

John 4:13-14

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[0 : 0 0] Well, for a time this evening, notice I didn't say short this time, for a time this evening we're going to look at John chapter 4, this account of when Jesus met the Samaritan woman.

And just to remind ourselves a wee bit of what we read, we can read again verse 13 and 14. Jesus answered, everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. I may be at the risk of divulging my age here, but I think it was the Rolling Stones who said, I can get no satisfaction. And that's exactly what we find in this chapter this evening. Someone who was looking for satisfaction, but looking in all the wrong places. And maybe that describes you tonight. Where are you looking for your fulfillment in life? Where are you looking for your satisfaction in life?

Because we live in a world that's thirsty. A world that's thirsty for peace, which is thirsty for satisfaction, which is thirsty for fulfillment. But a world that looks to satisfy that thirst with all the wrong things and all the wrong people and in all the wrong places. And in this chapter we read what Jesus is offering us. Living water. And we'll see what that means later on. He's offering us satisfaction. He's offering us the fulfillment within ourselves, that peace that we're looking for. And it's found in himself. It's found in Jesus.

At the start of the chapter we read of how Jesus, he's growing in popularity, he's gaining more disciples. And the Pharisees, the religious types, they hear about this and they're, well, they're not too happy about it. And Jesus feels that he has to leave the areas in and he has to head back to Galilee. And to head back to Galilee, he goes through this country called Samaria.

Now that in itself is pretty amazing. I remember hearing the preacher Alistair Begg when he was preaching in Lewis recently. If you don't listen to Alistair Begg, I would certainly recommend him.

[2 : 2 2] And he said, when we're reading the Bible, to look for the surprises. And if we don't find surprises when we're reading the Bible, it's because we're not looking for it. And this little story is packed full of surprises. And the first surprise is that Jesus passed through Samaria. Now, why is that surprising? Well, it's surprising because there was absolute hatred between Jews and Samaritans.

You know, it tends to be that neighboring communities, towns and villages tend to have a rivalry. Well, the Jews and the Samaritans took it to a whole new level. There was, I think, hatred isn't too fine a word to put on it. And there's a history to it. The Jews and the Samaritans were actually kind of distant cousins. In 722 BC, the Assyrians came in and deported a lot of the Israelites into Assyria. And then they shipped in all these foreigners to live in the Israelites' country on their land. Now, some of the Israelites, the Jews who remained, intermarried with these foreign peoples who moved in. And so the Jews kind of looked at them as some kind of half-breeds, if you like. They'd watered down the pure line. And they just really didn't know what to do with the Samaritans. The Samaritans had their own religion. They had their own form of worship.

The Jews centered around Jerusalem. Samaritans had their own mount, Mount Gerizim. And the Samaritans had their own version of the Bible. They only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis to Deuteronomy. So for the Jewish people, the Samaritans were kind of like a weirdo relation that they just didn't know what to do with. And they would just avoid them like the plague.

They wouldn't eat with them. They wouldn't drink with them. They wouldn't fellowship with them. They wouldn't have anything to do with them whatsoever. But Jesus went through Samaria. That's the great thing about Jesus. He doesn't have our prejudices. He doesn't have our hang-ups. And Jesus comes and he smashes through the prejudices of the day. And as he goes through Samaria, he arrives at this town called Sychar. And it's been a long journey. And we're told that

Jesus is tired.

[4 : 38] And he sits down beside a well while his disciples go off in town to get supplies. I don't know if you've ever thought about it, but, you know, imagine as Jesus traveled around from place to place. It wasn't just the 12 disciples he had with him.

There was a larger crowd that followed Jesus. And this was before the days when each town had a Tesco that you could pop into to buy rolls and to buy your sandwiches. And as you read through the New Testament, you'll often hear of messengers being sent ahead.

And part of the reason they were sent ahead was they could go into the town and say, there's a big load, there's a big company coming along. And they were to make preparations to provide food, to provide accommodation, and so on and so forth.

