

Meet Jesus, Find Satisfaction

John 4:4-42

I'm a sucker for a satisfying ending to a story
I woke up one morning during the Olympics
To hear of Australia winning another gold medal

And it was Saya Sakakibara pedalling her BMX to victory
Incredibly satisfying
Given what happened to her brother Kai in 2020
Who had a severe crash on his BMX in a world cup event
And suffered a life changing brain injury
It was Kai who inspired Saya to become a BMX racer
Saya herself had a bad crash in the Tokyo Olympics that eliminated her in the semifinals
And now to win gold three years later after such disappointment
And to have Kai by her side in Paris
Well you couldn't have scripted a more satisfying ending

Less so Rachel Gunn's story
Aka Raygun – Australia's female entrant into Olympic breakdancing
Rachel's performance has been the butt of jokes all over the internet
Complete with kangaroo hops, floor gyrations
A very earnest tracksuit
And a disappointing zero score from the judges
Rachel tried her heart out
But she didn't get the satisfying ending to her story
In fact she now has to deal with the scorn of the world

Now whose story do you relate to more
Saya's or Rachel's?
I suspect Rachel's
All of us want satisfying endings to our story
And we try so hard to work towards them
But more often than not
We experience failure and disappointment

We can relate to the lyrics of the Rolling Stones

*I can't get no satisfaction
Cause I try, and I try, and I try, and I try*

Today in the bible
We meet a woman who has not yet found satisfaction
And she meets Jesus
Who makes her an offer
That will change her life forever

We're going to look at three things in this chapter
Firstly, Jesus offers living water
Secondly, Jesus' hunger to satisfy

Thirdly, Come all who are thirsty

Well firstly Jesus offers living water

It seems a very innocuous situation
A man who is thirsty and tired
Is asking a woman for a drink of water
If you saw this in Melbourne, you wouldn't think twice
But for Jesus to do this
It broke all sorts of racial, cultural and religious barriers
For *this* woman is an outcast amongst outcasts
Let me give you some background

At the start of John chapter 4
Jesus has been ministering down south in the area of Judea
And now he is making his way back north to his home base of Galilee
But to get there, Jesus and his disciples have to travel through the region of Samaria
And on their journey they decide to take a break
At a place called we're told, called Sychar
Near the well of their Jewish ancestor Jacob

No there was no love lost between Jews and Samaritans
In 721 BC, the Assyrians exiled 10 tribes of Israel
And in their place foreigners were settled into Samaria
For the purpose of intermarrying with the remaining Israelites

This meant that the Samaritans were now mixed blood Jews
And it resulted in them having different worship practices to the Israelites
The Samaritans only believed in the first five books of the Old Testament
And so they worshipped at a different temple
All this resulted in the average Jew hating Samaritans
And the feeling was mutual
Take for example in John chapter 8
To insult and accuse Jesus a group of Jews said to him

“Aren't we right in saying that you're a Samaritan and have a demon?”

But for Jesus to speak to this Samaritan woman
Was for him to break custom
But even more so because she was a Samaritan woman with a questionable reputation
As we'll soon find out
But there's a little clue in verse 6 where we're told it's noon
You don't collect water for the day at noon when it's the hottest
When you have to lug a heavy jar of water in the scorching sun
You go to the well first thing in the morning when it's cool
But you see that's when everyone else goes
With all their critical eyes and their gossiping tongues
No, she prefers to go when no one else is around
And so even amongst Samaritans it seems that this lady is an outcast

So can you imagine,

From a Jewish point of view in the culture of Jesus,
the ranking might go something like this

Jewish man

Jewish woman

Samaritan man

Samaritan woman

Samaritan woman with a dodgy background

This woman is way down the pecking order in relation to Jesus

And in an honour/shame culture

For Jesus to engage with an outcast amongst outcasts

Was highly controversial

And even the Samaritan woman recognised this

Verse 9

“How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” she asked him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

But you see the thing about Jesus

Is that he couldn't care less about what people think

Jesus smashes barriers and stereotypes

Because he's on a mission

Not to condemn this woman and mock her

Not to take something from her

He's on a mission to give something to her

Verse 10

¹⁰ Jesus answered, “If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would ask him, and he would give you living water.”

Jesus offers her living water

Here's our first point

What does *living water* mean?

