

An Appetite for Evangelism

Good morning. My name is Pastor Mike Palombo. We are continuing our series on Spiritual Training. Some of us cringe at the thought of training because all we here is strain and pain. For anyone that has not developed a habit of physical training, you often focus on the strain of working out, the effort, the work, sweat, and rigor. And the resulting pain, the tearing of muscles, the soreness throughout, and the inability to function the next morning. You ask what is the point of all this strain to get all this pain?

But for those who have established a habit of training they have tasted the gains of pressing through the pain. They feel healthier, they use their muscles in new ways with new strength, they lose weight and gain energy. They have a greater capacity to enjoy life because of the gains of physical training. There is still great strain, but they begin to see through the pain to the great gain.

The gain from Spiritual training is not salvation. We do not commit to these spiritual practices of Bible, prayer, fasting, serving, etc. so we can somehow earn and gain acceptance by God. This is not about gaining salvation but gaining a greater satisfaction in Christ who has saved us. It is the joy of knowing your Savior and of being filled with Him to overflowing.

Every habit begins with a start, so I encourage you to start. This morning we are going to talk about the discipline of evangelism. We will see how Jesus seeks to save and satisfy a thirsty woman by a well. You can open up your Bible to John 4:1-42.

The Gospel of John was written so that we “may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name. In Chapter 3 Jesus reached out to a moralistic religious leader who was lost in His morality. Despite his moral goodness, he needed to be born again. His morals could not cover His sin or free him from the sentence of death, he needed Jesus’ salvation.

In John 4 we see Jesus reach out to an immoral woman who is lost in her immorality. Despite her pursuit of pleasure apart from God, she will end up not only empty, but eternally condemned in her sin, forever alienated from God and lasting satisfaction. Chapter 3 and 4 sums up the stark reality of life or death for the moral and immoral rebel: “³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Hear now the story of Jesus reaching the woman at the well. “Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is

it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?”¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.”¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

Let’s pray...

As we get started, I must confess that I am a spoiled rotten husband. This hasn’t always been the case. I did not always enjoy the great benefits of my beautiful wife. Before Whitney and I got married, my cooking abilities were very low grade.

One time I decided to serve Whitney when we were dating. I kept it easy by bringing a box of cereal and a jug of milk for a simple breakfast. After pouring the cereal and milk I began digging in with a spoonful of cereal. Whitney watched me with a disgusted look on her face. She pointed down to my bowl of cereal and shouted, “There is a dead cockroach in your bowl!”

After this and other events it became clear she would do most of the cooking. Her cooking is a return to Eden: her meals are a delight to the eyes and good for food. But just like many pleasures we enjoy regularly, I often take for granted these delicious meals and forget the blessing. It’s often not until we share these delicious meals with others that I realize how good I really have it. It is in sharing the good food of Whitney’s cooking that I remember the satisfaction of its taste.

In a very similar manner when we share the good news of the Gospel with people, we remember how good the Gospel is to us. We remember our own story of satisfaction in Jesus. Over time we take for granted the great benefits of the Gospel and have forget its goodness. Whenever we share the good news of Christ with other people, we ourselves remember the good taste of our Saviors love and God stirs our affections for godliness.

So how do we evangelize thirsty people? This story in John 4 reminds us that everyone around us has a common thirst. We all seek to satisfy this thirst. We have an inner longing for more.

I. A Common Thirst: We make a human connection

The first move in the discipline of evangelism is to make a human connection. This text vividly portrays the humanity of Jesus as he sees and seeks this woman. Jesus is growing in popularity and Jewish leaders are beginning to target him, so he goes behind the scenes down the backroads to Samaria. The text says he had to pass through Samaria, hinting that this was an undesirable part of town. But the long journey wearied Jesus and he was thirsty for water. Jesus, the son of God, sits by this well and looks up to the woman. With a parched mouth he asks, “Give me a drink.”

