



SERMON TITLE: Harvesting  
SCRIPTURE: John 4:27-42

DATE: November 10, 2019  
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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his own biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

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All of us have probably known someone who you would describe as a "man or woman on mission." Someone so wrapped up in their work or in some project that everything else took a back seat. What is your life-purpose? What keeps you focused and energized? What helps you push through difficult times with hope when things seem hopeless? What gives you so much joy and satisfaction that you can sometimes forgo sleep or a meal in order to stay on task? This is what John 4 is really about. Underneath the story of the Woman at the Well, we hear Jesus telling his disciples, not only who he is, but also what he came to accomplish. Jesus says he came to do the work of God. What is God's work? God is in the business of seeking and redeeming true worshippers—worshippers from all people groups, not just the Jews—worshippers who come to him through faith in Jesus. That's God's work. That's Jesus work. And as followers of Jesus, that's our work. In this passage, he calls that work 'harvesting'—the work of reaping and sowing (vv 35-38). Today, Christians talk about that work using the terms "evangelism" and "conversion." But many people today find the whole idea of evangelism and Christians trying to convert people to Christianity very offensive. Many people outside the church, and even some inside the church, feel it's not right to try to convince someone to abandon their own religious beliefs and convert to Christianity. That sounds reasonable to a lot of people, but to change that one thing is to change everything. It's like saying, "I like ice cream. I like everything about ice cream, except for the fact that it's frozen." But, if you take away frozenness, you've got something, but it's not ice cream, pudding, a milkshake, *something*, but it's not ice cream. In this passage, Jesus, in no uncertain terms, calls his disciples to do one thing. He calls them/us to harvesting. It's very clear that part of John purpose in this text is to talk about why harvesting is important to Jesus and his disciples. So I'm going to pull out three things from 4:27-42 that help us see why harvesting is necessary for all those who follow Jesus.

First of all, harvesting is necessary because of truth (4:22, 27-30). Contrary to the belief that all religions are the same—that all religions lead to the same place—Jesus clearly tells this woman that salvation comes from the Jews. Earlier in the conversation, when Jesus told this woman he knew all about her past, she changed the subject to a theological debate about where you should go to church. And in telling her that the time has come when worship is not about worshipping at the temple in Jerusalem or the temple in Samaria, he says this in 4:22—"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." He's telling her the truth. All religions are not the same. They don't all lead to the same place. She needs to know the truth or she will miss out on knowing who God is and what God is up to in the world. He tells her if she is going to know God—if she's to be a true worshipper of God in spirit and truth—she will have to put her faith in a *Jewish* Messiah. He's saying, "*Salvation comes from the Jews through me.*" And oddly enough, she did not find that offensive. *It is not narrow-minded to believe something is the truth if it is true.* So, harvesting is about telling people the truth about God and life and faith. It's telling people the truth about life and death and the afterlife. *Harvesting is necessary because people need to hear the truth*—the Good News about Jesus and the life he offers us.

Second, harvesting is necessary because of grace (4:29). Many people believe that if someone tries to convert someone to your religion then you must feel superior to other people. You must think that you are better than them. But look at Jesus. Did Jesus come across as cold and condemning with this woman? He told her the truth, but she heard the truth

through the lens of grace. And look at the woman. She now knows the truth and she shared it with the people back in Sychar. This woman had to be on the lowest rung on the social ladder. I seriously doubt that when Jesus lovingly told her the truth about her past that all of a sudden, she felt like she was better than everyone else. *It wasn't a feeling of superiority that motivated her to share—it was grace.* She had experience amazing grace and she was excited about sharing it with others. *What happens when Jesus becomes personal to you? What happens when the Good News really sinks in? What happens when you hear Jesus saying to you—"I know who you are and I love you anyway. Come be a part of my family. All your sins are forgiven. Here, I give you eternal life as a gift?"* What happens is you experience grace and grace by its own definition says—"I know I don't deserve the gift I've been given." *If you rightly understand grace you will never think you're better than anybody else.* However, you *will* want them to know the love and grace and truth you've found in Jesus. You will have to tell others about it.

Third, harvesting is essential because it is your food (4:30-38 and 4:39-42). Jesus says is—"Sure, my body needs nourishment, but more than that, right now, my soul is feeding on a purpose, and my purpose is to do the work of God and the will of God." He's saying, "I'll get to my body later, but right now, this conversation I've just had is food for my soul. And look at all these people coming to us. Do you see that the harvest to eternal life is coming in?" "My food is to do the will of God who sent me to accomplish his work." Again, what is this food that gives him such joy and satisfaction? He says, *I live to see people transformed into worshipers—I live to see people transformed, families transformed, neighborhoods transformed.* And that is exactly what happens there in Sychar. A whole community is being influenced by the truth and grace of Jesus. And Jesus says, that's my food. That is what sustains me. That is what strengthens me and energizes me. That's what I am feasting on right now.

Look back at v39—"Many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony: he told me everything I ever did." And we also see in v42, many more believed when they met Jesus for themselves.

Do you see how simple harvesting is? Being involved in the work of harvesting is as simple as telling someone the story of how you came to know Jesus in a personal way. It's having eyes to see that God is at work all around you. And as he gives you opportunities, you simply share a part of the truth and grace you've experienced in your relationship with Jesus. What was your life like before you met Jesus? How did Jesus change your past so that your future doesn't look like your yesterday? It's as simple as sharing the seeds of the Gospel wrapped in the story of how you met Jesus and what it means to know him today.

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#### Discussion Starters:

- In today's message, Charlie gave an example of James Murray, the man who compiled the Oxford English Dictionary along with many others he enlisted in the work. Who do you know of who lives a truly purpose-driven, mission-driven life?
- Have you ever been so caught up in some project or some work that it was no problem to give up sleep or even a meal in order to stay focused on that work? If so, tell the group about it.
- Ask for someone to retell the first part of John 4—the story of the woman at the well? Who was she? Why did she come to the well in the heat of the day? How did Jesus begin a conversation with her? How did Jesus end the conversation with her? What was her reaction to what Jesus shared with her?
- Talk about why being involved in Jesus' work of harvesting—of sowing and reaping—is so necessary. (see the three points in the Sermon Notes above) Why is it necessary for those outside the church? Why is it so necessary for those inside the church?
- How would you tell the story of how you came to know Jesus in a personal way? Make it short and simple. Have everyone in the group put their story into words.
- What would have to change in your life for Jesus' mission to become your mission and his purpose to be your purpose?