

The Saviour of the World

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[0 : 00] Well, do keep your Bible open and have it at that passage that Neil just read for us, John chapter 4. And we'll look at these verses together. Let me pray and ask for God's help as we come to his word.

Thank you, Father, for your word to us. We thank you that it points us to your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we pray today that you would help us by your Spirit to see how your message applies to each one of us.

And we pray that we would each respond accordingly. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, Andy Burnham has been in the news a lot recently.

Or at least maybe I've watched the news a lot more because I've been on holiday and watched and caught up in politics. But especially since Keir Starmer said he was resigning as the Prime Minister. It's all been about Andy Burnham.

And I wonder if you saw Andy Burnham when he was entering the House of Commons to be sworn in as an MP. When the speaker said, Andy Burnham, member for Makerfield, there was a fair bit of heckling from the benches.

[1 : 13] Somebody shouted out, Rome is saved. Somebody else shouted, he's not the Messiah. And then another was heard to say, will you turn the water into wine? Clearly the vibe in the House of Commons was that our country is in a bit of a mess.

And we need somebody to come and save us from this mess and to help us out of it. In *The Spectator*, which I read last week, it said of this, Now, as you gather from a reading, Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman.

And you'd see that he declared himself to be the Messiah. And we see in this encounter that Jesus has with this woman what he does with that power.

Because Jesus is God's King who has come to save us. To unite people in the true worship of God. So Samaritans as well as Jews.

Outsiders as well as insiders. Because it's no coincidence when you look down at your Bible that John places Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman right next to his encounter with this man called Nicodemus.

[2 : 38] So there is a Jewish religious man, an insider, John chapter 3. And then there is a Samaritan outside moral outcast.

And you couldn't find a more different pair of people. Nicodemus, chapter 3. Moral, distinguished, religious leader.

The Samaritan woman. Social and religious outsider. They could not be more different. But both, both need Jesus as their Savior.

And we do too. We need Jesus to save us and to bring us into a relationship with God. And so I'd like us this afternoon to look at three simple points as we look at these verses together.

The first is Jesus seeks. The second is Jesus satisfies. And the third, Jesus saves. Jesus seeks. He satisfies. And he saves.

[3 : 35] So first of all, Jesus seeks there in verse 1 to 9. You notice that Jesus seeks out this Samaritan woman. We read that he left Judea to go back to Galilee.

And he traveled with his disciples through Samaria. But notice that John records this in an interesting way. There in verse 4. It says, Now he had to go through Samaria.

He doesn't say why he had to go through Samaria. But the word suggests that this was a must. This is something that Jesus was compelled to do. Now Bible scholars note that the Jews would actually take a different route in their travels.

Just to avoid contact with Samaritans. They would decide to travel a longer way around Samaria. It's like crossing the street to avoid somebody.

Except it's a bit longer. But not Jesus. Jesus intentionally and deliberately takes this direct route. And as the story unfolds, we discover why he had to go through Samaria.

[4 : 44] Jesus is seeking this Samaritan woman. And the Samaritan people because he is the savior of the world. So look down at verse 5 and 6.

Just note here the humanity of Jesus.

He's tired. He is weary from this journey. And so he sits down at Jacob's well. He's thirsty. And he wants a drink. So we read in verse 7.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, Will you give me a drink? His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. That's the start of this conversation that Jesus has with the Samaritan woman.

Which is actually the longest conversation that Jesus has with anybody in all of the Gospels. And it begins with this simple and sincere request.

[5 : 54] Will you give me a drink? Now, that might not sound like a big deal for us. But Jesus does something radical here. Something shocking in that culture.

Because the woman is shocked by the fact that Jesus is even talking to her. Verse 9. The Samaritan woman said to him, You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman.

And how can you ask me for a drink? And then John gives the note. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. So what Jesus does here is he crosses a number of barriers in order to reach, in order to seek this Samaritan woman.

First of all, she is a Samaritan. And Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies. Jews avoided any association with Samaritans.

Seeing them as unclean and impure. The Jews claimed that proper worship had to take place in Jerusalem. Whereas the Samaritans had built a temple somewhere else.

[6 : 58] Which is what the Jews then destroyed. And so the Jews regarded the Samaritans as heretics. But Jesus ignores this racial and religious prejudice.

