

026: A Deep Subject

(based on Sermons #20 & #21 in the Life of Christ Series)

During his senior years, Mark Twain noted that, "Life would be infinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of 80 and gradually approach 18."

- Because aging and death are a reality of life, many throughout the centuries have sought for a fountain of youth to keep them perpetually young and thereby able to live continuously.
- Herodotus looked for this fountain, so did Alexander the Great.
- Some say the famous explorer Ponce de Leon found it in a well in St. Augustine, Florida.
- Today, a tourist attraction has been built around the well, and the owners are willing to let you see it — for a fee, of course.
- If Ponce de Leon did, indeed, find the fountain of youth, we have to wonder why he didn't live to tell us about it himself.
- In John 4 Jesus offers a Samaritan woman *living water*, which He describes as "a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."
- What is He offering this woman? And what is His purpose in confronting her?
- Before answering these questions, it is important to insert a parenthesis.

Within Christianity (broadly speaking) are varying views as to how someone becomes saved.

- I believe the Scriptures teach that salvation is a gracious gift of God bestowed upon those who simply believe Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for eternal life.

- Merely believing *the Gospel* is not sufficient for salvation, if using Paul's definition of the Gospel in 1 Cor. 15:3:
- "Christ died for our sins ... He was buried ... He rose again the third day."
- Roman Catholics believe *that* — and they even believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He was born of a virgin — yet they are not saved if they hold to the doctrine of their Church, which includes works as part of salvation.
- While the Gospel is important information for knowing who Jesus was, what He did, and why we should believe Him, it's not the means of salvation.

Salvation is received when one believes that Jesus gives eternal life to those who simply believe Him for it.

- Good works do not *merit* salvation (as with Roman Catholics), nor do they *maintain* it (as with Arminians), nor are they essential to *prove* that one has been saved (as with Calvinists).
- Rather, good works follow salvation *in the lives of those believers who choose the pathway of discipleship* — denying self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus.
- Since repentance includes behavioral change, it is not required for salvation.
- Repentance is most often presented in the Scriptures as the requirement for restored fellowship with God, in the case of those believers who have wandered from him through sinfulness (see 2 Chron. 7:14).

This position on salvation is typically referred to as *Free Grace*.

- I hold to this position.
- While *Free Grace* advocates may disagree amongst themselves as to what particular details about Jesus one

must believe to receive eternal life, they would all agree that salvation is strictly by grace, through faith, and not of works, unlike the other systems of theology described above.

- *Free Grace* theologians typically claim that the Synoptic Gospels (Matt./Mark/Luke) are not focused on matters of initial salvation (regeneration), but rather on the importance of *repentance* for those first century Jews who are out of fellowship with Jehovah.
- With that I would agree.
- Those same *Free Grace* advocates usually say that John's Gospel, on the other hand — which never mentions the words *repent* or *repentance* — is evangelistic or soteriological in nature, that is, directed at those who need to be saved.

Since John explicitly states that his Gospel is devoted to convincing his readers that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God, and that by believing Him they may have life (see John 20:31), those who hold to *Free Grace* soteriology think John's Gospel focuses primarily on salvation matters.

- With that I would disagree.
- The Jews are already Old Testament believers. As pointed out in the study on Nicodemus, the first century Jews believe in Jehovah God, and they offer Passover lambs annually, demonstrating their understanding of the necessity of substitutionary blood atonement.
- I personally believe the message of all four Gospels is the same:
 - a) Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God,
 - b) He offers inheritance in the ruling realm of the Messianic kingdom (New Jerusalem) for those who will repent, return to fellowship with God, and follow Him in discipleship, and

- c) to that end, He offers eternal (age-during) life as a gift to those who believe Him for it.
- Keep in mind that eternal life is not a ticket to Heaven. As stated in a previous study:
- Eternal life is the provision of Jesus within believers as the means by which they can live righteously and thereby qualify for age-lasting (millennial) inheritance.

