

John 1:1-14

If Only You Knew

If thou knewest the gift of God – v. 10

It's worth noting the contrast in this narrative to what preceded in chp. 3. In chp. 3 we find a master in Israel, a VIP, if you will, coming to Jesus at night. Nicodemus was no doubt a highly respected man in Israel and perhaps it was to protect his status and his reputation that he came to Jesus by night. In his case, I suppose, he would have been ashamed to be seen with Jesus.

By way of contrast, when we come into chp. 4 we find Christ speaking with a woman of ill repute. Christ would reveal to her what he knew about her in v. 18 where he points out that she had had 5 husbands and the current man she was with was not her husband. Quite a contrast to Nicodemus, the highly respected ruler in Israel. In this case Christ's disciples would marvel that He would even speak to this woman. In their minds Christ should have been ashamed to be seen with her. We see as well that when Jesus met this Samaritan woman it was certainly not at night. John tells us in v. 6 that it was about the 6th hour of the day. That would make it high noon and the hottest time of the day.

It would have been at such a time and in such conditions of intense heat that such a woman of ill repute would have come to the well. Had she come earlier in the morning about the time the sun was rising or toward the end of the day when the sun was setting she would have confronted the uncomfortable social situation of being with other more respectable women. Just as the night provided cover for Nicodemus to come to Jesus, so the heat of the noon day sun would have provided cover for this lady to avoid contact with others.

And yet here was Christ sitting on the well, the disciples having gone away to the city to buy meat according to v. 8. It's interesting here to note that in v. 4 John tells us that Jesus *must needs go through Samaria*. He and His disciples were on their way back to Galilee and the most direct route would take them through Samaria, however, the most direct route would not have been the common route. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews. If you remember your Old Testament history then you'll recall how Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom during the time when Israel was divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdom. When the Northern kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC they were deported into various countries while pagans from those other countries would have been brought in.

Because of their pagan heritage and the circumstances that brought them to Samaria they would not be considered to be a part of Israel, certainly not by the Jews of Judea. And so the Jews and the Samaritans had nothing to do with each other. You might recall from Luke's gospel chp. 9 how the Samaritans on that occasion would not receive Christ because He was facing Jerusalem and on His way to Jerusalem. And on that occasion one of Christ's disciples had the bright idea that he should call down fire upon Samaria to consume them even as Elijah had called fire down from heaven generations earlier.

And yet John tells us that Jesus *must needs to through Samaria*. There seems to be some consensus at least in the sources I checked that Jesus was keeping a very definite schedule and in order to keep to that schedule He couldn't afford the luxury of going around Samaria, so He must go through it. It seems also, however, that these same commentators acknowledge that the words indicate a higher purpose and not just a geographical one.

In other words Jesus meeting with this woman at the well was very much a part of His higher purpose of redemption. With the Lord Jesus there was no such thing as mere coincidence. This meeting was very much a part of what God ordained from eternity. So in keeping with that plan *He must needs go through Samaria*.

And so a discussion took place between Jesus and this lady. And in that discussion a number of topics were raised especially the topic of worship. And this passage in John's gospel has become one that is studied by those who want to sharpen their evangelistic skills. And they note how Jesus did call out this woman's sins but they also note how He offered to her the living water of life. One author I read also pointed out that this passage is one of very few in which Jesus actually comes out and positively identifies Himself as the Messiah.

Look at vv. 25,26 *The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.* You see how Christ so directly and positively identifies Himself as the Messiah?

In this discussion the Lord, who is very gracious in condescending to this woman, nevertheless doesn't lose sight of the differences between them and the difference I have in mind is not simply the difference between their characters but He also shows an awareness of the difference between his people and her people. Notice the words of v. 22 *Ye worship ye know not what* (note the plural form – ye), *we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews*.

So there was not simply a character difference between Christ and this lady, though there obviously was that, but there was more than that. There was a tremendous difference between the kinds of people they were. She was a Samaritan, Christ was a Jew. And Christ certainly knew that the Jews had great advantages over all other peoples. Paul identifies their chief advantage in Rom. 3:1,2 where he asks the question *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God*.

They had the oracles of God and because they had those oracles they had the knowledge of salvation. This lady from Samaria did not have that. And those who do not have Bibles today are at a tremendous disadvantage. So great was this contrast between Christ and this Samaritan lady even from that vantage point that Christ would say to her in v. 10 in effect – *if only you knew*. Look at how He puts it *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water*.

If only you knew. How often do you as a Christian think that way when souls come to mind that refuse to come to Christ? *If only they knew.* And when you see lost loved ones bring upon themselves the guilt and misery of sin and the effects of sin take their toll, it becomes easy to sigh and say to yourself *If only they knew.* It's a phrase, you know, that can be readily applied even to Christians who tend to forget what they know. It's as if the knowledge escapes their hearts even if it doesn't escape their heads.