The woman didn't understand Jesus at first

She thinks he's talking about physical water

And to be honest her answer is just a bit sarcastic

How can Jesus offer her water when he has no bucket

Does he think he's better than their shared ancestor Jacob who gave them the well

There's a bit of mocking in her tone

But this living water is something more than she realises

Verse 13

Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks from *this* water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life.”

What do we learn about this living water?

It's given by Jesus

It satisfies deep inside a person

It keeps nourishing a person for eternity

And we find out later in John's gospel what this living water is

John chapter 7

³⁷ On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him." ³⁹ He said this about the Spirit.

The living water is the Holy Spirit
The very presence of God living inside a person
A gift that only Jesus can give
A gift that transforms a person from an enemy of God
To a forgiven and beloved child of God their Father
This is the most precious gift that can ever be given
A gift so satisfying that it changes everything
And now Jesus is offering this gift to this outcast woman

And the Samaritan woman wants it
Well....kind of
Give me this water, she says

But she still doesn't understand
She's still thinking that Jesus is offering some sort of super water supply
To make her life more convenient and less of a daily grind

And how often do we expect God to do work like that in our lives
Like a vending machine
Someone we pray to, in order to make our lives easier and more convenient
The one we call for
To pass an exam
To find someone to marry
To get a mortgage or a secure job
And so often the things we ask for pale into comparison to what God is offering
The things we ask for eventually fail to satisfy
And I suspect most of us know that
Jesus instead offers life changing, living water
But first we must recognise our thirst

And so must this woman
So Jesus goes there in verse 16
¹⁶ "Go call your husband," he told her, "and come back here." ¹⁷ "I don't have a husband," she answered. "You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus said. ¹⁸ "For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

"Ouch Jesus" why'd you go there?
That's super awkward
The Samaritan woman has a past
It's possible she's so unlucky that five husbands have died and she hasn't gotten round to marrying number 6
But this option is quite unlikely
It's more likely that she's been used again and again by man after man
Remember she's not someone with a great deal of status or power in her culture
Or it's also possible

That she's in this situation because of a combination
Of her poor choices and the poor choices of these men
In the language of the bible, she's sinned against God and others
But she's also been sinned against by others

And I think we can all relate to this
None of us here are innocent
If we're honest, we have all made choices that we regret
Choices that run against God's commands
Choices that have impacted others
But it's also true that others have made sinful choices that have impacted us greatly

The Samaritan woman is no different
But the thing is
There's no escaping Jesus
He knows her
He knows her darkest secrets
We don't know the details but Jesus does
Jesus knows all the reasons and all the regrets
Because he is the Son of God

Why does Jesus stir up the murky waters of her life?
Is it to shame her?
No it's not
It's to help her realise her thirst
Her longing for satisfying relationship
Everyone thirsts for secure, loving relationship
To be loved and to love in return
But what's the tune she's been singing to

*I can't get no satisfaction
And I try, and I try, and I try, and I try, and I try, and I try*

Do you long for real relationship that satisfies?
But it seems so hard to get
Well how could Jesus make the difference?
Keep thinking about that

The Samaritan woman changes the subject
And I don't blame her to be honest
If Jesus was bringing up my past
I'd like to talk about something a little less awkward
So let's talk about religion

Verse 19

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

I like this lady
She could have left the conversation after Jesus raised her past but she's intrigued

She keeps on engaging
She's moved from the sarcasm to a bit more respect
She calls Jesus, "Sir" and a "prophet"
Because how else could he know personal things about her
And she raises the issue of the two different worship places of the Jews and Samaritans

The Samaritans saw Mt Gerizim as a sacred site
Because their forefathers Abraham and Jacob had built altars to God there in the past
And so they constructed a temple there to worship God
But the Jews, following more of the Old Testament
Believed that the temple was built in Jerusalem by Solomon
And so this was their place of worship
This is a significant difference
Whose religion is right?
The Jews or the Samaritans

Jesus provides a third option
Verse 21

²¹ Jesus told her, "Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

Jesus is the game-changer
What does he mean by this?
Verse 23

²³ But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth."

