

The Woman at the Well

by Anton Bosch

Jesus engages in conversation with the Samaritan woman, offering her living water and meeting her need for a Savior.

Duration: 31:47

Scripture: John 4:1-3, John 4:5-14, John 4:16-24

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of a woman who had been searching for fulfillment and satisfaction in her life. Despite going through multiple relationships, she still felt empty. However, when she encounters Jesus, she realizes that He is the answer to her search. Jesus offers her living water that will satisfy her thirst forever. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus can transform anyone's life and make them useful for His kingdom.

Transcript

And John chapter 4. John, Gospel according to John, chapter 4. This is the well-known story of the Samaritan woman at the well. And I'm going to read 1 through 20. John chapter 4, verse 1. Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus came and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus himself did not baptize but his disciples, he left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

And he needed to go through Samaria. So he came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now, Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, therefore, being wearied from his journey, sat thus by the well.

It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink.

For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself as well as his sons and his livestock? Jesus answered and said to her, Whoever drinks of this water will thirst

again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst, but the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst nor come here to draw.

Jesus said to her, Go and call your husband and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You have well said, I have no husband.

For you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband, in that you spoke truly. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.

And in verse 21 also, Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. We know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews.

I suppose we've often heard about the story of this woman at the well, and yet there are so many things about it that are so real and that are so true that we need to visit the story again and be reminded of this rather strange interaction between Jesus and this woman. Of course, there were two problems. The first was that as a rabbi, as a Jewish teacher, it was not for Jesus to speak to women.

Women were not to be approached, and women were not to approach him. That was not just Jesus, but that was true of any rabbi during that time. And so just for him to speak to a woman, that was a problem to begin with.

And then, of course, she was a Samaritan. And not only, as it says in the passage, do the Jews not have dealings with the Samaritans, they literally hated one another. And that goes way back into the history of Israel, and we won't go into all of that.

But it's sufficient to say that at this time it was so bad that if a Samaritan's shadow fell on a Jew, he would regard himself as unclean, and he would have to go and wash. So that was the degree of hatred that existed between these two groups of people. And yet Jesus engages this woman in a conversation.

And I want you to notice a few things. First of all, that Jesus was tired. It says he was weary, and he sat down, and his disciples went into the city to buy food.

And you know, sometimes we see Jesus as being this powerful God and being the eternal God, and that he never got tired. But as a man, he experienced everything that we did, and he knows what it is to be tired. He knows what it feels like to feel that he really needed a break.

And so Jesus just takes this break. But at the same time, his desire to minister to the needs of people exceeded his need for rest. And so this woman comes.

And she comes and says it was the sixth hour. Now, the sixth hour is midday in the Jewish system of time. Remember, the clock runs from six in the morning is the first hour, and then it runs through until six in the evening, which is the twelfth hour, and then it begins again from the one through twelve.

And so the Jewish day begins at six in the evening and runs through six in the following evening. So this being the sixth hour, it was noontime. It was midday.

And so the woman came to fetch water during the heat of the day. This was a strange thing, because women would normally fetch water at the end of the day. We see this in Africa and in other parts of the world where women still have to go and fetch water and carry water long distances.

They never do that during the middle of the day simply because it's too hot. And so they would do that at the end of the day. And not only is it a chore that they have to do, but it's an opportunity to socialize and to see all the other women at the place where you get the water from and to have a talk and to talk about the day and about the children and about all of the things that these women would talk about.

And yet this woman doesn't come at the normal time. She comes in the middle of the day. She comes at twelve o'clock.

And the reason is because she is an outcast. Not just because she is a Samaritan, because amongst her own people she wasn't an outcast, but she was an outcast because she had had five husbands and she was now living in sin. She was now living with a sick man and she was not even married to him.

And so socially she was totally unaccepted. Now this was a double problem because as far as the Jews were concerned, as far as Jesus was concerned, she was a woman. And in fact even in those days women were not even to be taught the law.

They felt that it was a waste of time to teach women the law. And in fact you may remember that the Jews would pray during those times, I thank you God that I am not a woman, a Gentile or a dog. Those were things that Jews would worship God for, that they were not a woman, a Gentile or a dog.

That was the social standing of women at that time. So she was a woman. She was a Samaritan.

And on top of that she was not a very good Samaritan either. And even amongst her own people she was an outcast. And she could not fetch water together with the other woman because she was shunned because of her lifestyle, which in those days must have been quite a thing today for people to have six husbands.

Well, you know, to be married over six times, that's not a big deal anymore. But those days it was a big deal. Even to be divorced once and remarried was a big problem in those days.

There was a huge social stigma to that. This woman had not only been divorced and remarried, and I guess some of them died, we don't know what happened to all of them, but to have gone through five husbands and now to actually be living without being married. And so she really had everything going against her.