So I want to look at these words of Christ this morning and I want to analyze them in order to bring to your remembrance things that you need to know if you don't know them and things to remember even if you do know them.

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water – v. 10.

Let's begin this analysis by noting:

I. Two Things this Samaritan Woman Needed to Know

If thou knewest the gift of God – those are Christ's first words to her after He had asked her to give Him a drink from the well (v. 7). The woman, who was apparently surprised that Christ would say anything at all to her, immediately raises the issue of the difference between them. *How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?* And then it seems that John adds the comment to the narrative *for the Jews have dealings with the Samaritans*. Whether or not this was John's comment or a continuation of the woman's comment might be hard to say. The truth of the statement is plain enough either way.

And yet it is exactly at this point that Christ demonstrates that He didn't go along with the natural cultural flow of the day. So He begins to reveal Himself to her with the statement *If thou knewest the gift of God*. Do you see His reference to *the gift of God*. He's not just speaking of common blessings now, blessings that through common grace are given to all men, believers and unbelievers alike. He's being very specific. The definite article *the* in *the gift of God* is calling her attention to something in particular.

Our Savior with these words is dealing with something that is spiritual and something that is very valuable, more valuable indeed than anything you could have in this world. *If thou knewest the gift of God*. I wonder this morning – do you know this gift of God? Do you know what the Lord is talking about when He references such a gift?

In the gospels the term *gifts* most often refers to the gifts of animal sacrifices or in some cases financial gifts that are contributed to the temple treasury. When you trace the word into the epistles, however, especially Paul's epistles, you begin to see much more of what Christ had in mind when He said to the woman *If thou knewest the gift of God*.

In Romans 5 Paul makes reference to *the free gift* and the fact that this free gift is one given by grace: Ro 5:15 *But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the*

offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

And in v. 17 (which happens to be one of my favorite verses in the N.T.) Paul becomes very specific in identifying this gift: *Ro 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)*

Now let's just pause here for a moment and put Paul's idea into the setting of what Jesus is saying to this Samaritan woman. Here is a woman who has no righteousness. She's had 5 husbands and the man she was with at the time was not her husband. Here was a woman, then, who was clearly immoral and in no way qualified for heaven. Paul writes in 1Cor. 6:9,10: *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

Those that go out of the bounds of marriage in their physical involvement with each other have no claim to the kingdom of God. And yet here is Christ saying to this woman *if you only knew – if you only knew the gift of God. If you only knew that you could be clothed with a perfect righteousness that far exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees and therefore qualifies you for heaven!*

Do you know such a gift this morning? Are you even aware of your need for such a gift? This gift, that God graciously provides is based on the righteous life and the atoning death of Jesus Christ. What an incredible gift that could never be earned and is not deserved by any child of Adam. It's the gift of righteousness. Do you know such a gift?

But we can go further and identifying the gift of God. It's the gift of life. I hope many of you know Rom. 6:23 by heart. It's a verse that presents to you what you've earned and what you will be paid but then also shows *the gift of God*. Listen to Rom. 6:23 *For the wages of sin [is] death; there's what you've earned and what you'll be paid apart from salvation. But then Paul goes on to say but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

It's no wonder that Paul could write to the Corinthians in his second epistle to them *Thanks [be] unto God for his unspeakable gift* (2Cor. 9:15). The reference in that verse is to Christ Himself and to the salvation provided by Christ. It defies description, that's why Paul calls it unspeakable.

In Eph. 2:8,9 we find another very familiar verse that makes reference to the gift of God: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* From this verse we conclude that salvation is a gift and even the faith to believe in Christ for salvation is a gift.

In Heb. 6:4 we come closer, I believe, to what exactly Christ has in mind when He speaks of the gift of God to this Samaritan woman. In that verse in Hebrews we read: *For*

it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. I don't want to get into the controversy that surrounds this verse at this time. My purpose in citing it now is that you might see how the gift of God is a heavenly gift and it's something that's tasted – not tasted with your physical senses, but tasted with your soul. This gift, in other words, answers to what the soul longs for.

And I say this is approaches what Christ has in mind for you'll notice that when He makes reference to the gift of God, He's making reference to something that satisfies soul thirst. *Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again,* He says in v. 13, making reference to the water that would be drawn from the well. *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him* He goes on to say in v. 14 *shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

Christ is drawing an analogy between the gift of God and the water of this world. You know, don't you, that if you've ever worked out in the heat on a hot day that there is nothing that will quench your thirst like cool, clear, water. We live in a day when any number of beverages are available but none of them work like water. And just as that water provides physical satisfaction, so the living water of Christ provides satisfaction to the deepest longings of the soul.

