

**John 4.31-38**  
**What's On Your Plate?**

**Aim:** for us to do God's will by feasting on the spiritual food of eternal life in the souls of men.

**Scripture Reading:** John 6.26-40

**INTRODUCTION:**

When our kids go to Alabama we swap vehicles with my mother-in-law, so over the last two weeks I have been driving my mother-in-law's SUV. Most of you know that I'm not much of a mechanic and so when the battery in our van needed to be jumped two years ago I wrongly crisscrossed the jumper cables and when I did I fried my radio and DVD system in the van. When I did this smoke began to pour into the van from the air vents and it quickly filled up the van while the family was still in it. Not one of the most shining moments of my life. But I digress.

I fried our radio, so outside of our cell phones we haven't listened to much music in the van for the last two years. Well when I had my mother-in-law's vehicle last week I was listening to KLUV and there was this song that came on and what I remember about the song was it was filled with questions. Questions like if you remembered when you first came to Christ and how you didn't care what others thought of you, but you kept telling people about Jesus. Do you remember those days, he would sing? Those days when the church was more than a place, people were more than faces, and Jesus was more than a name. You would do whatever you had to in order to get to the gathering as early as you could because you didn't want to miss a thing. Do you remember those days, he would sing.

There's no doubt that even the best of us in Christ have those seasons in our life where our love for Christ isn't burning as hot as it should or even as it once did. Just read the Psalms and listen to David's plea for God to restore him, to revive him, to satisfy him, to feed him, as he knows deep-down what he ultimately thirsts and hungers for and that is always for God.

Are you in one of those seasons of your life right now? Are your greatest moments in Christ something you have to remember way back in the past or is it happening right now? I'm talking about your love for Christ. Is the fire for your love for Jesus growing hotter and hotter or does it need to be rekindled?

The bible is filled with commands for us to not grow weary, to not lose heart, but to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58) We have those commands because there are times when our love grows cold and we need to be told, corrected, and admonished in Christ to rekindle the flame in our love for Jesus.

But this morning, right now, think about those moments in your life when everything else in the world was dim compared to your love for God; when everything else was dim compared to your pursuit after the righteousness of God in your life; when everything else was dim compared to seeking after God's holiness; when everything else was dim compared to striving and living after God's will in your life. I hope you don't have to remember back too far.

What is it that feeds you today? What is it that drives you? What is it that pushes you to do what you do today?

Jesus had something that fed Him. Jesus had something that was driving Him. Jesus had something that was pushing Him and motivating Him to do what He did. Jesus had a hunger and a thirst that was quenched by something that was not of this world. He had **food** that was not of this world. So what was it that fed Him? What was it that led Him to stoop so low in becoming a servant, a humble servant to sinners in this world?

**Let's read it together...John 4:31-38.**

**Title:** What's On Your Plate?

**Aim:** for us to do God's will by feasting on the spiritual food of eternal life in the souls of men.

## **Jesus Was Still Weary** (v.31)

**“Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’**

We’ve covered a lot of ground over the last few sermons in **John 4** as Jesus is in Samaria by this water well. But we can’t forget why He’s there. He had to go through Samaria because of His divine encounter with the Samaritan woman, but Jesus is also at the well not only because of a divine appointment, but because Jesus is also human. We are told that He’s weary, He’s tired, and He’s thirsty and possibly hungry. So His disciples, knowing that He was still weary from His journey, they encouraged Him to **eat** something.

If you remember the **disciples** had gone away into the city to buy food, possibly being instructed by Jesus to do so. We are told at this point, when Jesus declares Himself to the Samaritan woman the **disciples** came and heard Him reveal this to her. They had gone away to get **food** and now they were back. The Samaritan woman after hearing Jesus’ declaration of being the Messiah, the Christ she takes off to the city. She’s now gone. It’s now just the **disciples** and Jesus.

So the **disciple’s** attention is now back on why they had gone away; they had gone away to buy **food**. They now have their hands filled with **food** for them to eat and the **disciples** now encourage their **Rabbi to eat**. But what does Jesus say to them?