And secondly, as well as being a Samaritan, she is a woman. And to no Jewish man would ever want to speak to any woman in public.

It's scandalous. And so Jesus' disciples are even surprised to find him talking with her. In verse 27. So she's a Samaritan. She's a woman.

And then thirdly, we discover this woman was a moral outcast. And the first hint of this is the time of day when they meet.

Verse 6 tells us it was about noon. Now noon would have been the hottest part of the day. And so commentators say that this wasn't a normal time for people to go and draw water. Women would usually go early in the morning when it was cooler.

[8 : 01] And they would go in groups. And they would gather their water for the day. But this woman goes in this sweltering heat when she knew that nobody else would be about.

Presumably because she was persona non grata in her community. She'd become a moral outcast because of her life choices. And Jesus draws this out later when he mentions her many relationships with men.

And so I guess this woman had a bit of a reputation. You can imagine the other women gossiping in the Sychar branch of Starbucks as they sipped on their cappuccinos and their matcha lattes.

It's no wonder that she wanted to avoid people. And yet Jesus deliberately seeks her out. And to do so he smashes all of these social, cultural, religious, moral and racial barriers to get to her.

And it took her aback. And, you know, maybe it takes us aback too. But Jesus didn't write her off in the same way that Jesus never writes anyone off.

[9 : 14] No one is ever so far gone that they are beyond the reach of Jesus Christ. Jesus cared so much about this woman that he sought her out to give her what she was looking for, even if she never realized it.

It became clear that she was longing for satisfaction. But she had failed to find it. But the great news is, firstly, that Jesus not only seeks.

Secondly, Jesus satisfies. And we see this in verse 10 to 26. Verse 10 says, Jesus answered her, So Jesus moves the conversation on here.

And you notice he does it in a clever way. Because after initially asking for a drink because he was thirsty, he then uses water as a metaphor to speak to her on a spiritual level.

And so he's now talking about living water, whereas in her mind she's still thinking about well water. So verse 11 says, Sir, the woman said, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep.

[10:29] Where can you get this living water? So Jesus explains what he means. Verse 13 and 14, Jesus answered, 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 will become in them a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. And so this living water that Jesus is talking about describes eternal life.

And so what Jesus does is he contrasts the well water, which can quench your thirst for a while, with his living water, which can give ultimate satisfaction forever.

And I guess the image that Jesus uses here makes more sense in a hot climate without running water. But as it is, we are in Scotland.

In fact, it's worse. We're in Glasgow, where it's hardly ever hot and it rains all the time and we've got constant access to drinking water. But back then, they knew the experience of real desperate thirst, but also the real satisfaction of that thirst being quenched.

[11:43] And so Jesus is using this metaphor to say that only he can truly satisfy by offering us and giving us eternal life. And I don't think the woman has grasped this yet, but she's drawn in because this sounds like a great offer.

And so she says, verse 15, Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water. Like Nicodemus before her in chapter 3, she's focused on earthly things rather than on heavenly things.

And so Jesus confronts her with the desperately sad reality of her life. Verse 16 to 18, we read, He told her, Go call your husband and come back.

I have no husband, she replied. Jesus said to her, You're right when you say you have no husband. The fact is you have had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband.

What you have just said is quite true. Now, I guess it is possible for this woman to legitimately have had five husbands where each one died and then she married again.

[12:56] But it seems more likely that she'd already been through five failed marriages where she'd been trying to find Mr. Right. And it seems like she still was looking.

I guess our culture would call this woman a sexually liberated woman. But I doubt that's how she saw it. And so what's Jesus' tactic here?

Does Jesus deliberately want to humiliate her by reminding her of all her failed relationships? Of course he doesn't. Jesus isn't changing the subject here.

What he's doing is he is applying what he is saying to her own life and to her particular situation, which involves gently confronting her sinful lifestyle to help her see that what he offers to her is actually what she's been looking for her whole life.

It's just that she's been looking and she's been trying in all the wrong places. She's tried men, love, relationships to quench that inner thirst, but it hasn't been working.

[14:06] And the proof of that is her five failed marriages. And she hadn't even bothered to go through the motions with the guy that she was now living with. And I'm sure she felt the guilt and the shame as Jesus addressed this painful subject with her, picking up on her personal life.

