God Pursues John 4
Mar 8, 2026 Jesse Blaine

It's good to see you and I want to welcome you here to worship with us at Christ the King. If I haven't had a chance to meet you, my name is Jesse and it's always a joy to sing together with you to turn our hearts and our minds together to the table and to the Lord and to the scriptures. It's a joy. So, thank you for blessing me and I pray that the Lord blesses you this evening. Well, this evening we have a lot to cover and so I just want to jump right into our passage. We're in John chapter 4 and we're looking at the story, the connection, the account of Jesus speaking with a woman at the well. And just like every other interaction we see between Jesus and others, it's an interaction that is about their story and their life.

As Jared pointed out last week, John likes to hone in and focus on these specific individual conversations that Jesus has. He focuses on so many through the scriptures and especially here in the book of John, Nicodemus last week, the woman at the well. In a few weeks, we'll hear a few others. In fact, the lectionary sort of takes us through many of these conversations versus Jesus's large preaching to large audiences. Jesus has intimate and close conversations here with lots of different people. And here he meets with the woman at the well. And as we see Jesus have these conversations with people, it's really us learning about their story and how God connects to their story. But through them, we see our own story as well. How God speaks to us. In fact, St. Augustine called this woman, the woman at the well, the symbol of the church.

That is the conversation that Jesus has, the interactions, the layers that we pull back about the story are about Jesus connecting with this Samaritan woman, but they really are a way for us to think about how Jesus seeks and pursues and loves all of us and connects with all of us. Last week we heard the beautiful words, the famous words in their right context, Jesus speaking to Nicodemus saying, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." That word love, what does it mean that God loved the world? What does that love look like? What does that love mean? for us here in the church here and now. So, if last week introduced the idea of God's love, this week we're going to see what love in action looks like. Now, God's love is greater than just this passage and just this message we'll explore.

But God's love is very specific and it's not just a concept that sits in a verse that we write on cups or see on signs, but God's love is active and enters into this woman's life. It enters into all of our lives. It enters into the life of the church and it's a love that wants to be poured out into the world. What does that actually mean? What does that look like? My prayer this evening is that God's love, his active pursuing love, would speak to all of us so that we would know what God's love looked like in our own lives. As we do that, we're going to look at three layers in this conversation. God's love, it's active love. What does it look like? It's a kind of love that crosses boundaries. It's a kind of love that confronts our deepest thirst. And it's a kind of love that invites us to trust in him that he is not our rival but actually our source of life. Let me pray for us and then we'll jump into this passage. Lord, show us your love.

We pray not just as a concept but as a reality as a reality that reaches down into our souls, grabs our hearts to show us who you are and how you love us. May this love take a hold of our lives so that it's poured out both into our lives and to our families and into the world. Show us your love now, Lord, as there as it is displayed here in the words of the scriptures. Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to understand, and hearts to absorb who you are. We pray this in your great and holy name. Amen. Amen. Well, in the imagery of last week, Jared introduced this idea of the book of John sort of moving moves in scenes. And so you can imagine the scene from John chapter 3, the curtains close and then the curtains open and we're in John chapter 4 and we're in a new scene. Enter Jesus, stage right. And on the stage, it's a desert. He's moving through the region.

And the first thing I want us to notice about this way that God's love interacts with our lives comes exactly directly from the context. It says that Jesus went through Samaria. Now, if you were an ancient reader, if you're a Jewish person during this time immediately some alarms would go off in your head. What did Jesus go through Samaria? What do you mean? And the alarms would have gone off in your head because Jews would know that good Jews, especially religious Jews, don't pass through Samaria. They often go around Samaria. Samaritans Samaria was a land of the Samaritans. It was the northern kingdom where people intermarried with people from other countries. And so, according to the Jews, the Samaritans were people that were mixed breeds. They were impure spiritually. They were impure religiously. They were ethnically impure. They were just people that you didn't associate with.

In fact, Jews wrote down that if you had to eat near a Samaritan, make sure that you never share utensils with them. They just don't want to interact. To the Jews, the Samaritans were very, in the words of my 2-year-old, ew. No interaction, no connection. Jews don't speak with Samaritans, and they definitely don't pass through Samaria. So on top of that, Jews of this time, for Jews of this time, it was improper for a man to ever speak to a woman in public. In fact, some rabbis wrote, "Don't ever speak to your wife or even your sister in public, lest it bring dishonor upon you." So that was sort of a mentality. That's why it says later that the disciples when they saw Jesus speaking to a woman in public, it says that they marveled. They said, "Why would Jesus, this is the rabbi, this is the rabbi of rabbis. Why would he ever speak to a woman?" So Jesus crossed into the scenario. It's a thing that Jews don't do. He was speaking to a woman in public.