## **Mysterious Food** (v.32)

**“But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’”**

Jesus tells His **disciples** that He has some mysterious **food to eat that they do not know about**. In their minds they had just gone all the way into the city to buy **food**, so why in the world would Jesus send them out if He already had **food to eat**? So they began to ask each other, **“No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?”**

But Jesus in **verse 32** tells them He has **“food to eat...that they do not know about.”** Jesus tells them that they are ignorant of this **food** that Jesus is talking about to them. How many of you know that Jesus is altogether different? He is not of this world. He has **food** that He feeds on and unless He reveals what that **food** is...we too would remain in the dark.

So he reveals to them what this **food** is in **verse 34**.

### **His Food Is God’s Will** (v.34)

**“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.’”**

So **Jesus** tells His **disciples**, these men who were now physically and spiritually following Him what **food** was to Him. He says, **My food**; My meat; My bread; My drink; everything that sustains a man’s body for life, everything that gives a man energy for his life, everything that appeases a man’s hunger from his stomach and quenches a man’s thirst in his throat and that sustains him everyday...Jesus says to them, **My food**, all of this...**is to do the will of Him who sent Me**.

This is what I eat everyday that ultimately feeds My stomach and gives Me sustenance. This is what I drink everyday that ultimately quenches My thirst. **My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me**. My bread is God’s **will**. My drink is God’s **will**. My hunger in my stomach is filled with doing God’s **will**. My thirst is quenched with doing God’s **will**. **Jesus** is teaching them something that was already established many years ago.

When **Jesus** says this in **verse 34** to His **disciples** it immediately should have reminded them of **Deuteronomy 8.3**...when Moses tells the people of Israel...

**“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”**

There is a greater hunger in my life and in your life than physical **food** hunger. There is a greater thirst in my life and in your life than physical water thirst. It is a soul-hunger. It is a soul-thirst. And sadly just about everywhere in your life and my life we are bombarded to fix our eyes on that which is physical and temporal rather than that which is eternal. We are bombarded everyday in all kinds of ways to feed our hunger and to quench our thirst on the fleeting pleasures of this world.

Jesus is teaching His men that there is a greater hunger that exists in Him. And the only thing that can feed that hunger in Him **is doing the will of Him who sent Him**.

Jesus has different **food** to eat than the disciples are aware of at this point. He's teaching them to think beyond the bread, beyond the meat, and beyond the drink to remedy their weariness. He's teaching them that there is a greater source of strength that we are to eat and feed on.

For Jesus it is **doing and accomplishing God's will** in His life. So what is the **will of God**?

### **It's A Pleasure Thing** (v.34)

How much pleasure and satisfaction does a hungry and starving man take in eating? For a man who is weary and tired from a long journey he deep-down greatly longs to eat, to be fed, and to be nourished. We all know on some very small and finite level what it means to be hungry at times. We know what we feel like when we push ourselves past the normal lunch hour or the dinner hour and it's been awhile since we've eaten. There's that pang inside of us that tells our brain and our body that we must eat and we must eat soon. So we eat. We eat well. As a matter of fact we eat really well.

God has made us; He has made our bodies to eat **food**. God has made us to eat **food** and to enjoy eating food. God has made us to eat **food** for His glory because He is the great provider of our **food**.

**Matthew 6.25** “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Do not worry then, saying, what will we eat? Or what will we drink? Or what will we wear for clothing? For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

We give God the Father glory because He provides not only what we need but even those things we don't need, His abundance. We give thanks for all of those things, those **foods** we eat everyday at every meal because we know where they come from. In giving thanks and enjoying every meal we actually glorify God; the very One who watches over us and gives to us. **1 Corinthians 10.31** is for real.

**“Whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”**

Yes! You can eat and eat well to the glory of God. God the Holy Spirit through Paul says to do this. There should never be a bite you eat or a drink you take that is not bathed in glory to God. Everything we do is to be done for His glory as the great provider of everything good that we have.

But for Jesus in **John 4.32 & 34**...He's feasting not on bread. He's not drinking down water. He's feasting and drinking on something quite different than His **disciples**. He's feasting on the bread and water of His Father's **will**. Jesus is taking greater pleasure and satisfaction in doing His Father's **will** than He is in taking the time to actually eat **food**. Jesus is not only the most remarkable Man to ever live, but He's also the most remarkable Teacher who has ever taught.

