

# REAPING THE HARVEST

## John 4:26-42

There is a nationally known credit card company which usually ends their commercials by asking, "What's in your wallet?"

Now don't worry this is not a sermon about money or giving—we'll save that for a later time. But,

1. What if you could carry something in your wallet more valuable than your ID or cash or credit cards?
2. What if you could carry something in your wallet that could make a difference in reaping a harvest of souls for the Kingdom of God?

Hold that thought until we come to the end of our lesson today.

Over the last four weeks we have talked about the HARVEST. We have followed the outline from Psalm 126:5-6 "**Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.**"

GOING, WEEPING, SOWING, and REAPING--God's plan for the Harvest.

Last week we looked at the story of Jesus and the woman at the well. In that story we found Jesus sowing the seed of God's Word and God's love with a lonely, outcast Samaritan woman. Jesus asks her for a drink of water. Then Jesus offers to her living water, a relationship with God through Him, a life that would have the Holy Spirit overflowing in her life. As we ended last week we saw in verse 26 that Jesus revealed to her who He is. When she asked about the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus told her, "**I who speak to you am He.**"

At this point I believe the woman put her faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and she was converted at that very moment.

## I. Our Part in the Harvest begins with SALVATION (26-30).

She may have seemed like the least likely prospect for salvation, yet God did a tremendous work in her heart and it changed her life. We see three immediate evidences of her new life in Christ:

1. She experienced a **CHANGE** of values.

Verse 28, "**The woman then left her waterpot.**" Why did she leave her water jar behind? After she found the living water that satisfies the soul, she forgot about her water jar. Instead of worrying about the things of this world (like the water pot) she was overwhelmed by God's Spirit. Or maybe she left it there because she knew she was coming back.

2. She made a **CONFESSION** of faith.

She went into the city and said to the men there, (verse 29) "**Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?**"

“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. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Romans 10:9-10).

She was unashamed now. She boldly went back to the city in her excitement to let everyone know about the Savior she had just met. When you consider how little spiritual truth this woman knew, her zeal and her witness put many of us to shame. But God used her simple testimony. It was powerful because it was accompanied by a changed life and a concern for others.

Those in the village were drawn to discover why this woman with five ex-husbands and a current live-in was saying, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did." When we have good news, it's hard to keep it to ourselves.

Verse 30 tells us the result of her sincere news and compelling invitation to her village. They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

So urgent were her words that the village went out immediately to investigate. This is the heart of the transformation of a soul, the sharing and bringing of others to Jesus. A sign of discipleship is our testimony given to others — words that eagerly spill out of the overflow of Christ and His Spirit in our lives.

3. She demonstrated a **CONCERN** for the lost.

“**Come, see**”(4:29) was her invitation. She forgot about her emptiness; she forgot about her problems; she forgot about her loneliness; she forgot about her thirst!! She was walking in the overflow of the living water of Jesus Christ! She had gone from empty to overflowing. Her joy and excitement was spilling out on everyone she came in contact with. The people came to see Jesus for themselves.

Jesus is not looking for people who will just be sponges and soak up His living water, He is looking for people who will be fountains overflowing with living water.

Jesus said, ‘He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Jesus wants believers to be rivers, not reservoirs.

## **II. The Harvest is about SERVING, NOT SELF-SERVING (31-34).**

(34) **Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.**

Jesus says this because the disciples were preoccupied with lunch. They went into town to buy lunch and bring it back. But they find him talking to this woman! Once they regained their wits, their solution was rather simple, “Walk away Jesus and let’s have something to eat.”

Jesus was not focused on food, He was focused on two things: God’s *will* and God’s *work*. Jesus did not look on the Father’s will and work as a heavy burden or a distasteful task. He viewed His work as the very nourishment of His soul.

The will of God ought to be a source of strength and satisfaction to the child of God just as if we sat down to a sumptuous feast.

