

Sermon for Sunday, June 28, 2009
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ARE YOU SATISFIED?
John 4:7-26

Introduction—I want it. Give it to me now.

Are you satisfied? If you spend much time around kids, you'll recognize that they're rarely satisfied. "I want juice." "I want a new toy."

Well, the other day, I came home and I heard my five year old Charlie singing, "I want the world...I want the whole world..." You know the movie, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. That little phrase got me thinking about my favorite character from that movie.

Maybe you remember Veruca Salt—she was the little British, spoiled brat. Her lines almost invariably begin with the words "I want..."

When searching for the golden ticket:

Veruca Salt: I wanted to be the first to find a Golden Ticket, Daddy!

When they meet the Oompa Loompas:

Veruca Salt: Hey, Daddy, I want an Oompa Loompa! I want you to get me an Oompa Loompa right away!

Mr. Salt: All right, Veruca, all right. I'll get you one before the day is out.

Veruca Salt: I want an Oompa Loompa now!

Of course, the climax of Veruca's wants comes when they arrive in the room with the geese that lay the golden eggs:

Mr. Salt: Wonka, how much do you want for the golden goose?

Willy Wonka: They're not for sale.

Mr. Salt: Name your price.

Willy Wonka: She can't have one.

Veruca Salt: Who says I can't?

Mr. Salt: The man with the funny hat.

She sings, "I want the world...I want the whole world...I want to lock it all up in my pocket...it's my bar of chocolate...give it to me now!"

Veruca is a little girl who is never satisfied. She wants the whole world...now!

Desire is a strange thing. It never goes away. It never stops. The desires of children just give us a clearer glimpse of the human condition. We are always wanting and never fully satisfied.

Our desires change as we grow older—from toys, to love, to success, to security, to peace—but desire itself never goes away.

Our story today is familiar. But, perhaps Veruca's theme can help us see it in a new light. The main point of our passage is this:

God offers ultimate satisfaction

1. Jesus offers ultimate satisfaction

John 4:7-26 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "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 is breaking all kinds of social conventions here. He's talking to a woman. He's talking to a Samaritan woman—a people pious Jewish considered half-breeds and idolaters. The Samaritans were the descendants of the Israelite riff-raff left in the land after the exile—a group that mixed with the local peoples and came up with an alternate form of Judaism. And Jesus says, "Give me a drink." A bold request.

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." ¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus' response is ambiguous. When he says "living water" he could either mean *running water* or literally *living water*. She takes him to mean *running water*, which is no surprise since Jacob's well was known to have fresh water that came from an underground stream. So, she says, basically, "OK, where are you going to get this running water, big shot? You don't have anything to dip with. Are you going to provide a well like Jacob did?" She is mocking Jesus, teasing him just a little. But, Jesus doesn't back off. Instead, he increases the tension by expanding on his earlier claim. Look at these amazing words beginning in verse 13:

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ 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." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

The woman calls what she considers to be Jesus' bluff. "OK, Bigshot, my life sure would be easier if I didn't have to come to this well in the middle of the day. Give me some of that water."

Application—not water, but a well

It is absolutely crucial that we pay close attention to Jesus' words here. Here is a woman who is thirsty. Jesus doesn't offer her a drink. He offers her a well. He says, "I will end your thirst forever." That is a far greater gift.

The problem, of course, is that Christians are just like everyone else: we want things. My wife and I have been trying to sell our house since last August. Our third child will be here in two weeks and our house has two bedrooms. Do the math and you can see why we want a new house.

We got a contract on our house last Sunday. We put a contract on a new house on Monday. You would think we are satisfied, right?

Nope, not really. We are tempted to think about the new stuff we want in the new house.

The challenge for us in this whole process is to believe that God's intention is to satisfy us. To give us not necessarily what we want but what we need.

We're often like children who think that candy will satisfy. Parents know better. God knows what will lead us down the path to ultimate satisfaction not just what will quench our thirst today.

You see, in any situation we may be asking for water when God's intention is to give us a well. Our thirst is real. Our desires are real. Often we desire good things. But God's intention is not to merely quench our thirst but to lead us into ultimate satisfaction, to end our thirst.

I don't know what you want. But I know that if you belong to God through Jesus Christ that you will find ultimate satisfaction in God. I don't know what form that will take. It takes different forms for all of us. But the source of ultimate satisfaction is the same.

Even when we don't see how God will end our thirst, we know that we will. He is the source of all satisfaction, all joy, and He has given himself to us. God the Holy Spirit is the well springing up inside us to eternal life.

2. Jesus knows our real need, the source of our dissatisfaction

Jesus offers to end the thirst of the thirsty. He offers ultimate satisfaction. He tells us to simply ask for it.

But he doesn't just offer ultimate satisfaction to the thirsty. He offers it to sinners. Look with me in verse 16.

¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." ¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "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."

To have five husbands and be living with the sixth would be somewhat scandalous today. In first century Palestine it was unheard of. It seems cruel of Jesus to expose the woman in this way. Why does he do it?

