

A Desperate Woman

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[0 : 00] Good morning. I'm Alistair Watson. Our reading this morning is John chapter 4 verses 1 to 42. Don't worry, you won't have to listen to me for all 42 verses. I'm just doing verses 1 to 15.

Peter McGregor will read verses 15 to 26 and Rachel McClatchy will read verses 27 to the end. 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 about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water.

Jesus said to her, give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away to the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, how is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the 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.

[1 : 52] 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 again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water.

Jesus told her, 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. Jesus said to her, you are right when you say you have no husband.

I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place of the Father is not in him. You will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.

[3 : 43] God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in the spirit and in truth. The woman said, I know that Messiah called Christ is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.

Then Jesus declared, I, the one speaking to you, I am he. Just then his disciples came back. They marvelled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, what do you seek?

Or why are you talking with her? So the woman left her water jar and went away into 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 sends me and to accomplish his work.

[4 : 49] 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 the sower and reaper may rejoice together.

For he holds true, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the women'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 women, it is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the saviour of the world.

[5 : 56] Well, good morning, everyone. My name is Alistair. I have the privilege of being the assistant pastor here at Brunsfield, and it is both my job and my joy to lead us through John chapter 4 this morning.

So if you do have a Bible, please keep it open at John 4. We're going to be diving in and out of the text. But before we do any of that, let's pray together. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we ask that the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts would be pleasing to you this morning. In the name of Jesus Christ, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. Now this may or it may not surprise you, but growing up, I wasn't the most popular or athletic of children.

So maybe you remember those times on the playground as all the children stood in a line and two captains chose the children they wanted to be on their team.

Well, I was that little child who stood still as name after name after name was called out. I couldn't run fast.

[7 : 07] I had two left feet. I couldn't kick, throw, or catch to save my life. And so I was picked last. Or I was that convenient odd number that sat on the sidelines and watched.

But maybe for you it wasn't on the playground. Maybe it's at work. Or maybe it's in your friends and family circles.

Or maybe you've tuned in this morning because you don't know who you can turn to during this difficult time. We all know to some extent what it means to be on the fringes.

To be a little bit of an outcast. An outcast is someone who is ignored. Someone who's looked down on. Forgotten about by the majority of the world.

And left to fend for themselves on the fringes of society. Sadly, there are many different people and people groups who find themselves on the fringes.

[8 : 14] And who are wrongly treated as the unlovables of our world. Those with mental illnesses. Those who have addictions.

The homeless. Even people from different countries and cultures. We don't have to look very far in our world to find out that we're not actually as wrong. We are.

Many people are alone. Feeling left out and on the fringes. Now, you're probably thinking, well, why on earth is he telling me all of this?

I know what it feels like to be left out. I know what it feels like to be an outcast. Maybe that's how you're feeling this morning.

Well, I'm saying all of that because this morning we get to be flies on the wall. And listen in to the longest conversation Jesus had with one individual recorded.

[9 : 15] And it's a conversation with an outcast. This conversation shows how Jesus approaches those who are cast out. And those who feel rejected.

If Jesus were to visit Scotland today, we might be tempted to think that he would swing by Nicola Sturgeon's office for a chat. Or hang out with the important officials of the government.

Or maybe we'd be tempted to think that Jesus would be in the eloquent church halls, preaching to the religious elite up and down our land.

But the reality is that if Jesus were to visit Edinburgh today, do you know where you'd find him? Sitting on the street with the homeless. Speaking to people in their pain.

Listening to those who feel alone and abandoned. And that is exactly what we see this morning in John chapter 4. Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well.

[10 : 19] She is not one of the religious elite like we saw Nicodemus was last week in John chapter 3. But she is a religious outcast. She is not one of the respected members of society.

But she is someone who sits on the fringes. Maybe you think, well Jesus would never associate with people like that. Surely Jesus wouldn't go to the morally dubious.

Or approach a sinner who is clearly living contrary to God's law. Well friends, Jesus came for those very people.

Jesus approaches this woman and talks to her about true satisfaction. And about true worship. This is a conversation we all need to listen to.

Because each of us either has been or currently is characterized by searching for satisfaction in life. And each of us needs to understand what exactly true worship is.