So the disciples have gone off into town to buy food, and Jesus is sitting beside the well. And he's tired. And don't skip over that detail tonight.

Jesus was tired. How does that fit into your view of Jesus this evening? So we think of Jesus, we have to think of him as one who's fully God and fully man.

[5 : 44] And this is a reminder to us that Jesus was truly human. Here is the God-man. And he's tired. He needs a seat. He needs a rest.

And maybe he's more tired than all of his disciples, because they're the ones who went off into town to buy food while Jesus sat and had a rest. I think sometimes we lose sight of the fact that Jesus was a true human being.

You know, maybe it's Justin Lewis, but you'll often hear people saying, well, it was the human side of Jesus that did that, or the divine side of Jesus that did that. We can't divide Jesus up.

If you're tired, you can't say, this part of me is tired, but this part of me is fine. If you're tired, you are tired. And it's the same with Jesus. He is God and man, the whole person of Jesus.

We can't divide him up. And Jesus knows what it's like to be human. He knows what it's like to be hungry. He knows what it's like to be thirsty. He knows what it is to get tired.

[6 : 48] He lived just like you and me. He lived depending on God. He lived being upheld by the power of the Holy Spirit. So when we have a problem, when we have issues, when we're tired, when we're struggling, when we're in pain, we can come to Jesus and Jesus can say to us, I know exactly how you feel.

I think I know for a fact that some of you are going to struggle with that statement. I know for a fact some of you are going to be thinking, well, it's okay for him. He was God.

He doesn't know what it's like for me. The Bible says he does. Why could Jesus not provide his own water? Why did he have to ask the woman for a drink?

He's right beside a well. Could he not have made his own water to appear? Could he not have just struck a rock as in the Old Testament and a water could burst forth? Not once does Jesus do a miracle for his own comfort.

Because the moment he would have done that, he wouldn't have been living like a human being.

You and I can't walk around striking rocks and producing water. Jesus lived as a true human being.

[8 : 02] He lived just as you and I are to live. Remember the temptations when the devil came to him and said, well, if you are the son of God, tell this rock to become bread.

Jesus was hungry. There's nothing wrong with being hungry. Could he have turned the rock into bread? Of course he could have. So where's the temptation? What's the sin? It's at the moment he would have done that, he wouldn't have been living like a true human being.

He would have been using his divine power for his own comfort, for his own ease. Jesus fully entered into your experience and my experience. He fully entered into life as a human being.

We're told that it's midday at this point. It's the sixth hour. They started their day from 6 a.m. So it's midday. It's high noon. The sun's at its highest. It's at its hottest.

It's extremely hot here in the Middle East. And Jesus asks this woman who comes out to the well to get water. What's the surprise there? I've asked you to spot the surprises.

[9 : 04] If I was to ask Laura Nicholson to come up the front and tell us what the surprise is, I wonder what she would say. Well, don't worry, Laura. I'm not going to ask you to come up. Well, the first surprise is that you didn't come out at midday to collect water.

You didn't do your heavy work when the sun was at its hottest. That would be crazy. You waited until early in the morning or late at night when it was cooler to go and to collect the water. You know, we're told this well was 100 feet deep.

And not that I've ever had to get water out of a well. I am from Lewis, but we're not quite that bad yet. I can imagine it must have been pretty hard work. Hauling a full bucket, full of water, 100 feet up, and then all the way back from the well into the town.

Pretty heavy work. And it would have been dangerous to do that at midday. So why did this woman come at noon? Well, the fact that she did, I think, tells us a lot about her.

She came at noon because she knew no one would be around. She came at noon because she knew there would be nobody there. So it tells us that she didn't want to be seen.

[10:11] I think it tells us that she was ashamed of herself. She was ashamed of her past. We read in verse 17 that she had had five husbands. And she was now living with another guy, sleeping with another guy to whom she wasn't married.

