

INTRODUCTION

“Satisfaction guaranteed!” That is a common slogan for marketing. The owner of a car dealer confidently said in one TV commercial: “If it is not right I will make it right for you.” But for you to enjoy that privilege, you have to purchase a car from him first. A celebrity figure proudly stated: “I don’t endorse something randomly because I know my reputation is at stake.” The fact is, if anything goes wrong customers will blame the company and its products rather than him. However, even with all those promises there are still many unhappy customers out there. The problem is not what we have or do not have. The core issue is contentment. It all comes down to a simple question: if I have _____ then I will be satisfied. Each person may have a different answer. It may be wealth, health or relationship. What would your answer be? In John chapter 4, Jesus talked to a woman who was looking for an answer too. Through this conversation Jesus told us that He is the only source of grace that can satisfy the deepest longing of our hearts.

EXPLANATION

In the story, Jesus and His disciples were traveling from Judea to Galilee. Between the two provinces there were Samaria. It was about noon time when Jesus stopped by a well. His disciples went into the town to buy lunch. A Samaritan woman appeared on the scene. In our study we will divide the plot using three “W” – water, worship and witness. We will spend more time on the first W because of its relatively lengthier account.

1. 活水 Water

Here we are with the first W – water. Jesus used water as a topic to initiate a dialogue with a Samaritan woman. When Jesus asked this woman for water she was surprised by the request. She responded in **verse 9**: ...“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus broke two customs of His days. First, it was unusual for a Jewish man to talk to a female stranger in public. The second and more important taboo was for a Jew to interact with a Samaritan. The cultural prejudice can be traced back to the Old Testament. Samaria was once the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. In 722 BC the nation was defeated by Assyria. After that the Assyrians imported people from other countries to occupy Samaria. The Samaritans in Jesus’ time were the descendants from the inter-marriage between the Jews and those foreigners. The pure Jews despised the Samaritans. When they traveled between Judea and Galilee they would rather go the extra miles by getting around Samaria. Jesus ignored the woman’s inquiry and proceeded with His discussion about water. Let us read **verse 10**: Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” From physical water, Jesus connected it to spiritual water. But she kept thinking about water in the well and wondered how Jesus could get water without any tool. Jesus continued in **verses 13-14**: “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The idea of an ever-quenching water caught her attention. She reasoned that if

she drank that water and would never thirst again, then she would not need to go to the well any more. Jesus used living water to symbolize salvation. In doing so, Jesus alluded to similar descriptions in the Old Testament. In **Jeremiah 2:13** God confronted the Israelites by saying: My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. God condemned them for forsaking Him the Living Water but embraced their own cisterns, which refer to the idols. Cisterns are huge vessels that collect rain water. Not only that the water is stagnant, God pointed out that those cisterns were broken and could not even hold much water! Not only did Jesus offer living water to the Samaritan woman He also invited her husband to come. But the woman told Jesus that she did not have any husband. Jesus reacted in **verses 17-18**: 17 ...“You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.” Now the conversation was getting a little too sensitive. What was our Lord getting at? By disclosing the woman’s private life Jesus proved that He was the all-knowing God. Also, Jesus revealed the real need in the woman’s heart. Successive marriages and cohabitation with a sixth man reflected her desire for true companionship. The marital failure of this woman reminds me of Elizabeth Taylor. Ms. Taylor beat the woman in our story by having seven former husbands and two other engagements that did not lead to marriage. Taylor married her first husband when she was 18 and the relationship lasted 8 months only. Taylor subsequently married actors, singer, politician, and finally a construction worker she met at a substance dependency rehabilitation center. Taylor’s longest and perhaps the most well-known marriage was with Richard Burton for 10 years. They met when the two filmed the movie Cleopatra. At that time Burton was married to another woman. So his relationship with Taylor began with an affair. Stories like that may be ideal materials for gossip or tabloids. While Taylor and the woman by the well were looking for fulfillment in relationship what are you searching after? We may not have 7 boy-friends or girl-friends. But you may have owned all 6 previous generations of iPhones. You now have an iPhone 7 but are still not happy. Perhaps the expectation is from your parents. They invest all their life-savings in hoping that you will become a doctor, lawyer or professor. Perhaps the pressure comes from your peers. You are invited to a high school reunion. This classmate is an entrepreneur, and that one is a director of such and such company, and another one is listed in the who’s who hall of fame. You feel like a nobody, and you even feel ashamed to meet them. I also know people who used to be better off in their home countries. But for the sake of their children they willingly squeezed their way into the U.S. and surrendered their dignity to work in a restaurant. Ironically, the kids did not appreciate what their parents sacrificed. What you are chasing after may be physical or emotional, but your deepest need is spiritual in nature that only Jesus can fulfill. But first, Jesus has to reveal your need. You are a sinner and you need Him. I am not saying that looking for a job or a mate is unimportant. But when you get right with God you will understand the true meaning of life. Then Jesus can free you from chasing after what others are pursuing. Jesus came to invite you to build an eternal relationship with Him.