John's Gospel differs from the Synoptic Gospels only in this respect:

- The Gospel of John focuses on the glorious provision of eternal life and what that means, while the Synoptics focus on the necessity of repentance for inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.
- They are not two different messages, merely two aspects of the same message.
- Thus, *the overarching theme of all four Gospels is inheritance in the coming Messianic kingdom, and how to obtain it.*
- As will be seen later in Christ's ministry, the Jews reject Christ's offer of kingdom inheritance, so Jesus makes the same offer to the church, which is predominantly Gentile.
- Though that is not officially announced until much later (Matt. 21:43), we get a sneak preview of His offer to Gentiles in His conversation with the woman at the well.

Jesus only spoke with Gentiles on a handful of occasions

- He referred to the Samaritan leper who returned to give Him glory and thanks as a "foreigner"
- The word means a non-Jew or, simply, a Gentile. Thus, the woman at the well, being a Samaritan, is a Gentile.
- She is the first Gentile on record to be offered eternal life. Interestingly, Christ's method of extending the offer

is more consistent with the definition of eternal life given above than the traditional “ticket-to-heaven” definition assumed in most “plans of salvation.”

- In this study we will discover five profound truths from Christ’s meeting with the woman at the well.

1. Jesus Demonstrates Compelling Love for Jews and Gentiles

- In a previous study we saw Christ’s love for Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews.
- Here we see His love for a sinful Gentile woman of Samaria.
- The bottom line is that Jesus loves both Jews and Gentiles. Indeed, He loves the whole world.
- John 4:3-6
- 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.
- 4 But He needed to go through Samaria.
- 5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.
- 6 Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

Two roads led from Judea to Galilee at the time of Christ — one in the Jordan River valley, which was out of the way, but much more commonly used by Jews.

- The other route was direct through Samaria, which the Jews avoided because they hated the Samaritans.
- Jesus does not seem to be in a hurry. He does not need to go through Samaria for sake of time.
- Rather, He breaks with social conventions, because He is *divinely* compelled to go to Samaria.

- His message must be given there as well, so He deliberately chooses to ignore the cultural taboos.
- Undoubtedly, love compels Him to go, despite the racial religious bigotry of His day.
- A Gentile woman needs to meet Jesus and receive the offer of eternal life.
- She is what we might call a “divine appointment.”

Jesus arrives at Jacob’s well at about the sixth hour (noon), and He is weary from travel.

- The disciples have gone into the city to buy lunch.
- The well is about half a mile from the actual city of Sychar, in ancient Shechem — the modern city of Nablus in the West Bank — a beautiful valley region between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim.
- Incidentally, the well is still there on the property of the local Eastern Orthodox Church, a regular Holy Land tourist stop.
- The woman arrives to draw water.
- What is she doing at the well by herself at this hour of the day?
- Most women of her day would go to draw in the evening, when it was cooler.
- Some commentators point out, from what we know later in the passage, that the woman is likely an adulterer and shunned by the other women of the city.

Jesus asks her for a drink of water, since He has no vessel with which to draw from the well.

- Her response demonstrates both surprise and sarcasm:
- John 4:9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

- The woman is rude and does not give Jesus water.
- She cannot believe a man is sitting by the well since, in her day, that is considered a woman's place.
- Not to mention, He is Jewish.
- What is He doing in Samaria?
- To top it off, He actually speaks to her, a woman, and not just any woman — an adulterous Samaritan woman!
- No rabbi in his right mind is going to talk to a Samaritan woman, and he certainly is not going to ask her for a drink of water, even if he's dying of thirst.
- God forbid that he would drink from a Samaritan's cup!
- She replies with a sarcastic tone, as if to say, "You Jews trample us Samaritans under foot until you want something; then and only then are we good enough!"

Where does all of this cultural tension and prejudice come from?

- It is important to understand the historical background.
- When the ten northern tribes of Israel were conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC, the enemy deported thousands of Israelites and carried them off to foreign lands.
- In their place, the Assyrians imported pagan captives from other lands.
- Of course, they were Gentiles and brought with them their own gods and systems of worship.
- Throughout the centuries leading up to the time of Christ, the remaining Jews in Samaria intermarried with the pagan Gentile transplants.
- When the people of the southern two tribes of Judah returned after the Babylonian captivity, they quickly realized the huge difference between themselves and the Samaritans, racially, politically, and religiously.

By the time of Jesus there was a strong rivalry and hatred between the Jews and Samaritans.

