

John 4:5-42

How are you getting on in your Lenten journey? Learning new things? Discovering something about yourself? Experiencing God in a closer way?

John Stott, *'There is perhaps no greater secret of progress in Christian living than a healthy, hearty, **spiritual appetite**.'* How is your appetite this morning?

We heard in our gospel of Jesus stopping by a well to rest on a journey, weary and thirsty in the heat of the day. His disciples go off to a nearby town to find some food, and a Samaritan woman arrives to draw water from the well, and Jesus asks her for a drink. She hesitates, as someone like Jesus would not usually speak to a woman like her! Here is Jesus *'so loving the world'* in action, crossing barriers of race, gender, reputation, and prejudice, to speak with this woman. **v9-10**

This Samaritan woman didn't know Jesus, she didn't know who he was, but from their later conversation it is evident that in her heart she was seeking for God, and God was at work in her life. She had grown weary in trying what life offered her. She had been married five times, and now lived with a man who wasn't her husband. She knew there must be more to life. She was dissatisfied and knew something was missing from her life.

Only Jesus meets our deepest needs. Only Jesus can enable us by his Spirit to experience life eternal, to learn to live for others and not just ourselves.

Only Jesus can still all the fears and anxieties in our hearts and give us peace.

Jesus is offering her *'living water'*, but what is it?

v13-14 Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit. Last week we considered Jesus words to Nicodemus, *'you must be born again.. born of the Spirit'*. Now Jesus speaks more of the life of the Spirit. When we first come to know Jesus, we begin a relationship with God, we start the adventure of a life of Christian discipleship. The Spirit brings us to new birth and then works in us, giving us a desire, an appetite, to grow in our knowledge and love and experience of God. Jesus says this life deeply satisfies, like a spring fresh each day. All other pleasures that satisfy us always leave us seeking more to maintain our satisfaction. Jesus says those who drink this living water will never be thirsty again.

Bernard of Clairvaux, (12thC Cistercian Abbot), *'There is no proof of the presence of the Spirit which is more certain than a desire for **ever greater** grace.'*

The Spirit is not a spirit of apathy, or just for keeping the status quo. The Spirit leads us in fresh challenges every day. Saints and Christians down the ages all speak of their desire for God, and the joy of knowing him more and more. This spiritual desire gets dulled and weakened by the stresses of life, but it will spring up again, because it is not dependent on us, but on God. Many people follow **diets** for their health or appearance, but there is a temptation for Christians to follow spiritual diets, trying to live on very little spiritual sustenance, and become spiritually weak as a result.

When it comes to the things of God we need that *'healthy, hearty, spiritual appetite'*.

Once we have tasted of the goodness of God, we will always return for more.

Jesus said, *'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied'*. (Mt 5:6) James said, *'Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you'*. (4:8)

This encounter certainly changed this Samaritan woman.

v28-29 The woman could not keep this discovery to herself, she had to go and tell everyone she met. This new life bubbled out of her, she could not contain it.

New life is for sharing. The life of the Spirit is not simply for our enjoyment, it is for living to the glory of God. This means sharing the good news in word and deed, growing in love, joy, peace, faith and hope, learning to serve others as Christ serves us, to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Let us this Lent not be content just to have a passing acquaintance with God, but seek to be filled daily with the Holy Spirit, to live Jesus' way, and experience the life that is eternal.