2. 敬拜 Worship

Jesus is the only source of grace that can satisfy the deepest longing of our hearts. Jesus told the woman that He was the Living Water. After being confronted of her relational issue the woman switched topic to talk about worship. She said in **verse 20**: “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” In

Deuteronomy Moses told the Israelites that after they entered Canaan the Israelites should renew their covenant with God. Half of the people should go up to Mount Ebal to pronounce God's curses and the other half of the people should ascend Mount Gerizim to proclaim God's blessings. That was why the Samaritans claimed that Mount Gerizim was the right place for worship. However, the Jews asserted that since God's temple was in Jerusalem, that should be the right place for worship. Jesus responded that the question should not be where to worship but to whom people should worship. He said in **verses 21-22**: 21 "...Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." The designation of "The Father" for God was a foreign concept to both the Samaritans and the Jews. Jesus said that God was not a distant deity but an intimate Father in Heaven. By saying that the Samaritans did not know what they worshipped Jesus condemned them for blending idols into their worship. In that regard, the Jews were better by preserving the faith their ancestors held. Jesus continued in **verses 23-24**: 23 "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." When the answer about who to worship is certain then we can start talking about how to worship. Jesus said since the God is spirit we should worship Him in spirit and in truth. Since God is an omnipresent spirit we can worship Him any time of the day and anywhere, whether in Samaria or Jerusalem. Worshipping God in truth is to contrast worshipping God in falsehood. The Samaritans did not worship in truth because they practiced idolatry. Whereas, the Jews put the wrong focus on the rituals as if fulfilling the requirements of the law could lead to salvation. Jesus told the woman that a time "has now come" to rectify all the errors people had about worship. That "time" was here because Jesus came as the Savior to redeem us from sin so that we can be reconciled with the Father. Jesus serves as the Mediator between the Father and His children to make worship effective. The woman was still confused after hearing all that. She responded in **verse 25**: "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." But in her mind when the Messiah came He would teach His people all that they should know. In the Samaritans' tradition the Messiah would be a prophet and a teacher. They based that on **Deuteronomy 18:15** - The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. To that, Jesus declared in **verse 26**: "...I who speak to you am he." The woman did not have to wait any more. The Messiah was standing before her. In the early ministry of Jesus it was rare for Him to disclose His identity as the Messiah. In Judea, any self-acclaimed Messiah would be treated as a political rebel against the Romans. However, in Samaria the Messiah would be considered as a religious rather than a political figure. Jesus was more than a prophet who knew the woman's private life, or a teacher who had knowledge about God; Jesus was God and Savior. Through Jesus a right way to worship God was restored. We have to do so in spirit and truth. Though we can worship God alone anywhere we gather every Sunday morning to worship Him together. We do not come as spectators but as participants. The singing on the podium is not a musical performance, and the preaching is not for educational purpose only. Do we worship God in sincerity? When you are sitting on the pew does your mind drift away to other things you need to do after you leave the church – grocery shopping, sending your kids to their activities, homework, work, or even the Super Bowl this evening? Behavior can more or less reveals our attitude. When did you get up this morning? When did you arrive at our church? Did you prepare your heart when you entered the sanctuary? Those who are assigned to serve need to set a good

example. When you serve you need to arrive early to get everything done for worship. If the sanctuary is not ready no wonder people come in and chat, and the effect is contagious. If we truly know whom we worship then our attitude will be different.