Jesus and this woman both have a common thirst and find themselves talking about water at a common well. Our common conversation builds a bridge to our deeper desires and need for God.

But she is shocked that Jesus even sees her as a human, let alone wants to make a human connection. Notice her shocked words in 4:9: “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)” The Samaritan people were a mixed ethnic people from different nations around Israel. The Northern tribes of Israel were kicked out of the land of Israel to Assyria. The King of Assyria resettled the area with people from different conquered countries and the poor from Israel were left. 2 Kings 17:33 says, “they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away.” But more often they did not fear the Lord, did not follow the commandment that the Lord commanded. Some even sacrificed their children to the gods.” So, they were shunned by the Jews as inferior and enemies. They would not associate or talk with the Samaritans.

Just like the Jewish people there are people that we will not share the Gospel with because we do not see them as human. We will not associate with them, let alone evangelize them. If we will be evangelist to the thirsty like Jesus, we must repent from the many ways we disregard people as less than human.

At times we also see people from different ethnicities as less than human and don't share the Gospel with them. We must repent of our ethnic pride which sees our ethnicity is superior and more righteous and others as inferior and more sinful. We also must repent for ways we love comfort more than the great commission to make disciples of all nations. We feel uncomfortable to relate with people that do not look like us, talk like us or walk like us.

At times poor people do not see the rich as humans, but as greedy hoarders that gather up their wealth at the expense of the poor. At times the rich do not see the poor as humans, but as needy beggars who constantly look for a handout and not a hand-up. But to God the rich and the poor are equal in dignity and desperate for salvation.

At times we see people from different political parties as less than human. Even Christians buy into the hatred for the other side and shun those with different views of society. We think there is no way you can be a human and embrace the values of the Democratic party or the values of the Republican party. Republicans and Democrats are dying in their sin and we won't move toward them with the hope of the Gospel.

Many of us struggle to see our adversaries as humans. They hurt us, mock us, and slander our name. We want to get back at them, not give them the gospel. They deserve our hate and not our love. But Jesus called us to love our enemies, for even they are humans.

When we see people as humans, we make human connections. When Jesus asks for water, he is making a human connection with the woman who is also thirsty. In John 4:13-14 we see Jesus bridges our human thirst to the deeper spiritual thirst, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Jesus takes this basic human desire for water and says He has the ability to satisfy in ways water never will. He is the water that never runs dry but wells up to eternal life.

We too can take common human connections and bridge them to deeper spiritual and ultimate connections. You hear them talk about satisfying their hunger for love and the sadness of broken relationships and conflict. Behind this human love is the spiritual longing for ultimate satisfaction. You connect them to the love of Jesus that fills us and never forsakes you. Nothing in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You hear them talk about coping with their failures through moral change and the sadness of defeat as they repeat the same offenses, only adding to their self-disgust. Behind this shame you hear the longing for ultimate forgiveness. You connect them to Jesus who takes our record of debt and shame and nails it to the cross, substituting the sentence of condemnation for justification.

You hear them talk about education, work, and impact and the sadness of joblessness, debt and workaholicism. Behind this human labor is the spiritual longing for ultimate significance. You connect them to Jesus who is giving us real responsibility to build for His kingdom and impact the world towards justice and righteousness.

You hear them talk about their hopeful plans for the future and the fear of death and the loss of health. Behind this human control you hear the spiritual longing for ultimate security. You connect them to Jesus who gives us eternal life and grips us so tightly in His love that we will never perish, and no one will snatch us out of His hand. Not even death will keep us from being resurrected with Christ in the new creation. We make a human connection.

