

I. Jesus encounters the people of Samaria

A. John 4:35-45 . . . Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. [36] Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. [37] For in this case 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 labor." [39] From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done." [40] So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. [41] Many more believed because of His word; [42] and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world." [43] After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. [44] For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. [45] So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

B. In our last study of this story, I pointed out the following seven lessons:

1. There is great wisdom in asking a question or two to gain more information or clarification in order to better understand what a person is like, what they are saying, or what they are doing.
2. There will be times when submitting to God requires setting aside current cultural and religious practices in order to show love, speak truth, and offer life to those around you.
3. You cannot humbly encounter Jesus Christ, honestly and thoughtfully read the Word of God, and seek to love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself, without gaining an ever increasingly clearer picture of how selfish and sinful you have been, and still are.
4. Though there are various methods of evangelism, and though all methods are not worthy methods, what matters most is pointing unbelievers to Jesus, and calling them to repentance and faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

5. Priorities are not necessarily about good verses bad, but about good verses better or best. When we make pleasing and serving God our top priority, we will more accurately determine where everything else fits under those priorities.
6. If our evangelistic efforts are to be believed, we must live lives that both agree with and demonstrate our message.
7. Every Christian has the ability to sow, so let us not grow weary or get discouraged with sowing. However, not every Christian is good at reaping, so if you are not good at reaping, at least be good at praying for God to send more reapers.

C. Pray

II. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan people

A. John 4:35-38 – A look at why we should evangelize.

1. When you are in love, you want people to meet the one you love. When you know someone who can do miraculous things for people (i.e., doctor, chiropractor, auto mechanic, counselor, etc.), you tell those who need that kind of help about that person.
 - a. If it is natural for you to do this on the human level, it will be natural for you to do this on the spiritual or heavenly level.
 - b. In other words, when we love God and are convinced He can help those around us who need help, we will have a natural motivation to point them to God, and to His son, Jesus Christ.
 - c. Therefore, wanting those around you to meet the God you love, and wanting those in need to be helped by God who has powerfully helped you, are two significant reasons to evangelize those around you.
2. When people hate, disparage, or are in serious conflict with someone you love, it is natural for you to do what you can to convince the haters and disparagers that the one you love is a wonderful person. And it is equally natural to do what you can to reconcile the one you love with those in conflict with him.
 - a. Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, [19] namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

- b. Before moving on to the next reason to evangelize, I want to point out that these first reasons are God centered. And I am pointing this out because I believe evangelism should be, first and foremost, God-centered rather than making us and what God will do for us the focus.
 3. If you were traveling on a highway, and you knew the bridge ahead had just collapsed into the river, 50 feet below, you would stand on the road, waving and shouting, in an effort to save oncoming traffic from plunging 50 feet to the river below.
 - a. Paul speaks of this in Romans 1:16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."
 - b. Though eternal damnation will not take place until some future time, sin destroys people and their lives even now. Therefore, concern for the present and future welfare of those around you is a good reason to evangelize.
 4. Jesus commands and therefore expects us to evangelize.
 - a. Peter affirmed this in Acts 10:42, "[Jesus] ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead."
 - b. One of the reasons Jesus commands us to evangelize is so God's kingdom can be filled with children. We learn this from Jesus parable in Luke 14:23, "And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.'"
 - c. Another reason Jesus commands us to evangelize is to make disciples of those who respond – disciples who are baptized and taught all that Jesus taught His disciples. Jesus said this in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."
 - d. In other words, Jesus commands us to evangelize in order to fill His kingdom with people who will love Him, obey Him, live according to His will, and live with Him forever.
 5. My final reason for evangelizing comes to us from the fact that from the beginning of the church down through today, it has been the normal practice for Christians to evangelize.

6. I want to conclude these reasons for evangelizing by reminding you that we all can sow the seed of God's truth and the gospel of salvation. And though results are not our responsibility, sowing is. May we make the most of the time we have with those who still have time to repent and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation from the power, practice and penalty of sin.
- B. John 4:39-40 . . . From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done." [40] So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.
1. Because the Samaritan woman testified about her personal experience with Jesus Christ – an experience that included His power to expose her sin – many Samaritans believed in Jesus.
 - a. Like this Samaritan woman, we too have personally experienced the power of Jesus to expose our sin, give us new life, and transform us from what we were to what we are and are becoming.
 - b. Now it is true, admitting how sinfully we have lived can be embarrassing. Yet humility and a deep appreciation for God's grace – in spite of embarrassment over our sin – should be enough to motivate us to risk telling the truth about our past and even our current struggles as we press forward in becoming Christ-like.
 - c. And so I urge each of you, if you haven't done this already, take the time to write out your story of salvation – what Jesus saved you from and how He is transforming you into what He saved you to become. Then, memorize it and use it as your template in speaking to others about repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.
 2. This story tells us that because the Samaritan woman sowed seed, a number of Samaritans came to meet Jesus. And we know that those who came and met Jesus were so affected by Him that they asked Him to stay with them for a time so they could learn more.
 3. We may not have such a response from our evangelistic efforts, but that is not a reason to give up on evangelism. Sowing is not about results, it is about planting with the hope of results.
- C. John 4:41-42 . . . Many more believed because of His word; [42] and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."
1. There is something about hearing that is vital to the salvation process.