There was nothing about her that was socially acceptable. There was nothing that gave her an opportunity to be anything in life. And yet Jesus cared about her.

And you know, I think that sometimes when we read the story, we read in the Bible about this woman and we say, well, she was something because she's in the Bible. And she becomes this great picture of someone who brought many other people to Jesus. But we forget that at the point when Jesus met with her, she was absolutely nothing.

She was going nowhere. Her life was filled with disaster, with tragedy, with misunderstanding, with all sorts of problems and issues. And yet Jesus takes the time when he was tired to speak to her and to bring

her into an understanding of the truth.

And I believe that he is saying by this illustration and by this experience with this woman that there is no one that is beyond his reach. There is no one that is too low that Jesus does not care about. And I guess that you could probably look at the people in Israel at that time and if you had to order them and say, well, you know, who was the greatest? Maybe the high priest in human understanding, human thinking, he was maybe the greatest.

And then who was the lowest of society? And maybe you would have the lepers there. But then below the lepers you would have the Samaritans. And amongst the Samaritans were the women.

And amongst the women there was this terrible woman. And so she was really the bottom of society. She was the lowest of the low.

And yet Jesus engages her in conversation. Jesus wants to speak with her. And there is no one that is beyond God's reach.

There is no one that God is not interested in. And sometimes we look at our own lives and we say, well, you know, I just don't measure up. I just don't make the grade.

I'm just not as good as anybody else. I have all of these issues. I have all of these problems.

And she did have, apart from her social situation, she had a real problem. She had a problem with men. And yet Jesus speaks to her.

She had a problem with sin. And Jesus speaks to her. And I believe that it doesn't matter how low you think you are this morning.

It doesn't matter how insignificant and unimportant you may think you are. It doesn't matter how many sins you have committed. It doesn't matter how unacceptable you may be to others.

You are acceptable to Him. And He takes the time to speak to her. And He takes the time to speak to you today.

And I don't believe that we come into a meeting like this by chance. I believe that we come into a meeting like this because God has something for us. And when I select the message to speak on, I agonize about that because I want to know that I'm saying the things that God wants me to be saying.

And so if Jesus and I try very hard, and I'm not suggesting that I'm perfect, but I try very hard to be saying, well, what would Jesus be saying if He was here this morning? And I believe that one of the things Jesus would be saying if He was here this morning is, I want to engage with you in conversation. I want to talk to you about your need. I want to talk to you about your situation.

And you know, Jesus touches on exactly the core of the problem. And He says, give me something to drink. Give me something to drink.

You know, that wouldn't be a strange thing to ask, one would think, because He was at a well, and this is where you get water to drink. But for her, this was very strange. Because not only was He a man, not only was He a Jew, but She was an outcast.

And for Him to actually drink from her hand, because what She would have to do is She would have to let down the contraption with which they would draw the water out of the well, which would normally be a goatskin, which would be tied up, and it would have an opening at the top, and they would have three sticks to keep their mouth open. And they would have a rope, which they would throw down, and they would scoop the water out of the well, and so pour that into some vessel or into His hands so that He could drink. And of course, for a Jew, this was totally unacceptable.

But you know, Jesus is going beyond just the surface thing. The fact that He says, give me something to drink, because He was dealing here with somebody who had a thirst, who was looking for something, and who was trying to quench her thirst through all sorts of things in this life, but found no satisfaction. And that's why Jesus says, give me a drink.

And you know, sometimes when God speaks to us, He speaks in strange ways. He says things that we think is totally irrelevant. Why doesn't He just get to the issue? Why doesn't He just say, you need a Savior? Why does He begin with, I need something to drink? Because Jesus is wanting to draw her out.

Jesus is wanting to lead her to a point and a place where she will be able to understand that He is in fact the solution and the answer to her problem. And you know, I think one of the wonderful things, one of the gracious things about the story is that she doesn't cut Him off. She doesn't say, well, you know, I'm doing my, just forget about me.

Don't talk to me. But she actually follows up on the conversation. And you know, sometimes God just says things in our hearts and in our minds and in our lives through various ways, through a message that we hear on the radio, through a friend, or through a thought in our hearts.

And He just drops that thought, that idea. Give me something to drink. And you know, sometimes we just cut it off and we say, well, that's just crazy.

What does He want from me? But in fact, she followed up on that conversation. And she says, me? You really believe that I can give you something to drink? You know, when we listen to what God is saying in our lives and we begin to engage God in that conversation and we begin to listen to what God is trying to say and we try to understand, what is this all about? We can come to an understanding of what He is trying to communicate in our lives. But sometimes we just cut that conversation short.

We don't allow Him to pursue the thought, to pursue the train of ideas that He is trying to communicate with us. And so, she follows this conversation. And she says, can I, you know, I'm not in a position to give you.

