

The Man at the Spring & Living Water



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The Man at the Spring

I grabbed my water bottle off its hook and slammed the door on my way out of the apartment. “Men are so unreasonable, who needs them?!” I muttered as I rode through the streets of our village. I turned my bike onto the highway, looking forward to riding along the country roads between the surrounding fields and farms. I always enjoyed the feeling I got of being “out in the middle of nowhere” as I would cruise along. I needed to get away and burn off some excess energy.

First, though, I headed to the spring just outside the village where I could fill up my water bottle. Near the spring is a paved area, parallel to but separate from the highway, where one can park while filling up. I turned into the parking area and rode the length of it to the guard rail and leaned my bike up against it.

There between the tall grasses I found the path. I followed the short trail to the treasure at its end: the spring. Anchored in a concrete block set on the ground is a pipe from which continually flows a stream of clear cold water. I filled my bottle with the precious liquid, thinking how blessed we are to have this wonderful natural resource freely available and so close by our village.

A voice from behind me interrupted my thoughts. “Excuse me,” someone said. I whirled around and looked up to see a man standing beside my bike at the guard rail.

“I’m sorry; I didn’t mean to startle you,” he apologized.

“Well you certainly did. What do you want?” I did not bother to disguise the annoyance in my voice.

“May I please have a drink?” he asked. I sized him up quickly: backpack, windblown hair and scruffy beard. He must be a stranger, I concluded.

“You’re not from around these parts, are you?” It was more a statement than a question.

“Nope, just passing through,” he confirmed. “Please, will you

give me a drink?” he asked again.

I hesitated. Let a stranger drink from my water bottle? The man just stood there and waited. I considered for a minute or two, then decided to risk it. “Okay, you can have some,” I said and held out my water bottle.

“Thank you,” he said as he took it. He put it to his lips, tipped it back and drank it dry without even stopping for a breath. “Ah, that really hits the spot. I sure was thirsty,” he said. He gave it back to me and I refilled it and slung it over my shoulder.

I turned to leave, but the man spoke again. He said, “If you only knew the generous gift God has for you, you would ask *Him* and He would give you living water.”

“Living water? This spring is the best water in the world. It’s been tested and found to be almost 100 percent pure. You can’t get any better than this,” I bragged.

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,” he replied. “But I tell you of *living water*. Anyone who drinks this living water God gives will never be thirsty – not ever. It will be a perpetual spring within them, watering them with life forever, without end.”

“May I please have some of that water so I won’t get thirsty again?” I asked.

“Go and get your husband and come back,” he told me.

“I don’t have a husband,” I snickered.

“Technically, you’re right. You’ve had five partners and you’re not married to the man you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth there,” he stated.

“Marriage? Ha! That’s just an outdated religious tradition,” I said disdainfully. But how did he know that about me? I squinted to get a better look at him. I was sure I’d never seen him before. What *else* did he know? I thought it best to change the subject. I said to him, “Speaking of religion, maybe you can help me with this. I’ve been wondering: why are there so many kinds of different churches? How do I know which one is the right place to go?”

“Believe me,” he answered, “the important thing is not what

place you go; it's that your heart must be in the right place. It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. He is looking for people who come just the way they are to respect and honour Him."

I didn't think that God would be very impressed if I were to go to Him simply as I was. First I would need to clean myself up a little, no, make that – a lot. The man broke into my thoughts as if I had spoken out loud, "Nothing is hidden from God. It is not possible, nor necessary, to impress Him." As he continued talking with me, my amazement grew. There was nothing I had done (or hadn't done) that he didn't know about!

Eventually he brought the conversation back around to my question about religion and said, "God, by His very nature, is Spirit. Those who honour Him must do it with the very core of their being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration."

"I don't know about that," I confessed. "But you seem pretty confident in what you say about God and such."

"I *do* know what I am talking about," he said, "because God Himself sent me to speak to you."

Just then a car came into the parking area. The driver got out, opened the trunk and pulled out a couple of water containers. I saw that it was one of the ladies from my village. I decided then it was a good time to leave. "Nice meeting you," I shouted over my shoulder to the man as I mounted my bike and verily flew back to my village.

Who was that man at the spring? He knew me inside and out. "God Himself sent me," he had said. That was a serious claim that called for some serious consideration.

As was my habit when I wanted a quiet space, I went to the library. I intended to simply sit and think. I was settling into my favourite chair when I noticed a small book out of place on one of the higher shelves. "Ah, the benefits of being tall," I thought, as I stood and reached up to straighten the row of books. The title of the small book caught my eye: "The Good News according to John."

"Good news?" I wondered. "Never hear good news these days on TV

or radio. I sure could use some good news in my life.” I sat back down with the little book and began to read.

The book was like nothing I had ever come across before. It didn't make much sense to me at the beginning but as I kept reading, I felt inexplicably drawn into the story. I could see myself om the characters. There was a woman who went to the well near her town and a man there who asked her for a drink. He, too, talked about “living water”! It was uncanny. The similarities seemed too close to be just coincidence. What is living water?

Wee, it's been a few years since I met the man at the spring. And though I've not seen him since, I remember well his words about living water. The question is still very important, “What is living water?” it's hard to explain, it is beyond words. It can be a source of deep contentment and joy. Sometimes it wells up inside and comes bursting forth like a swell of unexpected laughter. But this much I know: those who ask God for His generous gift of living water will not be disappointed.

This is a fictional story inspired by the true account in chapter 4 of “The Good News (i.e. Gospel) according to John,” the Holy Bible.

Living Water

In a situation much like the one described in “The Man at the Spring,” a woman encountered a man at a well who offered her living water; all she had to do was ask. The man identified Himself as Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

Water was scarce in Jesus’ day, yet water was as much a necessity for life then as it is today. Just as the physical body needs water to continue living, so does the spirit. Jesus is the water needed by the spiritual part of a person. The soul is thirsty and we try to quench that thirst with many things that satisfy for a little while, but eventually we get thirsty again. The only thing that can truly quench this thirst of the spirit is the living water, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Living Water. He is the water that brings life to the soul. By drinking the living water one can live and never thirst again. Drinking is relying on Jesus’ promise to give life to the spirit and satisfy the thirst of those who believe Him. Are you thirsty? Come and drink.