It's a thing that devout Jews don't do. And this wasn't just any woman, by the way. This was a woman that was an outsider to the outsiders. That even the Samaritans thought that this woman wasn't somebody to be around. She says that she came to the well at the middle of the day. Most people would go to draw water in the morning. That's where all the women would connect and they would speak and talk about their lives. But this woman wanted to avoid the women there because she was persona nongrada to the to the terra nongrada to the popla nongrada that's a lot of Latin she was basically an outsider to the outsider of the outsiders that's why she was going there there in during the middle of the day so even to the Samaritans she was impure and so right from the context we see this Jesus crossing into Samaria speaking to a woman speaking to a Samaritan woman who was at least considered by the other Samaritans to be impure persona nongrada He was an outsider to the outsiders. And what we see here at the

beginning from the context is Jesus crossing boundary after boundary after boundary after boundary to connect with this woman. All of this conversation happened after Jesus already crossed through all sorts of boundaries. Now last week in terms of spiritual proximity to God, we saw the person who was at the center of spiritual proximity, Nicodemus. He was somebody that knew the law. He was in Jerusalem. He had money, wealth, and influence.

He was the one who was supposed to be the closest to who God is. He was right there in Jerusalem. This week, we see somebody who is the farthest, spiritually speaking, at least how they measure things, from who God is and being close to God. A Samaritan, a Samaritan woman, a Samaritan woman of illreute. And yet Jesus pursues her life and her soul anyways. This is what love looks like. Like the love of God that he gives us is a love that Jesus pursued this woman. He pursues us. He pursues the church. This is what God's love looks like. Looks like it's a generous love that is an inactive pursuit of those he loves. Now all of us in this room, whoever's been to church before, ever in your life, whoever's heard a message from the scriptures. Whoever's had a friend or a family member speak to them about God. Whoever has even looked at the clouds and had a sense that there's something greater out there.

Whoever's been drawn into thinking about the divine and the divine revelation of who God is. Every single person has had that pursuit in their lives that God is pursuing them and drawing them into life together with him. And that's because God is a God whose love pursues across all boundaries, pursues when there are reasons not to be pursued, pursues even when we don't want to be pursued. So there's no one that can say God won't want to pursue me because of my past or God won't want to pursue me because of my present. Do you know what I said or did earlier today even though there's no one whom God does not pursue? God pursues his people because God is a God of loving pursuit. There was a poet in the 1800s in England named Francis Thompson and he in that society you can think Victorian society was an outsider of outsiders of outsiders.

He grew up in a nice family and went to a private school but then as what sometimes happens during that time got addicted to opium and then ended up as someone on the streets and ended up stealing and doing other things that he wasn't proud of. And he then later returned to the faith and became a poet that wasn't as famous during his lifetime but later in his lifetime he wrote some uh beautiful poems and he reflected on what it was like to be pursued by God in a poem called the hound of heaven. He calls God the God that pursues us like a hound would pursue that which it's chasing. And I'll just read an excerpt from this. Says this, *"I fled from him down the nights and down the days. I fled from him down the arches of the years, but with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy they beat, and a voice beat more instant than the feet. All things betray thee who betrayest me.*

What Francis Thompson is reflecting on is this idea that no matter where he was, whether he was in a gutter addicted to opium or walking back into normal polite society, there was this sense of this pursuit of his soul and his heart. And what he was tapping into was this eternal truth. that God pursues. God pursues. If you're here today, he's pursuing you. This is what love looks like. It's a love that goes out, crosses boundaries. So Jesus pursues, he crosses the boundaries, and he comes to speak to this woman. And rightfully, she's surprised because it's

not a common thing. And in fact, she says, "Uh, how is it that you, a Jew, asked for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For as we said in parenthesis, for the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Remember, they don't even share utensils, much less a water bucket. Why would you ask for water from me? And then Jesus shares with her that he's not actually there because he's physically thirsty. That's not the deepest reason.

He is physically thirsty, but he's there to share with her about something that is deeper and more eternal. Something that will quench her thirst more than this water that's right in front of them. And that water and this well become a mode through which Jesus explains this eternal truth of living water. And there's this back and forth between Jesus and this woman. And he's using this idea of water again to explain to her, I've come to bring you this different kind of water, this living water, this water that gives you eternal satisfaction so you'll never have to go back to a well again to drink. It's water that is given to you, not water that you have to go out and earn. It's water that springs up within you to eternal life. And that Greek word for springs up is only used three times in the Bible. It's used two times later in the New Testament, and it's translated differently. Instead of springs, up. One time it says leaps.

