

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

White for Harvest!

Late last year John and I noticed the cotton fields along the road to Tucker Maximum Security Unit white and ready for harvest. It was the most ripened cotton at one time that we had ever seen. And, we could not help but think of the scripture in today's lesson: *lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.* Jesus drew this picture of the harvest fields for the purpose of making a parallel to the harvest of souls for the kingdom of God. Over a period of time the fields on the road to the Max were harvested. But, but for some reason (we do not know why) cotton was left in the fields. It was sad to see week after week those remnants of cotton left behind because it reminds us of the souls that will be left behind if we are not careful to work in the Lord's harvest. **Matthew 9:37-38 (ESV)** ³⁷ *Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

Today, we go back to the well in Samaria where Jesus was talking with a Samaritan woman. Jesus and the woman were having a conversation about the living spiritual water He will provide. The woman was in an immoral relationship and theologically confused. Nevertheless, she had a genuine messianic hope and Jesus revealed Himself to her as the Messiah. The disciples had been into town to buy food. Let's pick up where they returned to the well.

God uses witnesses who are excited about Jesus, have a harvest perspective, and invite others to come to Him.

Read John 4:27-30 (ESV) ²⁷ *Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"* ²⁸ *So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,* ²⁹ *"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"* ³⁰ *They went out of the town and were coming to him.*

When Jesus told this woman that He is the Messiah, she was given the opportunity to believe or not believe. John never states specifically whether she believed. Her response to Jesus' revelation is what tells the story. She immediately went to tell others about Jesus resulting in their believing in Him.

When the disciples returned, they marveled that Jesus was talking to this woman. Their surprise could have been because she was a woman or it could have been more. However, they did not question Jesus about it even though John tells us what they were thinking. This is a reminder of **Proverbs 21:23 (ESV)** ²³ *Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.*

There is quite a bit of commentary concerning the woman leaving her water pot behind. I will tell you what Wiersbe says, “For one thing, she had the living water within and was now satisfied. Also, she intended to come back; and perhaps in the interim, the disciples and Jesus could use the vessel to satisfy their thirst. Gone were the racial barriers and battles that had existed before! They were all one in faith and love!”

Some commentators says that the woman’s words: “*Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did!*” were an exaggeration. I prefer Matthew Henry’s commentary that says, “He told her that which none knew but God and her own conscience.” In our own soul-winning experiences, we cannot presume to tell a person the things that Jesus Himself would have said in a personal encounter. However, if we are willing and sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit we will be able to direct a person to see Jesus as Lord. It is interesting to me that this woman is portrayed as going to the well in the heat of the day to avoid people and yet the scripture records that she went immediately to town to share with others about the Messiah at the well.

In their culture, normally the testimony of a woman, much less a woman of ill repute, would have been disregarded. With all of this against her, why was her witness so effective? Spurgeon says “part of the answer lies in her careful way of speaking to these men. Her question in Greek implies a negative answer: ‘This is not the Christ, is it?’ If she had stated boldly that she had met the Christ, they all would have had a good laugh and gotten back to their conversation. But her question, framed as a tentative suggestion, piqued their curiosity. She deferred to the self-assumed wisdom of the men by letting them come to their own conclusion.”

Meanwhile Back at the Well

Read John 4:31-34 (ESV) ³¹ *Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”* ³² *But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”* ³³ *So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?”* ³⁴ *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.*

As the Samaritan woman hurried back to tell her friends about Jesus, the disciples had returned to the well with food and urged Jesus to eat something. When Jesus sat down upon the well, He was weary needing food and water; but His opportunity of saving a soul caused Him to lose interest in eating. He told them, “*I have food to eat that you don’t know about.*” And as usual, the disciples misunderstood, thinking Jesus was speaking of literal food when He was really referring to His mission. *My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work,* Then Jesus went on to elaborate regarding the urgency of His mission.