II. A Corrupted Thirst: We address human corruption

Secondly, we know that people have corrupted thirst, so we must address human corruption. Jesus says those who live for physical water alone will be thirsty again. This water won't ultimately satisfy. She asks Jesus to give her His lasting water so she would not have to draw the from the empty well. Jesus responds by revealing her human corruption. In 4:16 Jesus says, "Go call your husband, and come here." The woman answers quizzically, "I have no husband." Jesus addresses her in clear terms: You are right in saying, I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

When Jesus brings up these husbands, He is helping her see all the wells of water that she has been chasing. She has chased after five men in broken marriage and has now given up on covenant commitment altogether. She now has a man who is not her husband, meaning she is giving her body away without giving her life in covenant loyalty. She has a friend with benefits over a faithful bond. The fact that she draws water at around 12 p.m. shows that this corruption has earned her a shameful reputation. He calls her to look inward at the dissatisfaction this has brought in her life. Jesus reveals the core corruption of the human heart which is a distortion of our love. That love that was meant to go up to God and out to people has turned in on itself. Whenever our love is not first directed toward God and centered on Him, it will get crushed by other people or blown up into self-absorption and self-centeredness.

These are the twin reasons why most marriages end in deep dissatisfaction and divorce: We give our ultimate love to a spouse and look to that spouse to give us what only God can give us. Or we become so self-focused and selfish that we pursue our self-centered desires at the expense of a spouse. Most conflicts spring from two selfish people fighting over selfish goals which create a selfish storm.

David Foster Wallace draws out this corrupted selfishness in his commencement speech to Kenyon University. He says we all have a “deep belief that I am the absolute center of the universe; the realist, most vivid and important person in existence.” He notes that this core corruption of love “is our default setting, hard-wired into our boards at birth.”

Romans 1:22-23 reveals the root of this inner corruption. “²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.” Our hearts were made for glory, made for someone immortal. In other words, our hearts were made to find fullness of joy that lasts forever. And what has happened in the heart of every single human is we have turned from God who is the fountain of living water and have looked for fullness in jugs with holes. What Jesus is saying to this woman is that she is looking for someone created to satisfy her in a way that only the creator can satisfy. We have all exchanged the glory of the immortal God for godless things.

Later in Wallace’s speech he clarifies how human love is corrupted not only by hardwired selfishness but also by miss-directed worship. He says, “in the day-to day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is *what* to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship...is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It’s the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you.”

And with Samaritan Woman, if you worship marriage, you will go from spouse to spouse to finally find the one who will complete you. You will be crushed a million times over by the emptiness of another broken relationship. The problem is not primarily divorce but delight in the wrong object. We have looked to find the affection and affirmation from someone else who cannot fill us forever. Look on to your gracious God, he will satisfy you.

If we are to evangelize the thirsty, we must ask the hard questions. We have to share the hard truths. We must lovingly reveal their inner corruption and call them to the God who is full of glory and is immortal, who fills us forever.

The more we address people’s human corruption they will realize their need for rebirth, a complete rewiring of their heart’s desires. They will realize they don’t need to dust the screen on the outside but need to get rid of the virus on the inside. They don’t need new rules, but a new heart. This will call them out of themselves to look to God for what only He can do inside them. They need to surrender completely to the God who raises the dead. In their distress they must cry out to God for mercy and forgiveness that only the dying and rising savior can give.

St. Augustine was right when he said, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.” We must address the restlessness of everyone around us. The exhaustion of chasing after romantic relationships, chasing after fleeting peace through smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol, sexual fantasy, the exhaustion of achievement and climbing the corporate ladder.

Don’t you realize you are tired? And on the long road from one pleasure to the next, don’t you realize you haven’t yet reached your destination? Because your destination is The Lord Jesus Himself. For He says, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” For it is only in Jesus Christ that we have a Satisfied Thirst.

A Satisfied Thirst: We declare Jesus’ saving work and surpassing worth

So, we must make a human connection, we must address human corruption and finally, because Jesus is the one who satisfies our thirst, we must declare Jesus’ saving work and surpassing worth. Look at the text at John 4:19. After Jesus addresses her human corruption, she quickly changes subjects to another matter. She turns the attention away from herself and onto Jesus and a controversial debate. She says, “Sir I perceive that you are a prophet, you seem to have insight into my life.” She goes from her personal corruption of worship to talking about the place of worship. We worship on this mountain, but you worship at the temple in Jerusalem.

