

A Gospel Harvest John 4:27-42

Our text tonight is in John chapter 4, looking at verses 27 to 42. John chapter 4, verses 27 to 42. Before the reading, we'll pray. Please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we ask that you would bless your word to us. We ask that we would be given ears that hear, eyes that see, and hearts that understand and obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

We'll read from verse 1 once again, just to get the context—the context of the meeting with the woman of Samaria. So John chapter 4, starting at verse 1. We'll read through to verse 42. The sermon text is verses 27 to 42. John chapter 4, verse 1:

“¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

“⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’ ⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?’ (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’ ¹¹ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?’ ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.’ ¹³ Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ ¹⁵ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.’

“¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’ ¹⁷ The woman answered him, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You are right in saying, “I have no husband”; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.’ ¹⁹ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.’ ²¹ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’ ²⁵ The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.’ ²⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am he.’

“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.

“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. 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. 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.’

“³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’” Notice—that meant something to them—“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.’

“⁴³ After the two days he departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) ⁴⁵ So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.” So far God’s Holy Word. Amen.

So just catching up to where we were at last week, Jesus, in His conversation with the Samaritan woman, has basically plainly, in just clear plain language—I was almost going to say “in plain English” but obviously Jesus wasn’t speaking English, but in clear plain words—revealed to this woman of Samaria that He is the Messiah. He is the one that they were waiting for. He is the promised Savior. He said it plainly. There’s no possible secondary or double meaning—“I who speak to you am he.” He’s put it right out there as clearly as it can be spoken. He has spoken it. And who did He speak it to? A Samaritan woman, a reject, a woman with a history, with a shady past.

Let’s just look first of all simply at the fact that she’s a woman. Notice at the start of our text tonight, the disciples are wondering why He’s talking to a woman. After all, the Jewish rabbis of the day would not have spoken to a woman. It was actually a part of their training not to address a woman in public, even their own wife. To them, a woman was of no more value than the man that she’s married to, and actually, quite a deal less.

So Jesus revealed Himself straight up—straight up, plain as can be to a woman of that half-caste race that the Jews hated, the Samaritans, a woman with a shady past, and yet she was receives this wide-open invitation, this wide-open gospel call. It’s something more powerful than an invitation. I guess I should say, it’s basically a command—“Believe! Believe in me, and your sins will be forgiven.”

Remember Jesus revealed to her that He knows her, that He knows her well, He knows more than enough about her to know that she's a guilty sinner. "You have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband." Remember she said, "I perceive that you are a prophet." And then she asked a question, or made a questioning statement. "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." What's He saying to her?

I just want to refresh in your mind. I think her reply to Jesus was not a reply that was trying to change the subject. I think her reply to Jesus was more along the lines of, "I'm caught between a rock and a hard place here. You've come to me, a prophet, and you've spoken to me the truth. You've spoken to me, a woman of Samaria. You've spoken to me of living water. You've opened my heart. You've looked into the depths. You know what I'm like. And you've told me that I should be a worshiper of God, but here I am—I'm a Samaritan, and the Jews hate Samaritans, and I can't just suddenly decide I'm a Jew and go to Jerusalem, and there start worshiping in the temple." I think she's saying to the Lord, "I'm caught here. What can I do?"

And I think the Lord's reply to her would have brought great relief. "Believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." He's saying to her, "Where you are, what you are, how you are—start to worship the Father. Start to worship the Father. No longer is the way to God through the temple that is built in the city of Jerusalem. I who speak to you am He."

How was she to come to God? Through the very Savior who was speaking to her. Where He is, there the presence of God dwells. There is now the living temple. Cast your minds back to John chapter 2. Jesus said regarding His body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it." What was He saying? He's the temple. "I'm now the temple. The temple's not a building, it's not a place. The temple is here, where I am. If you are united to me, you are indeed worshiping in the presence of God.