So you can see this water leaping up within you to eternal life. And the second time is translated as dances. So this water dances within you up into eternal life. And it sustains our soul. This water sustains our soul for eternal life. Which as you've since you've been here, if you've been here before, you know that when we say eternal life, we don't just mean infinity years of life, but we talk about a quality of life that's been brought into the very nature and heart of God. to be embraced by him and to live into the fullness of who he has for us. So Jesus says, "I've not come to give you this kind of water, this physical H2O, but to give you this eternal living water." And she responds like all of us sort of very simply, "Sir, give me this water." And I find it interesting that this is the exact moment that Jesus gets personal with her. He had just explained to her the theology. She understands, at least on the surface, that this is good water. I won't have to thirst again.

Jesus, you've sort of opened the door for her. She's ready to accept. This is the point, Jesus, where you should sort of notch a belt up on the salvation plan and say, "Okay, now that you've recognized that you want living water, let me give you the prayer that you should pray, and then I can introduce you into the family of God." That's not what Jesus does here. He doesn't go in for the close. He asks a very weird question. If you look at it, it's almost like non sequitur. She says, "Yes, uh, I would like some of this water." And then he says immediately, "Go and get your husband." Rather than move forward into the sinner's prayer, Jesus says, "Go and get your husband." She responds. She says, "Well, I have none." And Jesus says, "You're right. Actually, you've had five husbands, and the man that you're with now isn't your husband." Which probably explains why she didn't want to be around the other women in that society.

Now, I want you to imagine being that woman or being that person that is being examined there by the wisdom of Jesus Christ in that exact moment. Jesus says, "Go and get your husband." She says, "I have none." He says, "You've had five, and the one you're not with or the one you're with now is not even your husband." What was going through her head? Was there some sort of flinch in her? Did you see her heart racing almost like the feeling that if you've ever been

caught in a lie, you start turning red? Or the time when my uh boss when I was a waiter was a very bad waiter by the way, but because I would always forget things. I'd get into conversations and then I'd get back to the computer screen and I say, "What did they want again?" And so I just would guess and just Well, I'm into the story now.

So anyways, um one time my boss I ran the credit card wrong and my boss said, "Don't run this credit card again." And I was like, "I think I can figure this out." And so I like hacked into the purchasing system. I was a bad waiter. So, I hacked in the purchasing system, reran the credit card backwards, and I thought I had solved it, but what I'd actually done is given them three extra charges. And my boss came out and he said, "Did you run this credit card again?" And I literally turned the reddest I've liked like this painting here. I just turned the reddest. I was like, "Well, I guess he's going to fire me." And he didn't at that time. But if you Yeah. At that time, exactly. But I don't know if you've ever had the feeling of being fully just fully examined, fully caught, fully seen in your sin, in what you've done wrong. I felt like I was two centimeters tall. I felt crushed. Now, how would this woman feel? You're right. You don't have a husband now.

In fact, you've had five and you don't have the one you're with now. What would you have said? Would you want to have to say, you know, I'm the victim. Actually, it's easy to get divorced here. And so, the reason that I've had five husbands is because I'm so unwanted. It's not because I seek men. It's because I'm unwanted. Or would you try to explain yourself? How would you feel at this moment? Did she expect condemnation? The question is, what is Jesus doing here? Jesus is not pushing her into a corner to say, "Gotcha. See, you are a sinner and you need to be forgiven." That's true of all of us. But what he's doing is he's tying the reality of this eternal living water to her deepest thirsts and her deepest needs and her deepest pain. There was something in her life, there was something in her life that was deeply broken. Either she had an unquenchable thirst or she was perpetually unwanted by people. Whatever it was, she lived with deep pain.

She lived with a deep need and a deep thirst. She lived with a deep need for survival and connection. And this is where Jesus is connecting her need with what he's offering. I came to give you eternal life. I've come to give you living water that leaps, that dances into eternal life. It's not just another thing on the menu. It's not something good to add on to your life. I've come to give you eternal life and that is everything. There's nothing more. This is everything that you need. So that's why Jesus sort of surgically looked into her life. Now, for us, especially in the season of Lent and just more broadly as we examine the scriptures and allow them to shape our hearts, I want to orbit this idea of what's going on in this passage here with one big question for you in your own life. What is a big question that we can take away from this? There's one word that I want to ask you. Why?

Now, if you've been in church, especially this one, you've probably heard the same message multiple times. It's not about what bucket you bring to the well. It's about how well you're going to. It's not about finding your goodness and your wholeness and your completeness in all the things of this world, whether it's money or your job or relationships or how you look in the mirror or or what people approve of how you speak and how you act. It's not about any of that. It's about going to God who's the source of life. And I would guess that most of you would answer

the question like what's most important in life. Most of you would probably say Jesus. knowing him. What is the source of eternal life? It's of course Christ. Is money worth it compared to God? Of course, most people in this room would say, "No, it's nothing compared to it. It's fleeting." But the question is for all of us and it was great to reflect on this myself.

