

# True Satisfaction: To Never Thirst Again

Text: John 4:1-26

## Context

- Historical Context
  - To set the stage for this text, it is important to understand who are the Samaritans and how did we get to this place where the text highlights the tensions between Samaritans and Jews
  - If you recall, when Jesus explained what it means to love your neighbor as yourself in Luke 10:25-37, he told the parable of the Good Samaritan. There is history here that will be helpful for us
  - Who are the Samaritans? What is the reason for this bad blood? Let me read some excerpts from a commentary by Theologian Don Carson to help answer this questions
    - After the Assyrians captured Samaria [the capital of the Northern kingdom of Israel] in 722-21 BC, they deported all the Israelites of substance and settled the land with foreigners, who intermarried with the surviving Israelites and adhered to some form of their ancient religion (2 Kings 17-18).
    - After the exile [of the Southern kingdom in Babylon], Jews, returning to their homeland . . . viewed the Samaritans not only as the children of political rebels, but as racial half-breeds whose religion was tainted by various unacceptable

elements. . . . About 400 BC the Samaritans erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. ([The Gospel According to John](#), 216)

- **Biblical Context**

- John is slowly revealing the Messiah to us the readers. From chapter 3, Jesus continues a series of dialogues, in which he is
  - Revealing himself as the fulfillment of God's promises, and
  - Directly confronting long held structures that are inaccurate
- In the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus is destabilizing wrong religious structures, and in the conversation with the Samaritan woman he is addressing religious and cultural divides, while at the same time offering both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman salvation and eternal life
- Jesus is offering himself to both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman - the have and have nots; the accepted and the rejected. He is offering everyone on the spectrum of humanity: living water that satisfies our every thirst we have

- **Literary Context**

- And so as Jesus is announcing and revealing himself more and more, the Jewish leaders take note. And Jesus withdraws from Judea to Galilee probably because the time has not yet come for this **impending confrontation**
- In verse 4, the bible says "**And he had to pass through Samaria.**" This doesn't mean there was no other way to get to Galilee as there are actually 3 different routes.
  - In fact we know that some Jews, perhaps the most devout Jews would actually avoid traveling through Samaria to get to Galilee

- Verse 4 probably refers to the fact that God has sovereignly willed it that Jesus meet this Samaritan woman at the well, and so Jesus had to go through Samaria to meet this woman
  - Please note **the intentionality of God** here - how he is always the one that initiates
  - Just as God had made himself known to what we might consider the elite of the society, in Nicodemus, in chapter 3, here Jesus will make himself known to a woman who is likely an outcast and one who has a messy past
  - The point I am highlighting here and that I want you to hold onto is that **no matter what you have done, and where you have been, Jesus is extending an invitation of love to you** - which we will see in this passage
  - **As we walk through this passage, be open to what God might say to you. Seek the transformation that Jesus wants to work in your life**
- With enough of a context in place, we can now examine the passage properly. I would like us to consider this passage under 3 main observations 1) Our Resistance to God, 2) God's Disposition towards Us and 3) True Satisfaction. We will end our study by looking at how this passage intersects with our lives

## Our Resistance to God

- John 4:7-15
- **7** A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." **8** (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) **9** The Samaritan woman said to him,

"How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

- Unusual Actions

- Looking at the interaction, we see a couple unusual things that set up this conversation with Jesus

- It is somewhat unusual to have a woman come to draw water by herself at noon - usually one of the hottest times of the day.
  - From Gen 24:11, 29:7, we see that women normally drew water during cooler parts of the day - the morning or evening
  - Coming out alone might mean she is avoiding contact with other women or other women are avoiding her
- The disciples going to a Samaritan town to buy food should cause us to raise an eyebrow given the bad blood between Samaritans and Jews
- Jesus engaging with the Samaritan woman by asking for a drink
  - A man initiating a conversation with a woman in public that is not his wife or relative
  - A Jew asking a Samaritan for a drink
  - A rabbi speaking to a woman

- A Normal Resistance

- Unfortunately, it is quite normal for the Samaritan woman to be taken aback by Jesus' request
- First this woman pushes back on the request Jesus makes and throws up a cultural divide.

