

Satisfied in a fulfilling God

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to Wednesday Lunchtime Bible Talk. Well, our reading for today is from John's Gospel, Chapter 4, and it's quite a lengthy reading from verse 1 to verse 42, so please do follow along with me in your Bibles.

Now, when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself did not baptize but only his disciples, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee, and he had to pass through Samaria.

So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well.

It was the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, a Jew, ask for me a drink, a woman of Samaria? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

[1 : 1 8] 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 nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob?

He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock. Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever.

The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.

Jesus said to her, Go call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You're right in saying I have no husband.

[2 : 3 2] For you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you're a prophet.

Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ.

When he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. Just then his disciples came back.

[3 : 44] They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, what do you seek? Or what are you talking with her? Why are you talking with her? So the woman left her water jar and went away into the town and said to the people, come see a man who told me all that I ever did.

Can this be the Christ? They went out of the town and were coming to him. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat.

But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. So the disciples said to one another, has anyone brought him something to eat? Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Do you not say there are yet four months, then comes the harvest? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

For here the saying holds true, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored and you have entered into their labor.

[5 : 02] Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them and he stayed there two days and many more believed because of his word.

They said to the woman, it is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.

Let me pray before we look at the passage in more detail. Father God, we thank you that we can come today and hear from you.

We thank you that you have spoken already in your word. And we pray now as we look at it in more depth that you would speak to us clearly, that you would satisfy our souls and show us what you have given to us.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We are people who desperately want lasting satisfaction, but we are absolutely clueless as to where to find it.

[6 : 16] People of my generation spend countless hours on social media trying to construct for ourselves a life of meaning. We want to portray to the world and to ourselves that our lives are purposeful and satisfying never before has a generation changed jobs and careers more than the generation of today.

We're desperate to do something that resonates with us, desperate to be part of something that is satisfying and bigger than ourselves. But it isn't just my generation who are like this.

We are all like this in some way or another. You might not spend all day on your mobile phone or your tablet, but you'll probably try and find some sense of meaning and purpose in your relationships.

Or you bury yourself in a book late at night to escape to another world where you can be caught up in a bigger story. But often the satisfaction and a purpose that these things bring us are short-lived.

So where can we find lasting satisfaction? Well, this is the question that Jesus is going to answer for us today here in John 4. Jesus visits a woman who is desperately dissatisfied and seeking meaning in all the wrong places.

[7 : 40] But Jesus doesn't leave her there. So let's look at our first point. Jesus calls us to lasting satisfaction. Looking at verses 7 to 15.

John starts by setting the scene for us. Jesus has been down in Judea and is now heading up north to Galilee and is passing through Samaria.

And there he meets a woman at a well at the hottest point of the day, the sixth hour, midday. Now, for us, this might not ring many alarm bells because we live in a multicultural part of the world where women are generally valued.

But I'm sure that we all know that this isn't the case the world over. There are many parts of the world where tensions are high amongst people groups and other places where it'd be unsightly for a man to be caught talking to a woman.

Think of the tensions between the Russians and the Ukrainians or the Iraqis and the Kurds. These are the kind of relationships that best illustrate the dynamics between the Samaritans and the Israelites back then.

[8 : 50] Close neighbors geographically, but all sense of relationship had been shattered. The Israelites considered the Samaritans to be half-breeds or mongrels.

They were ethnically Israelites traditionally, but had spent time in Assyria and thus weren't Israelites culturally anymore. They'd picked up the religion and the culture of the Assyrians and were now very different to their neighbors in Israel.

They still claimed to worship God, but had mixed in a lot of Assyrian traditions into how they worshipped him. And as a result, the Israelites looked down on him and relationships were heavily frayed.

And that is why the Samaritan woman is so shocked when Jesus approaches her and asks her for a drink. She's right to be gobsmacked in verse 9 when she says, how is it that you, a Jew, asked for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?

It was absolutely outrageous behavior on Jesus' part. It would be a bit like Mr. Poroshenko, the president of the Ukraine, asking Mr. Putin around for a cup of tea.

[10 : 04] It just isn't done. So why does Jesus approach this Samaritan woman and ask her for a drink? Well, he crosses this great cultural divide because he wants to offer this woman something that she desperately needs.

Jesus says in verse 10 that this is a great opportunity for the woman. If she understood who he was and what he had to offer, then she would have asked him for a drink, not the other way around.

Jesus has something far more valuable than plain old water. to offer this woman. He has living water. But the woman doesn't understand what Jesus is talking about.

She thinks he is talking about literal water. And in verse 11 says, well, I don't know where you plan on getting this water from. I mean, you don't even have a bucket.

But Jesus clarifies things for her in verse 13 when he says, everyone who drinks of this water, this water in the well that we're in front of will be thirsty again.