By that single statement, Jesus is getting rid of sacred places
God doesn't want cathedrals and temples and mosques
God is spirit – His presence is not constrained to a time and a place and one race of people
He wants true worshipers from anywhere and everywhere
People who worship him in spirit
That is with their whole being – God wants whole-hearted relationship
He doesn't want empty ritual
He wants people who know Him and love Him as their heavenly Father
People who worship Him on the basis of truth
And that truth is Jesus
In John chapter 14
Jesus will say "I am the way, THE TRUTH and the life"
No one comes to the Father except through me
Jesus invites all to worship God
And Jesus offers living water – the Holy Spirit to make that possible to anyone
But only those who believe the truth of Jesus *can* worship God

What Jesus is saying here is that religion based on ritual does not satisfy
It doesn't satisfy God or people
And again I suspect we all know that too – who wants meaningless ceremonies
What God wants is real relationship with His children
Children who know how much He loves them

Children who love him, trust him and obey him
And Jesus alone can pave a way for this to happen

Verse 25

²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶ Jesus told her, "I, the one speaking to you, am he."

The Jews and the Samaritans had been waiting for God's promised King
The Messiah

Their everlasting God

For hundreds of years

The one who would be the answer to all their longings

And this woman had been waiting her whole life for the messiah

Well can you imagine how she would have felt in that moment

When Jesus said to her

"I am He"

Then Jesus dropped the mic

Boom

Could he be the one?

I mean how else could he know me like that

And why me?

Why would the Messiah reveal himself to a person like me?

Remember what Maree said in her story of meeting Jesus

The fact that he claims me as one of his children

It's just amazing

Me, I'm as ordinary as a person can get

Now if you know Maree she's not an ordinary person

But I get what she means

I'm sure the Samaritan woman was thinking the same thing

I'm as ordinary as a person can get

Jesus knows my past and yet he's still talking to me

Regardless of how insignificant you feel

How guilty you are

How much shame you carry

How many regrets

How many wounds you bear because of others

How much disappointment and failure

Jesus says to you as he did to the Samaritan woman

"I have come for you"

"If only you knew the gift

"And who is speaking to you"

"You would ask him for living water"

So let me ask you

Do you know your thirst?

I have met people who thought sex would satisfy them

And it hasn't

I have met people who have amassed large amounts of wealth
And it's still not enough
I have met people who are very successful
And yet they are not satisfied
How would I describe them?
Thirsty and they just don't know how thirsty they really are
You see God made them to thirst after Him
Like a deer panting for water
And so nothing else will satisfy until they drink the living water
How about you?
Do you know how thirsty you really are

Jesus offers living water

Here's our second point

Jesus' hunger is to satisfy

While Jesus has been talking to the Samaritan woman
The disciples now enter the scene and are a bit taken aback
That Jesus is talking to this woman as we see in verse 27
They have been scouting the area for some food for Jesus
And now they urge their teacher to eat something

Listen to Jesus' response in verse 32

³² But he said, "I have food to eat that you don't know about."

He's doing what he did to the Samaritan woman
He asked her for a drink of water but he was more concerned about her thirst
And now the disciples want him to satisfy his hunger
But Jesus' is hungry for something greater
Verse 34

³⁴ "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work," Jesus told them

And later in Chapter 6 verse 40 he explains the will of God his Father
For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will
have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Jesus is hungry for people to believe in him and have eternal life
This is the plan that God the Father
And Jesus the Son agreed upon
This is their mission
This is what Jesus is here for
A world full of thirsty people
Who need Jesus and His living water
This encounter for Jesus with this woman was no lucky co-incidence
It was all part of God's plan for Jesus to meet this woman
And more thirsty people will come to Jesus
Jesus prepares the disciples for this in verse 34

Jesus told them. ³⁵ “Don’t you say, ‘There are still four more months, and then comes the harvest’? Listen to what I’m telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, because they are ready for harvest.

Jesus loves mixing his metaphors
Living Water, Food and now harvest
The ripe harvest - heavy golden heads of grain
Are actually people, ready to respond to the truth
People desperately longing for satisfaction
Just like the Samaritan woman

People going through the motions of life
Living groundhog day after groundhog day
Longing for an escape from their own lives
Thirsty people, searching for solutions to guilt and shame
People hungry for meaning in the drudgery of workaday lives
Yearning for hope in the face of grief and death
And Jesus’ hunger
His absolute commitment is to satisfy thirsty people
And he’s willing to forgo his own needs to do that for us
But we see in John’s gospel
This is not just Jesus skipping food and water

We see this on the cross
For God so loved the world that He sent his son into the world
To die on the cross in our place
Because that is how the guilt of our sin is dealt with
Jesus can offer us living water
Because he drank a cup of judgement for us
We can live by His Spirit
Because he died our death
That is how much he loved us
That is love without compare

Do you know such love?