- Despite this cultural history, Jesus is compelled by love to travel to Samaria to meet this woman.
- Incidentally, when the disciples return later in v. 27, they are shocked that Jesus is talking with a Samaritan woman.
- That's how culturally prejudiced they are.
- Are you prejudiced?
- Do you have racial hatred toward others who have a different skin color or nationality?
- Men, are you chauvinistic in your attitude toward women?
- Women, are you feministic in your attitude toward men?

Do you condescend to those who are in a lower financial status in life?

- Do you have scorn in your heart for those who come from other religious belief systems?
- Do you look down on immigrants?
- Or do you view people who are different from you as divine opportunities to share Christ with people who need the Lord?
- Are you willing to be inconvenienced for the sake of the Gospel?
- Jesus is willing. He finds Himself alone with a Samaritan woman, which is awkward, particularly in their culture.
- Furthermore, He is hungry and tired.
- Yet He pays no attention to His growling stomach.

He appropriates God's grace for strength during His time of weakness; and begins to talk to this woman, though she is sarcastic and rude.

- Notice that Jesus never snaps back nor does he pay any attention to her bitter, cynical attitude.
- Instead, He starts a conversation about her spiritual condition.
- In so doing, He demonstrates compelling love.
- That leads to a second profound truth from Christ's conversation with the woman.

2. Jesus Offers Living Water

- John 4:10-14
- 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says 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 with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"
- 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"
- 13-14 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

When Jesus offers living water — and, by that, He is using a metaphor for spiritual life — the woman assumes he is speaking of natural water.

- She wonders how He can possibly draw from such a deep well without any vessel to draw with.
- In modern times, having motorized well pumps, we often don't think of the work involved in drawing water from an ancient well.

- In most of the western world people turn on the faucet and clean, potable water pours out.
- We take fresh water for granted and hardly think about it, but many in the world do not have this same privilege.
- Of course, in ancient times, and particularly in the Middle East, water had to be hauled up from very deep wells, and it was laborious work.
- Today, Jacob's well is 135 ft. deep. Some scholars suggest that it was probably deeper — perhaps 150 ft. — during Christ's day, the equivalent depth of a ten-story high rise building in modern times!

No wonder the woman immediately responds, "Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw" (v. 15).

- Naturally, she is delighted to think that Jesus may be able to solve her nightly drudgery of drawing water from such a deep well and hauling it back home.
- Not to mention, she will no longer thirst.
- Of course, Jesus is offering something quite different, as she will soon learn.
- His water is living, because it is of a spiritual nature.
- The apostle John also wrote the book of Revelation, and there he quotes Jesus as saying:
- Rev. 21:6b I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

Keeping in mind the correct definition of *eternal*, as clarified in our previous study about Nicodemus, verses 13-14 could be better translated as follows:

- John 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said to her: "Everyone who is drinking of this water will be thirsting again, yet whoever may be drinking of the water which I shall be giving him, shall under no circumstances be thirsting for

the eon (age), but the water which I shall be giving him will become in him a spring of water, welling up into life eonian (age-during).

- Notice that the word *never* is translated *not for the age*.
- That is because, in Greek, it is the noun form (*aion*, meaning *age*) of the adjective (*aionios*, meaning *age-during*).
- The focus is on the millennial age.
- The moment anyone believes Jesus, they receive a wonderful gift — a fountain of water springing up to everlasting (literally, age-lasting) life — Jesus living within!
- The fountain imagery illustrates the tremendous potential of having Christ's life within the believer's life.

But what good is the fountain if the believer never draws from it?

- The gift remains “unopened,” so to speak.
- That happens when believers live for self rather than God, when they are not cooperating with God in His sanctifying work in their lives.
- Thus, the fountain, which is a spiritual goldmine of sorts, remains untapped.
- The key to appropriating the fountain is continued drinking, that is, continued belief.
- While *initial* belief results in receiving the *gift*, *continued* belief results in abundant living — and if appropriated consistently throughout life — *reward* in the millennial age to come.
- Keep in mind that the verb *appropriate* simply means “to take it and put it to good use.”
- Continued belief is the way believers appropriate their provision, thereby leveraging the marvelous potential.