Read John 4:35 (ESV) ³⁵ *Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.*

Some think Jesus was repeating a proverb concerning the need for immediate action. Others think the harvest was literally four months away when He said: *There are still four months, and*

then comes the harvest.” Jesus wanted His disciples then and now to know that the spiritual harvest is ready to be reaped. He said: *lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.* When we saw those ripened cotton fields as we drove by, no one had to tell us that the fields were very to be harvested. It should be even more evident to us when we encounter souls in need of a Savior. Stephen J. Cole on Bible.org says, “You never know how God may use your witness with someone whom you consider to be an unlikely prospect for the gospel. I would have zeroed in on Nicodemus, but he proved to be a bit slow in responding and we’re not told that he ever reached anyone else with the gospel. Like the disciples, I probably would have kept my distance from this immoral Samaritan woman, but she proved to be the key to reaching an entire village.” Always remember: **The harvest of souls may be ready in situations where you would never expect it.**

Read John 4:36-38 (ESV) ³⁶ *Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.* ³⁷ *For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’* ³⁸ *I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”*

There will be tears and great joy as we do the Lord’s work. We don’t like to admit it but there is no reaping without sowing first. It is so easy to want to reap without sowing. We wonder why we don’t see people coming to Christ and our churches being filled with new converts. Maybe there is a simple answer: We are not sowing seed and water seed as we should! Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (ESV)** ⁶ *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.* ⁷ *So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.* We can start by praying for opportunities to share the gospel with others. We can pray by name for the folks we already know who are lost and on the road to hell. **Psalms 126:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.*

Read John 4:39-42 (ESV) ³⁹ *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”* ⁴⁰ *So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.* ⁴¹ *And many more believed because of his word.* ⁴² *They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”*

The woman “seized the moment” and told her friends about Jesus. John did not record the content of what Jesus shared with the Samaritans only that: *many more believed because of his word.* We become anxious and fearful that we might not “say the right thing” when trying to lead others to Christ. We should never let that stop us when the Holy Spirit puts the desire in our heart to speak to someone. Oh, we can pretty easily quench that Spirit and possibly justify to ourselves our reasons for remaining silent. But, when we heed the prompting of the Holy Spirit and tell others about Jesus, possibly something we said combined with something someone else

said even years before will finally bring that person to the realization that Jesus is the Savior of the World. Jesus said: *I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Luke 15:7*

Adoniram Judson worked long and hard preaching and translating the Bible into Burmese and suffered imprisonment before he saw one real convert. Yet, when asked what his prospects were, Judson replied, "The prospects are as bright as the promises of God." Today Christians in Burma (Myanmar) who trace their roots back to Judson's labors make up from 4 to 6% of the population. Your sowing is not in vain even when others reap the fruit. Be faithful in sowing the seed!

In light of the centuries of hostility between Samaritans and Jews, the Samaritans' warm acceptance of Jesus is amazing.

God's invitation to you is this: "Come to Jesus!" Are you burdened with sin? Come! Are you thirsty for the water of life? Come! Jesus gives living water freely to unworthy sinners like this Samaritan woman who came and asked Him for it. Then when we have come, He uses us as effective witnesses, inviting others to come to Jesus and live. Although no longer at a well in Samaria, Jesus the Messiah through the Holy Spirit can still give us living water that will cause anyone who receives it to live forever.

Just in case you may not be sure how to come to Jesus or feel uncomfortable to tell others how to come to Jesus, I want to make sure that you know how. There are a variety of scriptures to use. We have recently studied **John 3:16 (ESV)**¹⁶ *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* It is that simple really. But in order to have more understanding, I will take you down what is often called the Roman Road – a group of scriptures found in the book of **Romans** – that explain how to come to know the Savior. I won't add any commentary, God's Word is living and active and speaks for itself.

Romans 3:23 - *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Romans 5:8 - *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 10:9 - *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Romans 10:13 - *for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

It is so easy a child can do it. Maybe it is more difficult when a person is grown. But, this I know. **2 Corinthians 6:2 (ESV)** *...Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*