3. 見證 Witness

Jesus is the only source of grace that can satisfy the deepest longing of our hearts. He is the Living Water that quenches our thirst. He is the Mediator through whom we worship God. Thirdly, Jesus motivates us to witness for Him. After the woman learned that Jesus was the Messiah, she could not wait to spread the news to others. She witnessed in [verse 29](#): “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” Without hesitation she invited everyone to meet with Jesus. She knew little about the gospel. All she said was: “Come and see!” Her reaction reminds me of the response of Andrew when Jesus met him and called him to be Jesus’ disciple. [John 1:41-42](#) read: 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus... The joy of salvation would drive us to witness for Christ. More than likely, the most zealous evangelists are the new believers. I am a shy person by nature. But I remember years ago after I received Christ I wrote letters to my whole class and invited them to an evangelistic meeting. A few years later one person received Christ and he thanked me for the invitation. Many years afterward another former classmate even became a pastor like me. God’s work is wonderful! When you first became a Christian you might be witnessing Christ to everyone you know. But gradually your enthusiasm cooled off. It might be because you were frustrated by the rejection you received or intimidated by the tough questions thrown at you. Don’t give up! One good way to maintain a passion for evangelism is to partner with another person – a brother with another brother, or a sister with another sister. You can pray together and encourage one another. Our Mandarin E-training program does not just teach the skills on sharing the gospel it is a good way to motivate one another when we visit non-believers as a team. How did the other Samaritans respond at the woman’s invitation? They went to meet Jesus and some of them believed in Him! As a result, they urged Jesus to stay a few more days for them to hear His teaching. Some of them needed time to find out more about this Messiah before making a decision to accept Him. In our gospel outreach, we should continue to invite those friends we visited to our fellowship meeting or seekers’ class Sunday school to study the Bible. The apostle John told us the effect of Jesus’ stay in [verses 41-42](#): 41 And because of his words many more became believers. 42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” The testimony of the woman attracted them to Jesus. However, a personal encounter with Jesus turned their curiosity to faith. Our personal testimonies are powerful tools in evangelism. However, God’s work in your life can be different from others. Testimonies can supplement but cannot replace God’s Word. We need to explain the gospel from the Bible to help seeker friends understand that they are sinners and they need Christ’s salvation. Though we may encounter different problems in life the biggest problem we all have is sin. Only Jesus can forgive our sins and reconcile us with God.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is the only source of grace that can satisfy the deepest longing of our hearts. Jesus did not need to pass through Samaria on His journey. He could have taken a different route. However, Jesus determined to pick the specific location and time of the day to stop and purposefully chatted with a woman. Dear friends: Jesus also has a date with you. Some time and somehow you meet a Christian friend and you are invited to a church. Jesus wants to be your Savior. He wants to restore your relationship as a child of God. In the past you may be blaming your ancestors or yourself for lost opportunities. In Christ you can have a new beginning. Brothers and sisters: even though Christ is your Lord do you still compare yourself with others? Do you still carry the burden of how people evaluate you? It is time to look at yourself from God's perspective. A song titled "Redeemed" may be encouragement and reminder for you.

“Redeemed” 我已被救贖 (by Big Daddy Weave 威夫老爸)

Seems like all I can see was the struggle
Haunted by ghosts that lived in my past
Bound up in shackles of all my failures
Wondering how long is this gonna last

放眼望去，所見只有掙扎
過去的重擔，彷彿魅影籠罩
無數的失敗，有若枷鎖網綁
艱難的日子，何時才會終結

All my life I have been called unworthy
Named by the voice of my shame and regret
But when I hear You whisper, "Child lift up your head"
I remember oh God, You're not done with me yet

我的一生，被視為一文不值
羞辱和遺憾的聲音為我命名
但當我聽到你低聲說：「孩子，抬起頭來！」
主啊我想到，你在我身上的工作仍未完成

I am redeemed, You set me free
So I'll shake off these heavy chains
Wipe away every stain now I'm not who I used to be
I am redeemed

我已被救贖，你釋放了我
我要掙脫鎖鏈，抹除一切污穢
不再是舊日的我
因我已被救贖