So the message to the woman of Samaria was all good news. "Yes, you're a sinner. You are definitely a sinner. Yes, your sins will take you to hell." Jesus never ever said that sins don't matter, sins don't mean a thing. He never ever said that to anybody. "Yes, you're a sinner, and the wages of sin are death." Now of course, that's Paul line, but Jesus spoke the truth. Jesus never ever tried to make out that sin was nothing. What did He say to her? "You can be a worshiper here, now. You, who have a life of sin and uncleanness, you who are a woman of Samaria, you can be a worshiper in spirit and in truth, for God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. Notice He says, "The Father is seeking such people to worship Him." The Father's seeking such people to worship Him.

Go back, and remember back at the start of this journey, John chapter 4, it says at verse 4, "Jesus had to pass through Samaria." And I explained to you, geographically, He didn't have to pass through Samaria. There was no geographical necessity for Him to pass through that place. The only reason it could say that He had to be there was that Jesus knew He had a divine appointment there. He had a reason to be there. That appointment was ordained of God the Father. The reason He had to be there was there's going to be a gospel harvest. He had to meet somebody there. He had to sow a seed there, that there would be a harvest.

So this whole story is a story of the Father seeking—the Father is seeking such people, and He’s drawing people out of where they are. Does Jesus accept people just as they are? Absolutely, yes He certainly does—in their sins, in our sins. He accepted me in my sins. He takes people as He finds them. Those whom God has set His love upon, He draws them in, wherever they are, from whatever condition they are in.

But my friends, don’t ever forget, He doesn’t leave anyone there. He doesn’t leave them there. He draws them out of their sins, He draws them out of their slavery, He draws them into His kingdom. And by the power of His Holy Spirit, He starts to transform their life. He transforms it on the spot, and then He continues to transform them in their Christian life and walk, day by day. So certainly, a sinner comes to Jesus with no preparation. You can’t prepare to become a Christian. Where you are and how you are, receive. Receive the gospel.

The gospel goes forth as a command. We often talk about invitations, we often talk about asking, but understand, it goes forth as a command. Here’s the command: “Believe in Jesus Christ and repent of your sins.” Here’s the promise: “And you will be saved.” It goes forth as a commandment with a promise: Believe in Jesus Christ and repent of your sins, and, by the power of His Holy Spirit, God grants life where He will to whom He pleases, and those who hear that word with faith—faith that has been given as a gift by God the Father—those are the ones He is seeking, and they become worshipers in spirit and in truth.

So let’s get down to our text. The woman at the well becomes an evangelist. She herself becomes an unofficial preacher. Let’s see how it all unfolds. Starting then at verse 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?’”

Now as I’ve already said, they were thinking, “Why, indeed, would He be spending His time speaking to this woman?” Not that they knew anything in particular about her, but they knew she was from Samaria, and they knew that she was a woman. “Why, indeed, would our Rabbi be speaking to a woman?”

But they must have learnt something by now, and what they’d learnt by now is, “Ask your dumb questions in private. Don’t ask them in public. Wait til you get an opportune moment, and then ask your dumb questions.” So no one said, “What do you seek,” or, “Why are you talking with her?” They zipped it. “What’s He doing?” “Dunno. Shut up.” “Okay.”

Verse 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.”

There’s a lot of very good evangelical sermons—and I’m not being critical of the preachers or the preaching—about the rejoicing of the woman. She was so happy, she forgot her water jar. But you know, there might be more than one reason why she left that water jar there. Perhaps while they were speaking, she was actually drawing the water that she came for, and she left a full pot of water there so Jesus could get the drink that He had asked for. Perhaps she left it there for the use of Jesus and the disciples so that they could slake their thirst whilst she ran off back to the village, knowing that she was planning to come back. She didn’t necessarily leave it there just because she was so excited she forgot about it, though it’s a nice thought.

