

The Problem and Blessing of Desire

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[0 : 00] The scripture for today comes from John chapter 4. Please follow along in your own bulletin, your own Bible, or up on the screen. Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself did not baptize but only his disciples, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there, so Jesus, worried as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water.

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

Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

[1 : 25] The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob?

He gave us that well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock. Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again.

But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water. Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come here.

The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You are right in saying I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.

[2 : 35] What you have said is true. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

Jesus said to her, Women, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem would you worship the Father. Father, you worship what you do not know.

We worship what we know. For salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he.

[3 : 47] Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman. But no one said, what do you seek? Or why are you talking with her?

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?

Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about.

So the disciples said to one another, Has anyone brought him something to eat? Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Do you not say, There are yet four months, then comes the harvest? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest.

[4 : 54] Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, One sows and another reaps.

I send you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.

And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.

This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Justin and Annabelle, for a long reading, but a great story. Let me pray for us briefly, and then we're going to dive in.

[6 : 01] Father God, once again, as we come to your word, we want to hear you speak to us. The amazing thing about your word is, though it's thousands of years old, it is still living.

It's active. It's real. It speaks to us even today in 21st century Hong Kong. God, I pray that you will speak to us from your word, by your spirit, God.

Show us ourselves, show us you, and call us to life, God. We want to experience fullness of life. We do that when we come to you, so help us, I pray, God.

Lord, you know the obstacles of our hearts. You know where our hearts are at. Jesus, come and help us today. Spirit of God, we pray, help us to understand your word and to apply it to our lives. In your great and wonderful name, I pray. Amen. Okay, many years ago, I was involved in helping to start a church in downtown Cape Town in South Africa, where we were from.

[7 : 01] And as part of kind of getting this church going, a bunch of us were doing kind of very grassroots, informal survey, trying to understand the culture and the people that we were wanting to reach out to.

And so a bunch of us would walk the streets, maybe on a Saturday morning or I guess throughout the week, and we'd kind of interview people and ask people questions. And we'd ask questions like, how long have you lived in the city?

What do you like about the city? What do you not like about the city? Et cetera, et cetera. Trying to get to know what is the makeup of the people and what gets the people thinking and their hearts moving.

And the questions would start off kind of pretty generic and then we'd go a little bit deeper. And one of the final questions, the questions that I always found very interesting, was the question, what could you not live without?

And people kind of started off, you know, how long have you lived here? What do you like about it? And then when you get to, what could you not live without? There's always a pause. Some people maybe would deal with it, you know, superficially, my pet or my job or the weather or my surfboard or whatever it is.

[8 : 12] But some people would stop and think, wow, what could I not live without? Maybe another way of asking that is, what if it was taken away from you, would make you question whether life is worth living?

It's an interesting question, is it? What could you not live without? Now, as a church, we are working through John's gospel and Justin Anvil read to us this long chapter. We've been in it for seven or eight weeks now.

And in John's gospel, the passage we come to today, Jesus and his disciples are traveling from the south of Israel in Judah up to the north in Galilee.

And in order to do that, they need to pass through this area called Samaria. Now, Samaria is famous for the Samaritans, the people of Samaria. And for a whole bunch of historical and cultural and religious reasons, the Samaritans, the people of Samaria, don't get along at all with the Jews, the people of Judea or Israel.

They don't like each other. And the main reason is because the people of Israel consider the Samaritans to be kind of half Jews, half breeds. A couple of centuries before, some people moved into the area of Samaria.

[9 : 25] And the Samaritans intermarried with them and they adopted their culture and their practices and their religious idols and their worship. And eventually built their own temple. And so

the Jews who consider themselves thoroughbreds, genuine, real worshippers of God, look at their neighbors and they say, you guys are kind of half Jew, but you're also half something else.

Both culturally, ethnically, but most importantly, religiously. And so they look down on the Samaritans with disdain and kind of disgust at these people that aren't really part of them. But in order to get to Galilee, Jesus and his disciples must walk through this area of Samaria. And so they do that. And they're on their way. And it's the middle of the day.

