

The Bad Samaritan (Evening Service)

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you so much for today. We thank you so much for this wonderful story in your gospel. Lord, we pray that we can meet you afresh today. In your precious name, amen.

How's everyone doing tonight? Good, good, very good. My name is Tad in Bowden. I'm one of the directors of student ministries here at St. John's, along with my wonderful wife, Nicole, and I have a little news to tell you. We are pregnant.

So there is a third... Yes, it's amazing. I wish I could have gotten to preach the Nicodemus passage. That would have been a lot better to segue into. But let's start. We don't have a lot of time, and we have a lot to cover in this passage. So we are doing this series called Meet Jesus.

And this series is both a kind of foundation and a springboard into CCQ. How many of you know what CCQ is? Okay, like four of you. That's great.

CCQ is a four-week kind of workshop that we are doing as a church. It stands for Connecting Content and Questions, and it's meant to equip us as a church to do evangelism in our city or in our workplace or in our neighborhoods, wherever it is. It's meant to equip us to do evangelism.

[1 : 32] And evangelism is all about telling our friends and neighbors about who Jesus is, what he came to do, and what difference he makes in our lives.

So you see why this series, Meeting Jesus, is important. It's important because if we are going to tell others about Jesus Christ, then we need to remind ourselves as a congregation that when people, just like you and I, when we meet Jesus, when they actually encounter his love and grace, that their lives change forever.

Why? Why? Why does that happen? Why is it that when people have a genuine encounter with Jesus Christ, their lives change?

There are a number of reasons, but I think one of the biggest reasons is that Jesus Christ, like no one or nothing else in this world, gets at our heart.

And by heart, I don't mean the emotions. I don't just mean the emotions or our feelings. This isn't some sentimental thing. I mean the biblical concept and the idea of heart.

[2 : 52] According to the Bible, the heart is the seat of the mind and the will and the emotions. The heart is the very center of who we are as human beings.

One author, James K.A. Smith, who wrote a series of books on this, said that the heart is like an internal compass in each and every one of us that orients us in a direction towards a vision of life that we find desirable, that we want, that we think will bring us satisfaction and joy and peace.

You see, here's the thing. Whatever the heart most wants out of life, the mind will find reasonable, the emotions will find valuable, and the will will find doable.

You see, here's the only point that I want to make tonight. Jesus changes lives because he changes hearts, the very center of who we are, the core of who we are as people.

He captivates us. He compels us, draws us in, and if we allow him, he will enter into the deepest parts of us, reorient our longings, our loves, our very lives, and transform the very core of who we are as people.

[4 : 16] This is amazing. This is the gospel. But here's the question before us. How does Jesus do it, right? How does he do it?

I think I've been a Christian for, I don't know how long, maybe seven or eight years or maybe more, but I kind of forget sometimes how he does it. How does he get at our hearts?

What does he offer the human heart that no one else or nothing else in this world can offer? Our text for today, thankfully, answers these very important questions.

And if you're taking notes, the two of you who take notes, here's the thing. The passage breaks down into three sections. So the first section, verses four to 15, deals with the idea of water. And it shows how Jesus addresses our hearts' deepest longings. The second section, verses 16 to 26, deals with the idea of worship, and it shows us how Jesus addresses our hearts' love, or what the heart loves and trusts.

[5 : 29] The third section, verses 27 to 42, deals with the idea of witness. And it shows us how Jesus addresses what our heart longs to live for.

So water, worship, witness, longing, love, and living. Three W's, three L's. I love alliteration. Okay, let's dive in. Section one, four through 15. Here we go. Our story begins with Jesus and his disciples.

They are leaving Judea, which is in the south, and they are going to Galilee, which is in the north. And on their way, they have to pass through Samaria.

Now, this little detail should strike us. It should stop us. Because you need to know a little bit about the background to appreciate what's going on here.

[6 : 26] You see, to Jews, to Jews like Jesus and his disciples, Samaritans were viewed as children of political rebels, racial half-breeds, whose religion was tainted and defiled.

These were children, according to Jews, who intermarried with the Assyrians when they captured Samaria in 722 to 721 BC.