Why are you asking of me? And then Jesus says to her, go and call your husband. In verse 16. Go and call your husband.

And of course, He knew exactly what was going on. This is what convinced her that He was who He said He was. Because He knew that this was a sensitive issue.

This was really the core of the problem. There were two problems that she had. The first was that she had a thirst for something.

She needed someone. And the second was that she had this incredible shame about her lifestyle. And Jesus touches on both of those sensitive issues.

And you know, He says to her, call your husband. She says, I don't have a husband. You can see the shame.

She's just trying to cover up. She doesn't want to say, well, you know, I've had all these husbands and, you know, I poisoned them or whatever happened to them. And now I'm living in sin.

She just says, I don't have a husband. She's trying to avoid the issue. And Jesus brings her back to the point.

And you see, sometimes when God begins to deal with our lives, there are sensitive issues in our lives. There are sensitive things that we don't really want to face up to. And we avoid the issue and we duck the question.

And we say, well, you know, I don't really have a husband. But He brings her back to that point. And He says, but this is your situation.

And, you know, we have to face the reality. And sometimes, you know, we try to hide from the shame. We try to hide from the guilt.

And we try to act as though there really is no issue in our lives. And young people are particularly good at this, putting up a front and a facade and acting as though everything is wonderful and everything is fine when in fact there are real, real issues. When there are deep hurts and shame and guilt and emptiness.

And Jesus brings her back to the situation. And He says, but here's your problem. Here's the issue.

You've had six men. And you've still not found what you're looking for. And, of course, the wonderful thing is that six is the number of men.

Notice that it was the sixth hour that he came to this well. She had six men. And Jesus was going to be the seventh one.

The number of perfection, the one who would complete her life as she came to find Him as her Lord and her Savior. But she had to face up to the reality. And she says, yes, Lord, you're right.

I've had five and I'm living with a sixth. And, folks, we need to face up to those realities. We need to come to that point of a confession and say, Lord, yeah, this is my issue.

You can't keep running from it. She had been running from it all of her life. I don't know how old she was.

I don't know how long it took her to go through six men. But the fact is that ever since she was a young woman she had been chasing something. She had been looking for some kind of fulfillment.

She had been looking for some kind of satisfaction. And she had not found it. And eventually she comes to this point where she meets with Jesus and she says, yeah, this is the issue.

And, folks, it's when we come to that point when we're able to say, Lord, this is what I'm running from. This is what I'm chasing after. These are the issues in my life.

When we face up to those realities and those situations, it is then that He's able to meet with us. But as long as we keep running, He just cannot help us. And so she admits to her problem.

And we know how Jesus now fulfills what He had said to her a little bit earlier because He said that, verse 10, Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water. He would have given you living water. And then verse 13, Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again.

But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. Jesus wants to meet your need.

Her need wasn't for water. Her need wasn't for husbands. Her need was for a Savior.

And sometimes we're not able to define for ourselves what our real issues are. We think our need is for pleasure. We think that our solution will be found in success, in marriage, in children, in a career.

We think that these are the things that will satisfy our needs. And we don't realize that in fact our real need is for a Savior. Our real need is for Jesus.

Our real need is because we have that void within us. Every one of us is born with that void and that emptiness which can only be filled by God. And yet we try to fill it with all sorts of other things.

We fill it with pleasure and with work and with ego and with money and with materialism. And we think that these things will satisfy. And yet, he says, you'll thirst again.

You can go to the mall and you can buy whatever latest thing you're going to go and buy. You take it home and a few hours later, it's worn off. And you need to go and buy the next thing.

Or you go out on partying and you enjoy whatever. And you go home and it's empty and it's lonely and there's nothing. And you have to start all over again.

And we can talk about the drugs and we can talk about the alcohol and we can talk about the sex and we can talk about whatever it is that the world has to offer. And all it does is it just creates a greater need and a greater desire and there is no satisfaction. But Jesus says, if you come to me, I will be able to meet your need.

And I will give you water that will spring up within you and you will never thirst again. Now, he's not saying that you will not have carnal desires again. Some people misunderstand that.

No, that's not what he is saying. But he is saying, I will meet your need in a way that you will really not have need for other things. You will be so satisfied with me and with what I'm able to give you and with the eternal life that I'm able to pour into your life that everything else becomes unimportant.

Everything else has no more great attraction. Yes, it's there and it still has an attraction. But you know, if you're enjoying Jesus, he meets that every need.

We spoke this morning about that hidden manna from the book of Revelation. Jesus is that manna. He is the one who is able to satisfy our every need.

And so, he says, it will become in you. It's not something you will have to go and get. You won't have to come to the well every day to fetch the water.

