

Drink Till Drunk
John 4
Peter Hiett
9-14-08

I read about Kathy in a support letter I received from Covenant House in New York City, a shelter.

Kathy came to the front door one Tuesday morning. She was dressed in dirty rags holding a paint can. She was a mystery to the sisters at the shelter. Whatever she did, wherever she went, she clutched that little paint can. Even in the shower, the paint can was only a few feet away. When the tiny homeless girl would dress, the can would rest alongside her feet.

"I'm sorry, this is mine," she would tell the counselors when they'd ask about it.
"This can belongs to me."

When Sister Mary Ellen would inquire, "would you like to tell me what's in the can?"

She would say, "Umm...not today...not today."

When Kathy's little soul seemed especially dry, when she was sad, or angry, or hurt (which was quite a bit) she would take her paint can by herself to a quiet dorm room on the third floor.

Many times, Sister Mary Ellen would pass by her room and watch her. She'd rock gently back and forth, the can wrapped in her arms. Sometimes, in low whispers, she'd talk to the pain can. She worshiped the can—kissed the can. (The biblical word for *worship* actually means "to kiss.") She worshipped the can.

Early one morning, Sister Mary Ellen asked Kathy to sit with her and have some breakfast. They sat, rested, and ate for awhile, talking quietly about nothing in particular. Then Sister Mary Ellen took a deep breath and said, "That's a really nice can. What's in it?"

For a long time, Kathy didn't answer. She rocked back and forth, clutching the can, her hair swaying across her shoulders. The she looked at Sister Mary Ellen, tears in her eyes. "It's my mother," she said.

"What do you mean, it's your mother?" asked Sister Mary Ellen.

"It's my mother's ashes," Kathy said. "I went and got them from the funeral home. See, I even asked them to put a label right here on the side. It has her name on it." Kathy held up the can for Sister Mary Ellen to see. Then Kathy pulled the can close and hugged it.

"I never really new my mother, Sister," said Kathy. "I mean, she threw me in the garbage two days after I was born."

(They checked Kathy's story later and sure enough, the year Kathy was born, the New York papers ran a story about the police finding a little infant girl in a dumpster two days after Kathy was born.)

"I ended up living in a lot of foster homes, mad at my mother. But then I decided I was going to try and find her. I got lucky. Someone knew where she was living. I went to her house. She wasn't there, Sister. She was in the hospital. She had AIDS. I went to the hospital, and I got to meet her the day before she died.

"My mother told me she loved me, Sister," Kathy cried. "She told me she loved me."

Sister Mary Ellen reached out to hug Kathy, but it was difficult to get her arm wrapped all the way around the desperate little girl because she would not let go of that can.

Just a taste of love and she would not let go of that can. She would not stop drinking those ashes. She would not stop worshipping at that can. She thought it was her life though it was literally a can of death. She thought it was her best shot at Heaven, but it was trapping her in Hell, like ashes in a can.

I don't know if Kathy ever put the can down...

...have you?

We all carry a can of ashes. Ashes of broken relationships, yet we crave more of those very relationships. Ashes of broken dreams, yet we seem to be addicted to those dreams. So we drink ashes and broken dreams and only get more thirsty. We only become more aware of our sorry, empty selves.

So Sister Mary Ellen asked, "What's in that can?"

And Jesus asks, "What's in that can you're holding so tightly to yourself? Let's talk about that thirst of your's because I'd like to give you something else to drink."

John 4:3-6 "Jesus left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon."

Literally, "*the sixth hour*." The number six is loaded with meaning. It's the day that humans are made in God's image.

"Sychar" actually means *drunk* or *drunken*. Formerly, it was named "Shechem." But now that it is occupied by Samaritans, the Jews refer to it as "Sychar"—"drunk town."

Yet this ground and this well is the promised inheritance of Joseph. And you'll remember Joseph is a picture of Jesus. Like Kathy (and the woman we're about to meet) Joseph and Jesus are rejected by their own family, but a deep well is their inheritance.

"About the sixth hour—it was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water."