They're tired. They're hungry. Jesus stops at a well and the disciples go into the village to get some food. And it's midday. They don't really expect anybody to come out in the heat of the day to come to the well.

But when the disciples come back, to their astonishment, Jesus is having a conversation. A conversation with a woman, with a Samaritan woman, a woman of the village. And this kind of blows their mind for a whole bunch of reasons.

[10:35] And one of the reasons is Jewish men were not allowed to culturally talk to women in everyday culture. Especially if you're a rabbi. A rabbi would not even look at another woman in the eyes, never mind engage her in conversation.

Never mind a Samaritan of all people. Rabbis, Jewish men would never do this. But here is Jesus and he's talking with her. In fact, Jesus initiates the conversation.

He starts the conversation. He reaches out to her. And Jesus crosses all sorts of cultural barriers and breaks all cultural and social etiquette to engage in this conversation.

And she's actually surprised. Look at verse 9. Jesus asks her for a drink of water. And the Samaritans said to him, How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? And then John, the author, says, For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Not only is he talking with her, he now wants to share like a drinking cup with her.

[11:36] I mean, this is just outrageous. But Jesus is willing to do it. And she can't quite understand why this man would do this. But Jesus has something on his mind.

And so he presses on. Look at verse 10. Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is that's asking you for a drink of water, you would have asked him.

He would have given you living water. The woman said to him, Sir, you've got nothing to draw water with. And the well is deep. Where are you going to get this living water, this flowing water? Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again.

But whoever drinks of the water that I give will never thirst again. The water I give will become within him or her. Will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Now, what's going on here? Well, again, in John's gospel, is usually the case is a little bit of play on words. The word living water could also mean flowing water as in streams.

[12:34] I think the lady here thinks that Jesus is saying, Listen, I have worked out where the source of this well is. There's the underground source.

And if you follow me, I'll take you to the source. And you won't need to keep on coming back to this well, which is 500 meters from the village. I will show you where the source is. And she says, Show me.

Then I won't need to keep on coming back every day to this well and drawing up this water. I'll just go straight to this source. But of course, that's not what Jesus means at all, is it?

Jesus is using this as an analogy. He's not talking about physical water. He's using it as an analogy. And the reason is because obviously water, especially in a time like that, in a dry and arid climate, it's one of the most important things for the people of that day and age.

It's the most basic and essential element of life. Even still today, if you think about it, scientists are constantly looking for sources of water on other planets, on Mars.

[13:34] Because if we can find a source of water, then maybe, just maybe, we can find other life sources. I don't know what you believe about that. But anyway, but the point is, we all know that water is the most basic and essential ingredient to sustaining life.

And that's why Jesus here, even in that day, everybody knows you can't live without water. And just as any life form needs water, Jesus is saying that as human beings, we need something to sustain us and keep us going.

Something that we cannot live without. Something that we must go back to again and again and again. You can't just have a drink of water when you're a child and say, okay, I'm good for life.

I'm set. I'm done. Every day you've got to be hydrating yourself. Jesus says as human beings, there's something, all of us were designed, the way we built, we've got to go back to some source that's going to animate us, hydrate us, that's going to keep us living.

And so just like this woman intuitively knows, she must get water every day if she's going to live. Jesus says that every human being needs something, some hope, some reason to live, something outside of ourselves to sustain us, not only physically, but metaphysically.

[14:55] And this is where Jesus makes a remarkable claim. Like he does throughout John's gospel, Jesus says that what water is for our bodies, sustaining, life-giving, he himself is for our souls.

That in order to truly live, not just in a material, physical way, in order to truly live and flourish and be a flourishing human being, we must come to him and depend on him and drink deeply and have our souls drink deeply of him.

You know, throughout John's gospel, one of his favorite phrases is the word eternal life, the phrase eternal life. Eternal life doesn't just mean one day when you die, you can live forever.