They built a rival temple in Mount Gerizim and developed their own religious practices based on the teachings of just the Pentateuch. They did not see the other books of the Old Testament as a valid source of God's revelation.

So many Jews would not even eat with Samaritans on Samaritans' home turf. Most of them just avoided it completely. They would fear that this would defile them.

You see, and this fear was intensified if the Samaritan was a woman. In about a generation from now, Jewish leaders would codify a law that reflected that all Samaritan women are perpetually unclean and should be avoided at all costs.

[7 : 46] But yet here is Jesus crossing social barriers, political barriers, racial barriers, and gender barriers just to reach the lost.

There's something to learn here. So here is Jesus sitting at this well in the heat of the day. He's thirsty. He doesn't have anything to draw water with. And then out in the distance, he sees someone approaching.

Who does he see? A Samaritan woman carrying a water jar. She is by herself coming to draw water.

And the text tells us what? That she does this. It tells us a little bit before that she does this at noon. Once again, a very striking detail.

This at noon thing, at midday. So you see, women normally gathered water from wells either early in the morning, before the sun came up, or at night, after it went down.

[8 : 53] And they did it in groups. This woman, however, was alone, getting water in the heat of the day. This tells us one thing, and Jesus knew it, that this woman is a moral and social outcast.

Yet Jesus Christ still engages with her. This is amazing. Why? Why does Jesus engage with her? Why doesn't he avoid her? Why doesn't he do what's customary? Because I believe that when Jesus saw this woman approaching with the water jar by herself, I believe he saw something else going on.

I believe that he saw her heart. He saw a heart that was broken, that was weighed down, that was isolated, that was lonely.

He saw a heart with an aching void deep within her soul that needed to be satisfied. So what does he do? He asks her for a drink, and then a conversation that will transform her life ensues.

[10 : 01] You see, friends, in this conversation, Jesus is trying to show us something very true about the human heart.

He's trying to show us that we are all thirsty. Each and every one of you, myself included, we all are deeply thirsty.

we all have deep longings within our heart, deep thirst in our soul that nothing on this earth can satisfy. He's trying to show us that each and every one of us tries to satisfy those longings by putting the bucket of our hearts in the wells of our own making.

And we try to drink from it, thinking it will quench our parched soul, but it never does. We are always left feeling thirsty.

Each and every one of us, we must understand, have deep thirsts. And I'm going to list off a few. Tim Keller says these. I took these from Tim Keller. Keller says that we all have at least three fundamental thirsts.

[11 : 11] The first is that we all thirst for things like purpose. We all want to know who we are, what we are meant to do, and to know that our life is going to make an impact.

So we put the bucket of our souls into the wells of things like school, our career, or some great social cause. And we think, we hope, we pray, that it will bring us lasting joy and satisfaction and purpose.

But it never lasts. The cause changes or fizzles out. The career gets interrupted. In school, there's always someone smarter.

We are still left thirsty. We thirst for things like love. We all long to be known and loved. We long for someone who is always there, always patient, always willing to listen to us and accept us and love us.

So we dip the bucket of our souls in things like relationship, in men, in women, in husbands, in wives, in children, whatever it is.

[12 : 20] But here's the thing, if any of you have been married for any stretch of time or been in a relationship or been in a friendship, you know one thing, is that people are imperfect. That people will break your heart.

And what happens in those moments, we are still left thirsty. And we all thirst for things like peace of conscience. We all struggle with guilt.

We all do. Maybe you've cheated in school or fudged the numbers at work. Maybe you've stolen something, lied, looked at something you shouldn't have looked at.

Whatever it is, we all to one degree or another struggle with this idea of guilt. So what do we do? We go to counselors. We try to numb it out. We try and lie to ourselves.

But no matter how much our counselor tries to tell us, no, this wasn't your fault. It's okay. You shouldn't feel guilty about this. We still feel guilty. Or how much we numb ourselves out or how much we lie or try and cover it up, the guilt remains.

[13 : 24] Our hearts are left thirsty. You see, Jesus is telling this woman and he's telling us as well, he's saying, listen, I'm telling you a deep truth about the reality of what it means to be human.

I'm telling you that there is a craving deep within your heart, deep within your soul that cannot be dealt with in anything you find here on earth. If you put the bucket of your soul down in anything else, any other cause, any other relationship, and you drink from it, you will go thirsty again.