[11 : 30] We need to meet Jesus just like this woman does in John chapter 4. So let's dive in and see what it is Jesus says to her. So the first thing Jesus talks about to this woman is true satisfaction.

True satisfaction. In verse 4 we see Jesus goes through Samaria. And being tired, having walked all morning and in the heat of the midday, he is thirsty.

And so he asks the Samaritan woman who he sees at the well for a drink in verse 7. Now we might look at this and think, well that's no big deal.

He's thirsty. There's a woman at the well with the appropriate tools to get water. So surely it's not a big ask for a little bit of water.

But oh how wrong we would be. In this conversation Jesus is reaching over multiple barriers to approach this woman.

[12 : 33] He's crossing a cultural barrier. Because this woman is an outcast. It is not seen as proper for Jesus to talk to her. And even more than that, Jesus is a Jew and she is a Samaritan.

Those two people groups hated each other. He's also crossing a gender barrier. Because in this culture no upright man would speak to a woman alone.

Especially not one who is at the well during midday. And he's also crossing a moral barrier.

Because in the eyes of society this woman is dubious.

And Jesus is a teacher of God. And those two people groups do not mix. We see the shock of the situation by the woman's response in verse 9.

She says to Jesus, but you are a Jew. And I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? Jesus is breaking down these barriers.

[13 : 40] And he is lovingly building bridges to this woman regardless of what culture says. He is putting his own reputation on the line. Because this woman needs to hear what he has to say.

This is how Jesus encounters people. He meets them where they are. In their pain. In their suffering. In their questions. And in their doubts.

Jesus approaches them. The reality is that he is never far from any one of us.

Irrespective of nationality. Irrespective of race. Of gender. Of history. And of baggage. Jesus approaches people with love.

And compassion. To teach. And to save. Jesus crossed those barriers. Because this is the kind of person he came to spend time with.

[14 : 41] This is exactly the kind of person he has come to rescue. Jesus doesn't look at this lady and see a social outcast. But he looks at this woman.

And he sees an image bearer of God. He sees someone who has worth. Someone who is valued. Friends.

No matter how much of an outcast you may feel. No matter how much of a failure you may feel. Or how much of a let down you think you are.

Jesus will always draw near to you. Jesus responds to this lady tenderly. And says in verse 10.

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. Jesus is saying what this woman already knows.

[15 : 42] That the water in this well will quench her thirst for a short while. But a few hours later. She will thirst again. But Jesus stands before her.

And is offering her living water. That never runs out. And that is solely because of his identity. As the son of God. Jesus knows everything about this woman.

How her whole life has been characterized. By the constant search for satisfaction. She has been searching for love.

But only met with disappointment. After disappointment. She wants people to love her. She is looking for satisfaction. And so in verse 13. Jesus says.

But everyone who drinks this water. Will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give them. Will never thirst. Indeed the water I give them.

[16 : 41] Will become in them a spring of water. Welling up to eternal life. Jesus isn't speaking about actual water here.

He's speaking about satisfaction. Imagine you're walking through the desert. In the middle of the day. With the sun beating down on you. You would be absolutely parched. And so imagine you get that glass of fresh cold water. When you drink it. You feel that satisfaction. It is that feeling of satisfaction.

The desire and longing for that kind of satisfaction. That has characterized this lady's life. But each time. She's been left wanting.

And Jesus says to her. That he can offer true satisfaction. He alone can offer true life. A life of real. And lasting joy.

[17 : 45] That can only be found. If you are made right with God. And living the way people were created. To live. In perfect harmony. With him. And hearing the prospect.

Of never thirsting again. And thinking that Jesus is talking about. Real water. She says. In verse 15. Sir give me this water. So that I won't get thirsty.

And have to keep coming here. To draw water. But it appears in verse 16. That Jesus suddenly changes the topic.

And starts talking about this woman's history with men. Why does he do that? Well Jesus isn't actually changing the topic at all.

He's helping this woman see that her whole life is characterized by this search for satisfaction. That with every failed relationship. That search just continued.

[18 : 44] And continued. Jesus says in verse 18. The fact is. You've had five husbands. And the man you have now is not your husband. Now Jesus isn't condemning or judging the lady.