- If we are being honest, we must confess that we sometimes resist engaging with people that are different from us. It can be so easy to assume things about others based on how they look, their background, their skin color, their age, etc.
  - The prayer is that God will help us see everyone as being made in the image of God...plagued by sin but made in the image of God nonetheless
  - May we come too treasure the unity of redeemed sinners above any cultural or political divide amongst us
- Jesus though ignores the pushback and offers her living water - which will truly address her deeper thirst, and look at the response of the woman in verse 10-12
    - **10** 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." **11** 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? **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."
  - I believe the Samaritan woman is actually spiritually aware of what Jesus is saying. We will see the depth of her knowledge later in verses 19-21 and verses 25, where she speaks of awaiting the Messiah.
  - The Samaritan woman seems to be mocking Jesus. In the original text the form of the question indicates she expects a negative response - **"You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you?"**
    - The implication here is that the woman sees Jesus as thinking too highly of himself

- We can conclude that the Samaritan woman subtly dismisses spiritual things (vs 10-12) and her tone carries an understandable form of hostility towards this Jewish teacher. She likely understand that Jesus is speaking figuratively but she subtly mocks Jesus
- What is our posture towards spiritual matters?
  - Sometimes we are the ones who subtly dismisses spiritual things, and keep God at arms length
  - We are willing to dialogue about God only to the extent that it doesn't disturb our conscience or comfort or personal goals.
  - We hide behind humor and downplay the grace of God because we want to keep a certain reputation or we do not want others to be uncomfortable
  - And maybe God wants us to actually say something hold - always gently and lovingly - Jesus is my savior, come and taste of him
- So what we see here is an unfortunate but quite normal resistance to Jesus' offer of salvation and true satisfaction. This is what me and you would do, if we were in her shoes
- While her resistance was borne of the religious and cultural divide, we must admit that those things are a reflection of humanity's natural posture towards God
- We are the Samaritan woman. Either due to past hurts or unfortunate circumstances, we often reject God, shaking our fists at him either directly or indirectly. We resist God when
  - As unbelievers we reject his offer of salvation.
  - As believers we live like functional atheists.
  - Our tendency is to rely on our natural abilities than God
  - Our hope is anchored in our societal status, work place, wealth, etc
  - Our lives are centered on how to best optimize for what we want

- We are slothful towards the movement of God upon our hearts
- Our identity is anchored in what I own, what I have accomplished, what people are saying about me
- We choose any other way apart from the way of God
- **This natural resistance is the normal way of man.** Martin Luther explains this as
  - *'man [is] so curved in upon himself that he uses not only physical but even spiritual goods for his own purposes and in all things seeks only himself'* (Luther's Works, vol. 25, p. 345, see also pp. 291-92)
- The natural question though is how does Jesus handle this Samaritan's rejection of his words? **This will give us a hint to God's disposition towards us**

## God's Disposition towards Us

- John 4:7-15
- When the Samaritan woman brings up religious and cultural divides, rather than address her points, Jesus answers like this
  - **10** 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."
  - Note that by ignoring the question of Jew vs Samaritan, Jesus is showing that such divide is inaccurate and we will see him address this more poignantly in verse 21-24
  - In this context, **living water probably refers** to the offer of salvation and the Holy Spirit, leading to eternal life