She has misunderstood him to this point, taking his words about water and thirst literally. So, Jesus himself gets literal and goes directly to the point of this woman's greatest need. Her search for satisfaction has led her through five marriages and to a sixth man who is not her husband.

Her confession—"I have no husband"—leads Jesus to the sad place her thirst for relationship has led her. It is as though Jesus is saying: "You joke about not having to come to the well. But I'm talking about something deeper. I talking about the sort of thirst that would lead you to this absurd position you find yourself in—5 husbands and 6th man."

She needed to know that Jesus was offering something greater than mere water. He was offering something that addressed her deepest needs and longings. A satisfaction that transcended her sin and shame.

Illustration—hiding from our need

Some of you know me well enough to know that I love to read. By the end of a typical day, I'll have read anywhere from two to four hours. Now, because I love my wife more than I love books, for the last

several years I've had a book budget. That way it goes right. We have to place limits on our desires or we risk letting them run wild.

Well, there is a common scenario for me. I'm sometimes over budget at the end of the month. It happens for a variety of reasons. I go to the bookstore and intend to keep it within the budget but there's this one additional book that would be great to have. Or, because my budget includes music also, I "forget" that I've already purchased books earlier in the month when I download those couple albums.

Now, the funny thing about this is how hard I struggle to be honest with my wife about it. I mean, she is the one who puts our expenses into Quickbooks. She knows when I'm over budget. But I don't want to admit to myself or to her that I'm the sort of person who lacks this sort of self-control. I'm ashamed.

Application—we confess

The more I experience my wife's love and grace for me as a husband, the more easily I find it to confess my brokenness and need to her.

That's the way it is with Jesus. I don't know what you're ashamed of. I don't know what you're hiding. But I know that all of us have this tendency. We've been hiding from God and from each other ever since that day in the garden when we ate the forbidden fruit.

We hide because we are ashamed. We hide because we are guilty. We hide because we just can't believe that Jesus is who he says he is—the one who offers ultimate satisfaction even to sinners like you and me.

The Samaritan woman had to face her need. She said, "I do not have a husband." Jesus gently but clearly laid the whole truth before her eyes. Whatever reality of your brokenness you're hiding, you can take it to Jesus. He already knows. And, still, he offers ultimate satisfaction, ultimate joy, everlasting life.

3. Jesus is the way to ultimate satisfaction

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

The conversation has taken two sharp turns—one initiated by Jesus, this one by the woman. And, in both cases, it may seem like the subject is changing, but it is not. Now that Jesus has exposed this woman—her sin and her shame—this is the next logical topic. You see Jesus has offered her ultimate satisfaction, a satisfaction that transcends even her sin and shame. But, he is a Jew and she is a Samaritan.

Her response is sincere and personal. She says, in effect, "How can this be?" The place of worship is the place of fellowship with God, the place of forgiveness. "How can this be that I am to receive this gift? You Jews say I have to worship in Jerusalem, but we worship here."

Jesus' answer cuts to the heart of her question and dissolves her reservations.

²¹ Jesus declared, "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.

Jesus does not deny that the Samaritans should be worshiping in Jerusalem. By refusing to follow the Jewish scriptures, they are worshiping in ignorance. But a time is coming and is here when these debates will be pointless because Jesus is opening up a completely new path into God's presence.

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."

There has been much debate about what Jesus means by spirit and truth, here. When Jesus says, "Yet a time is coming and has now come...", we see what he means. The time that has come is the time of Jesus' arrival. He is the revelation of God, his Word that reveals the truth of who God the Father is. He is the one who will die on the cross, rise from the dead, and pour out his Spirit on the church. So, what Jesus is saying here, subtly, is that He, not the temple, is the measure of whether or not someone gains access to the Father. He is the path to ultimate satisfaction.

The Samaritan woman's response shows that she sees something of the Messianic implications of Jesus' words. Look at verses 25 and 26:

²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." ²⁶ Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Conclusion

What a shock! She came to the well that afternoon just to draw water, to do so without the mocking gaze of the people in her city. She met this man, this Jewish man who asked her for a drink of water. He then offered her complete satisfaction, a supply of water that would never run dry. It was all so strange. And then he exposed her secret, the shame that isolated her from God and everyone else. He had approached her and offered her this satisfaction knowing all along who she was.

But there was this problem. How was *she* to receive such a gift? A Samaritan woman, living with a man not her husband. A new way of worship was coming into the world, direct access to God, the source of all satisfaction. This man, Jesus, the Messiah was the way to everything she'd ever dreamed.

At the end of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, Willy says to Charlie:

"Don't forget what happened to the man who suddenly got everything he ever wanted."

Charlie said, "What?"

Wonka, "...he lived happily ever after."

It sounds like a fairy tale...and it is. But it is a true fairy tale. We were created to find our ultimate satisfaction in God, fulfillment beyond our wildest dreams. Quit settling for just a drink of water. Go to the well. Jesus will lead you there.