Eternal life in John's gospel means full, flourishing, existential life in this world, in this day and age now, when you go to work and then you're home, you're married, you're parenting, you're being a son or a daughter of elderly parents, fully flourishing life in this world that continues past the grave forever.

And Jesus says that the key to that kind of life, not just physical existence in a material sense, existential flourishing, the key is to know him, to drink on him, to depend on him as your only source of hope and life in this world.

[16:18] Much like anyone in the desert is walking, scouring the landscape. Where is a water well? Where is a water well? Where can I find my source of hope? If you're walking through the desert and you don't know where water is and the children are languishing and they're asking how much further and you're constantly saying not much further, there's water just over the hill, there must be water because you know if there's no water you will die.

Jesus says as human beings unless we come to him and find him something in our souls will die. We cannot live without him. Friends, if you're not a Christian this morning, this is one of the main claims of Christianity that Jesus Christ is the source of all life, real life, existential life.

Later on in John's Gospel in chapter 7, Jesus very famously says this, he says, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink, whoever believes in me as the scripture said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water and that's what Jesus is saying here.

He's saying to her, I am water for the soul, I am life. Now, why is Jesus saying this to this woman? I mean, what's the reason? Well, there is a reason and the reason is because this lady, like all of us, is searching.

She's searching. Although she's been somewhat religious throughout her life, it seems that she's been searching for the meaning of life for a long time and Jesus knows something about her.

[17:50] Here is a lady that's been looking for the wrong sources for joy, for peace, for hope, for rest, for security and as a result of looking in the wrong places, she's suffering.

And so Jesus comes to her like he comes to all of us and he comes to this lady that has this deep existential thirst in her heart and just like her need for water, she knows how to quench her need temporarily but it never lasts.

And so she keeps returning to the source of water for her soul again and again and again but it never lasts. And so what is the well that this woman is drinking from? Well, look at what Jesus says. Look at verse 16. Jesus says, he says to her, go and call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband.

Jesus said to her, you are right in saying I have no husband for you have had five husbands and the man you're with now is not your husband, is he? Now that seems like a rather sudden change of subject, right? They're talking about water and wells and it's a bit philosophical and suddenly Jesus sharp turn to the right.

[19:06] Go call your husband. Change of subject. But actually, what's going on here? Jesus is using her need for water as an analogy to show her where her heart's at.

What is the well that she's been drinking from? What is the water source that her heart returns to again and again and again in order to satisfy her search for peace, for rest, for security?

Well, it's men, isn't it? It's marriage. It's relationships. Just as she returns to the well day after day because the water in her bucket isn't going to last, so she returns to the altar or to Tinder or to the dating app or to the local bar again and again and again after each relationship as one relationship dries up after another.

And how is this well that she's drinking from working out for her? Well, evidently not so well. We don't know the exact reason why she's been married five times, but the fact that Jesus says, listen, you're with someone now who's not really your husband suggests that she's not just an unlucky widow.

It's not just that she's had a bad choice of husbands and they've all died on her. There's something else going on here, right? No, friends, here is a lady that goes back and has tried one relationship after another and they do not satisfy.

[20 : 30] And so she keeps on going back to the well. I'm not sure if you picked up verse 6. Verse 6, there's a funny little sentence at the end that says this, and it was about the sixth hour.

In that day and age, time was measured from 6 a.m., from sunrise, the beginning of the day, right? And so when is the sixth hour? Well, the sixth hour is midday. It's 12 noon.

We know from historical records that in that day and age nobody would go to the watering well at the midday. It was the heat of the day, the sun was right above you, it's baking hot. You'd always go to the well early in the morning when the sun is not up and also said you've got water for the day or at the end of the day in the cool of the day, right?

To walk a kilometer and back with heavy water gels in the heat of the day, no one would do that. We also know that women would typically go to the well in groups. They'd never go alone because there's safety in numbers.