I promise you, you need to see that you're not just made for earth, you're made for heaven too. And the only way that your soul will truly be satisfied is if you come to me.

And if you come to me and drink of the water I give you, you will never go thirsty again. That is quite the promise, isn't it?

You will never go thirsty again. So here's the question that I want to ask Jesus. What is this water that you give us? And Jesus tells us.

[14 : 34] He says it is living water. It is living water. What does that mean? What does living water mean? Water is, in the ancient Near East, it's obvious in this desert region.

In the ancient Near East, the water was a metaphor for life, eternal life, which means a quality of life. Jesus is saying that when you come to me, the new quality of life that I will give you will quench your soul's thirst.

For example, you will get a true sense of purpose because through me you can meet God personally and discover what you were created for. You will find true love because God is a perfect Father who is always there, always patient, always welcoming and accepting, and never self-absorbed.

And you will find peace of conscience. Why? Because I have dealt with your sin and lived the perfect life. Because on the cross I thirsted, I endured the intense heat of my Father's wrath so that you could enjoy the fresh springs of eternal life.

But there's more, Jesus says. But there's more. Ooh, there's always more. Jesus says, I'm not just giving you this living water, I'm giving you a spring as opposed to a well.

[16:04] You see, living water is water that bubbles up fresh from a spring as contrasted with this stagnant water of a cistern. It's a kind of vigorous stream, a fountain that issues forth into eternal life.

And what Jesus is saying that if you come to him and accept the gift that he gives you, he will plant a fountain of living water in you that will never, ever be able to be put out.

And it will become a river in you that gets rid of all the filth in your life and it satisfies your heart's deepest longings. longings. Here's what I want to ask.

How many of you, how many of you are trying to go about, right now, trying to go about to satisfy the longings in your heart with the wells of your own making?

How many of you are dipping the buckets of your soul into things that you know in your heart of hearts are not really bringing you satisfaction, the kind of satisfaction you're longing for?

[17:13] If that's you, all you have to do, this text is telling us, is come to Jesus and accept the gift. It's nothing you do, it's everything he's done. Accept the gift that he has to offer.

Amazing. So we've seen this first section, how Jesus uses the waters to show us how he alone can satisfy our heart's deepest thirst and longing. Now we look at the second section which deals with worship and this idea of how he deals with our love.

Is everyone with me so far? Okay, here we go. Worship 16 to 26 for those of you taking notes. Not surprisingly, in the text, the woman says, Jesus, I want this water, right?

I want this water. I don't want to keep coming back to this well and drawing water and I don't want to thirst again, right? But she doesn't really quite get it. And then Jesus asks her to do something which kind of perplexes a lot of commentators and a lot of commentators differ on why Jesus just asks her this random thing, right?

What does he do? He says to her, go get your husband. Why? Why does he do that? Because Jesus needs to deal with something.

[18:32] He needs to get at the thing that is preventing this woman from receiving the true living water that she doesn't even know yet that she truly longs for.

You see, this woman had longings in her heart, longings for love and security like we all do and she had gone about trying to satisfy those longings by engaging in a string of relationships with six different guys.

And Jesus is saying to her, listen, and this is the most compassionate conversation you could imagine, saying, listen, I don't think you understand how deeply thirsty you really are.

You still think I'm talking about living, literal water. I'm not. He's saying to her, you're going from man to man to try and satisfy something deep within your heart and we have to get at the root of that. Plus, you're miserable. You're isolated and you're lonely. The thing that you're investing your life in is bringing you all, they're not bringing you the kind of satisfaction you're longing for.

[19:44] You have to come to terms with the harsh truth that your heart is loving and trusting in these relationships to give you only what God can give you.

In other words, Jesus is saying this, you're worshiping something else besides God and that is a serious problem. That's what the Bible would call idolatry.

And as Tim Keller says in a wonderful book called Counterfeit Gods, he says, idolatry, and we see this in the book of Romans, idolatry is the sin, the sin, underneath all other sins.

It's what we, what our heart truly loves, truly trusts to bring us joy and satisfaction, the things that only God can give us.