Strict Jewish men would not even address a woman in public let alone a Samaritan woman (half-breed with a half-breed religion) let alone an estranged Samaritan woman.

"She was alone."

It was customary for women to go together to the well in the cool of the day. It was a communal activity. (Guys: kind of like how they use the restroom together at restaurants) She was alone most likely for the reasons we'll soon read about.

An estranged Samaritan woman and Jesus, the King of Kings—and Jesus asks for help. She has something He wants.

John 4:7-16 "A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews to not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'" The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty [literally "*will not thirst again to the age*"]. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."

Let me paraphrase:

"What's in that paint can you held so tightly to your chest?"

"What's in that water jar you carry?"

"What have you been drinking that leaves you so thirsty?"

John 4:17-18 "The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said her, 'You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five

husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"

Ouch! Jesus doesn't skirt the painful issues, does he? In that culture, only the man could divorce the woman, so the more than likely, this Samaritan woman has been rejected five times by five husbands. Yet each time, she would desperately return to the source of her wounds, marrying into the same situation. And now, she's living with the sixth man. This woman is drinking men. They satisfy for a moment and then leave her more thirsty.

Six men. And now Jesus—the seventh man, the seventh Adam, the "ultimate man."

And Jesus knows her. The six other men didn't know her like Jesus does. It's like he swims in her paint can.

John 4:19-20 "The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Worship"—*proskuneô* (to kiss toward), "worship." It appears that she's evading the subject. But in reality, she's stumbled into the very depths of the subject: worship, what you drink, to whom you surrender your kisses. We drink the Spirit, kiss the Son, and worship our Father.

John 4:21-26 "Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father. [*He said "the Father" like "my Father and your Father. The same Father, Jew and Samaritan, Jesus and this woman.*] neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship that you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews [*Literally from Judah: Jesus is the Lion of Judah and we can know Him; He comes to our well*]. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." The woman said to him, "I know the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am [*"I AM."* The "*he*" is supplied by the translators.] he that is speaking to you."

"I AM the one who is speaking to you." Get it? I am that I am—Yahweh, God, just asked to drink from her cup even as He offers her a drink from His cup—a drinking party, a communion.

John 4:27-28 "Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that He was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city.

I mean, she left her pain can. She left her ashes and broken dreams. She left her earthen vessel. She left her terra-cotta water jar and went back to the city. It's like she forgot why she went to the well in the first place, like she came for a drink and now she's drunk.

John 4:28-30 "She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to him.

Pretty intriguing story and it leaves you wondering, did Jesus ever get his drink?—in the town named "drunk."

Whatever the case, I hope you noticed how Jesus engineered that dialogue from
thirst to
promiscuity to
worship.

1. It starts with a conversation about physical water and bodily thirst and Jesus turns it into a conversation about spiritual water and spiritual thirst. Water that doesn't only satisfy in this age—day six—but wells up to eternal life.

You may remember that just two chapters ago, Jesus went to a wedding feast and turned the water into wine in six giant stone jars. We are earthen vessels, stone jars. In us and through us, His water turns to wine. His life becomes blood. His love takes the form of mercy. We are earthen vessels prepared to be filled with His mercy. We are thirsty for God (whether we realize it or not). And if we don't drink His life, we will drink something.

2. So the woman says that she'd like some of that Living Water, but just then, Jesus brings up the second topic: her husbands. In effect,

"If you want my drink, tell me about the drink you've been drinking."
"If your earthen vessel is full of ashes, how might we fill it with living water?"
"If you've been drinking those ashes, no wonder you're still thirsty."

This woman was trying to satisfy her deepest thirst with men (I can see how it would be tempting cause we are pretty good). They'd fill her for a moment and yet leave her even more thirsty. Just as Kathy was trying to satisfy her deepest thirst with her mother's approval, she'd drink the ashes of her love and yet they only left her more thirsty. Just like an addict who tries to quench his deepest thirst with wine, but the wine only mocks him for in the end it leaves him more thirsty. Just like all of us sinners.

See the Samaritan woman, Kathy, addicts, and sinners—we all worship idols. What we drink into the depths of our being is what we worship.

