

In April 2006, a very thin, skeleton-looking figure stumbled into a cattle station in remote western Australia. The ranchers were quite shocked at the sight. The last thing Ricky Megee recalled is breaking down on a highway between Western Australia and the Northern Territory. He thought a hitchhiker drugged him and stole his car. He awoke to dingos scratching at him. Ricky MeGee had to live for 71 days off insects, snakes, frogs, and lizards and suffered from malnutrition. He lost over half of his body weight during the ordeal before he was finally rescued. Fortunately, though, it all happened during Australia's rainy season. He was able to drink water from a dam and find enough water to survive.

One of the few common threads to all these extreme survival stories is that somehow, somehow, the person finds water or manages to stretch it out until they can be found. It's one of the basic necessities of life. Even more important than food itself, you usually have only about 3 days to last before you need water. The lost and the rescuers alike know how dire the situation is, and they will do anything before time runs out. Just like people will go to any lengths to go on a search and rescue mission to save any and every one in danger of dying from thirst, Jesus has his own search and rescue mission for all people. Here the story about the Samaritan woman shows us how **"Jesus' Grace Quenches Everyone's Thirst."**

There are certain places everyone avoids. A dark, unsafe place at night. Maybe the in-laws during a holiday. In Jesus' time it was no different. No one wanted to go through Samaria. It had such a stigma to be avoided. The Samaritans weren't even God's people. They were half-Jews, at best. People would typically walk around Samaria along the other side of the Jordan or even sail along the Mediterranean. Why is Jesus going straight through? He has many reasons not to even bother. But he had to. Right before this section it so simply reveals the Savior's heart, **"Now he had to go through Samaria."** Jesus defies social customs by even associating with a Samaritan. They are unclean and Jesus would become unclean as well. Jesus defies religious customs by asking an openly adulterous woman for a drink. His mission requires he go out of his way to extend his living water to everyone, even the worst outcasts of society. Jesus goes on a search and rescue mission to quench everyone's thirst. **"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."**

But the Samaritan woman is suspicious if this really can happen to her personally. After all, this stranger can't possibly be greater than their forefather Jacob! When this stranger insists he has this water that will satisfy every thirst, at least we should entertain this crazy idea! Give me this so that I don't have to keep coming back here! That's the only reason I'd like it. If not, I don't need whatever this so-called living water is. So Jesus has to expose her inner thirst she is just trying to cover up. **"Go, call your husband and come back."** **"I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."** She's a social outcast due to her adultery and that's why she came to the well alone, avoiding the time when most would come. She certainly doesn't deserve Jesus' living water. She doesn't even want it. Jesus exposes her past and lets her admit herself she needs the living water of his grace.

The woman gets so uncomfortable she quickly changes the subject to a never-ending debate to get Jesus track: the debate between the Samaritans and Jews about where to worship. It

was more contentious than talking politics today. Jesus persists even when faced with distractions. He doesn't major on minors. He majors on majors. The woman tries to dismiss Jesus one last time by simply saying the Messiah will explain everything. Jesus shows once for all he is the Christ whose mission is for all. ***"I, the one speaking to you – I am he."***

Whenever you see a natural disaster on TV, footage keeps coming for days after as rescue workers turn over as much rubble as possible to hopefully save those trapped. Many are not so fortunate to be able to survive. But every so often, jubilation erupts as the faint cry grows and someone is rushed to the hospital. After the 2010 7.0 earthquake which devastated Haiti, Evans Monsignac was the last person to be rescued from the debris in the capital 27 days later. He told the British newspaper *The Telegraph*, "I still don't understand how I'm here. I was resigned to death. But God gave me life. The fact I'm alive today isn't because of me, it's because of the grace of God. It's a miracle, I can't explain it." Those rescue workers will go out of their way on their search and rescue mission to uncover every piece of rubble, no matter how fruitless it may seem at the time, to extend life to someone else. Just like all those rescue workers, Jesus will uncover stone and piece of debris to give his living water to those that desperately need it.

When Jesus comes to give you his living water, do you treat it like a water fountain, or a fire hose? Something needed every day, or something to use only in emergencies when it's convenient for you? Something to be taken to heart every day, or something to be disregarded because I know it all already and it's not special anymore? "Jesus, you must be so busy with others it doesn't matter if I take time for you. You're not as important as my other relationships in life that benefit me now." It's only self-deception that the allure of the world should quench my thirst for self-pleasure. It only relieves the pain for a little bit but then spirals us down. The problems of abuse and pursuit for gratification are trying to solve the real issue: thirst for value and gratification for real life. Just like the Samaritan woman who didn't even want Jesus' water, we share her sinful reputation and are the last people Jesus should offer his gift to.

Jesus had every reason to take the long road around you and go to someone else. You gave Jesus plenty of reasons why you didn't want him. But he came to you anyways. Jesus' gift of living water is free. It doesn't depend on you. It always depends on the one who offers it. In your baptism he gave you the living water of his grace, which washes away all your sins. Jesus opens up the waters of his grace to everyone. He holds himself to that divine necessity of proclaiming the Word to the outcasts of society. Still today, Jesus could go to the up and ups of society. He could be more efficient in spending time on those who get the press. But he comes to you. That living water Jesus gives will never run out. That well will never run dry. His grace bubbles forth so much you won't know what to do with it all. Our vain pursuit for real life from the gratifications of the world is over. He comes straight up to you, looks you in the eye, and says, "I am he. I am your Christ, your Savior. I am the one to quench your spiritual thirst."

It's easy to openly profess that Jesus came on his search and rescue mission to quench everyone's thirst. It's easy to say Jesus is God's gift to the world. Yet sometimes we're still surprised when Jesus holds himself to his mission to bring his life-saving water to everyone, even the outcasts of society. It may be surprising for us, but it's not for Jesus. Still today he actively seeks out those others forget about to quench their thirst. If you looked at the *Forward in Christ* magazine for this month, you heard about just one example. Once someone destroys a marriage, throws away a career, gets prosecuted for theft, and ends up in prison, most in our society would simply give a few well-wishes at best but not do much else. Not Jesus. He sought out our former member Mike McNichols when he was trying to satisfy his thirst in all the wrong places. Just like Jesus did to the Samaritan woman, Jesus went out of his way to find Mike.

Cancer which lead to an early release from prison and a random meeting with a friend which lead to an invitation to church here were all Jesus needed to quench Mike's thirst for true living water. No matter how much the world wants to turn Jesus' mission for all into a trite phrase, for Mike it was real. As he was facing his death due to his growing cancer, he said, "I'm not afraid to die because I'm at peace with my soul and I'm going to go to heaven." Without a doubt, Mike did go to heaven. Jesus came for Mike. Jesus came for that Samaritan woman. Jesus came for the world. That's the greatest comfort ever since it means he had to come for you too. Amen.