Now, this town of Sychar wouldn't have been a big town. I had to take a guess. Maybe between 50, 100 people would have lived there. And I'm sure we all know what small towns are like.

Gossip would have spread pretty quickly about her. People would have been talking about her. The Scarlet Woman of Sychar. The talk of the town and how people would have gossiped about the things that she was doing.

And tut-tut-tutting as they got their shopping. Talking about her behind her back. You know, small towns are the same the world over. And she was the talk of the town and not in a good way.

And that's why she came at noon. She came at noon because she didn't want anyone to see her. She couldn't face the world anymore. She was tired of the looks. She was tired of the sneers. She was tired of the snide remarks.

[11:14] She was tired of the insults. And she was maybe also ashamed. She felt shame and she just couldn't face meeting anybody. This woman just felt ostracized by the town folk.

She was cut off by the town folk. She felt alone and she felt utterly rejected. Just feeling like everybody was talking about her. And she just couldn't face it anymore. She couldn't face the world. She came to be on her own. And I think when this, as we read John chapter 4, John's deliberately setting up a contrast between chapter 3 and chapter 4.

In chapter 3 someone else comes to meet Jesus. The religious guy, Nicodemus. He comes to meet Jesus at night time. And John is contrasting the two.

There we have Nicodemus, the man, the Jew, the ruler, the big man in town. Someone who had all the prestige. Someone who had all the background. He had all the wealth. He had all the Bible knowledge in the world.

[12:20] Someone who had the position in town. Who had status in society. And who enjoyed all the trappings of it. But then Jesus told him an uncomfortable truth.

He wanted to come to Jesus and have a theological debate about miracles. And Jesus said, never mind that. You need to be born again. Unless you're born again, you can't even see the kingdom of heaven.

I heard it said that Jesus always had the right answers to the wrong questions. And have you ever noticed how often people came with these questions? And Jesus kind of just moved the question to one side and told them what they needed to hear.

So there's Nicodemus. And then in chapter four, we have someone who's probably just the polar opposite of Nicodemus. We have a woman, a Samaritan woman.

And while Nicodemus was very moral, very upright, a pillar of the community. We have a woman who was just a social outcast. A moral outcast.

[13:20] Someone with a reputation. Someone with a history. And I think there's a warning for us in there that we need to repent both of our sin and of our self-righteousness. If when we speak of sin and we speak of sinners, you think of people out there, you think of people other than yourself, then you need to repent of the sin of self-righteousness.

Because we cannot speak as outsiders of the human race. We are all sinners. And we all have sin that we need to repent of. So this woman came to Jesus and everyone in the town knew her.

They knew her reputation. And she could no longer face the world. And she came out on her own. But you know, when I read this story, when I think about this story, the one thing that strikes me time after time is this.

She came out not wanting to meet anybody. And who did she meet sitting beside the well but God in the flesh? Now I know sometimes we go out and we bump into people we don't expect.

But I think that probably tops anyone we've ever bumped into. She went out to collect water and she met Jesus. What did you expect when you came here tonight?

[14 : 37] I hope maybe for some of you here tonight that you came like this woman not expecting to meet anybody. Maybe just coming because it's a habit. Maybe just coming to keep the peace at home.

Maybe just coming to please a relative or a friend. But I hope like this woman, though you came with no great expectations, that you will leave having met Jesus. Because Jesus is here tonight. And Jesus wants to meet you tonight. And Jesus wants you to know him tonight. Now again, in a slight deviation from traditional free church fashion, I just want to have two headings this evening. The first of those is a drink requested. And the second of those is a drink offered. A drink requested, first of all. The woman comes out and she sees Jesus sitting beside of the well.

And at first she just doesn't know who he is. He didn't have a golden glow around him like you see in these Christmas cards. There wasn't a halo shining above his head. He looked like an ordinary Jewish man.

