

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #21

John 4:27-42

I read a true story of an ocean search and rescue team who were called to a sinking ship to rescue any who were alive. When they got to the boat, they discovered one man who was unconscious. They immediately removed him from the ship and headed for shore and a hospital. Shortly after getting the man to the hospital, he was revived and the first words out of his mouth were - there is another man who needs to be saved. The search and rescue team could not believe it, but they immediately jumped back in their boat and out they went and sure enough in another room was another unconscious man. They brought him to the same hospital and he too was saved. One man who was saved, testified of another who needed to be saved and as a result both were saved. This remarkable story about a physical salvation illustrates what needs to happen in order to promote spiritual salvation.

God expects, in fact, He demands that His people who have been brought into a relationship with Jesus Christ tell others about it. Now in this context what actually happens is a Samaritan woman becomes a tremendous witness for Jesus Christ and His own disciples are standing around like a bunch of dead doorposts, not spiritually witnessing, but physically eating.

The primary point of these verses is this:

PEOPLE WHO HAVE A REAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST NEED TO KEEP FOCUSED ON DOING GOD'S WILL WITH THEIR LIVES WHICH INCLUDES TESTIFYING AND WITNESSING TO INDIVIDUALS CLOSE TO THEM SO THEY MAY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COME TO HIM.

We are to plant and we are to water and sometimes, we are to harvest. Actually it is God's harvest, but sometimes we will have the privilege of sharing in it. We will not ever know what we are to accomplish if we don't witness for Christ. How do we know whether it is a planting or watering or harvesting time if we don't communicate the truth and invite people to Jesus Christ? That is the point of this context.

Now there are five main parts to this text:

PART #1 – The disciples don't understand why Christ is talking to a sinful woman . 4:27

The Jewish idea, based on what Jewish Rabbis taught, was that a man was not even to talk to a woman in public, even if she were his own wife. So Jesus has crossed three major cultural lines by talking to: 1) A woman ; 2) A Samaritan woman; 3) A sinful Samaritan woman.

The particular tense of the verb "speaking" indicates that when the disciples returned, this discussion was still taking place. Christ was still in the process of talking with the Samaritan woman. These disciples were amazed that He had been talking to this woman. There were two questions rolling around in their minds, that had they been right with God they would have had answers to - What do You seek? Why do You speak with her?

They should have been asking - "Why do You have anything to do with us, when You have heaven for Your home and angels to do Your bidding? What are You doing hanging with sinners like us?"

The answer to these questions is simple - this woman is a sinner who needs to be saved. In all reality, these disciples were totally amazed that Jesus Christ reached out to sinners. They had not quite figured out His purpose - He came to be the Lamb who would save sinners because He is "the Savior of the world" (4:42).

Watchman Nee, the famed Chinese evangelist, was visiting a friend one time and after supper, he and his friend and his little boy went down into the basement. The little boy wanted something that was back up the stairs, so he asked his mother for it. His mother responded by saying, "It's up here, come up and get it." The little boy said, "Mommy, I can't, it's such a steep climb, I can't make it." So the mom brought it down. That is exactly what God did. His righteousness is such a steep climb, that no one can make the climb, so He brought it down to man in the Divine Person of Jesus Christ. He will give it to any who would believe in Him.

Jesus Christ loved to associate with and witness to sinners, but never once did He associate with their sinful ways and do anything sinful. **There is a key principle to see here - our prejudices and convictions must always submit to the Word and Will of God. These disciples needed to change their thinking about talking to sinful women. If God's Word contradicts our opinion, we are obligated to change our opinion.**

PART #2 – The Samaritan woman immediately becomes a witness for Jesus Christ. 4:28-30

One of the first things any new babe does when it is born is to cry out. One of the first things this sinful Samaritan woman did was to cry out concerning her new birth.

Notice the first thing that happens when this woman came to terms with Jesus Christ - "she left her waterpot" (4:28). Now keep in your mind the fact that this was the reason she went to this well (4:7). John watched this himself. He was an eyewitness. He was totally amazed that a woman was so moved by Jesus Christ that she would leave her waterpot behind. You couldn't just go to a Meijer, or Kmart or Wal-Mart and buy a new one. These were tough to come by and water was critical for survival. So to leave a waterpot behind meant something extremely unusual just occurred.

