

The God we were made for

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[0 : 0 0] Well, just last week, five municipalities in the Western Cape were declared officially disaster areas because of lack of water. It was just in the news. As our country, you've no doubt noticed, tries to get through one of our worst droughts we've had in decades.

Last year at this time, dam levels were at 64%, which was bad enough just before a dry summer. Right now, our dams are at 49% and falling. And so all of a sudden, everybody's trying to save water, aren't we?

I think everybody here has been affected in some way. My neighbor just had a borehole put in on Friday. People are building systems to recycle wastewater so that nothing is wasted.

On Friday, we had municipal workers coming and checking on our water usage. In fact, it was strange. I was thinking on Friday of an introduction to my sermon. I was thinking, what can I talk about?

What can I talk about? And then we've got this borehole next door. We've got this ring at the doorbell. This woman saying, we're here to save your water. And I'm still going, what can I talk about in my sermon on Sunday? And then it just came to me.

[1 : 0 6] Water, the drought. I mean, because the fact is, we'll see in a bit that this passage we're about to look at, it starts with the whole theme of water.

But, you know, when we're in a drought like we are in, all of a sudden we realize how precious this water is that we normally take for granted. Because we do normally take for granted, don't we?

When we're not in a drought, we just turn on our taps and there it is.

We tend to forget how much we rely on this precious liquid called water that we get from our environment. In fact, how much we are needy for our environment to supply our basic needs.

And it's only like this when we realize how needy we actually are. How much we rely on our environment. No matter how advanced we are. No matter how much technology we have. We rely completely on our environment to give us a life.

Which is quite a thought. We are more needy creatures than we think. And that's really, as I say, what our passage this morning is about. It's about our need.

[2 : 0 7] Our basic human needs. It's a record of a conversation between the Samaritan woman and Jesus. Who he meets, who's coming to get water from a well.

And so it's really only because of her basic human need that she's here at all. And this conversation takes place at all. But little did she know, when she was walking that day to get her bucket of water, little did she know that it would result in a conversation that would change her life.

Because by the end of it, this woman has discovered a need that she has. Which is even more important than the need that drew her there in the first place.

Her basic need for water. And we see this in an interesting detail at the end of the story. Which is just after the passage of Michiel read for us. If you have your Bible, turn to verse 28. Have a look at that. Very interesting.

After the conversation in verse 28, we read this. Leaving her water jar, the woman went back to town. Isn't that interesting? Interesting.

[3 : 0 9] The woman came just to get water. And she leaves without that water that she came to get. So why? Why did she do that? What did she discover in this conversation with Jesus that changed her priorities so much to forget the very reason she was there in the first place?

Well, that's what I want us to discover this morning. I want us to discover what happened in that conversation which changed her, which changed her priorities. And so let's look at how the conversation between Jesus and this woman begins.

Verse 5. So he came to a town in Samaria called Syca near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. And Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well.

It was about noon. Verse 7. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, Will you give me a drink? His disciples had gone into town to buy food. So Jesus initiates this conversation, which already is quite a thing to do.

What he was doing is very unorthodox here. Just talking to a woman in public was frowned upon by Jewish men, let alone the fact that she was a Samaritan who the Jews hated with a passion.

[4 : 19] They avoided them like the plague. But Jesus doesn't care about cultural taboos. And so he initiates a conversation with this woman. And even she is shocked that he does this.

Look what she says next. Verse 9. You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? But then what Jesus does next is very interesting. Instead of answering a question, he turns the situation upside down.

Did you notice that? Look at verse 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.

Okay, so this is pretty cheeky, isn't it?

I mean, a second ago, Jesus was the one who was in need, asking this woman to supply what he needed. But now he says the truth is actually the complete opposite. She's really the one in need and she should be asking him.

And it's right there in what Jesus says. It's right there that we discover why Jesus started the conversation in the first place. Why did he start this conversation with a woman? Well, it was never actually about his needs, but it was about hers.

[5 : 27] I mean, we don't even get to find out whether Jesus gets the drink that he asked for.

Because it doesn't matter. That's not what this conversation is really about. It's about a need that this Samaritan woman has, which is far deeper and far more important than her need for water.

And so what could that be? What is this living water that Jesus is talking about? What could be more important than the basic human necessities that God gives us, like air and water and food? What could be more important than that? Well, there can only be one thing more important, and that is God himself. You see, just as God made our bodies to need water and food.

