

Find Life in the Son: Savior of the World John 4:27-42

Introduction

Last week we stepped back into a first-century world full of externalism, sectarianism, tribalism, polarization, prejudice, and mistreatment. An ancient world surprisingly similar to our own times. Then and now, there are needy people like us—thirsty for eternal life, for deep cleansing from personal sin, for true worship. A thirst no one but the promised Messiah can quench.

The Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well was such a person. We left off just at the moment Jesus revealed to her that He, the one talking to her, was the promised Messiah. In a twinkling of an eye, light flooded into her darkness, and everything changed. We know that for sure because of what happens next.

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." **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."

1. Amazing Grace (27-30)
2. Harvest Joy (31-38)

3. Reasonable Faith (39-42)

1. Amazing Grace (27-30)

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The disciples marveled—they were astonished, amazed—that Jesus was talking with a woman, and a Samaritan woman at that. They marvel because in those days a man talking to a woman in public especially about spiritual things just wasn't done. Had they known anything about her marriage track record, they would likely have been beside themselves.

Rabbinical warnings included sayings like these (quoted from Ryle, 233):

"He who instructs his daughter in the law plays the fool."

"Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no not with his own wife."

"Talking with a woman is one of the six things which made a disciple impure."

Clearly in that day the prevailing Jewish notion of the value of women and their spiritual capacity was low—and completely out of line with what the Scriptures actually teach, Old Testament and New. *It is possible to drift into unbiblical and therefore untrue ways of thinking and behaving even in a culture that thinks it is Bible based.*

Out of respect for Jesus the disciples did not ask why He was violating established custom. They just were amazed. They had a lot to unlearn from their culture if they were to be good representatives of the Savior of the World.

In reality, talking to a woman was far less radical than what Jesus had already done. He is the only begotten Son of God, but He humbled Himself to become a human being. He would be obedient to death, even death on a cross, for the sake of His saving mission. *It was amazing grace that Jesus would talk to such a woman, but His doing so was entirely consistent with His amazing grace to become the God-man Savior, who would lay down His very life to save sinners.*

What impact His bridge-building, barrier-breaking conversation had on this woman! So electrified she was with realizing she was talking with the promised Messiah that she left her water pot there and headed into town

to tell the good news. She had gone to get material water necessary to physical life, but she found something far more valuable and lasting. She is not shamed by the revelation that Jesus knows fully her failures and sins without her even telling Him about them. She is amazed. She is relieved. She has found the Messiah—or better, the Messiah has found her. For the first time in forever, she sees that she is not defined by and trapped in her sin, but that the Messiah can save her from it, and desires to do so, and will do so.

Tim Keller went to be with the Lord this week. Let me share a couple quotes with you that are all-time favorites, because they share the kind of truth we see in the life of this rescued Samaritan woman:

"The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."

"To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us."

The woman is savvy in the way she reports her encounter with Jesus and her discovery of who He really is. Especially with her former reputation, it could have been easy for others to discount her conviction that Jesus is the promised Messiah. So she poses the question whether this could be the Christ. She does so in a way that conveys a bit of doubt in order to leave room for others to check it out for themselves. And she uses the classic invitation we've seen before in John's Gospel, "Come and see."

We will talk more about this later. Suffice it to say that we need to leave room for others to come to faith through their own investigation rather than just taking our word for it. We want their faith to be in Christ more than just in us.

Applications

- What false boundaries and manmade barriers do you need to break through to engage others with the gospel?
- Who are some individuals you already know whom you could invite to come and see who Jesus is? What are their names and when can you do it?
- What can others see in your life that shows the transforming effect of knowing Jesus as your Savior?

2. Harvest Joy (31-38)

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.

We all have to eat. Without food we eventually starve to death. As fully human Jesus needed to eat. As important as daily food is to strengthening the body, accomplishing the work the Father had sent Him to do was even more invigorating. Physical nourishment is necessary and important, but spiritual nourishment even more so. As the perfect God-man Jesus exemplified this reality. Anyone of us who desires to be His disciple would do well to follow His example. You have to live for more than just food, and clothing, and shelter. These are the chief pursuits of people who don't know God. They are necessary things but not supreme things. You were made to live for more.

Matthew 6:31-33

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** But

seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

How often our desires for physical needs and material goods actually outrank our devotion to doing God's will as His image bearers. Many of the sins to which we are most likely to yield appeal to indulging our physical appetites at the expense of our spiritual wellbeing.

We do what we think will make us happy and fulfilled. Everyone sins when they are drawn away of their own desires and enticed (James). *How strong is your desire to fulfill what God has given you to do?*

In this case Jesus is referring not just to Bible reading and prayer, but to engaging this outcast of a woman with the gospel. And the words that follow show that Jesus expects His disciples to engage in the same kind of work.

John 20:21b

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

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."

There were still four months before the material harvest of crops was due. But the spiritual harvest was ready if they had eyes to see it. *We can be so fixated on the material world that we are blind to the spiritual.* It's a joyful thing when a good harvest rolls in. Spiritual planting, cultivating, and harvesting are going on somewhere all the time. When you see a harvest, it didn't spring from nothing. Someone has been at work sowing the seed. In this case Jesus Himself was at work, and the disciples were about to get to take part in the joy of spiritual harvest from His labors.