But here is a lady that goes to the well in the middle of the day, in the heat of the day, all on her own. Why is that? Well, commentators tell us the reason is because she's a social outcast.

[21 : 36] She's avoiding the other people of the town, the other people of the village. Here she is, she's shunned, she's rejected, maybe she's called names, maybe she's taken some of their husbands, we don't know. But here is a woman that has gone through a bunch of the men of the town and everybody knows it and everybody is despising her for it.

How has it worked out for her? Well, not very well. Friends, here is everybody knows her and yet nobody wants to be seen with her. And here is someone whose desire, whether it's for romantic love or acceptance or maybe it's financial security or whatever it is, something is driving her to one man after another.

And just like the bucket in her well, after each trip to the well, it's not long before she finds the relationship dry and empty. They cannot last.

They cannot satisfy. Jesus says here to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again. He's not just talking about the physical water, he's talking about the wells that we sink our hearts into and we try to plummet in order to find hope and peace and rest and joy in this life.

Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again. But Jesus says there's another option. But whoever drinks of the water that I give, whoever comes to me will never thirst again.

[22 : 56] In the Old Testament, the language of water wells was familiar to God's people. And God's often describing his people to those that are looking for water.

And he says to his people over and over again, if you follow me, that means you depend on me, you drink of me, you hope and you trust in me, just like someone in the desert hopes and trusts in the watering well.

And so, in Jeremiah 2, there's this very famous passage. Let me put it up on the screen for us. God says this, he's been calling his people to trust in him, to hope in him, to depend on him, but they do not.

And they go after other gods and other idols and other loves and other hopes and he says this, be appalled, O heavens, be shocked, declares the Lord. For my people have committed two great evils.

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water and they have cut out wells or cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that hold no water.

[23 : 52] See what God is saying? He's saying, my people, they reject me and they go looking after, looking for other wells, other hopes, other joys, other things to find peace and security and life and joy in, but these things are broken.

They can't hold water and they are toxic and they make my people sick. They trusted in lifeless idols and they become lifeless themselves.

And so Jesus comes to this lady and he's pointing out exactly what Jeremiah said, that in a spiritual sense, she's drinking from a broken well. She's looking for something other than God himself to fill her, to satisfy her, to give her hope and peace and rest.

But what she's consuming is not just unsatisfying, it's deadly. It's toxic. Jesus says, you drink of this again and again and again, it's not going to satisfy.

It's not going to make you well. So friends, here's the question this passage asks of us. What well are we returning to again and again and again?

[24 : 58] Where do we keep on returning? Hoping or believing it'll give us life. It'll give us peace. It'll give us security. Friends, what do we believe we must have in order to be fully alive, fully human, to flourish?

For myself, about two years ago, maybe a year and a half ago, I went through a strange period in my life where I'm not like very financially savvy person.

I'm not a complete idiot, but I'm not, you know, like an investment banker or something like that. But about, probably a year and a half ago, partly because of conversations with friends and family and, you know, the stock market is flying and the Magnificent Seven are doing their thing and I felt this pressure like, hey, I've got to get in on the game, right?

And so, I kind of started thinking a bit about stocks and investments and thinking about my future.

Okay, you know, I'm getting old now, I'm over 40, I've got to start thinking about these things and I started to, to kind of follow a little bit of stocks and investments and trading and that kind of stuff.

And at first, I told myself, you know, I'm just being a wise steward, just taking care of my family and just thinking about these things. But pretty soon, if I'm honest, it got its hold in me and I got sucked in in a big way and so, I would find myself, I'm sure none of you have ever found yourself doing this, but I find myself waking up and the first thing I do in the morning before I'm even out of bed is I'm looking at my phone, right?

[26 : 29] And there's this stupid little app that tells you what's happened in the stock market overnight, right? In the US. And so, I'm in bed and the first thing I do is I'm looking, hey, what happened overnight?

And then I find myself, the last thing I do before I turn out my light, before I close my eyes, you know, just final check before, just want to see what's happening in the markets open in the US.