And, you know, in our Bible studies, we spoke about the thirstiest moment that you can think of in your life. When is the thirstiest you've ever been? And we know that if we don't have water for, you know, a few hours, let alone a few days, our bodies crave it.

God has designed us to have needs when he made us. He made us with needs. He made our bodies to need water. But just as he made our bodies to need water and food and air, he made our souls to need him, to need relationship with our Creator.

[6 : 42] That's what Jesus describes as living water. It's the basic necessity of our souls. And yet, I think that's a basic necessity we neglect, isn't it, because of sin.

I mean, we're very happy to chase after our bodily needs, but Jesus is saying there is an even deeper need our souls have that we neglect. And that's what he highlighted about this woman.

You see, we don't realize about ourselves that we have this need. She didn't realize that she had this need, let alone the fact that Jesus could fulfill this need.

Look at, again, what Jesus says. He says, if you knew, in verse 10, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, then you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. But she didn't.

She didn't know the gift of God. She didn't know what she was lacking. She didn't even know that she needed this living water. And that's the problem, because neither do we most of the time.

[7 : 43] I don't think we've really come to terms with how much we really need God. And the reason I say that is because we're quite okay going through a day without any reference to God.

We get to the end of the day and we go, yeah, that was an okay day. I don't need God. That's what we do. And we only concentrate on him when we've got, you know, when we've got the time to do that, when we've sorted out all the basic needs of life.

Like we've done our job and we've got our money and we've got food on the table. Then I've got some time for God, maybe my quiet time in the evening or on Sunday. We don't realize that actually he is a more vital need than all those other things that we chase after.

That's what Jesus wants to teach us here, that God is our most basic human need. That we're not just physical beings. We have souls. And our souls, in many ways, are far more important than our bodies.

And just as our bodies need their physical environment to survive with its air and its water and its food that it gives us, you know, we wouldn't be able to survive without our environment raining down the things that we need.

[8 : 50] But in the same way, our souls need God to survive. He, God, is the environment in which we were made to operate. God is the environment.

And so in many respects, we are like beached whales. Have you ever seen a beached whale? It's a sad, it's a heart-wrenching sight.

You see this beautiful creature, and it's just lying there, dying on the beach. I remember years back in Scarborough, when I was living sort of in Fishwick area, a whole pod of a certain type of whale, pilot whales, I think, beached themselves on Scarborough Beach.

And we went to go have a look, and there's really nothing we can do for them because they're so big. You can't exactly pick up a whale and throw it back into the sea. And we don't know why they do that, but often whales beach themselves like it could be some navigational error, some magnetic north thing that they, you know, some malfunction that causes them to all land themselves on a beach.

But when they're there, when they're out of the water, and they're on this beach, and the tide goes down, they just lie there, useless. It's sad. It's heartbreaking to see their life just ebbing away, and there's nothing you can do for them.

[10 : 00] And the reason is because they're out of the environment they were made for. You see? And the fact is that the environment that we were made for as humans is God himself.

You know, God is like to us what the water is to the whales. Relationship with God, that's where he intends us to live. That's where he intends us to operate and find life and find happiness and find meaning and find pleasure in relationship with him.

And yet, we've had this navigational malfunction called sin that's taken us out of that environment and leaves us lying helpless in this broken world with our life ebbing away just like a whale on the beach.

As we grow older and we eventually die, that's what we are. We're beached whales in this broken world because we're cut off from the environment we were meant to live in.

We're cut off from God. Relationship with God. We're cut off from the source of our life. And that's why we die. That's why our lives eb away. That's why nothing works properly.

[11 : 08] That's why we're frustrated. And the saddest thing? The saddest thing is so many people feel those effects, feel that frustration, you know, the unfulfillment, the inability to ever be truly happy, but they don't realize why.

The reason, of course, is because they are out of the environment that they were made for. They're cut off from the living water of relationship with God. And that describes human life. There's so many people living right now, sitting, waking up, sitting in their living rooms, watching TV, who are just beached whales.

They're frustrated. They're worried about the week to come. They're not happy because they're cut off from relationship with God. That's the only environment they were meant to find happiness and fulfillment in.

And that's what Jesus is trying to tell this woman. You see, that's what this conversation is about, that she has a spiritual need that is far more important than any physical need. And she must realize how spiritually thirsty she really is.

And you know what Jesus does to show her how spiritually thirsty she is? He goes on to ask a very unexpected question in verse 16. He says, Go, call your husband and come back.

[12 : 22] Okay, where did that come from, Jesus? She said, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You're right when you say you have no husband. The fact is you've had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband.