But he's lovingly pointing out. That the theme tune of this lady's life is. I can't get no satisfaction by the rolling stones. I can't get no satisfaction. I try.

And I try. And I try. I just can't get no satisfaction. She needs to know this. And be reminded of her life. Because.

It is only once we have come to an end of ourselves. That we're in the place to run to Jesus for everlasting life. It is only once we give up and confess that all our efforts are pointless.

That our sin is too great. Only then. Are we willing and able to run to Jesus. And take hold of the everlasting life that he offers.

[19 : 52] Jesus is saying she's been characterized. By searching for satisfaction. And she's been looking for that satisfaction and fulfillment in the arms of men.

She's been looking for the right things. Satisfaction. But in all the wrong places. But now. The only person in the world who can offer her true satisfaction.

Stands before her. And offers her life. Isn't that what we all do? We try to find satisfaction in our jobs.

In relationships. Possessions. Reputation. Sex. Being liked by people. Having a good reputation. But all those things will leave us wanting. It's like we're trying to quench our thirst in a dust filled well.

[20 : 50] Surrounded by a desert. But Jesus stands and offers us true satisfaction. Which in comparison to the transient things of this world. Is like the flowing waters of the Niagara Falls.

If you're tuning in this morning and you're not a Christian. You need this life that Jesus offers this woman. Friends you can go on searching for satisfaction in life.

But you will not find it. All the things that you store up now. Will be left behind once you are dead. True satisfaction. Can only be found in Jesus Christ.

God in the flesh. Who came to save and restore sinful people like us. To a holy God. God in the flesh. God in the flesh. God in the flesh. I recently read the story of Stephen Lungu.

An African gang member turned Christian missionary. And one night he was planning on killing a bunch of Christians in a mission. And he sat down petrol bombs at the ready.

[21 : 56] But he heard the message of Jesus. And he repented and believed. And in the following weeks he was homeless. He had no money. He had no friends.

And he slept under a bridge with nothing but his Bible. He had nothing. But he felt a deep sense of satisfaction.

Because he knew that his entire past had been forgiven. And he knew that the future that awaited him in the presence of God. Was far, far greater.

Than all the treasures of this world combined. Humanly speaking. That sounds insane. Humanly speaking. Humanly speaking.

He had nothing in the world. But true satisfaction. Is only found in Jesus. True satisfaction is not found in stuff.

[22 : 50] You can have everything in the world. But if you don't have Jesus. Then you have nothing. True satisfaction is not in stuff.

It is only in Jesus. It is only in Jesus. Now how is this possible? Well because finding satisfaction in Jesus is life changing.

It means recognizing that our worth, our identity are found in him. And if that is the case. And if that is the case. Then we are freed from being preoccupied with ourselves.

We are freed from the search for satisfaction. Because we are loved with an everlasting love. And we are living the life of harmony. With God that we were created to live.

Jesus approaches this woman. Who is seen as an outcast. And he speaks kindly to her. He tells her the reality of how her life is a constant search for satisfaction.

[23 : 52] Which always leads to disappointment after disappointment. And he tells her the true satisfaction can only be found in him. Friends that is the message I am here to tell you this morning.

You can go through your whole life searching for satisfaction. In the fleeting things of this world. But you will be left wanting. Glenn Scrivener, an evangelist, says this.

And he sums it up wonderfully I think. He says we are thirsty souls chasing fullness. In all the wrong places. And when the wells run dry. We are left with a mouthful of dirt.

The only place. Where you can find true and lasting satisfaction. Is in Jesus Christ. Who died and who rose again. So that you can have eternal life.

And be made right with God. It doesn't matter what you have done. It doesn't matter who you are. Irrespective of age. Of sex.

[24 : 58] Of nationality. Of race. The offer of eternal life is yours to take hold of. Will you repent and believe in Jesus Christ this morning? You can have everything in the world.

But if you don't have Jesus. Then you have nothing. The second thing we see in this passage. Is that Jesus is teaching this woman about true worship.

True worship. So this lady has realized that Jesus is not just a normal man. And she calls him a prophet in verse 19. And what follows is a discussion on exactly where and how people should worship.

Should have worshipped God in those days. But Jesus says in verse 21. That the day is coming where people will not worship God on one mountain or another.