## **III. The Harvest is SURE (31-35).**

Jesus then begins to talk about the harvest with His disciples. In verse 35 He says, **"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"**

Jesus asks them to lift up their eyes and look at the fields. The farmer knows that when he has sown the seed and tended the crops there will be a harvest, usually in about four months. Jesus is telling us that the same thing happens with evangelism. When spiritual seeds are sown by preaching and teaching and telling and living the Gospel, some of those seeds will sprout and begin to take root. Then when those seeds begin to take root in people's lives, and those lives are nurtured and cared for and taught by word and example, they will begin to grow. And before you know it some will be ready for harvest. Those people be saved and begin to bear fruit on their own. Jesus says that just as seeds planted in the ground will bring an agricultural harvest, evangelism will bring a spiritual harvest. The one is obvious to us. Can we lift up our eyes to see the other?

When the disciples looked out, they probably saw a field full of grain blowing in the breeze. But Jesus was lifting their eyes beyond that field. He wanted them to see the fields full of people that needed to hear the Gospel. The Samaritans from that village were already coming to see Jesus for themselves, maybe they were walking through the fields of grain. They were the harvest.

Can you lift up your eyes and see the fields? We have family fields. We have friend and co-worker fields. We have neighbor fields. The point is that Jesus wants us to see the fields. Not just the field that's closest or easiest. We should be seeing the fields in our home, on our street, in our town, in our county, in our state, in our nation and throughout the world. Those are our fields. Widen your perspective. Lift up your eyes to see them. Jesus wants you to lift up your eyes and see the fields. The Harvest is sure. Many are already white for harvest.

#### **IV. The Harvest is SHARED (36-38).**

**36 "And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.**

**37 "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.'**

**38 "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."**

Jesus is teaching us here that the Harvest is SHARED. There is no competition in the Lord's harvest. We are all a part of one another's labors. We are not trying to outdo one another or competing with any other Christian group or church. This is not just a New Covenant Baptist thing, this is a Kingdom of God thing.

The Corinthian church had a problem at this point. They even began to divide over their preachers and leaders. But Paul corrects them in 1 Corinthians 3:6-9, **"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will**

**receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building."**

Not only is there no competition in the Lord's harvest, but because we share the harvest we are not alone in this work. As Jesus said, **"others have labored and you have entered into their labors."** Who else had labored in the harvest field in Samaria? As I thought about that question my mind went back to verse 25 when the woman said, **"I know that Messiah is coming."** How did she know that the Messiah was coming? The Samaritan only followed the scriptures in the Law of Moses, the first five books of the Bible. Their religion rejected the other writings and prophets. Now certainly there are some references to One who would come from God in the Law, but the idea of the Messiah is much more developed in the psalms and the prophets. How did she get the idea of Messiah's coming?

Go back in your Bible just a page or two and find John 3:23. Here is an interesting note about John the Baptist. It says, **"Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized."** It seems that while Jesus and his disciples were baptizing in Judea, John was at **"Aenon near Salim."** Anybody have a guess where that place is? No? Well you're in good company. Most bible scholars and archeologists aren't sure either. There are two likely sites for Aenon near Salim. And guess what? Both of them are in or near Samaria.

There is a good possibility that these Samaritans had heard John preach. And we know what his message was. Look at John 1:20. John preached about the Messiah, the Christ. People even asked John if he was the Christ. And verse 20 says John, **"confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.'"** And in verse 26, **"John answered them, saying, 'I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.'"**

Maybe the "other labor" that Jesus spoke about was John the Baptist. He had sowed the seed and Jesus and His disciples were reaping the harvest. And of course the woman herself planted the seed through her testimony. Jesus had sent His disciples into the town. And while they were buying food it seems that they did no evangelizing. They gave no witness. Maybe they thought it was a waste of time to tell the good news in Samaria. But Jesus didn't. And the woman didn't. She took their place and did the work. Now they can rejoice in reaping the harvest. Here is a valuable lesson for us. Never look at any opportunity for witness as wasted time and energy. You never know how God will use that seed along with many others to bring someone to faith in Jesus.