3. So now the woman rightly brings up the third topic: worship.

All emptiness, dryness, and sin is the result of misdirected worship. It's idolatry. And yet, even that has a purpose in God's supreme design. It helps us come to know the depths of our own thirst, and thus, the only drink that satisfies. The life of Jesus satisfies our thirst.

Jesus says, "I've got living water, a spring welling up to eternal life. His live, His love, He Himself satisfies for,

1. He knows us.

He swims in our paint can. He tells us about everything we've ever done. This woman's six lovers never really know her. Kathy's mother never really knew her. You want to be known but you're terrified at being known. Jesus knows you better than you know yourself. And He adores you. No need to hide. He swims in your paint can. He hangs on your cross. He drinks from your cup and hands you His.

2. We can know Him.

The world worships what they do not know. We worship Jesus. God came to us in the flesh. The love of God poured out for us. When we see Him, it's easy to worship. The Life of Jesus satisfies our thirst for we were made to worship Him.

We are His body made to be filled with His blood (blood is living water—life).
We are His bride made to be filled with Him (our groom).
We are His house, a temple made for God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

To worship is to drink Him in. It's to place Him at the center. We are to do that with every breath we take. Yet like the Samaritans on Mt Gerazim, like the Jews in Jerusalem, we also gather to do it. And when we gather, we are His city on Mt. Zion, His temple, His sanctuary. When we worship, we are most truly who we were made to be.

Now pay attention. We were made to worship God, but in the absence of God, we will worship something. We were made to drink His spirit, but if we don't we will drink something (even poison). We are made for Jesus, but away from Him, we'll give ourselves to any lover that comes along.

Paul writes, "We exchanged the glory of the immortal God and we worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator."

So if you find yourself enslaved to some created thing like a can of ashes or a bottle of wine, worship God. You're trying to satisfy a thirst no created thing can satisfy.

“Don’t be drunk with wine,” writes Paul. “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Don’t get drunk on wine, be drunk by the Spirit. So if you struggle with wine, don’t let yourself get so thirsty for living water. If you struggle with a sex addiction, don’t go so long without communion, for you’re seeking a communion no mere human can offer.

Chesterton wrote, “the man that knocks on the brothel door is knocking for God.”

One summer, during college, I had a maintenance job. I was dating Susan at the time and trying to control my thought life. Riding the lawn mower all day in the hot sun, I realized that I could only think about one of two things: sex or God. And the only way I could stop thinking about sex was to start thinking about God—I mean worshipping God. He was the only One remotely capable of competing with lust for Susan—the only communion more powerful than sex.

If we don’t worship God, we’ll worship something, and turn that something into an idol. And when we worship idols, we destroy ourselves and destroy the idol trying to complete ourselves.

The Samaritan woman was on her sixth man. It’s very likely that she was not an easy woman to live with. I imagine that’s because she expected each man to quench her thirst. And none of those six could, so she devoured them as they devoured her.

Here’s some marriage counseling: worship God so you don’t expect your spouse to be God. Drink the life of Jesus or you’ll suck the life out of your spouse trying to satisfy an eternal thirst.

I’m the biggest nagging, complaining pain in the behind to Susan when I haven’t been worshipping. So what’s happening? In the absence of God, I turn to the next best thing: my wife, and I start to suck the life out of her. Even if she was Mother Theresa in Gissell Bund.... Body, apart from God, I’d still suck the life out of her, destroy her and destroy me.

Expecting Susan to be Jesus, I’ll end up hating Susan, even though I cling to Susan.

Expecting men to be Jesus, the Samaritan woman hated men, but kept sleeping with them.

Expecting those ashes to be Jesus, Kathy despised her mom, but was addicted to her ashes.

Expecting any creation to be the creator, you’ll destroy that creation as you destroy yourself, for you’re a slave of that creation.

Expecting alcohol to be Jesus, you’ll become its slave—hating your master,

but serving your master. You'll drink till you're drunk by an unworthy master.