There have been at least three suggested reasons why she left her waterpot: 1) She left it so Jesus could have a drink; 2) She was so excited about her relationship with Christ she forgot it; 3) She could travel faster to the city if she weren't carrying it. Whatever her reason, here is the point I want you to see - **whatever the physical need is, which needs to be met, it is secondary to a spiritual need that is met in Jesus Christ.** When you are right with Jesus Christ, you will think much more about the spiritual than the physical. This woman had an instant change of values. When one actually believes in Jesus Christ you may expect to see: 1) A conviction of sin; 2) A change of values; 3) A concern for the lost; 4) A communication of one's faith.

We are not sure how much this woman grasped, but she was convinced that everyone in town ought to hear this guy she met at that well. This woman went straight back to the city of Sychar and said to the "men," there is a man who told me everything I have done; could this be the Christ? The prevailing theological opinion was that only God knows everything about us (Psalm 139:1-4).

Now all who heard this woman would naturally wonder - is this "the Christ" and could He tell me everything about myself? More than likely, the fine upstanding women of the community would not even talk to this woman who had been married five times and was now living with a man. But some of the men would talk with her and she went to them and "they" (v. 30) were going to the well to see Jesus. As Dr. Ironside said, this woman who had been a sin-stained, characterless woman had now become an earnest evangelist (*John*, p. 151). Elizabeth Elliot, the wife of the martyred Jim Elliot, once said: "The fact that I am a woman does not make me a different kind of Christian, but the fact that I am a Christian does make me a different kind of woman."

This is not a person we would normally think would become a fervent evangelist. But this was God's person. When a person is right with Jesus Christ, he/she will have a passion to witness. He may not know all of the theology or proper verbiage, but he will want to tell others. It has been well observed that there are two things you need to leave behind when you meet Jesus: 1) Past sin and shame; 2) Past friends and activities.

PART #3 – The disciples are more concerned with the physical than the spiritual. 4:31-33

Now we may recall that the disciples had gone into town to get some food (4:8). They brought some food back and were asking Him to eat. Christ was weary (4:6). Christ said, "I have food to eat that you do not know about" (v. 32). **The specific food He refers to is to do the will of His Father and accomplish His will.** That is where Jesus Christ found His greatest fulfillment and the same is true for us. What He was saying is when you are fulfilling the will of God you will discover that it brings you more satisfaction than anything physical ever could. When you are witnessing to others and ministering to them - you will be nourished in ways that are truly fulfilling. Until you come to terms with the will of God for your life, you will never be completely satisfied with anything you do or anything you have.

His disciples had no idea what he was talking about (v. 33) and wondered whether or not someone else had brought Him some food. They had not yet figured out that one of the most satisfying things we may do in life is to inform a sinner that he/she may be saved from all of their sins. Our sin is not too great for a great Savior. When we are really right with Jesus Christ we will be the happiest and most fulfilled when we are bringing others to an understanding of the truth of God.

PART #4 – Jesus instructs His disciples concerning His and their real purpose. 4:34-38

There are five important points that Christ was able to teach His disciples through this episode with this woman:

(Point #1) - Jesus' purpose for coming to this world was to do the will of God the Father. 4:34

He was not here to philosophize or socialize, He was here to do the will of God the Father. This is moving, for what this means is that it was the will of God for His Son to come to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins so we may be saved.

(Point #2) - The disciples need to understand that they are to harvest souls now. 4:35

The disciples of Christ thought they were being trained for something big and spectacular. Their focus was on some big program. Jesus is focused on one Samaritan woman. These guys needed to open their eyes to the need of those individuals who were walking right past them. Sometimes, people can get focused on some big program and miss the person working right next to them, who needs harvesting. There was a man who drove a bus for a church to pickup kids on Sunday. It was a good ministry and that is what he lived for. When you talked to him, he was focused on this ministry. But he was missing the men he worked with. He was focused on the program, not the individual. We must not ever get so active that we miss the Samaritan woman.