But she left her water jar and went away into the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.” I wonder how they responded to that. “Come see a man who told me all that I ever did.” You know, *All that she ever did?*” Wow. “This guy knows all that *she* ever did? I don’t know if anyone knows all that she ever did. I wonder if God even knows all that this woman has ever done.” Those would have been the thoughts that ran through their mind. “All that *she* ever did? He told her all that *she* ever did? This has got to be interesting, got to be good.” And then she asks that question, “Can this be the Christ?”

The question itself was like her other questions set in the negative. Remember she asked a negative question back at verse 12: “Are you greater than our father Jacob?” Now when I say it was set in the negative, it was asked in a way that expected only a “No” for the answer. So we might put it, in sort of modern English, “We know you’re not greater than Jacob, now are you,” expecting the only possible answer to be “No.” Well it’s asked in the same negative manner. “Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. It couldn’t be Christ, could it?” Or, “He couldn’t be the Savior, could He?” It’s set in that negative tone.

Why would she have done it that way? Well, I think that her main aim is simply to get people to come and meet Jesus, and she’s prepared to do anything to get them to come. And so she sparks their curiosity—“He told me all that I ever did. And by the way, I’m wondering, is He the Messiah? He told me all that I ever did. Do you think He might be the Savior? Do you think it’s possible?” What does she want? She just wants to get people to come out and meet this Savior. Why? Well, she’s just heard that wonderful piece of good news.

Now what’s their problem? Remember this longstanding controversy between the Samaritans and the Jews. The Samaritans say you worship on one mountain; the Jews say you worship on their mountain. The Jews say that the Samaritans are not saved, that they’re a cult, they’re an offshoot, they’re evil, they’re half-breeds, they’re good for nothing; and the Samaritans have come up with their own story: “We’re on the correct mountain, because this is really the mountain where Abraham offered Isaac. The Jews are the ones who’ve got it all wrong. If you want salvation, you come to the Samaritans. You’ve got trouble. You’ve got problems.”

Now remember, Jesus revealed Himself to the Samaritan woman through prophetic insight and then through an outright open statement of fact, “I who speak to you am He.” And remember He also told her that the mountain is not the question. It’s not a question of whether or not you’re a Samaritan or a Jew. The question is, Do you worship in spirit and in truth? For the Father seeks those who worship in spirit and truth.

And so what’s her hope, her hope for the people with whom she associates day by day? They need to hear this news. They need to hear this prophet. They need to hear what He’s got to say, because He’s saying that the great religious debate of our life, this great weight that hangs over our head, He’s saying it’s irrelevant. He’s saying that if we come to God worshipping in spirit and in truth, we will be saved.

She wants the people to come and meet Him, she wants them to hear what He’s got to say, so she works simply on the basis of curiosity. “He told me all that I ever did. Could He be the Savior? Come and see! Come and find out for yourself.”

Verse 31: “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.’”

Do you notice something similar here in the conversation between Jesus and His disciples and the earlier conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman? He’s speaking of one thing, they’re speaking of a different thing. Remember He spoke of living water, she spoke of well water. He spoke of streams of living water, she spoke of your need for a bucket to get water out of the well. Now Jesus speaks to the disciples. “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” And the disciples ask the question, “Has anyone brought Him something to eat?”

You see, He’s speaking on a spiritual level, or a symbolic level. He’s using figurative language to try and communicate a spiritual truth. And what are they thinking? They’re thinking potatoes, leeks, onions, lamb. He’s speaking of heavenly food. What’s the heavenly food? It’s to live and to dwell in the presence of God, and to obey God. It’s to do the work of God. And they’re wondering what’s going to turn up for lunch. They’re a little bit like the Samaritan woman herself. They just don’t quite get it. At this point in time, they’re not much further down the road than the lady of Samaria herself is.

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.” There’s an echo there from Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 3, I think. “Man shall not live by bread alone.” It’s not just an issue of food, it’s an issue of being obedient to the will of God. It’s the issue of knowing and living on the word of God. Remember Jesus used that very passage to resist Satan. When Satan spoke of turning stones into bread, Jesus said, “Is it not written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God?’” Jesus has a different kind of food in mind. He’s speaking of a different kind of food. It’s the food of living upon the very word of God. It’s the food of living in obedience to the will of God.