However when you worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth, kiss the son, and drink of His Spirit, then those old idols are transformed into sacraments and temples. Susan is not Jesus, but she is a temple at which I worship Jesus.

I worship Jesus by loving and making love with my wife, in the sanctuary of her temple.

I worship Jesus by honoring my parents, but they're not an idol.

I worship Jesus by loving His church, but I'm not enslaved to church.

I worship Jesus by having a good glass of wine in remembrance of Him. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me," not "in place of me."

Through worship, all creation becomes holy—sacramental. Every sunset, every flower—everything becomes a sacrament reminding me of its Maker. I exchange the worship of the creature for the creator, and all my old idols become temples of His glory.

So drink Christ's life—the love of God poured out—drink love and you won't be so desperate to drink "ashes and broken dreams."

Song of Solomon 5:1 "Drink and be drunk with love."

But how do we drink?

How do we worship?

I mean, if you worship to quench your thirst, is that worship?

If you worship to fix your marriage and control your addictions, is that worship?

If you worship to fix you, then your worship is about you, and you're not worshipping Jesus. You're using Jesus in order to worship you—it's all about you. And you've made yourself, your will and work, into an idol. You're full of you. You think you worship but then you ask, "did it work?" It was all about you. Your water jar is full of you. You're full of yourself. You're full of ashes. You try to lose yourself, but it's you trying to lose your which is only more of you.

So how do you forget you? Our deepest thirst is to lose ourselves and find ourselves in another. Alcohol makes you forget you. That's why it's such a tempting idol. Alcohol makes you forget you, but only for a moment; then there's more of you. Sex makes you forget you, but only for a moment; then there's a lot of responsibility. So how can you lose you in order to find you?

Well, did you notice this story isn't just about you and your thirst?

It's not just about the Samaritan Woman and her thirst.

It's about Jesus and his thirst.

He's the one that came looking for a drink first just as His Father searches the earth looking for worshipers first.

The point is that Jesus is thirsty. He said, "the water I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Who is eternal life? Jesus said, "I am the life."

So we become fountains. Who drinks from our fountain?

*Spring up, oh well, within my soul
Spring up, oh well, and make me whole
Spring up, oh well, and give to me
That life abundantly*

That does happen, but is that the point?—give to me?

Who is it that longs to drink from the fountain that is you?

Did Jesus ever get His drink?

Towards the end of John's gospel, on the sixth day of the week, about the sixth hour, Jesus lifts his head from the tree on which he is being crucified for the sins of the world. He cries, "I thirst!"

God thirsts.
I AM thirsts.

Then He cries, "It is finished."

It's at the cross that we see God and unspeakable beauty—love poured out. We drink His wine, and receive His life—and He is intoxicating. We lose ourselves in Him and we drop our can of ashes. We forget our earthen vessel, and we forget our water jar. We forget ourselves for we're no longer simply drinking, we're being drunk by God.

The Lord drinks His Spirit through a fountain that is you. And we are lost and found in the communion that is the love of God. At the cross, God finally gets His drink: worship in spirit and in truth.

So satisfy your thirst by quenching His thirst.
Serve Him your worship.
That's why it's called a "worship service."

This is my point: drink to be drunk by God.

On the sixth day, the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread and he broke it saying, "Take and eat. This is my body." And in the same manner, after supper, and having given thanks, he took the cup and said, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink it, do it in remembrance of me." Drink.

When we come to the table, we come to the cross. He hands us His cup and says, "I thirst." He hands me His cup and asks, "Peter, what have you been drinking?"

Well, this wasn't my intention, but as I prepared this message, I felt like I needed to show you my can of ashes. This is kind of like my paint can.

The Samaritan Woman wanted the love and approval of men and her community. Kathy was addicted to the approval of her mother. The church is a community *and* a mother.

I grew up in the church. My Dad was the pastor. I didn't fit in at school, but I did at church. It was my life. It was my community, and I was addicted to her acceptance and approval.

In 1982, after 15 years at the church, my father was removed by the Presbytery. They wouldn't even allow him back into the building to say "good-bye." I'm still unsure as to what the official reasons were, but I do know there was a world of gossip and slander.