So thus, we enter the topic of worship. So most of us think, most of us think that worship is something that only religious people do.

[20:48] It's kind of that boring thing, like we get up, we sing songs, we do liturgy, whatever. It's just what religious people do. But worship is a reality we all engage in all the time.

Whether you're an atheist, a secular person, or whatever, we all worship. To worship in the Greek, the Greek word proskuneo, all it means is to recognize someone or something as having superior value.

value. And when you recognize someone or something as having superior value, your whole posture and attitude towards that thing changes, and you begin to invest in it because you have seen how that thing could change your life.

Let me give you one example of how this works out in everyday life. Let's say, and I know this example because it happened to me, except, okay, I'll tell you. So let's say your grandpa gives you

a watch, right?

And you're like, okay, this is an old watch, I guess it's kind of cool. And you're like, whatever. And so you throw it in your sock drawer. Yes, I did this. Okay, throw it in your sock drawer. Okay? So you don't think of anything, right?

[22 : 01] You don't think it's anything. But then, imagine, a watch expert comes to your house, finds the watch, and assesses it. And he tells you that this is a very rare and valuable watch.

Son, this was in the early part of the 20th century, made in this rare part of Europe, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's amazing, right? The Swiss made it. It was so great. It's got all these bells and whistles.

This is a seriously valuable watch. And what if he tells you that it's worth \$50,000? Woo! Oh, buddy. What would you do?

Even if he was like, it's worth \$10,000. So you'd freak out, right? What would you do? What would happen? Everything changes. Your attitude and your stance towards that thing changes.

You get it out of the drawer. You dust it off. And then you begin to admire it. Think of the value of it. And then you think of the implications of your life now that you know the true value of it.

[23 : 04] And then you begin, what? To invest in it. You clean it. You get it fixed up. You even buy a safe. You see what's happening here.

You have discovered something as having high value. And because of that discovery, your attitude and posture towards that thing changes. And then you fill your mind with the worth of that thing and the implications for your life.

And then you begin to invest in it. You are, in this little instance, worshiping. Does this make sense? Does everyone follow? So here's the thing.

This dynamic of worship, this dynamic that we see, is at play in each and every one of our hearts. It's a live option all the time.

We cannot help but worship. Back to James K.A. Smith, he wrote a series of books, a trilogy, dealing with this very thing, arguing that human beings cannot not worship.

[24 : 06] We're worshiping all the time. We're either worshiping God or something else. We always worship. We all have someone or something that we recognize as having high or even ultimate value for our lives.

Someone we think will satisfy our deepest needs and longings. We all have someone or something we're investing our time and energy in. Something that we're giving ourselves to.

Something that we love and we trust more than God. This could be anything. Let me list off a few for you. This could be anything. It could be things like your family, your children, your career, making money, achievement, critical acclaim, a romantic relationship, your children, peer approval, the beauty or the brains, a great political or social cause.

It could even be success in Christian ministry. We can worship anything and anything can become an idol in our hearts.

And so this is what Jesus is saying. He's saying, if you allow your heart to love and to trust and to worship anything like this, if you look to them for your hope and meaning and fulfillment, you will always be left feeling empty and less than who I created you to be.

[25 : 31] He's saying what? You must worship the Father through me. That is the only way for our hearts to truly be fulfilled.

He's telling us this, the dynamic of worship that you guys do all the time, that we do all the time.

He's saying, instead of assigning God high value, assign Him ultimate value.

And instead of investing a lot into God, invest everything that you have in God. Everything. Why? Because in worship we become fully alive.

We become who we were created to be. But here's the question, and this is once again the question that I want to ask Jesus. Okay, I get the importance of worship, true worship, but how do I do it?

How do I do it? Jesus tells us, He tells us first, you need to know something. You need to know that the hour, the hour in John's gospel always points to Jesus' death on the cross.

[26 : 34] He's saying, my death on the cross has changed worship forever. Now, I am the true temple through which you come to God. You don't need these other temples.

And he is saying, when you approach God, and when you begin to apprehend or get His worth, His supreme worth, and you begin to stand before Him in all His glory, you don't have to feel guilt or you

don't have to feel shame.

Why? Because I dealt with that on the cross. That's the thing you need to know. The second thing is this. He's saying, when you worship, you need to worship in spirit and in truth.