Twice in the book of Jeremiah, God is referred to as source from which this living water flows. Jer 2:13 *For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, [and] hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* And in Jer. 17:13 we have a prayer by Jeremiah: *O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, [and] they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.*

Christ makes reference to this living water again later in John's gospel. And in that later reference we see exactly what He has in mind with regard to this gift of God. Listen to the words of Jn. 7:38,39 *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

So let's do a little tabulation here with regard to this gift of God. It's the gift of righteousness; it's the gift of life; it's the gift of salvation; it's the gift of faith; it's the gift of Christ Himself; and it's the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I said earlier that when Christ addressed this Samaritan woman he expressed His desire that she know two things. The first thing is the gift itself, the second thing is the giver of the gift. Look at our text again in Jn. 4:10 *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

Do you see how Christ wished not only that she knew the gift of God but that she know Christ Himself, the One who said to her *give me to drink.* This is what validates the gift,

knowing the giver of the gift. And this is what makes the gift a constant source of soul refreshment and assurance. There's a sense, you know, in which you can't have the gift without having the giver Himself. So Christ says in His high priestly prayer in Jn. 17:3 *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

The gift and the giver of the gift go hand in hand, you see. To have salvation is to have Christ and to have eternal life is to have the One who is the source from which all life flows. So again I ask you – do you know the gift of God? If you do then you know Christ Himself. *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

So we've seen two things this Samaritan woman needed to know. She needed to know the gift of God and she needed to know the giver of the gift which was Christ Himself. Let's think for a moment finally on:

II. The Impact of Knowing These Two Things

If you knew the gift, Christ says to her, and if you knew the One offering you the gift, He goes on to say – and then He states what effect such knowledge would have on her. If you knew the gift, and the One who saith to thee, Give me to drink – you would ask of Him.

Nothing else would matter. Nothing else would be as important. If you knew the gift and the giver of the gift you would drop everything and ask of Him. This same idea is conveyed by Christ in the parables when He says in Mt. 13:44-46 *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: 46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

When you truly become aware of the gift of God, you see, and you become aware of Christ, the giver of eternal life, you assign the highest priority to that discovery. There is nothing that comes close to being as important as that treasure, or that costly pearl which both stand for salvation. Gaining such a gracious and costly gift warrants your complete and immediate attention, you see.

There's something in this statement of Christ to the woman at the well that suggests that the impact of the knowledge of the gift compels a person to adjust his or her priorities. Remember the setting of this conversation. It's high noon, the 6th hour and it's hot. The woman has come to draw water and the very first thing Christ does is make a request of her. That request is found in v. 7 at the end of the verse where He says to her *Give me to drink.*

This is what starts the conversation about Jews and Samaritans etc. But do you notice how Christ says to her *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* There's something here that might seem a little subtle on the surface of it. You

might expect Christ to have said something like this: If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have immediately tended to Him by honoring His request and you would have gotten that drink for Him. Wouldn't that have made sense? Doesn't it make sense that once a person becomes aware of the God in whose presence he stands he should instantly obey whatever request God has made?

This is why I say that there's an instant adjustment in priorities. And it may very well be that Christ is teaching us here that before you can even begin to serve God; before this Samaritan woman could begin to render service to Christ she must first tend to the matter of salvation. And so must that be the case with any and all of us. You need something, you see, from Christ, before you can begin to even think about serving God. You need the gift – you need the gift of righteousness and you need the gift of life and you need the gift of salvation.

This is the impact of knowing the gift and the giver of the gift. And I can't conclude our study this morning without noting how Christ not only says that if she knew, she would have asked – that's the first thing to tend to once the knowledge of salvation and the knowledge of Christ the Savior is gained. But notice also that Christ then goes on to say *and he would have given thee living water*. You know; you ask; and He answers. That's the order. You know the gift, you see your need for the gift, you've become acquainted with the giver of the gift which leads to you asking before you do anything else – and as a result God hears and God answers and the gift becomes yours.

And then, and only then, do you begin to render the obedience of faith. And so again I set it before you this morning – do you know the gift of God and who it is that offers the gift? I hope you know. If you do know then you'll ask Him. And your asking will not be simply a one time thing. Oh, no. You'll begin a new life habit of asking. You'll seek Him every day and you'll say to Him both physically and spiritually – *give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*.

I began this message by mentioning the souls we know who compel us to sigh and say to ourselves – *if they only knew*. *If they only knew the gift of God and who it is that offers such a gift*. I hope I don't have to sigh that way for anyone here. I hope you do know the gift and if you don't know the gift or the give of the gift of salvation then I hope you'll begin to ask and seek and knock and that you'll do so until God Himself draws near by His Spirit and gives you the unspeakable gift of Christ and salvation by Christ.