



John 4:27-38
“The Harvest”

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men,

29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."

33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?"

34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

35 "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

36 "And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

37 "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'

38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."

Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus did many things that surprised and sometimes even shocked the sensibilities of his disciples. They were shocked because Jesus was departing from the norms of Jewish society and the traditions of the elders, and the customs of the Rabbis or what we could sum up as “the traditions of men” in order to get back to God’s agenda and the teaching of scripture. In order to complete the mission He was sent to earth to complete, He needed to sweep away all of the useless additions and divergences from biblical religion that had been added during the centuries between the return of the Jewish people from exile in Babylon and the Birth of Christ. He also needed to do that to show His disciples they must follow their master by doing the same thing.

John tells us that when he and the disciples returned from from buying food for Jesus in the city, they were shocked to find him talking not only to one of the hated Samaritans, but to a woman. This was a huge break from the practice of Jewish men at the time. A prayer from the period which is still in the Jewish prayer-book says “*Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a woman, a Gentile, or a slave.*” And as for Rabbis one of the widely held rules was - “*Talk not much with womankind*” and sadly that included one’s own wife. Well here Jesus is breaking those man-made rules because the Good News is for all mankind, Jew and Gentile, Slave and Free, Male and Female.

The Samaritan woman in the meantime has been radically changed by her encounter with Jesus, we see that in the fact that while she came to the well expressly to get water, she abandons her waterpot and runs back to the city to tell her fellow Samaritans about Jesus. Now you remember this woman had come to the well at an odd time, probably because her scandalous history of multiple husbands and

boyfriends had made her an outcast, but now she doesn't care, she has been convicted of her sins and has ceased to be defensive about them as a result. She even admits that this man Jesus knew all about her messed up and sinful life. Gordon Keddie puts it well *"She openly admitted the exposure of her sin, with all the relief of someone who has faced herself honestly before God for the first time."* And then he has this profound and wonderful insight *"Conviction of sin is the end of concealing of sin."* But still with her past she isn't going to be dogmatic in her pronouncements to the elders, so she instead does something wise and winsome, she peaks their curiosity – *"Could this be the Christ?"*

What a contrast this newly converted woman is with Christ's disciples! They had just been in same city, but it had never even occurred to say Nathaniel to say *"Come see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"* Because these were unbelieving Samaritans, not nice acceptable Jews. Nope, the disciples didn't leave *their* waterpots behind, they went into the city to buy food, they bought food, they left. Ah, Brothers and Sisters how often it is that the newly converted put those who have been following Christ for a while to shame with their zeal for evangelism. They may not know nearly as much about Him, but they are so eager to share what they have with others.

Jesus meanwhile wants to draw their attention to the real work God has for them,

So Jesus says I have food, and of course, he doesn't mean literal food like the disciples assume – how did he get food - he means that that which sustains Him and keeps Him pressing forward is to do the will of His father and finish the work He has been sent to earth to do. When he uses the phrase finish His work – Jesus was already knew that *work would not be finished until the moment on the cross when He said, "It is finished!"* That work of saving souls is His priority and he wants his disciple to make that work their priority as well, and to know that God has not called them and gifted to fetch sandwiches and coffee – the Apostles, although they like us are sometimes slow on the uptake, do learn this lesson incidentally and when in Acts chapter 6 the need for people to distribute food to widows in the church we read: *"Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;"but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

But at this point in time, the Apostles still have several problems 2 of the mains one were:

- 1) **As we've seen they are still buying into the traditions of the culture**, that is why they are shocked that their teacher, their Rabbi was talking to a woman, and why it never even *occurred* to them to evangelize Samaritans.
- 2) **There was no sense of the urgency of their mission**, now part of that is forgivable, they were probably still thinking in terms of the typical Rabbi student relationship. The Rabbi lectured and made observations, the students followed him around for many years and provided for His needs, they listened and they learned. Paul for instance had essentially grown to manhood studying at the feet of a famous Rabbi named Gamaliel. But you see Jesus knows his time with them will be short not more than three years of training from beginning to end, and that theirs will be more of a working apprenticeship where theory will be put immediately to use in ministry as they go from place to place.

But its more than just the relatively short amount of time that he will be with them on earth that should be driving their urgency, it is the pressing need of the people all around them. So Jesus points this out using a saying of the day in verse 35 to try to wake them up: *"Do you not say, 'There are still four*

months and then comes the harvest” Now that saying made reference to the fact that four months elapsed between the end of seed-time and the beginning of harvest. Kids, seed time was when they went out to plant or sow the seeds, which they did by taking a bag and throwing them out. And the harvest was when they went out to cut or *reap* the plants that grew in the field. And what could a farmer do in the intervening time to spend up the process? Nothing! It was God’s cycle.

So what that saying meant is *there is no need to hurry, you can’t get around the period of waiting between sowing the seed and reaping the harvest*. That is true in the physical world in agriculture. But not in SPIRITUAL world. There the amount of time between sowing the seed of gospel and reaping a harvest could be immediate.