He's teaching His **disciples** that there is indeed a greater hunger inside of Him. He's teaching them that there's a greater thirst inside of Him. He's teaching them that there's a greater meal to be eaten and enjoyed. He's teaching them that there is something greater on His plate than bread and meat.

But listen, Jesus doesn't deny the need to eat. But He shifts the focus of appetite onto something greater and eternal than the **food** that the **disciples** just bought. Jesus takes greater pleasure in this **food, the food of the One who sent Him**. Jesus glorifies His Father from eating the **food** on this plate...the plate of **food in doing the will of Him who sent Jesus**.

Can you imagine what His **disciples** were thinking at this point? What an incredible other-worldly teaching they were receiving from the greatest Teacher ever. Once again, just like the Samaritan woman was thinking about physical water, His **disciples** too were thinking about physical food, so He takes them Godward, vertical, and higher.

So He says in **verse 35**....

### **Lift Up Your Eyes** (v.35)

**“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”**

In **verses 35-38** Jesus will unfold more specifically what His **food** is...what **the will of the Father is**. And He unfolds it in agricultural terms. He says to them, **“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?’”**

What Jesus is most likely emphasizing is that there was a separation time between **sowing** the seed of a crop and **reaping** the fruit of those crops. That time was about four months between each other. That's the natural saying.

But Jesus spiritually now tells them in **verse 35**, **“Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”**

What these **disciples** would say and think about that which is natural, sowing seed and reaping a crop, Jesus explains to them in the spiritual.

He tells them to **lift up your eyes** so that they will see spiritually what is going on right before their very eyes.

**Jesus** wants them to see the people, the **field** of people, right here in Samaria who are ripe for the picking. They are ripe for belief in the Son of Man, they are ripe to believe in Jesus the Christ and to follow Him; even those people right here in Samaria. **Lift up your eyes**. See with your spiritual eyes, men, that those around you are a **field** that is **white for harvest**.

The **disciples** are now to think about every step of land that they walk on and every person that they meet as a **field**. They are to see with spiritual eyes now. They are to see the world of people, the nations as a **field**.

Well getting into this agriculture stuff, I contacted our resident agricultural expert this week (Brandon Sheridan) and I asked him what was the process of getting a **field** ready from beginning to end, in order to **reap a harvest**. He affirmed that every field must be tilled, it must be plowed, it must be seeded, and it must be watered. There's a definite strategy, from beginning to end, that goes into producing a crop in a **field**.

If Jesus wants His disciples to see people as the **field**, then those people as a **field** need to have their minds and hearts tilled up, they need to have their minds and hearts plowed with straight lines, they then need to have their minds and hearts planted with the seed of the gospel, and then they need to have their minds and hearts watered with the ongoing water of God's Word. And then and only then will that **field** need to be **harvested**, because God has caused the growth in that **field**; God has produced a crop. Folks, it's a spiritual **field**. God gave us farming, so that we can understand the process of what it means for God to save people and produce eternal life in people.

Jesus' **disciples** were going to be the sowers. They were going to be the laborers. They were going to be the reapers. They were going to be the harvesters. Jesus was taking their minds off of natural **food** and putting it on spiritual **food; the food of His Father's will**. The **Father's will** is going to consist of spiritual farming. It is going to be sowing the seed of the gospel in people's lives. It is going to be watering the gospel in people's lives. It is going to be reaping and gathering the fruit of the gospel in people's lives, which is born again worshipers of God.



**Jesus** tells His **disciples** that this is **My food**; this is My bread; this is My meat; this is My drink; it is to do My Father's will and My Father's will is to give eternal life to sinners. The Apostle Paul would say it like this...

**“it is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”**

Today, you and I, as disciples of Christ are all spiritual farmers. It's time for us to farm. So lift up your eyes and look at the field that is white for harvest.

Jesus closes out in **verse 36-38** by showing us that there doesn't need to be a time-gap between **sowing and reaping**.