And I find that my waking up is the first thing and the last thing before I've even said hello to my kids, before I've got out of bed, before I've even considered my Bible, Jesus, or any of that, I'm thinking, what's happening?

What's happening? How are my investments doing? Now, friends, is it wrong to follow your investments? No, of course not. I think the Bible actually says it's unwise to not know what's happening financially.

You can get yourself in a lot of trouble like that. So it's a good thing to be aware on top of your finances. Don't be not on top of your finances. But for me, if I'm honest with you, it wasn't about wisdom or planning, it became about seduction.

[27 : 27] It was a well that I was returning to a couple of times a day. First thing in the morning, last thing at night, because in a sense it promised me freedom. It promised me joy, it promised me security, it promised me peace.

In a word, it promised me life. Now, here's the scary part, is that during all this time, for probably six months or a year or so, I was still worshipping, still reading my Bible, still leading Bible studies, still preparing sermons, preaching sermons.

Still, I wasn't a heretic. I didn't deny the gospel. I wasn't living a double life, one life to you and then another life on the side. I wasn't visiting places in the city that I shouldn't be visiting.

But friends, if I'm honest with you, something else had gripped my heart. Something else was more real to me, more vivid to me, more precious to me than the person of Jesus Christ.

Something else was giving me a sense of hope and peace and the prospect of security and joy more than God Himself. And if I'm honest, it wasn't black and white, it was a little gray.

[28 : 33] If I'm honest, I could sense it. There was something inside of my heart that wasn't quite alive. Friends, Jesus says to us, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again.

It cannot quench the craving of the soul. Only the God who made us for Himself and to know Him and to love Him can give us this peace. And many of us would have heard, it's a very famous quote, many of us would have heard of David Foster Wallace's commencement address, Kenyan College, 2007.

Very famous. You might have heard this before. But I want to read this to us. David Foster Wallace, if you don't know him, was an American novelist and writer. He was an agnostic. He wasn't a Christian.

He unfortunately took his own life in I think it was 2013. But before he died, he gave this commencement address to Kenyan College. I want to read this to us. This is profoundly insightful. He says, In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there's actually no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice you get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of God or religion is that pretty much everything else you worship will eat you alive.

[29 : 42] If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in this life, then you will never have enough. Never feel you have enough. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure.

You will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before your loved ones finally plant you in the grave. Friends, worship power.

You will end up feeling weak and afraid. You will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect. Being seen as smart and you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.

The insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they are evil, but that they are unconscious. Isn't that profound? Whatever you worship will control you.

It will eat you alive. So friends, again, ask us the question, what is it that we are worshipping? What is the well we're returning to week after week, day after day? Where does your mind drift when you're feeling anxious and worried?

[30 : 46] What fantasy do you go to that can give you a sense of peace? Friends, what do you think if only you'll gain it, you'll find freedom and joy, security, life.

Maybe for some of us it's our investments and our portfolios and we're checking our portfolios all the time. Friends, maybe for some of us it is like this woman, it's romantic relationships. We bounce from one relationship to the next to the next, never feeling like we can be alone, be ourselves.

Always need somebody to affirm us or build us up. Friends, maybe for some of us it's our children's accomplishments accomplishments and so we're sending them to one exam, one accomplishment, one accolade off the other and as soon as they get their one accolade we're rolling them up for the next one, right?

Because we've always got to keep their portfolio growing. Friends, maybe for some of us it's a hidden addiction, pornography, prostitution, substance abuse. On the side we return there again and again and again.

For some of us maybe it's social media, always posting, always checking who's liking my post, what's the response, what are they saying? For some of us it's our work life, always online, never switching off, always responding to our boss, our clients, compromising even our values, our ethics in order to win that client, advance our careers.

[32 : 01] Friends, what is the well we keep returning to? Where do our hearts and minds go to to give us peace? And I know this is something we talk about in a lot of churches and so it's easy to roll eyes and say yes, yes, I know, okay, I know, I know.