[15 : 41] And she comes out and she sees him sitting there. And she must have just nearly keeled over when Jesus asked her for a drink. As I said, Jews didn't eat or drink with Samaritans because they thought it would make them ceremonially unclean.

In fact, there's some strict Jewish rabbis which forbade Jewish men even to speak to women. And Jesus smashes through all these taboos. And again, we need to praise God today that Jesus does smash through these taboos and these prejudices.

Because he smashes through them to reach someone who was hurting. To reach someone who was broken. To reach someone who needed to know God's love for her.

For her personally. Everyone else in this town had turned their backs on the woman. They didn't want anything to do with the woman. But someone wanted something to do with her and it was Jesus Christ.

She lived in a town of people who looked down their noses at her. Who sneered at her and who gossiped about her. But Jesus came.

[16 : 42] And he met with her. And he offered her love. He offered her the satisfaction that she was looking for. He offered her fulfillment. And Jesus wouldn't become unclean by contact with her.

But she is the one who would be changed and transformed by contact with him. You know, we live in a world that labels people. We live in a world that judges people by appearance.

That judges people far too quickly. And who writes people off far too quickly. How thankful we need to be that Jesus doesn't have the same hang-ups and prejudices we have.

He knew what this woman was like. You can imagine the religious people at the time always say, Well, Jesus, but you don't know what she's like. You don't know what she's done. And Jesus would say, Well, I do know what she's like. I do know what she's done.

I know everything about her. I know her better than she knows herself. And did that mean that Jesus didn't love her? Did that mean Jesus was going to turn his back on her like everyone else had done?

[17 : 43] Absolutely not. Jesus knows all about her sin. Jesus knows all about her pain. Jesus knows all about her shame. He knows everything about her. And he still loves her just the same.

He knows your heart tonight. And he knows my heart. He knows our hurts. He knows our scars. He knows our wounds. He knows our pains. And the great thing is tonight, we don't have to pretend with Jesus. We don't have to put a front on. We don't have to put a face on.

And you know, aren't we sometimes guilty of that when we come to church? We put our church face on, pretend everything's great and everything's fine. And we've got no problems and no hassles. We don't have to put a front on with Jesus.

As we said this morning, you don't have to make yourself better before coming to Jesus. He didn't say to her, well, go sort your life out, then come back and talk to me. We come straight to Jesus.

[18 : 43] We can't sort ourselves out. We can't fix ourselves. Only Jesus can help. Only Jesus can forgive. Only Jesus can heal. He is the one who died.

He is the one who rose again. He is the one who is there for us today. There is no one else who can help us. You know, as the old hymn says, if you tarry, if you wait till you're better, then you'll never come at all.

And Jesus is waiting for you tonight. And the question for you to answer, and the answer of which may determine your eternal destiny, will you come?

Will you take the drink that he offers? That's the second heading. A drink offered. The woman is rightly, understandably shocked that Jesus, a Jewish man, could ask her for a drink.

And I love the fact that she doesn't try and hide it. She just blurts it out. How is it that you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink? And Jesus says to her, 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.

[20 : 02] Jesus said, everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life.

Jesus has turned the conversation around from his thirst to her thirst. And he says that if she knew who he was, then she could ask him for a drink of this living water.

That means she would never thirst again. Now when he talks about thirsting here, he's not talking about physical thirst. He doesn't have a magical bottle of Coke that will forever quench your thirst. He's talking about a deeper thirst, a spiritual thirst, a thirst we all have, a thirst we all need to be met. That search that we spoke about earlier, it's a search for satisfaction, a search for peace, a search for what the Bible speaks of as shalom, which means wholeness and completeness and complete fulfillment.

And this woman was looking in the wrong place. You know, Jesus says, how many times do you have to come and draw water from that well? She would come, she would draw water, she would take a drink, a few hours later she'd be thirsty again, take another drink, a few hours later she's thirsty again, take another drink, back to the well, more water, thirsty again, another drink, an endless cycle, never being satisfied.

