

John 4 – True Satisfaction

[played Vic bitter ad]. Nothing like it, is there? I remember helping a farmer muster his sheep in southern NSW. The dog was not getting it right – wasn't going 'way back'. Me and a couple of mates were walking behind the sheep. It was hot and dusty. We moved them from paddock to paddock for hours. By the end of the day we were hot and sweaty and full of dust. Well, sitting down on the farmers veranda with a couple of good guys and actually feeling like you'd done a day's work – and washing the dust down with that first beer – is pretty satisfying.

Well Jesus has had to move more than a few paddocks. He didn't want to conflict with John's ministry or stir up trouble with the Pharisees, so he starts walking back from Judea to Galilee – it's about a 3 day walk. It's hot and dusty. And about half way, now in Samaria, he's tired – so fully human was he and he's ready for a big cold beer – well....a drink from a nice well. We often remember Jesus as the nice baby at Christmas or for his amazing miracles. But as Jesus walked the earth he was human just like us; able to get tired and dusty and thirsty. But as you heard in the story, what starts out as Jesus wanting to satisfy his thirst turns out to be a much deeper satisfaction for a women and some of her people.

What satisfies you? People try for satisfaction in all sorts of areas these days. Satisfaction in a good friendship. Satisfaction in a good relationship. Satisfaction in passing that exam. Satisfaction in getting that essay in at last. Satisfaction in a rewarding job. Satisfaction in acting for some cause or the other. Satisfaction in helping someone out. Satisfaction in renovating that house. Satisfaction in building that fence. Satisfaction in running the distance. Satisfaction in going to that concert. Satisfaction in learning French. Satisfaction in your team winning.

But as good as they all are – and some of them are very good – they don't fully satisfy. Do you ever feel that? You feel that you seem to be getting some things right, but somehow they're not fully satisfying? The women at the well had been trying to get satisfaction through relationships.

She's had 5 marriages and was now on her 6th relationship. Each time perhaps looking for security, looking for permanence, looking for satisfaction... but it wasn't there.

So, four places of true satisfaction from John 4. Firstly satisfaction in discovering Jesus. The woman at the well doesn't immediately become a Christian when confronted with Jesus – it's a process. She doesn't go – oh it's Jesus – sure I'll believe in you. And for many today – for some of you, discovering Jesus will be a process – not some kind of blinding flash.

Now, as an aside, the Samaritans were the people living north of Judea. They were the original northern tribes of Israel, and King Omri named the area Samaria - but in 722 BC Assyria came in and took anyone of significance into exile, never to return. Those left intermarried with the Assyrians. What shook out was a group of people who were considered at best half breeds and politically compromised. They still were sort of practicing Israelites, but only read the first 5 books of the Old Testament – no kings or prophets. They built a rival temple to the Jerusalem one on Mount Gerizim and even though it was pulled down in 200BC, they still worshipped there. So there was plenty of enmity between Jews and Samaritans, just as there is today in that territory between Israel, Palestine and Jordan.

The woman begins her discovery of Jesus with outright rejection from that old bias in verse 9: 'how is it that you a Jew, ask a drink from me, a women of Samaria?' It's often where people start today – believe in Jesus – are you joking? Although her interest is sparked by the radical nature of what Jesus is doing. Even talking to a women. Even talking to a Samaritan.

On earth Jesus was happy to deal with the broadest group of people. In the previous chapter Jesus is talking with Nicodemus. A man, a Jew, a ruler, learned – THE teacher of Israel, powerful, respected, 'upright'. One chapter later, here is Jesus talking to... a women, a Samaritan, an outcast, the lowest of the low, having to draw water, uneducated, powerless, unrespected, rejected and morally suspect. Doesn't matter which one – Jesus will talk to either about who he is.

Doesn't matter who you are today. Rich, poor, smart, PHD, school dropout, plumber, chemist, thin, overweight, mentally ill, got it all together... anyone can find satisfaction in Jesus.

So the women's interest is sparked, though her interest is pretty cynical in verse 12: 'Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob?' The question implies the answer no, you're not. Don't be afraid to ask the question – people can be pretty cynical today about Jesus, particularly when you see some of the stupid things churches or Christians do. Questions are part of the discovery process. Jesus doesn't condemn the woman for asking a question, even a cynical one. Ask questions. Ask them of me. Ask them of your friends.

Well, as the story goes, Jesus gets more appealing, yet still there is misunderstanding. Look at verse 15, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.' Plenty of misunderstanding when it comes to Jesus today. Let me tell you, Jesus will not necessarily make you rich or heal your arthritis or enable you to stop work or make your earthly life perfect. But you will find deep satisfaction in discovering who Jesus is.