Remember Maree’s story when she thought about the cross
It broke her heart
Jesus did all this for me
And then what did Maree say, “you kind of fall in love with him?
And that is so true
That’s what the Holy Spirit does
He helps you to know Jesus’ love and to love him in return
Imagine the Samaritan woman
Jesus might just be the first man who has ever loved her like that
And soon the Messiah will become the love of her life
How could you not fall in love with someone
Who loves you like that
And when you’ve tasted love like that
Nothing else will satisfy
His love changes everything
Do you know such love?

Jesus offers living water
Jesus' hunger is to satisfy
And here's our third point
Come all you thirsty

The Samaritan woman has been on a dramatic journey
She started with sceptical sarcasm towards Jesus
And look where she is now,
She's open to Jesus
She's willing to believe that he's the messiah
She's tasted the living water
Verse 28

²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" ³⁰ They left the town and made their way to him

Notice that small but important observation that John makes
She left her water jar
The Living water is now more important than her daily water
The Samaritan woman has taken up Jesus priorities
And it doesn't mean she won't have to go back tomorrow to the well
As she will every other day
But she will return as someone with her thirst satisfied
Someone whom Jesus has transformed
Someone with God's Spirit living in her

But she leaves her water jar to share the good news of Jesus with others
For this is not about finding a gold mine to keep for yourself
This is a cure for an incurable sickness
This living water must be shared with other thirsty people
So she races back to town sans jar
And many other Samaritans follow her to meet Jesus
The harvest has appeared in front of the disciples
Just as Jesus said

Verse 39

³⁹ Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of what the woman said when she testified, "He told me everything I ever did."

Jesus stays there for two more days
And even more Samaritans come to believe that He is the Saviour of the world

Now notice what the woman said to convince them to follow her back to Jesus
He told me everything I ever did
Last time I checked – what Jesus said about her life was not glowing
It was the stuff of deep shame in her culture
Remember this is the woman who comes to collect water in the middle of the day
And now she couldn't care less who knows
Because Jesus is worth the risk
He's worth the shame
Because what he offers is just too important to keep to myself

And now think of the many lives that are changed
Because of the Samaritan woman pointing them to Jesus
Now that is a satisfying ending to her story
She tasted the living water
And she offered it to others

And that's what we're trying to do here on the Meet Jesus Sundays
We are not good people
We are not better than you or anyone else
We are just thirsty people who met Jesus
And have tasted the living water
And we want to share His living water
With other thirsty people

When you meet Jesus it changes nothing
You still have interest rates to deal with
Sick children
Disappointing relationships
You still have to go to the well and collect a pay check
But meeting Jesus changes everything
Eternal love in a relationship that is not based on your performance
The burden of guilt and shame lifted by Jesus forever
Hope of eternal life in the face of grief and death

Meeting Jesus changes everything

If today you're convicted that Jesus is speaking to you
Then can I encourage you to pray,
Talk to God with a simple prayer like this:

Dear God
I'm sorry for my sin
Thank you for Jesus and his loving sacrifice for me
Please give me living water so I can live for Jesus
Amen

If you pray something like this
Then start your new life with Jesus
And ask a Christian to help you in your new relationship with Jesus

If you're not ready to pray but you want to do more research into Jesus
Here's a couple of options
Read the gospel of John with someone and we can help you with that
Just like Belinda helped Maree
Or join a Christianity Explored course like the one Maree joined
And find out more about Jesus with others like you with their questions
It took 18 months for Maree and remember she encourages you to keep persevering
Come and see us at the Meet Jesus table
Or at the Meet Jesus website

Maree was so happy to have her story recorded and shared with you today

Because like the Samaritan woman
She wants others to find satisfaction
She said to me "Jesus changes everything"

And after we recorded the video

Maree said:

Oh I'm kicking myself

I forgot to tell people that I became a Christian at 65

I just wanted to let people know that it's never too late to meet Jesus

Maree's right

It's never too late or too early

Come all you thirsty

Leave your water jar behind

Meet Jesus, Find satisfaction

Let's pray