[21 : 32] And Jesus is saying, that's what your life is like. Is that what your life is like tonight? Jesus says, it doesn't have to be like that. You're drinking from the wrong place.

If you took the drink that I am offering you, you would find the satisfaction that you're looking for.

This woman was looking for satisfaction in relationships. You can imagine her getting married for the first time, full of hope, full of expectation, great plans for the future, I'm sure.

But things didn't work out the way she expected. We don't know what happened, her husband either died, or she was divorced by him. Then came husband number two, husband number three, husband number four, husband number five, before the man she was with at the moment.

And remember, at this time, in this society, an unmarried woman, presumably of the age she was, had no means of supporting herself. There was no job center to go down to, there was no income support, there was no tax credits, she would have been destitute, she would have been penniless, she would have had absolutely no form of way to support herself, other than to live, presumably as a prostitute.

And she's living with this other man. Maybe, perhaps just for support, because there was no alternative for her, but to be on the streets. Who knows? But I think, by the time Jesus met her, she would have been very far removed, from the girl who got married the first time.

[23 : 13] I have this image in my head, of someone who, at this point, is quite worn down, quite weary, just quite grey. Worn down by life. Her hopes have vanished. Life's a drudgery, life is a struggle, life is hard, life is wearisome.

So far removed from the girl, full of hope and joy, in her wedding day. What she'd been looking for, what she'd been seeking, in these relationships, it just wasn't there. She was still thirsty.

Maybe that's you today, you're looking in the wrong place. You're looking in a relationship. You're looking, at the bottom of a bottle. You're looking, for the parties at the weekends.

You're looking, for drugs. You're looking in sex. You're looking, whatever it might be. But Jesus is saying, just like that drink of water, it satisfies for a short time.

But then you get thirsty again. How much is enough? How much does it take, to satisfy? No, Jesus is saying, you need to come to me.

[24 : 19] You need to commit your life to me. Not just a wee hour on a Sunday, not just even two hours on a Sunday. You need to commit your whole life to me. Give yourself to me totally, your whole heart, your whole life.

I will give you this living water. And if you take of it, you will never thirst again. And this idea of living water, what is it?

As we said, he's comparing this water in the well, which is probably quite stagnant and pretty unpleasant, to this image he's got of crystal clear, running, living water that will satisfy. And the living water that he offers is himself and the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. The moment we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside us. And this idea of living water, while it might be a bit difficult for you and me to understand, it would have been very understandable to this woman. This idea of living waters is found throughout the Old Testament.

[25 : 24] Jeremiah chapter 2, verse 13, God calls himself the spring of living water. Psalm 36, verse 9, it's quoted there, with you, is the fountain of life.

Isaiah 55, verse 1, come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. And Psalm 42, that we sang, as the deer pants for the water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

I think she would have understood right away what Jesus was saying. Look at her response, straight away she said, give me this water. Give me this water.

You know, you can paraphrase what Jesus was saying, as nothing can satisfy your longings or my longings completely or wholly except for filling ourselves with Him, with Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

That's what's missing in our lives. That's where we feel this emptiness, that something's not quite right. And sometimes we struggle to understand what it is or identify what it is.

[26 : 28] Well, that's what it is. Do we need to make ourselves right with Jesus and come to Him and put our trust in Him? What is it we have to do to get this living water?

What is it that we have to do? What great feat? What great task? We just ask Him for it. It's free. It's free. And the woman took Him up on it.

And notice how Jesus doesn't gloss over her sin, but He exposes it in this gentle, gentle manner. You know, what clearly would have been a raw nerve for her, an open wound, that Jesus is just masterful in the way that He deals with her.

And please notice this, and I think this is very important. He first offers her the gospel before He gets to this point. He doesn't say to her, you need to get yourself sorted out.

He says, come, take this living water. And then afterwards, He comes to expose her sin. I think sometimes as the church, we're guilty of putting the cart before the horse.