But friends, I've preached this message hundreds of times, I know this stuff and yet for me it's easy to stay in my head and my heart to drift. And Jesus doesn't just want our heads to know it, he wants our hearts to own it, he wants our hearts to be transformed, which is why he takes the conversation where it goes.

And so look at the last section here. Where does Jesus take the conversation? Well, he takes it to worship. And so look at what happens here. Jesus directs the conversation towards worship, he says, he tells the lady about herself and she says, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet and she then says this really interesting thing.

She says, listen, I have tried, let me just find it here. It says, our fathers worshipped on this mountain but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

I think she's saying, listen, I've tried to worship God as our fathers have told us here on this mountain. You Jews say that we Samaritans are not really very orthodox or real. You say we've got to go to Jerusalem to worship.

[33 : 18] Listen, I don't really know what's going on. I've tried to follow what God wants for me. The Samaritans don't believe in most of the Old Testament, only the first five books of the Bible. And so when they read that, they say, on Mount Gerizim, that's where God wants us to worship.

But the Jews say, no, well, David, God promised David that he would build him a house in Jerusalem. So they say, you must go to Jerusalem. And she's saying, there's a bit of, who's right here? Are you guys right?

Are we right? What does God want for me? Does God want me to go worship here? Does God want me to go worship there? Must I believe the whole Old Testament or just this? I don't really know.

What does God want for me? And look what Jesus says to her. What God wants for us is a good question to ask if God is a moral policeman who simply wants us to obey the rules.

But God is not a moral policeman. He's a father who loves us and he wants us to be free. We sang earlier, what is the line? Something about the God who needs nothing from us.

[34 : 17] Jesus doesn't want anything from us. He wants life for us. And because Jesus loves her and he wants her to be free and he wants her to come and draw from the living water of the living God so that she can be free from the false gods that she's worshipped and the false hope she's put her hope in and the false worship she's giving herself to, he offers her a lifeline.

And he says this, woman, believe me. Verse 22. The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor on that mountain will he worship the Father. Verse 23. Indeed the hour is coming that the hour is now here.

The time has come when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. What's Jesus saying? Jesus, for the Samaritan there's this big debate.

Who's right and who's wrong? Are the Jews right? Are the Samaritans right? Maybe that clan over there's right. Actually maybe we're all wrong. Maybe those guys are right. Who's bringing right worship to God?

And Jesus says the hour has come, the time has come when all people, religious, rich, elites like Nicodemus or poor Samaritan outsiders like you, all people, no matter their cultural background, their religious background, their ethnic background, their social standing, their family background, all people, whether Jews or Samaritans, whether Asians or Africans or Americans, all people, the time is coming, God has made a way where all people can come to him and find life.

[35 : 53] And what do you need to be included in this community of people that worship God and find life? Do you need to go to Jerusalem? Do you need to go to this mountain? Do you need to wear a certain garb? Do you need to speak a language? Do you need to be educated like Nicodemus?

Do you need to worship this God and find life? And Jesus says, there's one thing you need. It's genuineness.

It's sincerity. That's what he says by worshiping in spirit and in truth. Spirit and truth are not two different things. They're one thing here. Jesus says that the only thing you need is to come to him and to worship him from your heart in sincerity and genuineness and to trust in Jesus.

Jesus is showing her that the reason for her struggles with men and relationships, the reason why she keeps going back for more and more and more, it's probably the same reason why these relationships don't last.

And it's not a social problem. It's not an EQ problem. It's not a psychological problem. It's a heart problem. She's been worshiping at the altar of men and relationships and it hasn't satisfied.

[36 : 59] And Jesus says there's one thing that satisfies. Come to me. Come to me genuinely. Come to me sincerely. Come and worship me from your heart in spirit and in truth and you will be set free.

And Jesus says that if you do that, if you will worship God, if that's, sorry, Jesus says that if you will worship at the altar of relationships, if that's where your heart is at, if that's what you sincerely and genuinely give yourself to, if that's what you functionally think that you can't live without, it'll never satisfy.