But Jesus is like a surgeon here with a scalpel, where he has to cut deeply, not to wound her, but in order to heal her, to expose to her how her lifestyle, far from satisfy her, actually left her trapped and enslaved, feeling thirsty and empty.

Because only Jesus can satisfy the longing in her soul that no man ever could and nothing else ever could. And there are many just like her, aren't there, who throw themselves into one relationship after another relationship and another relationship, hoping that they will eventually find what they are looking for.

But it's not just relationships, love, sex, where we seek satisfaction. Jesus here is pointing out how the issue in her life is really the fundamental issue in all of our lives.

And that's this longing for deep and lasting satisfaction. And it manifests itself in different ways in different people. So people will try all kinds of things to be satisfied.

[15:40] For this woman, it was relationships. But for others, it might be education, or it might be career, or success, or family, or money.

In fact, anything that makes us think, if only I had that thing, then I would be happy. The ideal partner, perhaps, or the right promotion at work, a certain level of power, that home, or that car, or those possessions.

And even if we get that thing, or even if we have that experience, we can still feel like we're singing along with the Rolling Stones, that I can't get no satisfaction.

And I try, and I try, and I try, but I can't get no satisfaction. It's interesting, even those people who reach their goals and get to the top, who catch what they're chasing, they also discover that when they get there, they're shocked when they realize it still doesn't deliver the satisfaction that they expected it would.

I wonder if you've been watching Wimbledon. Bit of a change from the World Cup now that Scotland are out. But Boris Becker was a former Wimbledon champion. And listen to what he once said.

[16:55] He said, I had won Wimbledon twice before. Once as the youngest player, I was rich. I had all the material possessions I needed. It's the old song of movie stars and pop stars who commit suicide.

They have everything, and yet they are so unhappy. I had no inner peace. Boris Becker, at least he is honest enough to express the truth of what Jesus is saying here.

Because he had everything on the outside. Success, fame, sex, money, possessions. But he acknowledges that he had no inner peace.

And what Jesus is saying here is that all of this outer stuff will never quench that thirst which is inside our heart and our soul. And only Jesus is the one who can give that deep satisfaction on the inside.

And so after Jesus here expresses this woman's life and her sin, exposes it to her, she quickly changes the subject. Which is what people often do when Jesus challenges them on their lifestyle.

[18:03] Verse 19, she says, Sir, Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.

Now apparently this was a big religious question of the day, a hot potato. It was a debate. And it was a good debate so that the attention could be taken away from her failed relationships onto something else.

And it was a debate about the proper place of worship. Was worship to be on the mountain where the Samaritans worshipped? Or was worship to be in Jerusalem in the temple where the Jews worshipped?

The woman wants to know who's right to deflect from Jesus, getting too personal about her life. But Jesus isn't plump for one or the other as the proper place of worship.

Instead, he says, verse 23, Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.

[19:04] For they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit and His worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth. He's saying there's going to be a time when there's no need to go to a place in order to worship God.

God is Spirit, so you don't need to go to a specific place in order to access Him. God is not tied down in that way. And so God should be worshipped by all people all of the time.

And Jesus here is indicating that He is the true temple where people must go to worship God. Now that He has arrived, Jews and Samaritans must come together as worshippers because He's the Messiah for the Samaritans as well as for the Jews.

And so He's saying that places of worship, sites, mountains, buildings, churches, temples, they are redundant. They are redundant because worship, Jesus is saying, is now in a person, not in a place.

And He is the person that we are to worship. And it's to happen in spirit and in truth. And so what Jesus is doing with the woman is not only inviting her to drink this living water in order to satisfy herself, but He is inviting her to join the true worship of God.

[20:29] And it all centers on Him. And the woman can't take this in. It's overwhelming for her. So she responds in verse 25. The woman said, I know that Messiah called Christ is coming.

When He comes, He'll explain everything to us. Again, she's deflecting Jesus. It's as if she's saying, this is just too much for me right now. When life is less busy, when I've got more time to think about these deep, important spiritual matters, I'll get to it then, but not now.

I'll just put it off. But she's not able to dismiss Jesus that easily because Jesus then declares to her, I, the one speaking to you, I am He.

Jesus explicitly identifies Himself as the Messiah that she has just mentioned. And so He's directing this woman to Himself by drawing all the threads of their conversation together.

Because of the Messiah, He can offer the living water of eternal life that truly satisfies. And the true worship of God can only take place in Him.