When you give yourself to sowing the gospel seed in the lives of others, when you cultivate, and when you harvest, you are not alone in this great endeavor. You are never starting from scratch. God the Father, Son, and Spirit are at work. Other followers of Jesus are working the field, too.

1 Corinthians 3:6-9a

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. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ^{9a} For we are God's fellow workers.

And when the harvest of souls comes rolling in there is great joy among all those who took part in the effort. The very angels of God join in the joyful celebration every time a sinner repents and turns in faith to Jesus (Luke 15:10). And no wonder. They are God's messengers. Remember their words to the shepherds outside Bethlehem? "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

John 4:36

Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

There is a joyful payoff for doing this kind of God-appointed work.

Receiving wages

Gathering fruit

For life eternal

These wages, this fruit, lasts forever. Not just as the good news spreads from place to place and generation to generation, but throughout

eternity in the new heaven and earth to come. Fruit here on earth rots. Wages lose their value and dwindle away. An inheritance built up over a lifetime can be squandered in a few short years. But there will never come a day when these wages and this harvest is worthless because those who receive life through the gospel live forever. A billion years from now those who engaged in gospel work will still be enjoying the harvest from it.

Applications

- What efforts are you making that demonstrate how important it is to you to be working for the gospel harvest?
- What lesser priorities and desires are keeping you from taking part in the joy of gospel sowing and reaping?
- With whatever is left of your time on earth, how could you make doing God's will and work a greater priority?

3. Reasonable Faith (39-42)

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.”

People tend to divorce faith from reason, but that is not biblical faith. *Faith means reliance, and God gives us solid reason to rely on Him. If your faith is just a leap in the dark or just a feeling, if it's just from high emotion or loyalty to tradition, it's not the kind of faith the Bible talks about.* Faith is not valuable in and of itself. People believe all sorts of lies and rely on them to their own harm. The object of our faith is what makes it valuable. Who are you trusting? What evidence are you relying on?

Why did this woman believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah and Savior of the World? On the basis of firsthand evidence. Jesus demonstrated He knew all about her, and Jesus testified that He was the Messiah God had promised through the OT prophets for centuries. Her faith was rooted in the reliability of God who spoke through reliable prophets and made His promises good by sending Jesus the Messiah to earth just as He had foretold. Further, Jesus the Messiah demonstrated that He knows our sin and loves us still—enough to free us from its grip. He took on human flesh in order to be our substitute and pay our sin's death penalty on the cross. He rose again to prove His power

over death itself, and He promised to come back again to receive His own forever.

Why did these Samaritan townspeople believe? They were not foolish rubes. They heard the woman's firsthand testimony. They saw the incredible change in her life. That by itself was convincing. You see someone's life completely turn around through nothing more and nothing less than trusting in Jesus, and you've got some difficult explaining to do to account for it in some way other than what the Scriptures call being born again.

But at her invitation, they went further yet. They did not base the destiny of their eternal souls merely on the testimony of this one woman. They went and talked with Jesus themselves. They asked Him to stay. Two days of hearing His word and they were convinced for themselves that He was indeed the Savior of the World God had been promising for centuries. "We know indeed"—we have experienced Jesus ourselves.

Is that you? Have you paid attention to the testimony of those whose lives have been transformed by coming to Jesus? As of today there have been millions of such cases. This harvest in John 4 was only the beginning.

And have you taken time and made the effort to actually hear what Jesus has to say? For

hundreds of years the OT prophets predicted the Messiah was coming. When Jesus came, reliable people wrote down what He said and what He did. It is firsthand testimony that makes it possible for you and me to know His works and words ourselves. These witnesses themselves were transformed and took the gospel of Jesus to the world. That's why we worship Jesus today, though we are literally on the other side of the world from where He ministered when He was on earth.

Applications

- On what basis do you believe what you believe?
- Who are persons you know that have been transformed by trusting in Jesus Christ?
- What words and works of Jesus as recorded by eyewitnesses are your basis for relying on Him to save you from your sin and death?
- If you have turned away from trusting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, what or whom are you trusting instead?

Conclusion

1. Amazing Grace (27-30)
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“We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” The Samaritans could see this great reality better than most Jews. God’s heart is wide as the world, and they were living proof of it.

If you are sure you’re following Jesus, how wide is your heart? Where are you finding your conversations at the well? Who are the thirsty people you are giving the water of life? If this is not your pattern of life, when do you plan to start?

Closing Song: Jesus, Strong and Kind

Applications Summary

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- What can others see in your life that shows the transforming effect of knowing Jesus as your Savior?
- What efforts are you making that demonstrate how important it is to you to be working for the gospel harvest?
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- With whatever is left of your time on earth, how could you make doing God's will and work a greater priority?
- On what basis do you believe what you believe?
- Who are persons you know that have been transformed by trusting in Jesus Christ?
- What words and works of Jesus as recorded by eyewitnesses are your basis for relying on Him to save you from your sin and death?
- If you have turned away from trusting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, what or whom are you trusting instead?