As the Jews and Samaritans did. But the time has now come Jesus says. In verse 24. For people to worship God. In the spirit.

[26 : 04] And in truth. Meaning that the time is here. Where the physical location of worship is irrelevant. Because people's entire lives.

Should be characterized and marked by. A wholehearted worship of God. That is the first mark of true worship.

That people worship God in the spirit and in truth. True worship is living your whole life. Dedicated to God.

And having a living relationship with God. Which is only possible through Jesus Christ. And in verse 25. The woman thinks that Jesus is speaking about the Messiah.

The promised anointed one from the Old Testament. Who would be sent by God to save his people. And how does Jesus respond?

[27 : 02] Well in verse 26. Jesus says. I am the Messiah. I am he. The one you have been looking for. The one you have been told about.

The one who would bring about salvation. And make you right with God. It is I Jesus says. Look no further. Jesus is revealing.

That he is God in the flesh. He is not hinting at it. He is stating it. He is saying it. He is. He is. He is. And so he has revealed his true identity. To a socially outcast.

Hurting woman. Why? Because she needed to find eternal life. She needed to be forgiven. And made right with God.

And we would love to see how that conversation continued. But the disciples return interrupting the discussion. But look at verse 28.

[27 : 59] Look at this woman's devotion. Because she legs it back to town. Running like the cartoon characters. Where all you see are a cloud of dust left in her wake.

She drops her water jug. And leaves it behind. Because she cannot hold it in for excitement. She has found the one that the whole world needs.

She has found the long awaited Messiah. The one who will make people right with God. She realizes who Jesus is.

And she cannot help but spread the good news about him. Christians do we share that excitement. For the good news of Jesus.

Or have we become numb. This is another mark of true worship. A deep desire to share Jesus with the world.

[28 : 56] And then doing it. Christians aren't made right with God. And saved by Jesus. To be good people. And create a holy huddle. That meet on a Sunday morning.

We are called and saved to go into the world. To share the good news about Jesus. And call people to repent. And believe. To tell them about Jesus.

And so all of a sudden this woman who was disregarded. And seen as an outcast. Is now spreading the greatest news that this town has ever heard. And the whole town comes out to see.

Who this man is. Could he really be the Christ? The Messiah? The promised one? Verse 39 says that many people in the town believed.

Because of this lady's testimony. Friends that is evangelism right there. We get excited about. We cherish. We love. We ooze the gospel.

[30 : 00] That we cannot help but drop our water jugs. And run and tell people the good news about Jesus. And through that testimony people believe.

Not because of our works. But simply because we point people to Jesus. The people of the town go to Jesus.

And he stays with them for two days. And then look at what the people of the town say to this woman in verse 42. We no longer believe just because of what you said.

Now we have heard for ourselves. And we know that this man really is the savior of the world.

Friends the power to change someone's life is not in our words.

It is not in our actions. Salvation comes from people hearing the words of the Bible. As God's word. As God's story. Is proclaimed. As the identity of Jesus is held out to a watching world.

[31 : 08] People hear. Who Jesus is. That he is the savior of the world. And it is solely because he lived the life that we could never live.

That he died the death that each and every one of us deserves. And he rose from the dead.

Defeating sin. Defeating death itself.

Meaning that sinners like you. Like me. And like this woman. Can be redeemed. Restored.

And made right with God. Jesus is the savior of the world. And if you do not know him. Now is the time to repent and believe.

Jesus approaches this woman who is a social outcast. And he speaks kindly to her. He tells her the reality of how her life has been a constant search for satisfaction.

[32 : 14] That has always led to disappointment after disappointment. And he tells her that that satisfaction can only be found in him. Friends that's what I'm telling you this morning.

That you can go through your whole life. Searching for satisfaction in the fleeting things of this world. But you will always be left wanting. The only place where you can find true and lasting satisfaction.

Is in Jesus Christ who died and rose again. So that you can have eternal life. And be made right with God. So that you can go from being an outcast.

From being estranged from God. To being one of his children. Will you repent. And believe in Jesus this morning.

And take hold of that living water. That leads to eternal life. Let's pray together. Father would you forgive us.

[33 : 19] For the times that our lives have been marked. By a search for satisfaction. In the transient things of this world. Lord we pray that you would give us the strength.