But the story doesn't end with a nice bloke Jesus talking to a women about living water. The crunch comes in verse 16. Jesus cuts to the heart of the matter – her sin – with 'go call your husband'. And it turns out that she's had a series of relationship disasters – doesn't say why – and she's now living with some guy. 'I have no husband; you are right in saying you have no husband; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband...' I mean it sounds a bit Hollywood, Joan Collins like.... You can tell she is broken in this area, for normally women would come in groups to the well to draw water for protection and they wouldn't normally come in the middle of the day at the hottest time – she's there by herself at the worst time, almost certainly because of all the broken relationships she has had and made. Imagine you are from a small town and you've had five different marriages, plus another relationship – I mean maybe she is extraordinarily beautiful – we don't know – but imagine all the extended broken relationships going on.

Jesus gets her to confront her sin and brokenness. And you know if you're not willing to confront your sin, you will not respond to Jesus either. And if you won't confront your own sin and brokenness, you won't find true satisfaction. While you might want to paint Jesus as patient and caring of this woman, he is also willing to confront her sin – to cut to the chase and say you won't find satisfaction like that.

You know people don't like talking about sin these days – it all seems so old hat. But you know you'll never find true satisfaction while holding tight to your own sin and brokenness or by pretending it doesn't really exist. Holding secret sins inside you will not lead to satisfaction. Those secrets of past thefts, of past relationships, of broken desire, of addictions, of anger, of selfishness... You will find satisfaction after confronting sin – Jesus knew that.

And so the woman begins responding to Jesus – he's a prophet, in verse 19. Then realizing he's more than a prophet – he's the Messiah, verse 25 – although still puzzling it through in verse 29 – yet she is excited now about Jesus 'Come see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah can he?' And by the end of the passage not only she, but many others, verse 42, have come to believe that Jesus is the 'saviour of the world'. Jesus is the Messiah – it means anointed one. He is God's anointed King, come to save the world from its brokenness and sin and to give us meaning, purpose and true satisfaction in life.

She finds true satisfaction, not in her relationships; not in drawing her daily water – I mean she even leaves her water jar behind in verse 28 – but in discovering Jesus – this is exciting – this is satisfying.

Please note that it was a process for her. From rejection to cynicism to misunderstanding to appeal, to confronting sin, to responding to Jesus. And for most people, becoming a Christian will be a process. For some it will take one day, for others many years.

It began for me when a salvation army bloke playing in a band outside our house in Edithvale suggested that I should pray every day – I was about 8. But I didn't become a Christian then. I then joined an Anglican school, it probably helped – all those chapel services – although for some weird reason all the RE classes seemed to be about sex or evolution – well that's what I remembered as a teenage boy. Wasn't until I was 20 at University that I really started discovering Jesus. And let me tell you it was greatly satisfying.

You know not even a great marriage will be able to satisfy like Jesus. Not even great kids will be able to satisfy you. Not even a great job will be able to satisfy you. If you put your hope in worldly things – as good as they are – you will come up thirsty. Jesus is the one who can make us never thirsty. He is the one who can give us living water. He's is the one who can bring us eternal life. Satisfaction in discovering Jesus.

But the satisfaction runs deeper still in this passage. For discovering Jesus is not an end in itself. And helping people to discover Jesus is not an end in itself. For true satisfaction is found in true worship. True satisfaction is found in glorifying God.

The women talks about Jewish and Samaritan differences in worship. One worshipping on Mount Gerizim; the other worshipping at the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus makes it clear from verse 21 that place is not important in worship. Three Christians getting together to read the Bible and pray in a tent in Bairnsdale is as good as 10,000 meeting together in St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Of course true worship is not just worshipping anything or just being spiritual. Jesus does comment in verse 22 that you Samaritans worship what you do not know, but we Jews worship what we know – that is based on the true revelation of God. True worship is not just a vague spiritual feeling; neither is it adopting some random ritual of throwing small rocks at satanic pillars or trying to divest yourself of all forms of attachment or trying to encounter some kind of transcendental consciousness. It's worth learning the truth about who God is; for the more you understand God the better you can praise him for who he is.

He says, verse 24, 'God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' That's not two types of worship – spirit and truth means something like heartfelt worship. As opposed to ritualistic worship in Jerusalem or on Mt Gerizim. Worshipping God sincerely. Worshipping God who is not limited to a place.

Satisfaction is found in our worship of God. For the chief purpose for all of us is to glorify God. I mean, if God really is there, and he is really responsible for this Universe – then we really should respond to him. If God is here – if God is present – if God sees us now – if God cares for us now – if God knows even the thoughts and intentions of your heart – now – then you know, honouring him seems the thing to do. If God really sent his son. If God really sent Jesus to live and to teach and to work wonders and to challenge and to heal and to suffer and to die for our sins and to rise from the dead – then hey – he is worth responding to. One of the things I find immensely satisfying is knowing the meaning and purpose of life – that is that we should worship and glorify God. For me, all else seems fleeting by comparison. Satisfaction in true worship.

Well...matter of fact I've got it now – time for a big cold beer... actually, true satisfaction is found in discovering Jesus. True satisfaction in confronting sin. True satisfaction in responding to Jesus. And true satisfaction is found in worshipping and glorifying the only true God. Where do you find true satisfaction?