Last Saturday I was having an afternoon snack with two of my granddaughters – a three year old and a two year old. We were drinking milk and having cookies and after I took a sip of my milk I went, “ah.” Immediately my granddaughters did the same thing. I thought to myself, this sounds neat I think I’ll try it again, so I did. And as soon as I finished with my “ah” to more little “ah’s” followed. The rest of the afternoon was spent drinking milk and ahing.

Now, before I go any further I should define "Ahh!" It's not really a word. It's sort of an instinctive moan/groan frequently uttered after you've taken a sip or a gulp of a refreshing beverage. After you swallow, instinct tells you to say, "Ahh." Or, "Aaaaaahhhhh!" without realizing it! I want to show you a parody that was made about Coca-Cola's “Ahh” moment.

You might say that the "ahh effect" is in play in our text from John’s gospel. Today, we see Jesus traveling through Samaria who, although very thirsty himself, offered water to someone in great need. Jesus knew all about water. Growing up in the rocky, dry land of Israel, he knew first hand that water was a precious resource that didn't come easily. He must have grown up seeing his mother and countless other women spend hours of their days hauling water for cooking, cleaning and drinking.

When Jesus encounters the lone Samaritan woman at the well in the hot noonday sun, he could appreciate the hard work that was required to draw enough water from the deep well in order to meet the needs of her family. Now, water is notoriously heavy -- 1 pint of water weighs 1 pound, so a 5-gallon bucket equals a staggering 40 pounds. A woman would have to haul this much water several times every day to meet the demands of a large family and busy household.

When Jesus encounters the woman at the well, his human side is definitely prevailing. He's hot and tired from his journey, and, what's more, he's not packing a bottle of Evian or Perrier. He's parched, but he knows exactly what he needs to ease his thirst; "Give me a drink," he says to the Samaritan woman. It's a touching, vulnerable moment, one of the very few times that we hear Jesus make a request of another person. He needs something that she can provide. In that moment it doesn't matter that he's the Son of God, the Savior of the world, a man in a male-oriented society or a Jew encountering someone from the ridiculed and belittled Samaritans. All the barriers and differences -- like gender and nationality -- that might divide them, fall away; Jesus is simply a person with a basic human need, and this woman has the ability to help him. She can give him water. It is here that I’m sure Jesus had his "ahh" moment. Water for us is necessary for survival. What we don't often consider is how necessary for our spiritual survival is the living water Jesus offers through the Holy Spirit, and so soon, the woman's "ahh" moment is coming.

Now, to be true to this story, it never actually tells us if Jesus gets that cup of water, because there's something much more important going on. We don't know if this unnamed woman took the time to draw water for Jesus. We do know that she stops what she's doing, because she's amazed that Jesus is speaking to her at all. Just by noticing her, Jesus has opened up a world of brand new possibilities to this woman weighed down by guilt and shame.
Jesus, of course, is never simply a "taker"; he hasn't come into her life simply to demand something that he needs. Jesus is experiencing the discomfort of thirst, but he knows that the woman at the well is carrying a far heavier burden. He's prepared to give her much more than a simple cup of water. He's going to offer her something that Coke, Pepsi, Nestle, and Perrier cannot offer: water that will remove her thirst forever. Jesus knows exactly who this woman is and can see the painful secrets of her heart. Jesus recognizes her thirst for forgiveness and acceptance. Jesus offers what she needs even before she knows enough to ask for help. Unlike Jesus, she doesn't even have to voice her request -- "I can give you living water," he says, water that can heal your spirit and ease the pain in your heart. This water is truly refreshing. The woman is so consumed with the day-in, day-out burden of hauling endless buckets of water that she can't grasp the magnitude of what Jesus is offering. She's simply eager to find a way to avoid this back-breaking drudgery that defines her life. When Jesus tells her that he has water that will forever cure her thirst, she eagerly replies, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water". Jesus is offering to open up all of eternity to her, and she's focused on making fewer trips to the village well! How often are we ready to settle for less than what God wants to offer to us? How often do we hesitate to ask for anything from this generous God who's prepared to let love and blessing and forgiveness flow over us like an ever-flowing stream? There's no way the woman at the well could visualize how refreshing this water is. Jesus isn't suggesting a better way to do her chores. He's not proposing to create a better work environment for her. He's offering to ease the burden of her troubled soul and release her from the pain of guilt. This woman is living with a past that makes her an outcast in her own village -- she's been married multiple times. Even worse, for that day and age and culture -- she's now living with a man who's not her husband. She carries with her the pain of guilt, shame and rejection -- and that's a far heavier burden than the water that she hauls every day. Jesus doesn't want to help her with the burden of her hands; he wants to ease the burden of her heart. He wants to remove the pain of isolation and disgrace.

There by the well Jesus shows this woman why he has come -- he wants to offer the gift of God's life-giving Spirit, water that wells "up to eternal life" to God's people. Just as the Samaritan woman has exactly what Jesus needs in that moment -- water -- he has precisely what she needs as well, even if she doesn't know it: grace and forgiveness and the promise of new life. Quite refreshing, and not a bad trade for a cup of water! Jesus will be thirsty again after he enjoys the cup of water that (we hope) the woman gives to him. But his living water will meet a need deep inside her.

As I said earlier, although we never see Jesus receive water from this woman, we do get to see the power of our Lord’s transforming love when it's given and received. Jesus tells her that he is the Messiah, the One that they have all been waiting and hoping for. We hear him tell her the good news, "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 truth".

That's what Jesus offers this tired, burdened woman -- a chance to be transformed. She can be washed clean with simply one drink of the water he's offering her. And with that sip, her life has been transformed. She's so excited, she wants to share the good news to others! Look what this man has done!!!!!!!
So, what do we thirst for? Someone who knows us as completely as Jesus does and yet loves us anyway? Forgiveness and new life that God alone can offer? A fresh start? Understanding? Rest? Renewal? Peace? To acknowledge the mistakes that we have made and know that there is still hope for us? To cast away the burden of guilt and the weight of regret?

Jesus offers us "Living Water." It sort of sounds like a corporate brand doesn’t it? "Living Water", it reaches a need far deeper than everyday thirst. "Living Water" it touches the part of us that wakes up in the night worried or lonely or consumed with remorse. "Living Water" can wash away the parts of us that feel unclean and threaten to keep us isolated forever.

So, what do you thirst for people? I hope and pray that as we continue on this journey, we will take time to take what our Lord and savior has to offer and then set back and enjoy the "Ahh" moment our Lord and Savior has to offer.