You see what she is doing she is changing the direction of the conversation from her personal corruption, so she does not feel the sting of it. She says let’s not talk so much about me, let’s talk about you. You seem to be a prophet from down south in Jerusalem. Being from Jerusalem Jesus would have strong opinions about proper worship in Jerusalem. So she brings up a hot political topic of proper worship rather than her personal corruption. Jesus sees through the pretense and points her to her deepest need which is Himself.

He says, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.”²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

He talks about proper worship in the context of God’s salvation. Jesus knows about proper worship because salvation is from the Jews. The faithful covenant God of Israel pursued his people relentlessly. He delivered them from the oppressive bondage of sin in Egypt. This God forgives sins as far as the east is from the west. He is the one who welcomes us to worship.

Before people know proper worship, they must know God’s saving work. After talking about the dynamics of true worship, the woman says that she knows that when Messiah comes, He will tell us all things. Jesus responds by saying I who speak to you am He. I am the savior King who has come to seek and to save those lost in sin that they might find satisfaction in their savior.

Isaiah 53 reveals this profound work of salvation that the Messiah, the Savior king accomplishes. “He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement (punishment) that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The Messiah will chase after the lost sheep by dying in their place, taking the punishment they deserve for their rebellion.

Peter says it like this, “¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,” (1 Peter 3:18).

We must declare to them that Jesus has done for us what we have failed to do for ourselves. That Jesus lived the perfect life for us that we might receive his perfect record. That Jesus died a sacrificial death for us that He might take our punishment. That Jesus rose a victorious resurrection to give us new life. If there is no salvation from the power and penalty of sin, then there is no Worship of God.

As people receive Jesus’ saving work, they will see His surpassing worth. This is what it means to worship Jesus in Spirit and in truth. We come to enjoy His glory in all of its truth and worship Him with sincerity of spirit. Worship is the act of coming to God thirsty and finding all of our satisfaction in His glorious worth. It is looking upon Him, beholding his power and glory and declaring His steadfast love is better than life. It is blessing Him as long as we live and, in His name, lifting up our hands and living for His glory in all of life.

After This woman sees Jesus’ saving work and His surpassing worth she leaves her water basin by the well. This is a profound picture of true conversion: She symbolically turns from those small sources of life she used to pursue and trust in Jesus the Satisfying Savior as her only source of life. We must lay aside the passing pleasures of sin and lay hold of the surpassing worth of Jesus.

Having her thirst satisfied in Jesus she goes back to her hometown to declare Jesus’ saving work and surpassing worth. John 4:39 tells us “³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” This Jesus saw all of her sin, all of her dissatisfaction, all of her shame and he didn’t leave her like the other husbands. She saw in Jesus a merciful savior who doesn’t condemn her in her sin but offers her steadfast love and salvation. “¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him,” (John 3:17).

In John 4:40 it says, “⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Much like the Samaritan Woman St. Augustine was a thirsty man who walked down many roads to find the destination of his delight. In His book *Confessions* we see his journey of joy as he went from one well of water to the next. He was raised in the church, told the old story of

Jesus. Like the young prodigal he left his house and His savior to find life on the road. He sought life in academics and his rhetorical ability and skill. He went off to find life in his political position and civic responsibility with the Empire of Rome. He went off to find life in a sexual relationship with a mistress for numerous years, not withholding any pleasure but chasing after them all. But He came to his senses and realized, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that Jesus will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that Jesus will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Here is how he tells his story in *Confessions*, “Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved you!... You called me and cried to me and broke upon my deafness; you sent forth your beams and shone upon me and chased away my blindness; you breathed your fragrance upon me, and I drew in my breath and now I pant for you; I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst for you; you touched me, and I burn for your peace.”

Jesus is the savior of the world, let us share Jesus that the lost may be saved and the thirsty may be satisfied.