[27 : 38] Sometimes as the church, we weighed in. How many of us would have weighed in to this woman to say, you need to sort out your living arrangements? You too need to get yourself sorted out. Come see the minister, we'll get you married.

How many of us would have gone there first before we came and offered the gospel? But Jesus doesn't. Reminded of the man back home who, the house next door to him was getting sold, and a family moved up from England.

They were viewing the house and they were showing all around the house. And the man, a Christian man, leaned over the fence and his opening comment to a man who doesn't, who didn't know the Lord was, well, I hope you won't have your washing aid on a Sunday.

What kind of impression does that give to him of Christians, of Christianity? Jesus came with gospel first and then law.

We need to follow His example. Because this woman, this outcast, this stranger, this one that people wanted nothing to do with, she was actually a lost sheep.

[28 : 40] A lost sheep that was hurt, a lost sheep that was in pain, and a lost sheep that needed to be brought home. And though everyone else ignored her and everyone else abandoned her, Jesus the Good Shepherd came and He got her.

No one else came. No one else bothered, no one else wanted to give her the time of day. Wouldn't even be seen dead talking to her. But Jesus came and Jesus found her.

Where was the church? Where were God's people of the day? Why were they not helping to her? Why were they not ministering to her? Why were they not showing the compassion and the love of Christ to her?

There were nowhere to be seen. Jesus came to redeem her. We spoke about redemption this morning.

And I've got a good quotation here that I found this afternoon. That Jesus, our Redeemer, it's not just an abstract religious concept. Sometimes we just use these words but we think, well what relevance does it have to me?

[29 : 46] How does that have any bearing on my life? And he says it's not just an abstract religious concept but a complete, powerful, steadfast, loving, and personal God who pursues and redeems his people.

He pursued her. At the start of the chapter it said he had to pass through Samaria. Why? Well you can argue it was the quickest way to get to Galilee. Maybe it was. But maybe the main reason he had to pass through Samaria was because this sheep had to be brought into the fold.

Her life was going to be changed forever by meeting Jesus. The pains, the shame, the guilt, the being the outcast that she had born would change forever on this day through meeting with Jesus. And she becomes, well I don't know what you want to call her, a preacher, a missionary, what title do you want to put on her? You pick. But so many people in the town come to believe in Jesus through her.

Through her witness, through her testimony. You know if you had to pick a missionary to go to this town of Sychar, I'm pretty sure none of us would have chosen this woman. We'd go and pick the guys who'd been to Bible college and to seminary and theological training and all the rest of it but Jesus came and he found the outcast.

[31 : 08] The one that no one in the town wanted to give the time of day to. Jesus works in his own way. He works in ways we would never expect. But the reality today is that God can do the same through you and through me as he did through that woman.

She went home and she told people about Jesus and people believed. You know sometimes I think we can lose confidence in that simple fact. If we tell people about Jesus some will believe.

Yes, some will reject us. Some might seem like they've accepted for a short time and fall away but the reality is that people will believe. But we need to follow that woman's example and the question for you to answer tonight is while some people will come and believe will you?

What are you going to do with Jesus? He's offering you living water and the choice you have before you today is to continue drinking from the stagnant water that you're trying to find satisfaction from tonight?

This stagnant water that might satisfy for a wee while but ultimately can never fulfill you or to come and to take the crystal clear fountain of living water that Jesus is offering you tonight?

[32 : 27] My prayer is and I know the prayer of many in here tonight is that you will take a drink of that living water. You'll take Jesus up on his offer and if you do you'll find his word to be true.

He has come that we might have life life to the full. He's come that we might have shalom and we might have that fulfillment and it's sin that has broken that fulfillment and it's only Jesus who can sort it out.

It's only Jesus who can deal with our sins. What will it be for you tonight? The well of stagnant water or the fountain of clear crystal water?

The choice is yours. Let's pray.