- a. Paul put it this way in Romans 10:12-14, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; [13] for "Whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved." [14] How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?
- b. Now we know that creation, evangelistic tracks, Christian books, and the witness of a godly life speak clearly and loudly enough to lead an unbeliever to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.
2. However, the Bible presents hearing the truth as a significant part of coming to saving faith. For example –
 - a. In the parable of the four soils (Matthew 13:18-23), Jesus makes it clear that each soil heard the word. Now it is true that each soil responded differently to what they heard, but all heard.
 - b. In the story of the house built on the sand and the one built on the rock, each house represents someone who heard the word. And though the different foundations represent different responses to what was heard, the truth came through hearing it.
 - c. My point here is simply this, one of the significant ways of doing evangelism is personally speaking the truth of God's word and telling your own story to unbelievers. Of course, it is vital that you authenticate your words by how you live. Yet, why is your speaking and an unbelievers hearing so important? Here are two reasons –
 - (1) First, Jesus used this method – which indicates He was convinced it was a worthy method.
 - (2) Second, hearing the gospel from someone who has experienced its power to save and transform, and who is living accordingly, adds a level of integrity, sincerity, concern, and compassion that less personal methods cannot provide – and these additions are a good thing in that they represent God himself.
3. Now I want to make this clear, hearing the truth is not a guarantee that the one doing the hearing will properly respond to the truth.
 - a. We see this fact in the story of the two foundations. Even though both heard, one ignored what he heard and built his house on the sand while one believed and obeyed what he heard and built his house on the rock.
 - b. We also see this fact in the parable of the soils. All four heard – one ignored, two considered, but only one believed and obeyed.

- c. My point here is simply this – let us not neglect personally speaking to unbelievers in relation to evangelism.
- 4. There is another lesson from these verses that is important, and that lesson is this: We must experience Jesus Christ for ourselves if we are to see and experience Him in a way that saves us and changes us – not just for a time, but for all eternity.
 - a. Many have heard about Jesus. Many of those who have heard have met Jesus. But only some have come to know and submit to and love Jesus.
 - b. As with hearing the gospel, meeting Jesus is not enough. And it can only become enough if an unbeliever meets Jesus, listens attentively to His truth, and responds in faith and obedience.
 - c. We see the truth of this in the Gospels, for they tell us that many met Jesus and heard His message during His three years of ministry, but only some believed and validated their faith by their obedience.
- 5. The final lesson from these verses comes from the acknowledgment by the Samaritans that Jesus is the Savior of the world.
 - a. Interestingly, John is the only NT writer to use this phrase, “Savior of the world.” We find it here (vs 42) and in 1 John 4:14.
 - b. I am pointing this out because we are prone and tempted to look to someone along with God, or even other than God, to be the savior or saviors of the world.
 - (1) For example, we tend to look to government and political leaders who hold a view of the world similar to our view of how to fix things or improve things.
 - (2) We tend to look to money, savings accounts, retirement plans, insurance, and other financial means to save us in times of need.
 - (3) It is not uncommon for us to look to the military, police, or even a personal weapon – such as a gun – to save us in threatening situations.
 - c. However, none of these saviors, for all the good they might do, have saved the world – or us – from our human tendency to sin, to think evil thoughts, to treat others unkindly, to speak sarcastically or abusively, to be proud or sinfully angry, to hate and discriminate, to be envious and greedy, to feel sorry for ourselves, to be discontent, to lust, to drink excessively, to take drugs, to lie and cheat, to return evil for evil, or to take our own revenge.

- (1) In fact, according to Paul (2 Timothy 3:1-5), earthly, human saviors will not save us, and he confirms by prophesying that life on earth will progressively get worse until evil is rampant and righteousness is hard to find.
- (2) Jesus said that just before His return (second coming), it will be like the days of Noah, when evil is so rampant that almost no one will be looking for the return of Christ.
- (3) In other words, all our earthly, human saviors will fail to save us. Only Jesus is the savior of the world. Only Jesus is the way the truth and the life. Only Jesus frees us from the power and practice of sin. Only Jesus has paid our penalty for sin. Only Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit, and a new nature. And only Jesus satisfies God's wrath against sin and sinners so that we can be reconciled to God, and live with Him forever.

III. Conclusion

- A. John 4:43-45 . . . After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. [44] For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. [45] So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.
 1. John ends this story – and prepares us for the next story – by affirming what he said in John 1:11-12, “[Jesus] came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. [12] But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”
 2. You see, God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised – God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the LORD."