- While the woman mistakes Christ's offer for natural water, Jesus obviously speaks of spiritual water, living water, which always satisfies, at least to the extent one continues to drink.

As a child in church I enjoyed hearing soloists sing the classic 1970s gospel song:

- Like the woman at the well, I was seeking
- For things that could not satisfy.
- And then I heard my Savior speaking—
- "Draw from My well that never shall run dry."
- Fill my cup, Lord; I lift it up, Lord;
- Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.
- Bread of Heaven, feed me 'til I want no more.
- Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole.
- That leads to a third profound truth from Christ's conversation with the woman.

3. Jesus identifies the obstacle to abundant living

- John 4:16-19
- 16 Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”
- 17 The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’
- 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.”
- 19 The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

Notice that Jesus does not point-blank say: “Woman, you are an adulterer!”

- To the Jewish woman caught in adultery He says, “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11).
- But to this Samaritan woman He simply makes an unassuming statement to get her attention, and catches the woman off-guard.
- I can only imagine that is because our Lord is gentle, loving and merciful, ready to forgive.
- “Go, call your husband,” He says.
- She is surprised, for although she has remained unmarried in the eyes of man, she has had five “husbands” in the eyes of God.
- In other words, she has lived as if married — enjoying the intimacy intended for those who are wed — with six men.

Perhaps this intimation of her adultery brings guilt, but the passage never says that.

- Rather, the woman perceives that Jesus is a prophet, and then later in the text she tells the men in the city, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” (v. 29).
- Traditional commentaries like to paint this text as evangelistic.
- The woman at the well, they say, needs salvation.
- That much is true.
- But what kind of salvation does she need — regeneration, because she is an unbeliever; or forgiveness of sins and restoration to fellowship with God, because she is an Old Testament believer who has been living sinfully (Luke 1:77)?
- The latter leads to continued life and reward in the Millennium.
- Ironically, the passage doesn’t indicate.
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Furthermore, John never says if the woman believes Jesus for eternal (age-during) life — i.e., in the initial sense, to receive the *gift* — nor does he say if she repents from her sinful lifestyle.

- The reader is not even told if she feels guilty about her sin.
- Traditional interpreters of this text simply make assumptions.
- They superimpose New Testament theology backwards onto this Old Testament person, jumping to the conclusion that she must be an unbeliever who needs a ticket to Heaven.
- But the text gives no indication that is the case.
- Only one positive thing is said about the woman.
- Because of her testimony, the men of the city go to Jesus to hear more, and many believe (vs. 39-42).
- She is a conduit, connecting others with Jesus.
- Is this not confessing Christ, for which disciples are rewarded?
- Matt. 10:32 Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

However, we cannot be dogmatic about what is happening in this woman’s life, because John doesn’t tell us.

- He seems to purposely leave the details nebulous.
- And why would John do that?
- It seems that John’s purpose is to emphasize another facet of eternal (age-during) life, namely, that it is a fountain of water, springing up, which pictures continued belief, resulting in abundant life.
- Jesus wants this woman — and all of us, for that matter — to experience abundant life now, which is glorious in itself, but also leads to receiving the reward of eternal life for those who choose to continue believing.

- *Implied in the conversation is that sin is the one major obstacle to experiencing this abundant life.*
- That leads to a fourth profound truth from Christ's conversation with the woman.

4. Jesus teaches that God is looking for true worshipers

- John 4:19-24
- 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.
- 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."
- Whether this woman attempts to dodge the matter of her sin by changing the subject to a theological discussion, or whether she genuinely wants to continue the discussion and learn more, we don't know.
- We can only discuss what we know.

She believes Jesus to be a prophet, that is, a divine messenger, sent to communicate God's Word to man.

- That's the only possible way He can possess the ability to know the intimate details of her life.
- Being isolated in Samaria, the woman probably has not heard about Jesus or His miracle-working power.
- But seeing that He knows all about her past, she essentially concludes the same as Nicodemus — that "He is a teacher come from God," and "God is with Him" (John 3:2).
- Seeing that she recognizes Jesus as sent by God, why wouldn't she believe the truths that He is sharing with her?