What does that mean, spirit and in truth? It means this. It means taking the truth. It means letting the truth of who God is and what Jesus Christ has done, and it means let the beauty of it, the value of it, fill your heart until it permeates every part of your being.

It means investing everything, bringing everything to Him, your sins, fears, your hopes, your dreams, and then allowing the spirit of the living God to point your heart towards Jesus Christ.

[27 : 56] This is true worship. This is the worship that transforms the heart. This is the worship that God seeks. Now friends, let me ask you a question as a question that I ask myself in preparing for this sermon and praying before the Lord, coming before Him and searching my heart and saying, do I really worship you?

Do I value you as supreme? Do I invest everything I have in you? Do I actually trust you and love you? And the reality is, most of the time, yes, I'm up here preaching, but most of the time, it's hard. It's hard to worship God. Let me ask you this. Are you allowing your hearts to love and to trust things more than God?

How many of us are worshiping other things besides Him? Guys, the answer is to these things.

It's so, so simple. It's all we need to do is come to Him, fill our mind with the true worth of who He is and what He has done for us.

[29 : 05] Bring everything that we have to Him and let Him heal our heart. Does this make sense? Last section. We're almost done.

So we've seen the water. We've seen the worship. Ooh, baby, good stuff. And now we go into the witness section, which is verses 27 to 42. See, friends, here it is.

We all have a desire deep within us, deep within our hearts to do something great. Am I right?

Something that will make a lasting impact in this world. We all want our lives to actually count for something.

We all want to make a difference. You see, friends, when this woman first meets Jesus, she was a moral and social outcast. Basically, a nobody.

She didn't have a lot to live for. Her vision of her life, I imagine, was probably quite small. She probably thought that any chance of making a real difference, of doing something great, of changing the world and all that stuff, had long since passed.

[30 : 10] She was far too gone, I'm sure she thought. Boom. Okay. But then she meets, but then here's the, this is, I love this.

Then she meets Jesus Christ. She meets him. She has a personal encounter with him. And what happens? Her life is completely transformed in this short little conversation.

What happens? She leaves her water jar and then goes and tells the whole town about what Jesus has done for her. She has tasted the living water of Jesus.

She doesn't need, she doesn't need this literal water anymore. She's tasted it. I'm going to leave this water jar. She has entered in, even briefly into worship of the living God.

She's tasted it, seen his beauty, seen his glory. There is nothing like it when the heart beholds it.

And she has received this fountain deep within her heart that is now bubbling up and is overflowing and pouring out over into this town.

[31 : 17] And she cannot be stopped. It's awesome. And I love this, right? She doesn't feel guilt. She doesn't feel shame going back into this town. There is this new sense of boldness.

Come, look at this man who's told me everything I've ever done. He's redeemed my past. He's forgiven my sins. It's amazing. Could this be the Christ?

She knows that Jesus somehow dealt with her guilt and covered up her shame. She can go into the town and boldly declare how Jesus has changed her life. Do you see what's happening? Jesus has transformed this woman from an isolated outcast to a bold evangelist.

She has become a powerful witness to the transforming power of God in her own life. Friends, if we're going to do a thing on evangelism, let me tell you the most effective form of evangelism is not winning arguments, not even defending the faith, which is important.

It's just about telling your story about God, about how God has changed your life, how he has transformed your life. Jesus has gotten at this woman's heart.

[32 : 33] He has transformed it and given this woman a whole new life to live into. And now she is tasting the eternal satisfaction of telling others about him.

She is making an eternal and lasting impact. This is what she was made to do. Friends, I'm telling you what, there is nothing in this world more satisfying, no food, as Jesus says in verse 34, no food more satisfying than to do God's will for our lives.

And what is that will? Well, according to that text, it's a whole different thing, but one of the wills of God for our lives is that we join him on our mission, on his mission to restore and redeem and renew a lost and broken and hurting and, dare I say, sinful world.

His will for our lives is that we would share with our friends and our neighbors and our colleagues how Jesus has changed our lives, how he has transformed our hearts.

That is the adventure we are made for. That is the life we were created to live. That is the kind of life our heart longs for. Amen.