### **All Are Rejoicing** (v.36-38)

**“Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor.”**

We will learn next time that many of the Samaritans in the city came out to see **Jesus** from the Samaritan woman's testimony to them. So perhaps at this time Jesus is telling his **disciples** to **lift up their eyes** so that they can see the field of people that are coming out to them from a distance. Jesus is teaching His disciples that they are about to receive wages, they are about to receive a sweet reward because they are about to gather fruit for life eternal in these people.

Jesus' disciples did not sow into their lives, but they are about to reap a harvest because there was someone who did sow into their lives. Therefore he who sows and he who reaps can rejoice together at the same time. In the natural world you have to wait four months between sowing and reaping. But in the spiritual world God can take the seed of the gospel and He can cause immediate spiritual growth in a person's life. That's why the sower and the reaper can rejoice together.

I read that in biblical times it was common for the ones who **sowed** the seed to be different from those who **reaped** the **fruit** and **gathered the harvest**. But Jesus is teaching His **disciples** that spiritual birth, spiritual growth, spiritual new life can be so miraculously quick that both the **sower** and the **reaper** are present **together** and can **rejoice together**.

The Apostle Paul alludes to this as well to the church in Corinth when he tells them...

**“What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.”**

The **disciples** were about to **reap a harvest** of souls in which they didn't even **sow** into these people's lives. They are simply going to **reap a harvest** based upon what others **sowed** and how others **labored**. So the **fields** that they are about to walk into; the people that they are going to be engaging have already been **sowed** into. The gospel seed has been planted and the gospel seed has been watered and the **disciples** are simply going to pick, and **gather in the fruit** of the labors of those who have gone before them.

I think Jesus has in mind the **laborers** of those Old Testament prophets who have **labored** in this culture for many years and that ended with John the Baptist and his ministry of preparing the way of the Lord. Jesus' **disciples** will soon **reap** where they did not **sow**.

This is the **food** that Jesus eats. This is the **food** that gives Him sustenance and strength. This is the **food** that is other-worldly. **My food**, he says, **is to do the will of Him who sent Me**. And God's will is for Jesus to gather in all of those who belong to Him. Jesus is the means of everyone's eternal life. We have life through Him. We have life in His life. We have life in His ministry of being the One who would die for the sins of the world. Behold Him!

Jesus' plate was filled with the food of God's will. His bread that He ate was to feed the soul's who were starving. His drink that He drank was to quench the soul's who were thirsty. Jesus' plate was filled with the food of God's will.

On the cross Jesus did His Father's will. On the cross Jesus accomplished His Father's work. The Father was working through His Son to create and make worshipers of Himself. This was Jesus' food. This was His bread. This was His meat. This was His drink. And He teaches His disciples that there is a greater hunger and a greater thirst that exists in Him. He came to do His Father's will and to accomplish His work.

This is what Jesus' plate would be filled with while here on earth. His plate was filled with the food of the Father's will. That food is bread for eternal life; meat for eternal life; water for eternal life. Jesus' plate was full. And His plate was full of God's will.

What is your plate filled with? We all hear of others from time to time that say their plate is full. Well this may be true, but what is their plate full of or full with? Is it full of God's will? Is it full of sowing the gospel into people's lives? Is it full of watering the gospel into people's lives? Is it full of reaping and gathering in the harvest of people's lives? Is it full of the labor of spiritual farming?

Listen, we can and we should always feed the hungry and give the thirsty something to drink, but if we fail to give them the Bread of Life and the Living water, what good have we really done? The will of God is to sow, labor, and reap the gospel in people's lives and then to rejoice and enjoy the harvest that God produces from our work.

I'm sure your plates are full. But what is your plate filled with? It may be time for you to clean some things off your plate, so that you can see that as a child of God there are already things on your plate that God wants you to do and to accomplish and complete in this life.

Some of us here probably have things on our plates that are not doing God's will, or accomplishing God's work. We are all spiritual farmers and unless you are sowing, watering, laboring, and reaping the gospel in people's lives you are not doing God's will.

It's time we work the works of God. It's time we lift up our eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Go into those fields and do the will of God!