I don’t think He’s necessarily saying that you never have to eat again if you truly serve God, but I think what He’s trying to get the disciples to understand is that for Him, as a true worshiper of God the Father as one who loves the Father with all His heart and all His mind and all His strength, that for Him to obey God, to do the will of God, comes over and above food. It’s greater than the desire for food. Remember, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength—Jesus is one who does love the Lord His God with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength. So to obey God, to obey God to Jesus, is more important than food. “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.’”

Verse 35: “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?’” What’s that all about? Well apparently, it’s a little saying, or local proverb that the disciples were familiar with. “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?’” In agricultural terms, between the sowing of the seed and the harvesting of the wheat, or whatever crop it is, there’s a period of time where you really can’t do much about it, especially in ancient agricultural terms. You know, they didn’t have weed sprays, and they didn’t have traveling irrigators. They didn’t have all the stuff that we have, where a farmer today might do a whole number of things between sowing and harvesting. Back then, you sow, then you harvest.

What about weeds? Well remember when Jesus gave that parable about the wheat and the tares, He said, “No, you can’t dig the tares out while the wheat is growing.” Well, that’s a point isn’t it? What’s the point of going out with your hoe to chip out the tares, or the weeds, if at the same time, you’re destroying the crop? So, between sowing and harvest, noting much is happening.

“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. ³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.” And we read earlier from Amos chapter 9, where God spoke through Amos, saying that “the day will come when the Son of David will come and set things right.” And He promised that the sower and the reaper would be working together, in the same field at the same time. That’s something different—it’s miraculous. It’s abundance. He’s receiving wages, gathering fruit for eternal life.

So Jesus is likening Himself at this moment to someone who’s taking up a harvest. He’s drawing in the crop. He’s bringing things into the storehouse. He’s the one who reaps, and He’s receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life. What would these wages be? It would be the joy and the pleasure of serving God. This is a man who loves God, who truly loves God, and His wages are the satisfaction of obedience.

A person who loves their work gets great pleasure in simply accomplishing the work that they’re given. A person who loves their work is usually also very good at their job, and they produce very high-quality work. You don’t get high-quality work from someone who hates what they’re doing. Why? Because they hate what they’re doing, and they don’t put their heart into it. They detest it. Someone who loves what they are doing works well. They put their heart into it. Jesus loves serving the Father, and that in itself is a reward. He’s receiving the wages of genuine, honest service from the heart.

Verse 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.” Now what’s all this about? Well, first of all, another saying—the saying that He’s giving this time is, “one sows and another reaps.” And you say, “Okay, what’s that one all about?” Well, it’s even the case today. If you’re sowing your grain, it really doesn’t matter how long that takes you as long as it’s in before the expected water. Whether you’re irrigating or whether you’re waiting for seasonal rains, as long as the seed is in the ground, it doesn’t matter. If it takes you two weeks to sow your fields, it doesn’t matter, as long as the seed is in the ground when the water comes, that’s what matters.

But harvesting ripened grain is a different story. When it comes time to harvest—and I’ve lived and worked on a wheat station, a sheep-wheat station—when it comes time to harvest, all available hands are put to the task. Even today with modern machinery, everyone who can do something is made to do it. Why? Because at the point of harvest is the point where your crop is most vulnerable to destruction. A bolt of lightning from a summer storm could set the field on fire. Think of that.

Think of this—if you’re growing your grain under contract to one of the major food companies, they want that wheat to come in at a certain particular percentage of moisture, and the farmer will go out and he’ll take a sample, and he’ll test it. Down to 26%? Not quite right. It’s got to be supplied at 24%. Come out after a few more hot days, 24%—time to harvest.

You don't want that harvest to take two or three weeks. You don't want that harvest to take forever. Rain might come and ruin it. Anything might happen. The moment it's ready, you want it off the field. You want it in the silo. You want it in the trucks, taking it to your customers.