I was at the Presbytery meeting where the last man who spoke stood down front, declared my father to be a liar, closed the debate, and called for the vote that threw my Dad out—and me out. That night, I felt like my mother threw me in the garbage.

Now I did not set this thing up this way. I had forgotten where that room was till my Mom reminded me.

But this is that room.
That man stood right here.
And these are my father's ashes.

They are not my father, but my father's water jar—his earthen vessel. My father was a picture of God the Father. So for me, these ashes don't represent him so much as they represent broken dreams of church. They are ashes from that night in this room.

Years ago, at a conference in Canada, God miraculously revealed to me that I went into ministry out of a loathing for the church—His bride—a loathing that was an addiction. I was driven to make church work for me and get her approval. I think God washed away those ashes at that conference, but because I'm an addict, I keep picking them up and trying to drink.

Well, Jesus has a way of showing us our paint can. After fifteen years, I was removed, and I wasn't allowed to go back. And now, here I am in this room. And I think God is saying, "Peter, drink Me, worship Me, drink My approval here in the depths of your paint can. Surrender your paint can."

You think it's a mansion, but it's your prison.
You think it's heaven, but for you , it's a piece of hell.

Now please understand, I love you and I really love Jesus. But it's my addiction to the approval of this thing we call church. It's my addiction that turns a mansion into a prison that turns my life into hell. I get insecure, I become driven, and I get consumed with myself.

You see, me and my eyes, my flesh, are the ashes in my own paint can. In drivenness, anxiety, and fear, I drink those ashes and they only make me thirsty. And they make Jesus thirsty for I'm not drinking him.

But when I drink to be drunk by God, when I worship Jesus Christ and Him crucified, He hands me His cup saying, "Peter this is my opinion of you: you are eternally approved-of by Me. There is nothing you could do to make me love you more. There is nothing you could do to make me approve of you more. You are forever accepted!"

And then I forget me. I drink, and then I'm drunk by God. I forget my ashes. I forget this old earthen vessel. And my old idol turns into a temple, no longer a prison but a sanctuary where I drink and am drunk by love, where I'm lost and found in Love—in God.

Well, that's my paint can. You have a paint can, too.

So tonight, we start extended worship—Resound. We'll have the benediction and then you can stay and worship as long as you'd like.

If you're wondering, "how long should I stay and worship?"

I think this is the best answer: "you should drink until you're drunk by God."

And you say, "how will I know that I'm drunk?"

You'll know you're drunk when you can't find your paint can, and don't even care to look.

"And what if I can't stop drinking?"

Then you've arrived in the kingdom of heaven. Ultimately perfected in His image.

Cups with ribbon are wine.

Cups with no ribbon are juice.

Song of Songs 5:1 "Drink and be drunk by love."

He is the one that you were made for.

Communion

Benediction

He lifted His head and He cried, “It is finished!” And He gave up His spirit.

Now imagine his disciples. Imagine the can of ashes they were holding at that moment: all their hopes, all their dreams, new cabinet posts in the newly constituted Israel, right-hand men to the king—and now just a can of ashes.

But you see, God is in charge of the can of ashes. If you’re a believer, you are never a victim. Your Father is in charge of the can of ashes. It’s His plan.

And over the next forty days, Jesus would appear to them. And I’m sure that was very confusing. He says the strangest things and then he would disappear. And they didn’t know what to do. They were confused.

Finally Jesus appeared to them and says, “Go wait in Jerusalem.” And according to scripture, they went and they waited. And they devoted themselves to the prayers in the upper room. I’m wondering if this was the same room that this happened that night. The same room, the location of that place where they received their can of ashes.

They go to that place and they drink. (I wonder if they felt like drinking.) They didn’t know what to do. So they worshiped. They drank, until they were drunk. For the Holy Spirit fell on them at Pentecost like tongues of fire from heaven, the living water filled them. People who were standing by said, “these men are drunk!”

But those drunk guys changed the world. For they were drunk by a good master. So drink so that you might be drunk by Him.