Jesus wanted His disciples to view the world as a field of individuals which needed to be harvested for God. There is a time for planting and a time for harvesting. Christ was on earth and His disciples had the responsibility to harvest souls for Him. The Samaritans were ripe for the work of God. There were many who were ready to be saved.

(Point #3) - The disciple who reaps and bears eternal fruit and will receive eternal rewards .
4:36

There will be a wonderful payday for the disciple who continually bears fruit. He will receive a good wage and there will be a day of rejoicing when the sower and the reaper will both rejoice. Even though salvation is of the Lord and God sovereignly saves people, when you faithfully witness to individuals and people come to Christ, you do earn eternal rewards for your faithful witness. You do lay up treasures in heaven. We have the responsibility to witness to others and point them to Jesus Christ. Remember, in following Christ's pattern of witnessing, He did not approach people with the same memorized formula. He figured out where each individual was and communicated truth specifically to the individual.

When we went to Alaska, we had several opportunities to communicate Jesus Christ to individuals. The approach used with a man from Israel, was to start by discussing the Promised Land and directing the conversation to Jesus Christ who will give it. The approach used with a depressed man searching for meaning to life, was to direct the conversation to Jesus Christ as the One who could give purpose to his existence. The approach used to a religious man was that religion cannot save you. We used different tactics for different individuals. That is how Jesus witnessed.

(Point #4) - Different disciples have different ministries . 4:37

John's ministry for example was preparatory . Jesus' ministry was a reaping ministry. His disciples should understand why He was talking to a sinful Samaritan woman because His very point in being here was to draw sinners to Himself.

(Point #5) - Jesus sent these disciples to reap . 4:38

Their ministry purpose was to reap a harvest of souls. This was specifically the assignment He gave to His disciples. They were going to buy food and missing opportunities to talk to Samaritans and tell them who they were buying it for. They should have been telling people, we have Jesus out there at the well, who can save you from your sins.

Now Paul says our ministry is to plant and water so that God may give increase. Sometimes we will see nothing happen and sometimes we will see great things happen. But in order for anything to happen, we must be witnessing and inviting people to come to Christ. If these disciples never witnessed and never opened their mouths, they would not fulfill God's will and we if never open our mouths, we won't either.

PART #5 – The Samaritan woman points “ many ” people to Jesus Christ through her witnessing. 4:39-42

This sinful, Samaritan woman made an incredible impact on her own environment. We may see an important missionary truth here - **the best missionaries are people from the same area.** They are the best witnesses for Jesus Christ in their own culture. This woman was not some outsider who went to this town and knocked on doors. She was a woman everyone knew, who started telling those people, who knew her, about her relationship with Jesus Christ and look at her impact:

(Impact #1) - Many were drawn to believe on Christ because of her witness. **4:39**

(Impact #2) - The Samaritan citizens invited Jesus to stay with them in the city because of her witness. **4:40**

(Impact #3) - Many more believed because of Christ's word in the next couple of days, all due to this woman's witness. **4:41**

(Impact #4) - Many were making Christ their personal Savior because of her initial witness, but now because of their own personal faith. **4:42**

The assumption we may make on the basis of verse 42 is that Jesus must have told others about their sins, because they “heard for ourselves.” They immediately identify Jesus as the “Savior of the world.” Here is the truth, there is no other Savior in this world. Only Jesus can save you and rescue you from your sin, your guilt, your despair. But you must come to Him by faith.

All of these amazing things happened because one woman went to town and witnessed for Jesus Christ. She didn't have a team with her, nor did she have a program to offer - she simply told others about Jesus Christ.

I find it so amazing that Christians will fight political causes, social causes and educational causes. They will promote church activities and programs. What is really needed is one Christian sharing Jesus Christ with another sinful individual. What is needed is you sharing Jesus Christ with people you know need Him. Nothing will change a life faster than Jesus Christ.

If you never open your mouth and witness, you will never know what God might have done with you and through you. We have the responsibility to tell the truth about Jesus Christ to others. Tell the story of what He has done for you and what He can do for them.