Back in the day—go back into ancient times. It really didn't matter how slowly the sower sowed, as long as the seed was in before the seasonal rains. But once the crop is ripe, you want it in storage as quickly as possible, because it's so easy to lose a crop. Everybody goes to work when it's harvest time, every available hand.

Even today, farmers will call in contractors. They might have one header of their own and call in four other contractors—I'm talking about the big broad acre operations further west—they'll call in four, five contractors and get four or five headers taking that wheat off, to get it off in a hurry. The moment it's ready, they want it off. And it was the same back in ancient times. And so one man might sow, but another man would reap, because as soon as the harvest was ready, you would call in as many workers as you could find. You'd get as many people as you could to get that grain off the field.

What's Jesus saying, then, when He speaks to the disciples? "I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." What Jesus is saying here is that that which came before—the book of Genesis through to the book of Malachi, which we call the Old Testament—that which came before was the sowing. The word of the prophets was the sowing. The Psalms was the sowing.

God was revealing Himself in the Scriptures, and Jesus is now saying, "You, my disciples, are the harvesters. You are the ones who are going to go and reap the harvest that has been sown throughout the ages. You are the ones who are going to be drawing in the people who are God's crop." Use the word "crop"—God's people. "You are the ones who are going to be drawing in God's people. Others labored, and you have entered into their labor. You have entered into the labor of the prophets. You have entered into the labor of those who have come before you. You are now servants of the kingdom."

Let's keep reading. Verse 39: "Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me all that I ever did.'" Notice, that meant something to them—"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.'

So let's notice here, let's sort of see what's happening. The woman draws them to Jesus, by any means that she can. In the presence of Jesus, hearing the word of Jesus, they believe—not because of her words, but because of the words of Jesus. She's just a missionary. She's just a messenger. She's the postie—the one delivering the mail. She's the one carrying the news, or the information, bringing or drawing those people into the presence of Jesus, that they would hear the words of Jesus. Those are the things that made the difference. "No longer, because of what *you* said. It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

There's some enormous irony there. Remember back in John chapter 1, verse 11, it says: "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. Who did not receive Him? Who were His own? The Pharisees, the Jews, the Sadducees, the priests—Nicodemus, for example, that great teacher of the law.

Now it seems, as we read the gospel of John and we see Nicodemus reappear in the story a few more times, it seems that Nicodemus is on the way to salvation, but the point is, Nicodemus didn't immediately run off seeking all of his fellow Jews, saying, "I found the Messiah! Come! I've met the one who is the promised Savior, come—come and hear what He has to say!" Nicodemus just drops out of the story at this point in time. He drops out of the narrative.

But Jesus reveals Himself to this woman of Samaria, she believes His words, she immediately rushes off to other Samaritans, tells them of His words, and tells them to "come and see for yourself." They come out to see this supposed Jewish prophet. I wonder how many of them wandered out there thinking, "Hah—she's half crazy, that woman. She's mad, but this could be worth the show. This could be entertaining." People have been converted on less, you know.

A story in the biography of George Whitfield tells of a fellow who went to hear a Whitfield sermon merely for the purpose of having some material to entertain his friends with at the pub that night. He thought he'd see this guy preach so he would have something to mock him with while he was drinking with his mates. He walked in there a scoffing unbeliever; he walked out of there converted, a Christian. He heard Whitfield preach—he *really* heard Whitfield preach.

I wonder how many people of Samaria walked out to hear Jesus preach, if only because it seemed to them somewhat funny that this woman who's had five husbands, and the one she's currently with is not her husband, says "He knows everything I ever did, and furthermore, I think He might be the Savior of the world." I wonder how many of them thought, "Well, this will be funny. This will be a laugh. A Jewish prophet, she reckons." And what happened? They heard the words of Jesus. "We have heard for ourselves, and we know." Notice the definiteness there, the certainty of what they say: "And we *know* that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

You see the irony. Jesus comes to His own, and His own do not receive Him. Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night and does not receive Him. The only reason that Jesus moved on from where the disciples were baptizing is that the Pharisees were showing their presence there. The Pharisees were stirring up troubles. Jesus goes to the Samaritans, and what happens? The Samaritans believe.