Give us the understanding. That true satisfaction can only be found in you. And then Father help us. From that life of satisfaction.

That life of everlasting joy. Take the good news of Jesus Christ. To a world that needs to hear about him so much. Help us drop our water jugs.

Help us leave the things of this world behind. And seek first the kingdom. And all his righteousness. We ask this for your glory. And for the upbuilding of your kingdom.

In Jesus name. Amen. Thank you so much Alistair. Folks I trust that as God's word has gone forth today. That we've all been challenged to stop.

[34 : 19] And to think about our lives. And the things that we are doing day to day. And if you get any questions about anything that's been said there. Then we'd love for you to get in touch with us.

The usual address questions at Brunsfield. That will come up on the screen. But one of the great things that we've been doing over the last number of weeks. Is hearing from different members of our congregation.

About how they came to know Jesus. And about how they seek to live day to day for him. And maybe particularly thinking about taking the news of Jesus to the peoples of the world.

I'm going to introduce us now to Dani. And Dani is going to tell us a little bit about her story. And also how she seeks to tell the people in her life about Jesus.

Good morning. I hope you're all well. My name is Dani. And I'm just going to share a little testimony. The story starts pretty low. But it gets better.

[35 : 15] So stick with me. When I was at university. I was harassed and stalked by somebody. And I dealt with it pretty badly.

I was just consumed by fear and shame. I found myself anxious all the time. I couldn't sleep. I wasn't doing my university work.

I didn't go to campus by myself. And even though I did have some amazing people around me to help and support and listen and care for me. There were still some days that I couldn't even make myself leave the house.

My church family at the time were amazing. They sat with me. And they believed me. And they were really just proactive about making sure that everything got sorted out and that I was safe. And they consistently reminded me of biblical truths when my perspective was just clouded by anxiety. One of the key people who really stood with me at that time was an older lady in the church.

[36 : 24] That we would meet up for coffee and we would just talk and read the Bible together. And, you know, my church community had always been telling me, like, oh, you're not alone. You don't have to do this alone.

And that lady was really just the living. She was living out that. And she, like, I could say anything to her and she would listen and we would talk about it.

And one of the things she gave me was this poem. It's like a rewording of some Bible verses. And I still have it, like, all these years later.

So I'll read it. It says, Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine.

When you walk through the waters, I will be with you. You will never sink below the waves. When the fire is burning all around you, you will never be consumed by the flames.

[37 : 21] When the fear of loneliness is looming, then remember I am at your side. When you dwell in the exile of the stranger, remember you are precious in my eyes.

You are mine, oh, my child. I am your father and I love you with the perfect love. So, although I really appreciated and needed all of the, you know, the practical help, it was in Jesus that I learned forgiveness and trust and peace and the ability to let it go, let things go and move forward.

So, fast forward a little bit, I did finish my university course. And as a graduate, I spent a little bit of time reaching out to women who had been trafficked and exploited and abused.

And I'm not in any way comparing what happened to me with what happens to them because I don't have the words to explain the suffering and oppression that these women face pretty much daily.

But you can see some of the patterns emerging, right? The shame and the guilt and the fear. Yeah, and like this internalization of I've been treated like I'm less than nothing, therefore I am less than nothing, that you just really believe that.

[38 : 53] And there are so many things we can do for people in these situations, things like just food and money, basics, professional training and healthcare and educating kids and counselling.

And they're all such good, wonderful things and we should completely do them. But I have never seen such holistic healing, such freedom from past hurts and such open-hearted love in these people as when they have been healed and transformed by Jesus.

And I feel like that's why we're still sharing our faith even in a pandemic. We've been surrounded by so much suffering and all you have to do is turn on the news, right?

And you're like, there's so much hurt and pain and evil in the world. But we're still talking about Jesus because he's just like our sound hope.

And it's not like we're selling people like, come join our cool club. We're trying to find the humility to say, I really needed Jesus and I need Jesus.

[40 : 17] Because, you know, I was lost and he saved me. I was broken and he restored me. I was hurting and he healed me.

And then there's this invitation, like you want to find out about him too. Okay, I'm done. Thank you for listening to me and I hope your Sunday is lovely.

Thank you.