- Jesus is **redirecting the conversation to that which can truly satisfy her** - not just her physical thirst but that which can satisfy her true need.
  - Jesus offers her reconciliation with God, he offers her salvation in the name of the Messiah that she longs for.
  - **The point I do not want you to miss is that Jesus offers her true salvation from all thirst or desires**
- When the Samaritan woman asks Jesus if he was greater than Jacob, mocking him, Jesus responds with this
  - **13** Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
- Again Jesus redirects the conversation back to what the **Samaritan woman needs, what we all truly need**. Jesus again offers her salvation and eternal life, reminding her that every other pursuit to satisfy her thirst is at best a temporary fix that can never satisfy
  - This is also what God offers you and me, **in every situation we find ourselves**
  - **Jesus is always redirecting the conversation to what will satisfy our true needs**
  - And this is instructive for me and you
    - God cares about you, more than you care about yourself.
    - God wants what is good for you, more than you want it for yourself
    - So when God leads and directs your heart, even though the path may not look sensible or right...trust Him. The sovereignty of God must be the pillow on which we rest our heads



- Please note the disposition of Jesus towards this Samaritan woman, who has consistently resisted him. This is Jesus' disposition to all of us - to the woman with a sordid past, to the adulterer caught in the act, to the addict, to the legalist, to the wall street mogul whose hope is found in riches, etc.
- And God gives this mercy eagerly and earnestly. **He not only loves you, he enjoys loving you**
- The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies they never come to an end - they are truly new every morning

## True Satisfaction

- Before we continue, we should ask the question: what does it mean “to never thirst again?” when we consider Jesus words in John 4: 13-14
  - **13** Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.
  - Surely this cannot mean that we do not feel thirst or our every need - physical, emotional, psychological, etc., will be met
- The thirst that Jesus speaks of is the restlessness and the emptiness of life lived without God. It is that ache in the human heart that expresses itself in so many ways and tries to find fulfillment in all sort of things

- This thirst is met not by removing the aching desire but by accepting Jesus' offer of salvation, reconciliation to God, and the promise of the Holy Spirit. This thirst is met by a belief and an anchoring in Christ. **To never thirst again means our hope is squarely in Christ and it is him that we look to**
  - **It means we are not run amok by our desires or outcomes, whether they are noble or not. Rather we are anchored and rooted squarely in Christ. We are not pushed to and fro by every wind of desire or doctrine**
- A personal conversation
- With Jesus' last response to the Samaritan woman, it seems the Samaritan woman is at least interested in the promise of a living water that satisfies every thirst.
  - **15** 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."
  - It is likely that she still doesn't understand Jesus' reference
- To draw her out more, Jesus abruptly shifts the conversation
  - **16** Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." **17** The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; **18** for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."
- Jesus must have known that this is an area of potential deep hurt and scars. Jesus is pulling at something deeper here. **I am not sure why Jesus turns to this question but we do know this question deepens their conversation**
- In essence, Jesus exposes a deep need (deep thirst) within the woman

- Scottish preacher, Eric Alexander says the empty water jar the woman has with her is maybe metaphorical of her life
- It seems her life has been a long saga of bruised intimacy and emotional hurt
- And so Christ pulls at this thread to show her that he truly is the source of living water that can quench this thirst, heal these scars that she bears
- What about me and you? If we were having a conversation with Jesus and he got very personal and started drawing out a hidden past, present sins, dashed hopes, unfulfilled longings, etc? What is your response to Christ?
  - No matter your thirst, no matter your need, Jesus wants you to see in him the living water that satisfies every thirst
  - May this passage always be an invitation for me and you to always come to God with our questions, doubts, mistakes and with every baggage we carry. May we never run away from the loving hands of God
- **In light of our resistance to God, I hope you see the disposition of God towards you**
- **True Worship**
- It would seem that this personal conversation has softened the heart of the Samaritan woman. I can almost see her being more curious and symbolically leaning into the conversation, while there is still some skepticism
- The conversation takes another twist - the Samaritan woman seeks to resolve a long standing theological contention between Jews and Samaritans
  - **19** The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. **20** Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."