This is a bit like the story of Jonah the prophet, in the days when Israel was spiraling down to destruction and the people were rejecting the words of the prophets, rejecting God's word—"No, no, no; we're the promised people in the Promised Land; we've got all we need. God loves us. Nothing to worry about."—And God tells Jonah, "Go preach to the Ninevites. Go preach to one of those nations that's going to destroy you. Go preach to your mortal enemy." But Jonah says, "I don't want to. I don't want to go preach there. They're our mortal enemy. And what's more, your such a gracious God, you might actually make my preaching effective. I don't want that to happen." And where does Jonah end up? In Nineveh, preaching to this pagan city. And it says they repented from the king down to the stable boy. Even the donkeys ended up wearing sackcloth and ashes. The whole city repented!

You see, Jesus goes to Samaria, He preaches in a village, and they receive Him—the half-castes, the rejects, the impure ones—they receive the Savior who first of all came to the Jews. Jesus Himself said salvation is of the Jews. Salvation is from the Jews. The people who had the Scriptures didn't want to know the Lord Jesus who, as God the Son of God, authored or sent forth the Scriptures. They didn't want to know God's eternal, ever-living Word, the Word who is God, the Word who was God—they didn't want to know Him.

But the Samaritans want to know Him. The lost want to know Him. The people who think they are nothing, the people who are convinced that they are nothing and nobody special, they're the people most likely to hear the gospel. And in this case, it's the Samaritans. "And we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world!" We *know* that this is the Savior.

My friends, let's just get some simple application out of this. Let's go right back to the start and put it all together. Jesus speaks to a woman at the well, where He is, in the situation He's in, and says, "I need a drink of water. Can I share from your bucket? Give me a drink."

He leads her to things of which she was not before thinking. She started to talk about water, so okay, let's talk about water—living water, water that springs up to eternal life, water that quenches eternal thirst.

She seems to be resisting, and then He speaks to her about herself—opens her eyes to her own mess. "Where's your husband?" "I don't have one." "No. You're on man number six. You've had five husbands, and the one you currently have is not even your husband." She knows herself, and then she comes to know Him. "I who speak to you am he."

She then returns to her people with a testimony. "He knows all about me. Could He be the Savior? He knows all about me. He saw into me. He read me like an open book. Could He be the Savior?" The people come to Jesus, into His presence. They hear His word, and they believe.

What's this then a testimony to? What's this all about? Well, it's here in John chapter 4: "The Father is seeking such people to worship Him." The Father is seeking such people to worship Him. It's wonderful to hear about conversions that seem to have been the most unlikely conversions: occultists, prostitutes, Muslims, all kinds of different people converted, led into the kingdom. Why? How? What's it all about? "The Father is seeking such who worship Him in spirit and in truth." Every time that people are drawn into the kingdom, they're drawn into the kingdom because God is drawing them into the kingdom through Jesus Christ His Son.

And we are being sent out, just as the woman was, and just as the disciples were—we are being sent out into His fields to draw in His harvest. Make yourself as good at that as you can possibly be. Study the Scripture, learn, grow in grace and faith, make yourself as useful as you can be. But understand this: It's not reliant upon you, or your abilities, or your eloquence, or your skills. It's not reliant upon your intellect. It's not reliant upon any of those things. It's reliant upon the will of God the Father, who is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. There's encouragement here for us.

You know, not one of us is perfect. Not one of us is all that we ought to be. Not one of us is even halfway there, I don't think. Yet, God uses people as they are, where they are, to draw people to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. "God is seeking such people to worship Him."