Then why do I often still turn to these things and to these other sources of life for myself? And the answer or the question is not comprehensive. But I think there's one angle to this that I want to ask and that is I think the reason that we don't turn to eternal life frequently and all the time regularly is because we all have what I like to call a Prometheian problem. Now in there's an ancient Greek myth about Prometheus which was a man that went to steal fire from the gods and he went to sneak in and he and he where Zeus was and he stole fire from the gods and that was because the perspective of of the gods during that time was that the gods and humans are in competition with each other that in order for humans to have. They have to go to gods and to steal from them. That the gods are in of themselves stingy rivals for our human glory and ultimately they're in competition.

In fact, there's a in other words, you could say that it was spiritually speaking a zero sum world that if the gods have that we don't have. Now, there's a sophisticated lie that we tell ourselves and we put it in a simple way. If God wins somehow in life, I lose. We treat God like this deity like Zeus. like we're Prometheus. We have to go steal from God. And we see him through a Prometheian lens. And so we say, "God, if I have to give you my relationships, then I'll be miserable and I'll be lonely. If I have to give you my sexuality, I'll be unfulfilled and unhappy. If I have to give you my money, then I'll be poor because if you receive, then I lose. If you take, then I have to give up. If I have to give up my autonomy, I'll just be a shell of a person that's just a robot for you." And we imagine the universe is a zero, some universe that there's only so much life to go around and if we give God our own life then we lose.

What God is saying to this woman here and saying to all of us is that of course God is not the taker of life. He is the giver of life and his will is eternal and abounding. Irenaeus was an ancient writer, and one of his most famous quotes was the glory of God. Excuse me, sorry I should actually read the quote. The glory of God is man fully alive. That is God's desire in us is to make us fully alive. Not in the version that the world would define, but Christ in us, the spirit in us moving within us. God's desire is to see us made fully alive. There's no competition between us and God. So the question I want to ask you all is if you met Jesus at the well and he was talking about living water, what would he say to you next? For this woman, he said, "Go and get your husband because he was tapping into her deepest desires and needs and vulnerabilities for us. What would Jesus tell us to do next? Where would there be resistance in our own hearts to the invitation of God?

What are the things in life that we refuse to give up because we see God like Zeus almost like if he takes I have to lose. Jesus said, "I came to give you eternal life. Life that will always well up into goodness into joy and into peace. Last observation, John includes this interesting detail here in verse 28. He says, "So the woman left her water jar." So the reason she went to the well was to go to get water and you carry that water in a jar and she was so enamored, so filled with joy and hope and peace by what Jesus just told her. She left what she was going to the well with

in the first place, she put her jar down and she ran and she told other people about who he is by the goodness of who God is. Now Henry Nen reflected on this and he said that the great trap in our life is not success or popularity or power but self-rejection. As soon as we begin to believe that we are not the beloved children of God, we start looking for that love in places where it cannot be found.

And as soon as this woman realized that she is loved by God because God pursued her and offered her eternal life, she was filled with so much joy. This life welling up within her, she ran and she told everybody about it. It's almost like she lived in Isaiah 12. With joy you will draw from water from the wells of salvation and you will say on that day, "Give thanks to the Lord. Call upon his name. Make known his deeds among the peoples and proclaim that his name is exalted." She did that. Now, it's interesting that Nicodemus, who's this person with all sorts of power and proximity, He left quietly at night to ponder the things of Jesus, which is good for us all to do. And here this uh fem nonrada in terra nongrada of poplum nongrada, the person who's the farthest you could get away from God. As soon as she receives this living water, she becomes the herald of who Jesus is, his goodness and his joy. And that's because living water was dancing up within her.

When we are touched by God's love, Mission is not a chore. It's an overflow of joy and satisfaction. That's what love looks like when it's poured out. So, what do we see in this passage? We see that God pursues this woman. He pursues the town through her, through his message, and through his individuals. He pursues us as individuals. He pursues his church. And he pursues us not to take in a zero- sum game, not to be our rival for good life to but to be the source of all that is good and true and just and right and beautiful. So let us then give up our Prometheian independence. Let us turn to him and offer ourselves fully to the one who offers us living water and eternal life.

Let me pray for us. Lord, we thank you that you do pursue us, that you love us, that you want to cross into a fullness of life with you. Would you help us to experience the same thing that this woman experienced? Such an overwhelming joy from your eternal life leaping up within us that we can no longer contain it both within our own souls and within our relationships. Let us know you and let this become a source of life to ourselves and to others. We thank you for your goodness and your love. Be with us this week. We pray in your name. Amen.