[11 : 15] In other words, I'm not talking about regular physical water that you get from this well. I'm talking about something entirely different. So what is this living water that Jesus is talking about and offering this woman?

Well, living water in John's gospel is really just shorthand for the Holy Spirit. He uses it elsewhere like in chapter 7. Well, how does the Holy Spirit then satisfy us?

Well, he satisfies us in two ways. One, now in the present and the other by securing a great future for us. So let's look at the present first.

Jesus offering the Samaritan woman the Holy Spirit is really an offer for her to come into relationship with God. God. The Bible says that we were created to do life in relationship with God.

Therefore, coming into relationship with God helps us to live life as we're supposed to. It gives us a blueprint for life which is very reassuring and it gives us purpose and meaning.

- [12 : 25] Well, what about the future? Well, verse 14 tells us that the living water will well up into eternal life. the Holy Spirit secures for us everlasting life as well, as well as giving us purpose and meaning in the present, life and satisfaction beyond the grave.
- Everything that we chase in this world, however good it may be, can offer us only temporary satisfaction. We get a new gadget one week and we're bored of it the next.
- We get a promotion at work but eventually the novelty of extra money and extra responsibilities wears off. Even our best relationships can't satisfy us all the time but Jesus promises to satisfy us forever.
- Well, the penny still hasn't quite dropped for the Samaritan woman if you look at verse 15. She says, Sir, give me this water so that I will not have to come here to draw water.
- She still doesn't quite understand that he is using an illustration. So Jesus pushes the point home. He ensures that she does go home receiving this living water and he does this by undercutting the things she has been finding satisfaction in and eroding away her excuses for not coming to Jesus the finest lasting satisfaction.
- [13 : 58] So let's look at verses 15 to 28, our second point. Jesus calls you to worship him regardless of your background.
- Jesus is doing two things in this section. One, he is exposing her deep satisfaction in life and two, he is showing her that her moral and cultural and religious background doesn't exclude her from receiving this gift.
- So firstly, how does Jesus uncover her dissatisfaction in verses 16 to 18? Well, Jesus asks her to call her husband, which seems a bit of a curveball.
- But Jesus asks her to call her husband so that she might come to realize that she's been looking for satisfaction in the wrong place. She replies, I have no husband, which is a rather coy answer.
- She doesn't want to reveal the fact that she is a loose woman. But Jesus doesn't let her off the hook. And he says, you're right in saying that you have no husband, for you have had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband.
- [15 : 18] There's no hiding for her. This was a woman who was desperate for love, but had never found it. She was no doubt known amongst the town for all the wrong reasons and people probably wanted nothing to do with her.
- That's probably why she's at the well at midday rather than in the morning when all the other women would have gone to the well to collect water. She was a homewrecker. She was marginalized.
- But as well as that, she was deeply dissatisfied. But Jesus did not just expose her in order to shame her. He exposes her to reveal to her that she has been looking to men to satisfy her and give her a sense of meaning and worth.
- She's been expecting men to do something for her that only God can do. There's a passage in Jeremiah chapter 2 which succinctly describes what is going on in her heart and what naturally goes on in all of our hearts as well.
- Jeremiah 2, I think it's verse 13, says, My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.
- [16 : 43] In other words, we turn from God who is the only one who can satisfy us and try and find satisfaction in things that can't. God is the only well who can give us lasting satisfaction.
- Every other well is broken. They may quench our thirst for a while. I mean, I'm sure this woman's lovers gave us some sense of satisfaction for a while, but it would never last.

Well, the conversation moves on. Now the woman has been exposed, she feels somewhat uncomfortable and changes the subject, and she shifts the focus from her sexual history onto a matter of how to worship.

But despite the seemingly derailment of the conversation, Jesus goes with her and addresses her concerns. She says, our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

In other words, there's another barrier in the way for me. Surely, I'm cut off from this gift because I'm culturally and religiously very different from you.

[18 : 01] And Jesus' answer is somewhat surprising. He doesn't try and blur out their differences and pretend that they're not there. He even tells in verse 22 that she has been worshipping God wrong.

She's been playing wrong all this time. But he says that that doesn't matter now. Things are changing. Jesus says that it soon won't matter where you worship God at all.

Jesus' entrance into the world was going to shake things up. Soon, God's presence would not be confined to one geographical place in the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus' offer of giving us living water, the Holy Spirit, God himself to people is a huge thing. Soon, this woman wouldn't have to go to the temple where God's presence was to worship because God's presence was going to be with her wherever she went.

in other words, it doesn't matter a great deal how you worship now. Soon, everything is going to change. There's nothing to keep you from receiving the Holy Spirit and becoming a true worshipper and finding this life of meaning that I'm offering you.