What you have said is quite true. And so Jesus knows this woman more than she knows herself. He knows that she is living an immoral lifestyle on the back of a string of relationships, failed relationships with men.

But, okay, he knows that. But why does he bring it up now? Well, you see, he brings it up to show her that she is trying to quench her spiritual thirst in all the wrong places.

He's talking about, Jesus is trying to prove to this woman that she is spiritually thirsty for God. because he shows her that she's trying to find pleasure and security and love.

All the things she was meant to find in God, she's trying to find in sexual relationships. And it's obviously not working. Because she just hops from one relationship to the next and she's never satisfied.

[13 : 25] And she probably doesn't realize why she's so unsatisfied. She doesn't realize that she's looking for something in these relationships that they can never really give her. That, you know, something, security and love and pleasure, something that she was meant to only find in God.

But because she's out of that relationship, she can't find it and she looks in all the wrong places. And so, in a way, you could say that sex for this woman has become a substitute for God.

And that's why Jesus raises the topic. Because she's looking in sex and in relationship for all the things that she should be finding in God. But you know what the Bible says?

The Bible says that we all are like that Samaritan woman. That we all have God's substitutes. Things that we chase after rather than God in order to fulfill our spiritual thirst.

That's what we're doing every day. Whether we realize it or not, we are chasing after the things that are going to fulfill that deep thirst we have deep down inside. And God makes this quite clear.

[14 : 30] Listen to Jeremiah 2, verse 13. I'll put it up on the screen. This is God speaking to His own people. He says, My people have committed two sins. They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and they have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns, that cannot hold water.

Don't you think that verse, Jeremiah 2, verse 13, is such an apt description of our world? People chasing after happiness and fulfillment in things like sex and money and success and fame, but they're never satisfied.

They always need more. Doesn't that describe our world? People chasing after things, and once they get those things, they need more, and they need more, and they need more, because those are broken cisterns. Broken pots that can never quench our spiritual thirst, that can never fulfill us, much as we think they can, and much as we keep on chasing after them.

Yeah, sure, we'll come to church on Sunday, we'll give God some airtime, but then we go back to the week, and we chase after our God substitutes. So let me ask you, what are your broken cisterns that you've dug in your life, that you try to find fulfillment in?

What are you chasing after, to give you security, and happiness, and love and pleasure? What are your broken cisterns? Let me ask it another way. What are the things that you need in your life to make you happy, that you'd be distraught if you were to lose them?

[15 : 59] Think about that. What are the things that you need so much in your life to make you happy, that you would be distraught, you would be devastated if you lost them? Well, those are your God substitutes.

Those are your broken cisterns, that you're trying to find fulfillment in that only God can give you. And no matter what you might say, those are the things that you worship more than God.

See, it's no mistake now that this conversation turns to the topic of worship. That's the very next thing Jesus talks about. In fact, at first, it's an attempt of this woman to change the subject away from talking about her five husbands.

And so she brings up the religious controversy of the day, which is all about worship and where the right place to worship was. And so, you know, if you ever want to change the subject out of an uncomfortable conversation, just bring up a religious controversy.

I've seen it a lot as a pastor. You know, I'm meeting with someone and I bring up a particular sensitive area of their life and all of a sudden they go, so, pastor, what's your view on infant baptism?

[17 : 04] You know, change the subject when it gets uncomfortable. With the religious controversy, that's exactly what this woman tries to do. But Jesus is not deterred because, in fact, we see he's quite happy to talk about worship.

He's quite happy to go on this rabbit trail because it just so happens that's the very thing he's been talking about all along. And so he says, okay, okay, I'll talk about worship because, you know what worship really is?

Worship isn't about places or traditions or religion. Worship, as Jesus puts it, is about spirit and truth. That's how he defines true worship. It's what you value in your heart of hearts, in your soul, what you value and what you believe you truly need above all other things.

That is what you'll worship. And that's what Jesus wanted this woman to realize, that she really wasn't worshipping God at all because she was chasing after everything but God to fulfill her deepest desires.

But that's not all this woman needed to know. That's not all Jesus wanted her to know. He also wants her to realize that not only that he's come to bring her this spiritual fulfillment that she's been seeking everywhere else, but that it comes free of charge.

[18:21] Free of charge. You know, this is the most amazing fact of this entire conversation and it's so heartwarming for sinners such as myself and yourself.

because Jesus knows this woman's sins more than she does. He knows her inside out. He's already proved that. He knows that she's a failure.