[21 : 40] And so the woman finds all of this in Jesus. Jesus is saying that in Him, she can discover fullness of life in relationship with the God who made her.

And so can we. So Jesus seeks, Jesus satisfies, and Jesus saves. That's our third point, verse 27 to 42. And that's really what this final section of the Samaritan woman's story tells us about Jesus. His conversation with her ends when the disciples arrive. But through it, she has grown in her understanding of Jesus. So verse 9, He was a Jew.

Verse 19, He was then a prophet. To verse 29, He was the Messiah. And so when she makes this discovery, she goes straight into town to tell everyone about Him.

29, she says, Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah? That's this woman's testimony. Jesus knew everything that she had ever done.

[22 : 48] All of her relationships, all of the circumstances surrounding them, all of the guilt, all of the shame, and yet Jesus treated her far better than anyone else had ever treated her.

Jesus didn't avoid her. Jesus sought her out. He offered satisfaction and He came to save her. In Jesus, you see this tender compassion which is combined with truthful confrontation.

And so this woman had been the talk of the town, but now she's telling everyone in the town about Jesus and the way that her life has been transformed by Him.

He knew everything about her, but He did not reject her like everybody else. And so she becomes this instant evangelist to her people, the Samaritans, because Jesus didn't just come to save her, He came to save her fellow Samaritans too.

And that's the gist of the conversation there in verse 31 to 38. Jesus is saying He's doing God's saving work because it's harvest time. The fields are ripe and the Samaritans will become a crop for eternal life.

[24 : 07] And so verse 42 says, they said to the woman, 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.

So they believe because Jesus is the Savior of the world. that's really got to be our response too, hasn't it?

That we must believe in Jesus in order to be saved. The Messiah and the Savior of the world has come to us, seeking us, calling us to Himself, promising to satisfy us, and He came for all people, Jews, Samaritans, you, me, seeking us out.

Despite what we've done in the past, even despite how we're living in the present, Jesus offers one and all this living water of eternal life.

Which means religion, race, culture, lifestyle, background should never stop anyone thinking they can't receive this living water that satisfies from Jesus Christ.

[25 : 23] Christ. And so whoever you are, wherever you're from, whatever you've done, Jesus is a Savior for everyone.

And that's why there's no point pretending that you're fine. No point trying to cover over the emptiness that you feel inside.

No point trying to fill that emptiness with things that will never satisfy. It's a waste of time and energy seeking satisfaction in all the wrong places.

And so the best thing you can do is to acknowledge that you're not right with the God who made you. And that you feel this way because you don't know Him or worship Him because your sin keeps you apart from Him.

Don't you see there is one who knows everything you've ever done. Everything all of us has ever done. And yet He loves us.

[26 : 28] And He accepts us despite what we are. Jesus gently but firmly broke through the Samaritan woman's defenses to reveal the thirst in her soul enabling her to drink the living water and be satisfied.

How do we know that she did? I think John drops a sweet detail into how he tells her story. And he does this a lot in his gospel. Things that seem insignificant incidental details are actually full of significance.

And it's there in verse 28 where we read then leaving her water jar. So she ditched the thing that gave her the reason to go to the well in the first place.

Her water jar is a symbol of her old life. Her empty life. And her water jar is simply left at Jesus' feet because she knew she would never thirst again.

And do you know why we can experience the same as this woman? Well it's because Jesus himself was thirsty. Jesus was only thirsty because as the eternal son of God he took on a human nature to enter into our world.

[27 : 54] thirst. And so as a fully human being Jesus was subject to human needs like hunger and thirst. And so Jesus was genuinely thirsty when he sat down at that well at noon.

But there's another time where we read about Jesus being thirsty in John's Gospel. When Jesus hung on the cross he said I am thirsty just before he died.

Of course Jesus would have been dehydrated by the torture and the pain and the blood loss. But this was more than just a physical thirst.

Jesus knew his death on the cross meant facing God's judgment against our sin. Where he would experience God's forsakenness.

The ultimate thirst thirst for us. For all of our sin, all of our guilt, and all of our shame. So that our spiritual thirst could be satisfied by the living water that he gives.

[29 : 04] That's why Jesus was able to say to the Samaritan woman that she would never thirst again. And so the question is as we close this part of John's Gospel have you drunk of this living water yet?

Let's pray.