In this case it was. **LOOK!** Here it is interesting to note that in Palestine there is not one crop that is *White* when it is ready for reaping, but here the inhabitants of the village were coming out, most of the clothing of the time was undyed white robes so there it is a harvest of people coming out to be reaped. Now the apostles hadn’t done the sowing. That had been done by Jesus and the woman at the well. But they must be involved now in the reaping process. They were about to enter into that labor. They must not be lazy. Left too long without reaping, the harvest is ruined. The work is urgent! Sure it is that God brings in the harvest but they are the agency, the workers whom God has appointed.

Acts 27:21 But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

22 "And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

23 "For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,

24 "saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

25 "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

26 "However, we must run aground on a certain island."

...

30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow,

31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.

The sower and the reaper are not in competition. 1 Cor. 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. He stresses this point when he says that others have labored – John the Baptist and his followers sowed seed, **it is appropriate that I often profit from the prior work of Baptists myself**, before them the prophets sowed the seed, you have now entered into their **labors**. *Jesus tells us the sower and the reaper, because they are doing the will of the father both receive the same reward and they both rejoice, because while they have different parts to play, what is their shared objective?*

The HARVEST! The sower doesn’t go into the field for the sheer joy of throwing seed around. The reaper doesn’t go there because he says I like to cut things, both of them go into the field looking forward to the harvest. In the same way, a preacher doesn’t or at least shouldn’t be preaching because he likes the sound of his own voice, the evangelist shouldn’t be evangelizing because he wants to boast about souls he has one. The harvest and the desire to do the will of their Master should be what animates both of them.

To put it in the simplest possible terms, we should be sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, and

praying, because we want to see a rich harvest of souls brought into the kingdom. Because we want to see men and women from all around the world go to heaven and not hell.

3 Applications:

1) Few people today, even amongst evangelicals know the name JC Ryle. He was an enormously talented man, a great athlete and a scholar, he entered the church of England, and could have had any position he wanted. He lived in a time when the church was sinking under the weight of liberalism of and supernaturalism. But he was an evangelical who loved the Lord and wanted to make him known. So he chose to become the bishop of the newly created see of Liverpool, a scruffy, grimy port city, clogged with sin, with almost no evangelical presence and he labored there for the rest of his life

“That which the Samaritan woman here did, all true Christians ought to do likewise. The Church needs it. The state of the world demands it. Common sense points out that it is right. Every one who has received the grace of God, and tasted that Christ is gracious, ought to find words to testify of Christ to others. Where is our faith, if we believe that souls around us are perishing, and that Christ alone can save them, and yet remain silent? Where is our charity if we can see others going down to hell, and yet say nothing to them about Christ and salvation? We may well doubt our own love to Christ, if our hearts are never moved to speak of Him. We may well doubt the safety of our own souls, if we feel no concern about the souls of others.”

“The man who souls for Christ is at work on something with lasting consequences. His work is for eternity.” – Leon Morris. Of what other work could we say the same thing? Whatever field of work you are in, no matter how important it is, will the product or the service you render last for eternity?

2) In the process of that harvest, never think of yourself as in competition with any other laborer in the kingdom. Think of yourselves as all the working together for a common master to reap his crop in his field. You don't bundle together your sheaves and take them home and hide them, you put them in common lot. And remember ***Each Christian worker is dependent for success on the labors of others***

One of the things that has made me more aware of that than ever is laboring here in Fayetteville where I only get to see each person for a few years at most, it breaks my heart to see families whom I love go, but I have to view it as a “Sending ministry” and remember you are not my little lambs, you are Christs, and that He has many other shepherds who have helped me in my labors. Nine times out of ten, I know I am building on someone else's foundation, even if its only a radio preacher or someone who handed out a tract. But I put on the next part of the building and send you on to the next builder, its Christ's Temple that's being built, I'm just a workman.

3) What of you? Have you ever left your waterpot and gone to tell others of Christ? Most people don't because they don't really know Him. ***“Conduct like that here described is doubtless uncommon in the present day. Rarely do we see a person so entirely taken up with spiritual matters, that attention to this world's affairs is made a secondary matter, or postponed. And why is it so? Simply because true conversions to God are uncommon. Few really feel their sins, and flee to Christ by faith. Few really pass from death to life, and become new creatures. Yet these few are the real Christians of the world. These are the people whose religion, like the Samaritan woman's, tells on others. Happy are they who know something by experience of this woman's feelings, and can say with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ!" Happy are they who have given up***

everything for Christ's sake, or at any rate have altered the relative importance of all things in their minds! "If your eye be single your whole body shall be full of light." (Philip. 3:8; Matt. 6:22.)- Ryle

What of you?

NKJ 2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Jer. 8:20 "The harvest is past, The summer is ended, And we are not saved!"