He knows that she's an adulteress. He knows her sin and yet despite all of that, he still offers her living water. Isn't that amazing?

Isn't that grace? He still, despite all her failure to be the person she should be, he still offers her a way back into relationship with God. All she needs to do is realize how thirsty she is for him.

That's all she needs. She doesn't need to tick any boxes. She doesn't need to become religious.

She doesn't need to, you know, jump through hoops. All she needs to do, and this is the same today, the only requirement for salvation is to realize how thirsty you are for God and to realize that Jesus came to quench that thirst.

[19:28] That's all. And accept the free gift of living water that he holds out to you. And we know, in hindsight, we know now how he could give this gift of living water free of charge.

How he could bring this woman and us into right relationship with God despite our sins because he went on to die for the sins of people just like this woman when he died on the cross. So that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

and Jesus offers the same thing to you today despite all your sins and all your failures and all the things you think you can hide from God. Jesus knows them and yet he still offers you living water free of charge if only you will realize your thirst for him.

And in fact, that's what God's been offering people from day one. Listen again to the passage from Isaiah that Alan read for us where we hear God appealing pleading with his people listen to what he says come all you who are thirsty come to the waters this is God pleading with you come to the waters and you who have no money come buy and eat come buy wine and milk without money and without cost why spend money on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy listen, listen to me and eat what is good and you will delight in the richest affair give ear and come to me listen so that you may live this is God speaking to you this morning and so are you thirsty for him? That's what I want you to ask are you thirsty for God? Do you realize that he is your greatest need that you need God more than you need food and water because God is the environment you were made to live in he is the one you were meant to find your security and joy and peace and fulfillment in so stop chasing after those God substitutes those broken cisterns which can never satisfy you and give yourself fully to Jesus who died to bring you the free gift of living water that's all you've got to do and if you've done that if you've truly come to Jesus and repented of your worshipping of God substitutes and made him the priority of your life and thirsted after God more than anything else if you've done that if you're a Christian and a true Christian then I want to challenge you to do something this week this is something I challenged the Tuesday morning Bible study with so you'll remember if you were there but after I challenged the Tuesday morning Bible study and indeed challenged myself

[22:05] I thought you know everybody needs to hear this challenge and this is the challenge in the coming week every time you are thirsty alright and you go to the tap to get a glass of water or you go to the fridge to get a cool drink to quench that thirst every time you feel that thirst and you go to quench it stop and remember that you have an even greater need than water right then and there that while your body might need water in that moment your soul needs fellowship with God more than all your physical needs combined and stop then and there and do what God says in Jeremiah listen listen to me and eat what is good and you will delight in the richest of fear give ear and come to me listen that you may live and so stop there when you've got your glass of water sit down on the couch take a moment to pray take a moment to reconnect with God take a moment to read

something from his word to quench your thirsty soul you see because the only reason that we struggle with daily quiet times you know we do ask

I can ask most of you right now how's your quiet time going you'll say you know it's a struggle it's discipline I've got to make sure I do it every day the reason we struggle is we fail to realize how much we need God we fail to realize how thirsty we are and so from this day on I challenge you to take your relationship with God more seriously than you do your most basic human needs and pursue that relationship above all else because God promises you you will delight in the richest affair when you quench your thirst in him now there's no better way to remember that than in Holy Communion which we're going to participate in now this is the sign that Jesus gave us to picture what he did for us to bring us living water to bring us into relationship with God and it's no coincidence that he uses food and drink to represent the significance of who he is and what he's done because just as our body needs food and liquid so much more does our soul need the body and the blood of Jesus Christ to wash away our sins and bring us to God and so take this opportunity now as we have communion to recommit yourself to God take this opportunity to be silent and in prayer to affirm to God your creator and to affirm to your own soul that he is your greatest need take this opportunity to as you hold that bread as you hold that grape juice say God I've heard you this morning I need you I need you more than anything take this opportunity to do that and then come and drink the living water the fountain of delights that God wants to give you in Jesus Christ and so I invite all of you who believe in Christ and desire to follow him now as we prepare for communion to join me in praying the prayer that will appear behind me let us pray together dear God you are our living water forgive us for digging broken cisterns that can never hold water and help us to put you first in our lives again thank you that your salvation is free of charge all because of what Jesus did on the cross for us help us to feed on him by faith now and satisfy our souls with the knowledge of the salvation he brings amen who who towards and who who go as an