Greg Long sings a song called "Fifteen." Some say it takes an average of fifteen times for a person to hear about Jesus before most of them believe. In the first verse he tells about a friend who witnesses to their waitress at the restaurant. And then his friend says,

If it takes fifteen times

To hear about Jesus  
For someone to believe  
Wherever I stand in line  
I've got to make a difference  
In case it comes down to me  
'Cause, I may be the third, may be the seventh  
There may be years in between  
But what if I'm fifteen  
What if I'm fifteen.

The disciples were getting ready to see many Samaritan souls saved. They were going to enjoy the payday even though others had sowed the Gospel seeds. God calls for you to be faithful in sowing seeds. You might get to see a bountiful harvest in this world, or you might not. Either way, you need to lift up your eyes.

And just look at the results from this woman's testimony and Jesus' Word,

**39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did."**

**40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.**

**41 And many more believed because of His own word.**

**42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."**

Many believed because of her testimony and many more believed because of the word of Jesus. Listen to their testimony, **"we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."** These Samaritans were just new believers but they already had a missionary vision. In fact their vision was wider than that of the Apostles. They saw that Jesus is the *Savior of the World!*

Remember the commission that Jesus gave to His disciples in Acts 1:8? Jesus said, **"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

I find it interesting to trace Jesus' footsteps in these first few chapters of the Gospel of John. In chapter 2 Jesus is in Jerusalem (2:23). In chapter 3 he is in Judea (3:22). In chapter 4 He goes to Samaria (4:4). And now the Samaritans declare him to be the **"Savior of the world."** Jesus demonstrated for us the Kingdom program, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth. Jesus has gone before us, if we follow He will give us the harvest.

Let me tell you one story of a man who followed Jesus' example and saw the harvest.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Jeannie Braca switched on the television to check the weather report, only to hear that a plane had just hit the World Trade Center.

Jeannie's husband, Al, worked as a corporate bond trader for Cantor Fitzgerald. His office was on the 105th floor of Tower One.

Al had survived the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and had even helped a woman with asthma escape from the building. Jeannie knew that Al would do the same thing this time, "I knew he would stop to help and minister to people," she said, "but I never thought for a minute that he wouldn't be coming home!"

A week later, like so many others who were in that building, Al's body was found in the rubble. Al's wife, Jeannie, and his son Christopher were devastated!

Then the reports began to trickle in from friends and acquaintances. Some people on the 105th floor had made a last call or sent a final e-mail to loved ones saying that a man was leading people in prayer. A few referred to Al by name.

Al's family learned that Al had indeed been ministering to people during the attack! When Al realized that they were all trapped in the building and would not be able to escape, Al shared the gospel with a group of 50 co-workers and led them in prayer.

This news came as no surprise to Al's wife, Jeannie. For years, she and Al had been praying for the salvation of these men and women. According to Jeannie, Al hated his job and couldn't stand the environment. It was a world so out of touch with his Christian values, but he wouldn't quit—it was his mission field. Al was convinced that God wanted him to stay there, to be a light in the darkness.

Al was not ashamed of Christ and Christ's words...and he paid the price of taking up his cross daily. Al had often shared his faith, sowing the seed, with his co-workers....many of whom sarcastically nicknamed him "The Rev."

And on that fateful day...on September 11, in the midst of the chaos, Al's co-workers looked to him—and Al delivered. And he saw the harvest!

As we come to the Lord's invitation time this morning I want to ask you, Do you see the harvest fields? Lift up your eyes! Jesus is sending you!

Over the last few weeks I have begun to see the harvest. The Lord is sending me. But I'm not the only one. I have been praying the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers into His harvest field. How will you respond today?

Here is a simple way for you to begin. What is in your wallet of real value? What is in there that is going to last for eternity? Anything?

1. Would you add a card listing the names of three people who need Christ?
2. Would you pray once a day for them? Would you agree to do that at least six days a week?
3. Would you share Christ with them as the Holy Spirit gives you the opportunity?