[19 : 20] And then Jesus presses the point home. In verse 25, the woman starts to talk about the Messiah. Perhaps she's starting to pick up on the scent of who is stood right in front of her.

Perhaps she's starting to put two and two together. This man knows everything about me and he's teaching me things that I'm told that the Messiah is going to teach me about.

Could this possibly be? Well, Jesus puts an end to all the guessing games and he says, I who speak to you am he.

it's the ultimate confrontation. Jesus leaves no room to be misunderstood. I am the Messiah.

And it perhaps isn't obvious in our English translations, but he's basically saying, I am God. The Samaritan homewrecker stands face to face with the Messiah and the great I am.

[20 : 27] Jesus saying, I am God and therefore I know everything about you, even your secrets that you hope will never see the light of day.

And I'm still offering you this living water. I'm still offering you to find satisfaction. Stop playing your games, trying to make excuses because of your cultural or religious background.

I've shown you who I am and I've shown you what I have to offer. Will you worship me and find a life of meaning and purpose that will continue after the grave?

Or will you go back to drinking from muddied puddles? Well, let's look at a final point. Jesus calls us to become part of a bigger story.

Looking at verses 27 to 42. Here, the narrative shifts. The story has just reached its climax. The woman leaves her water jar.

[21 : 30] She's found this living water. She's come to the conclusion that Jesus really is the Christ and goes out to the streets proclaiming, come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did. Can this be the Christ?

It's an incredible high point. But then the camera leaves the main action and focuses on some somewhat dim-witted disciples.

So why does John put this little section here and break up this incredible story? Well, I think he does it for a very important reason. He wants us to take a step back and see the bigger picture of what is going on.

It's staggering and breathtaking what has happened to this individual woman. Jesus has given her lasting satisfaction, eternal life, despite her very shady background. But Jesus is doing something bigger.

And to reveal this bigger narrative, Jesus starts to talk about food instead of water. Disciples come to him, bumbling over one another and urging Jesus to eat.

[22 : 40] But Jesus again uses this as an opportunity to teach and says his food is to do the will of him who sent him and to do his work.

what is this work? Verse 35, to bring in a harvest. What is the harvest? Well, he says to his disciples, look, lift up your eyes.

The harvest is right in front of you. Samaritan woman is running through the streets telling everyone about Jesus and people are coming to believe that he really is the Messiah.

The Samaritans are the harvest and there is plenty of harvesting to be done. He's telling his disciples to get on board and get stuck in with the reaping.

He wants his followers, those who have found lasting satisfaction in him already, to come alongside him and help him in his work to bring eternal life and satisfaction to others.

[23 : 42] So they stay there for two more days to get involved in this harvesting work in verse 40, teaching the Samaritans. And what is the result?

Well, many believed and recognized that he is the Savior of the world. Jesus is engaged in a work not just to rescue Israel and give them lasting satisfaction, but Samaria too, and indeed to the very ends of the earth.

And he is inviting all those who have come to know him and found satisfaction in him to get involved in that work too. Well, what's this got to do with us finding satisfaction?

I said at the beginning that we are trying to live lives of purpose and meaning. And we write our own narratives to construct meaning for ourselves and to find a satisfaction.

The problem is we're just making a best guess at how to do this, a best guess at how to do life. We have no idea what will satisfy us and what will last, but Jesus does.

[25 : 01] Not only does he give us the Holy Spirit and the promise of eternal life to satisfy our souls, but he gives us purpose here and now. He calls us to stop writing our own little fantasy stories and become part of the greater narrative.

Jesus is calling us to become part of a cosmic story, the greatest story ever written. Regardless of your background, your moral inadequacies, or your cultural get-ups, God wants us to play our part in his plan to save the world.

So what will you do? Carry on hunting for satisfaction in broken wells, or come to Jesus for lasting satisfaction and become part of the biggest story?

Let me pray for us. Father God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for this confrontation of Jesus and this woman who is far closer to us than we would like to think. Father, we thank you that only in Jesus can we find lasting satisfaction.

[26 : 21] Thank you that he, if we believed in him, has given us meaning, and purpose and assurance of eternal life. Thank you that gives us a blueprint as to how to do life.

And thank you, Father, we don't have to keep on pretending. We don't have to start writing our own story, hoping that we're doing it right. But we can just get involved in the greatest story that you have prepared, the story of bringing everything under your son.

Father, many of us today, we will know that you are the only one who can bring satisfaction. But as well, Lord, we recognize that so often we do go to these broken cisterns nonetheless.

Help us to remember who you are and what you've done for us, so we might not go to muddled puzzles any longer. And help us to play our part in this greater narrative.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. God Man Man Man Man Man Man Man Man Man Man Man Man