.

3. How many cups of sand do we have to drink to quench our Thirst?!?
- B. If you could name the one time in your life that was the absolute worst ... that darkest moment ... you would probably, if you were honest, have to say it had to do with quenching this Thirst inside of me. And you would probably admit that what you did to quench it didn't quench it, but compounded the problems you already had in life!
- C. And when we are confronted by anyone close to us ... people who really care about us ... about the decisions we are making, we do the same thing that the woman at the well did: We change the subject ... we don't want to be held accountable for what we do...
1. *"So, you moved in with him/her?"* "Yeah, but it's because it's too expensive to have our own places and we're getting married anyway and everyone is doing it and...justify, justify, justify..." We love listening to our culture and not God.
 2. *"So, you're just going to leave him, huh?"* "Yeah, but we're trying to still be friends for the kids sake and I needed some space and it's his fault because of ... blame, blame, blame..."
 3. *"So, you're going to hang out at the bar again tonight?"* "Yeah, my old lady has the kids and they don't really like me around and I have to have my time with the boys and if I don't I'm just cranky at home anyway and me and my wife get into a fight because I'm never around and the kids don't really like me... excuse, excuse, excuse..."
 4. *"So, you still haven't talked to your sister yet?"* "Seriously, after what she did to me/said about me you want me to talk to her? I know all about that unconditional love stuff and forgiveness, but I've decided that I'm not going to do it God's way, because I can't...blame, blame, blame..."
- D. How many cups of sand will we drink before we finally go after the Living Water that Jesus offers? You and I were CREATED BY God to have a NEED FOR God! Until we come back to God and agree that we will attempt to live life God's way, we will ALWAYS BE THIRSTY!
- E. This woman realized that she needed something more than what relationships with men offered her... She went for that Living Water that fulfills us when nothing else can.
- F. Will you? At what point, at what expense to our lives and our families and our friends ... what will it take for us to finally decide to live this life God's way ... no more excuses, no more justifying, no more blaming other people or society or our parents for our behaviors...
- G. Please, sense Jesus looking you in the eye and saying, "I'm the one you keep looking for. I'm right here."

Let's Pray!

Special thanks to Andy Stanley for ideas and new parameters for this worship series and my preaching as a whole.