But in fact, it will be something which will be within you. And he is speaking about his abiding presence within us as his presence and his spirit within us satisfies us, fills us with himself, fills us with his word, fills us with his love and with his grace and with his presence. And so, the question this morning is, are you trying to quench your thirst with the wrong things? They may be quite legitimate.

I'm not saying they're wrong in that sense. But they're not going to hit the spot. They're not going to satisfy because you'll thirst again.

This woman had to come to this well every day. You can drink water as much as you like. An hour later, you're going to be thirsty again.

It's just the way it is. And you can try to satisfy the needs that are deep down within you. As much as you like, it will never be satisfied until you meet Jesus.

You know, this woman recognized, and I think that she came to a point, at this point, when Jesus met with her, she was at a point where she was ready. She had given up. She had tried everything.

She'd gone as far as she could. And she'd hit a brick wall. She was finding no joy.

She was finding no fulfillment. And so, she finally meets with Jesus. And when Jesus says, I'm able to give you the needs and satisfy your deepest longings, she receives what he has to offer.

And her life has changed in a powerful and a glorious and a dramatic way. And sometimes it's sad that people have to go all that way. They have to knock their heads against the wall.

And they have to come up empty again and again and again until eventually they come to this place where they recognize and say, Lord, where do I go to? Do you remember, Peter? You alone have the words of eternal life. You're the only one who has the answers. You're the only one who has the solutions.

So maybe this morning you're chasing and you're looking for things. You're trying to find some kind of joy and fulfillment, some kind of meaning, some kind of satisfaction. And you've tried everything.

You've tried many things. And you've come up empty every time. Jesus wants to fulfill that need.

And I believe that he can. He did for this woman. He has done for thousands and thousands of others.

He's done it for me. And I believe that he can meet your need today. He said, but nobody has my problem.

Yeah, there were not many people in Israel who had this woman's problem. But he was able to meet it. And it doesn't matter what your problem is.

It doesn't matter what your issue is. And it doesn't matter how you're trying to fulfill that need. There is still only one solution.

There is only one answer. You know, when we little toddlers, we have these little Tupperware balls that has all other different games where you have little shapes that have to fit into holes. And so you have a star and it has to go into the star-shaped hole and you have a round and that has to go in the round-shaped hole.

Only one solution will fit the puzzle. And, folks, there is only one that can fit that particular void and emptiness in your life. And it's Jesus.

You can try all the other shapes. You can try the round and the square and you can try everything else. But there's only one that will fit.

And there's only one that will meet that need. And it is Jesus. And I pray that as you come to the service this morning, you would come to a point where you recognize that God is speaking to you.

Don't duck the issue. Don't avoid it. Come out with the truth.

Say, Lord, yeah, this is my problem. I have a thirst. I have a longing.

And Jesus meets her need. And look how instantly her life is transformed. Because she goes into the city and she calls the people.

And there was something about her that was different. They recognized that she had changed. In a few moments she had changed.

And they were prepared to listen to her. Before, they would never listen to her. And they come and they receive the message.

And it says in verse 39, And so many of the Samaritans of that city believed in him because of the word of the woman who testified, He told me all that I ever did. And so when the Samaritans had come to him, they urged him to stay with them. And he stayed there today.

Many believed because of her word. Here is this woman who was absolutely nothing. She could not even fetch water together with the other woman.

And suddenly she becomes one of the first evangelists in all the world. Many people came to meet Jesus as a result of her testimony. God can do that in your life.

He can change your life. And he can make you useful. She had no use.

She was cast out. She was on the rubbish heap of life. And the next moment she is this powerful tool that God is able to use to bring people into the kingdom.

And God can do it in your life today. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for Jesus who loves us and cares enough to take time out to speak to us.

And Lord, I pray that if there are those in the service this morning who are running, who are chasing after, trying to find some kind of fulfillment, some kind of satisfaction, some kind of joy, some kind of peace, keep coming up empty. Pray, Lord, that today they would come to a point of stop running and just say, Jesus, you're right. I need you.

You're the only one who can satisfy my need. And, Lord, I pray that that may be true. And, Lord, that those who hear you speak may not avoid you, may not avoid the truth, but just face up to the realities and allow you to come into our lives and to change us.

And, Lord, I pray for those who maybe feel this morning that they are just not up to standard. They just don't make the grade. Help us, Lord, to understand that none is so low that your grace and your love cannot reach them.

And that there is nothing that we have done, Lord, that is so terrible and so abhorrent and so sinful that you cannot change us and save us from it and forgive us. And so, Lord, help us not to run away from you, but help us to run to you this morning. I ask it in Jesus' name.

Lord, I pray for those who leave us now. We pray that you would go with them. Keep them and protect them, Lord, and above all, grant that your word may constantly be taught to them through your Spirit.

And, Lord, for those who come around your table to remember the work of Jesus on the cross, we pray that it may be a sweet and a precious time for us. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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