- **21** Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. **22** You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23** But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.
- **24 God is spirit**, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."
- There are a couple things I want to quickly call out
  - This question by the woman shows her awareness of spiritual matters, and helps us understand her tone in the earlier conversation to be one of mockery
  - It is possible she is still skeptical of Jesus and throws out this contentious matter to test him
  - Pay attention to how Jesus answers her question and draws her to what really matters
- Jesus bypasses the seeming divide and address the real issue, and he has 3 things to say about worship
  - He announced the impending obsolescence of both the Jerusalem temple and Mt Gerizim
  - He insists that Jews are right about the location of worship and the object of worship (note that this doesn't mean the Jews are actually doing worship right)
  - He explains the true nature of worship - which forever renders the theological contention on location obsolete and actually focuses on "how" of worship, and by extension the "why" of worship
- What does it mean to worship the father in spirit and truth?

- First of all, note that scripture says “God is spirit” and not “God is a spirit” as if he were one of the many types of spirits.
- Rather, Jesus is saying God is different than humans, and so we cannot truly worship him according to our customs, and in our ways - rather we must worship him “in spirit and truth”
- The phrase “in spirit and truth” are not two separate things but one idea. They carry this idea of “God-centeredness” - worship must be God centered
- In the book of John, the word “truth” **carries this sense of the arrival of heavenly reality in contrast to the OT types and shadows.**
- So therefore to worship in spirit and truth means to **worship in light of the arrival of a new order, of a heavenly reality, which is being made possible by the Messiah.**
- Worshiping God must first start with acceptance of his gracious offer of salvation through his Messiah. Worship is never about a place or location or a race but more so about accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord
- Worship is no longer limited to what we do here on Sunday. It starts with putting our trust in Christ Jesus - which then transforms every aspect of your life and how you live.
- **In light of our resistance to God, God’s loving disposition to us, the right and proper response from us is worship - which starts with putting our trust in him**
- The Messiah is here
  - I am not sure if the woman understands all that Jesus has said but it seems she is becoming more and more open to Jesus' words.

- The Samaritan woman brings up a long running promise of the coming Messiah (which shows that she is quite spiritually aware)
  - **25** 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." **26** Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."
- What she has been looking for all of her life was staring her right in the face. The only one who can fill the hole in her heart has finally revealed himself
  - All that you thirst for and seek is found in the person of Christ.
- It is striking that Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman, with a messy past, despite her resistance. Why is this?
- I do not know but my guess is that Jesus recognizes that the longings of the Samaritan people would only be satisfied, and they would only be able to offer true worship to God if they trusted him
- And the same is true of me and you

## Application

- If we were to summarize this passage into major arcs, we might come up with the following
  - We see the consistent resistance of the Samaritan woman, which is met by the consistent disposition of love towards us - even in our resistance, even in our sin
  - We are the Samaritan woman, the Samaritan people - a people often mistaken, yet who think they are right.

- If I may give you a charge, I would ask 3 things of you
  - **Be open and sensitive to the movement of God on your heart**
    - Do not hide behind the wall of pain, or shame or guilt.
    - If you are not a believer, come to the One who will love you and enjoy loving you
    - For those who are believers, do not live as functional atheists - where we know God exist but we live life without truly trusting him, especially in the little things
    - Get real with Jesus. Let the Holy Spirit shed light on the areas or things you have held back from his piercing word
  - In our openness to God, our next step must be repentance. **We must repent and return to him (cf Isa 30)** - this is not a one time thing but an ongoing activity that is a part of us.
    - Repentance must be for all of life
    - God stands and knocks at the door of your heart, always calling you back home
    - You are never far too gone...you are never far too gone
  - **The proper response to God's open invitation is Worship** - this is the true response from all those who receive the offer of Christ
    - This starts with truly relying on Christ. And then this works itself out in every facet of our lives - our thoughts, our actions, our motivations. We will fail, we will repent and go back to his every open and loving arms
- And so I will end with a directive from Paul from Romans 12

- **1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
- **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- **3** For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.