But I've come to change that and I've come to change you. And this lady does change, doesn't she? Because look at how the story ends. Jesus reveals himself to her and he helps her see that he is who he's been saying that he is.

He really is the Christ. He's the Messiah. She says at one point, listen, I don't know about all this stuff, but when the Messiah comes, he will tell us all things. And Jesus says, I who speak to you am he.

Or another translation says, the one who speaks to you is I am. I am him. I'm God. I'm the Messiah. And she puts down her jar of water and she runs into the village and she goes and calls everybody that up until now has been shunning her and rejecting her.

[38 : 20] And she says, they've all been, they've all nothing to do with her because she's this pariah. She's maybe been taking all their men or whatever it is. They've been rejecting her and she calls out to them.

She says, come everybody, come listen to me. And she says, I just met a man who knows everything about me. And they say, yeah, so what? We know everything about you anyway. What, you know, this village is a small village and people talk, we all know about you. And she says, no, no, this man is different. This man knows everything about me, but he's not rejecting me. He's not shunning me. I met a man who knows, who knows me fully and yet he's welcoming me. He's accepting me. The people of the village, even though she's part of their village, they want nothing to do with her.

Jesus' culture says you should have nothing to do with her and Jesus moves towards her. He starts the conversation. He initiates. Jesus knows everything about her, her sin, her shame, her past, everything about her and he welcomes her.

[39 : 24] And that blows her mind, but it also changes her. And she runs back to village a different person. Friends, here is a lady that came to the well a different person from the one who left the well because she encountered Jesus.

So friends, what about you? What could you not live without? What if it were taken from you would make you question whether life is worth living? What do you keep giving yourself to again and again and again?

Friends, what or who are you worshipping? Two weeks ago, we looked at Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus and today we've listened in on a very different conversation with a different conversation partner.

And despite all their differences in culture, education, background, religion, socioeconomic status, rich, religious, Nicodemus, poor, uneducated, Samaritan woman whose name we don't even know, despite their very stark differences, these two stories are actually very similar in some ways.

In both these stories, Jesus comes to these very different people and he approaches them not as an idea but as a person. He speaks honestly. He speaks frankly. He speaks genuinely to their hearts.

[40 : 42] In both of these stories, Jesus calls them to trust in him. He doesn't just give them a religious data or dogma. He doesn't just give them a theology. He calls them to trust in him, in him alone.

And in both of these encounters, Jesus points himself as the solution. And it's amazing, John is telling us that the deepest longings of the human heart transcend culture. They transcend ethnicity. Friends, whether you are Asian or African like me, whether you're American, whether you're Chinese or Caucasian, whether you're Australian, it doesn't matter what your culture, your background, whether you're rich or whether you're poor, you're uneducated or you're a professor, the deepest longings of the human heart are all the same.

Both of these people need Jesus. To both of these, Jesus is willing to come and save them. And friends, that's true for us as well. All of us need Jesus and to all of us, Jesus is coming and willing to offer himself as the hope that we need and the hope that he wants to give us.

Why don't we come to him now in prayer and let's ask him to do that. Lord Jesus, thank you so much for the gospels and thank you for the Bible. Thank you for John's gospel that just again and again and again, week in and week out, show us who you are and call us to trust you.

[42 : 04] Jesus, you are so gracious. You're so beautiful. You move towards our mess and our shame. God, the areas of our life that we feel most shame are the areas of life you love to move towards and bring healing, redemption, and freedom.

Jesus, we love you. We need you. God, come and help us, I pray. Come and help us, God, to drink of the well of living water.

Come and help us to drink of you, God. You will satisfy and never, never run dry. God, through all the economic upturns and downturns, the market turmoil, God, and everything that's going on in our world, you are the one consistent source of life that never disappoints.

Come and help us, I pray. In your great and wonderful name, Amen. Amen. Amen.