Jesus speaking to His disciples, in John chapter 15, verse 16, tells them He has chosen them. That must indeed be something wonderful, but He says more than this. Jesus said to them, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another." There's a lot in there, isn't there? "Chosen"—I chose you. "You did not choose me, but I chose you." There's the will of God—God seeking, God choosing.

But not only were they chosen, they were appointed. What were they appointed to? "Go and bear fruit that your fruit should abide." They're appointed to a ministry, a fruitful ministry, a harvesting ministry, of permanent consequence. Every soul led to the Lord Jesus Christ, every person drawn into the kingdom is drawn into eternal life. Something permanent.

Jeff's an engineer, and he's got some things around town here that he's mentioned from time to time. He's quite happy of what he's done. He's quite happy with his work. He's got some good things to look at. But are any of them permanent? They're as good as he could possibly make them. He's built all of the quality that he could into what he did, but are they permanent? Will they be here in a thousand years' time? Would he be ready to guarantee it? No.

But—*but*—the soul led to eternal life, it's abiding fruit, fruit that will abide. It's permanent fruit. It's worth a lifetime of service. It's worth a lifetime of obedience. You know, you get to walk around in heaven—new earth. You'll meet someone. "I was the means by which you heard the gospel." And they'll say, "Yeah, Amen! And that fellow over there? I was the means by which *he* heard the gospel." And that fellow over there will be going, "Yeah, Amen! And those ones over there, I was the means by which *they* heard to gospel." And we've done some work and that work is permanent and everlasting and abiding.

I mentioned that people who loved their work are generally the people who do good work. We should love our work as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. We've been appointed to bear fruit and that fruit will abide, so that whatever we ask the Father in Jesus' name, He may give it to us. "These things I command you, so that you will love one another."

In obedience and in service, we get the things that are appointed to us. "These things I command you." There's a commandment in there. What's the commandment, then? "I chose you, I appointed and ordained that you would bear fruit, and I command you"—Jesus gives a command. What's the command, then? "Go out! Go out and bear the fruit! Go out and draw in the harvest, and your fruit will abide—so that you will love one another."

You know, I've been thinking about something during the week. You can't generate love just by choosing to be nicer. You can't just turn on the "love" switch, can you really?—not in any genuine way, not in any real way. And you can't get people to love one another just by saying, "Love one another," and by saying the word "love" once every second sentence. You just can't make it happen. You can't manipulate people into this.

But if people have their eye upon Jesus, if people are serving God the Father, if people are truly submitted to the word of God, if people are moving in the same direction along the way, what are you moving in? What's happening? You're loving one another. It happens. Why? Because it's one of the things that God has commanded and appointed. His people will be a people who love.

We don't get love by sitting around and whingeing and complaining and carrying on. You don't get love by deciding you're going to be loving. You get love through being obedient to the will of God. God works His love in us. God works His love in us, and you love the people that God brings before you because it's been appointed. It's been appointed by God Himself. He's appointed this gospel harvest.

O, that we would hear the words, "We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." I want to hear it. Do you want to hear it? I want to hear it. I want to hear it from people who never used to say it. It's great to hear it from you, and I hope you don't mind hearing it from me. "We know indeed that Jesus is the Savior of the world." But I want to hear it from people who, at this moment, aren't saying it. I want to hear it from people who at this moment don't accept the truth. I want to hear it from people who at this moment are not Christians.

I want to see the gospel harvest. I want to see where the reaper catches up to the sower. I want to see where they're both working together, side by side. The promise of God is that, in obedience, we will see it. Let's just close it there. We'll finish off there. Please join me in prayer.

Father in heaven, we do long to see that gospel harvest. We do long to see people led to you. We do long to be worshipers in spirit and in truth, and we do long to see the work of your Spirit calling and drawing in people to the Lord Jesus Christ, that they also would be worshipers in spirit and in truth, and that we would see abiding, eternal gospel fruit.

Father, we ask you would bless our obedience. We ask that you would bless your word to us. We ask that you would pour out your Spirit upon us, that we would be faithful and obedient servants. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.