The woman seizes the opportunity to bring up a matter that has apparently bothered her for some time.

- "We Samaritans have traditionally worshiped on Mt. Gerizim, but you Jews insist that Jerusalem is to be the center of worship."
- As if to say, "Do I have to stop being a Samaritan (in religious belief) and convert to Judaism if I am to receive this gift of living water?"
- Jesus gives a classic response:
- John 4:21-24
- 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.
- 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.
- 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.
- 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

First, Jesus never questions her belief in Jehovah God.

- The Samaritans also believed in Jehovah, thanks to their ancient Jewish heritage.
- The problem was that their religious system over the centuries had become corrupted with idolatry and pagan concepts.
- But the Jews had their corruptions too.
- Think of the Pharisees and their numerous man-made additions to the Mosaic law that they equated to the level of God's Word.
- Second, Jesus never questions her Jewish heritage.
- The woman refers to "our fathers," an obvious reference to Abraham, who had built an altar to the Lord there at Shechem, and Jacob, who had dug the well where they are conversing.

- They had, indeed, worshiped on Mt. Gerizim in ancient times.
- She is right about that.

Third, Jesus does not criticize her religious beliefs.

- The Samaritans held only to the Torah — the first five books of Moses.
- That was their entire Scripture basis — no history, poetry or prophets.
- Not to mention, their copy of the Torah was corrupted.
- In Deut. 27:4-8, just before his death, Moses ordered that an altar be built on Mt. Ebal, which was to be the place for sacrificing, after the Israelites entered the Promised Land.
- But the Samaritan version of the Torah specified Mt. Gerizim as the place.

Of course, centuries later David moved the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, and Solomon was commissioned to build a temple for God there.

- The Samaritans, because of their reliance on the Torah alone, continued to worship on Mt. Gerizim.
- In fact, like the Israelites, they annually offered Passover lambs to commemorate the salvation back in Egypt.
- During the days of Nehemiah, the Samaritans opposed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.
- They erected their own temple on Mt. Gerizim in the middle of the fifth century BC.
- The project was led by Sanballat, a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah.
- The Maccabees later destroyed the Samaritan temple in 110 BC.

- Despite the loss of their temple, the Samaritans continued to offer Passover lambs on altars outdoors even up to the time of Christ.

Jesus never rebukes this woman's beliefs and assumes that she worships the same Jehovah God, referring to Him as "the Father" — no longer El-Shaddai or Jehovah — as if He were her Father as much as Christ's.

- We also discover later in the conversation that she awaits a coming Messiah (v. 25).
- Fourth, Jesus tells the woman about the new way of worship.
- Remarkably, He shares new revelation with this woman — a Gentile — that He has never told to anyone else.
- Worship of the Father going forward will neither be in Jerusalem nor on Mt. Gerizim.
- That is earth-shattering news!
- "The hour is coming, *and now is*, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth."
- As if to say, "The time is coming when the venue and mode of worship will change.
- No longer will true worship be in the temple at Jerusalem, nor will it be in the open air on Mt. Gerizim.
- Indeed, that time is *now*, for I have come from God. *Salvation is of the Jews.*"

This salvation, in context, seems to be referring to Messianic salvation, the deliverance to be brought by the Messiah that John the Baptist's father, the priest Zacharias, thanked God for in Luke 1:68-79.

- Though the entire passage is too lengthy to quote here, Zacharias refers to the "horn of salvation" that God has "raised up," then he describes the nature of that

salvation: “that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.”

- Zacharias gives a classic definition of an Old Testament Jew’s understanding of salvation.
- While the typical New Testament, church-age believer thinks of salvation as deliverance from Hell via a ticket to Heaven, Jesus and the Jews — and even this Samaritan woman — are thinking of salvation as deliverance from enemies.
- The means of obtaining this salvation is national repentance which leads to remission of sins and restoration to fellowship with God.

The woman apparently holds to a similar definition of salvation, for when Jesus proclaims, “Salvation is of the Jews, she announces her belief in a coming Messiah (v. 25), “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ).

- “When He comes, He will tell us all things.”
- Jesus replies to her, “I who speak to you am He.”
- What a stunning climax to the conversation!
- The Messianic salvation is not limited to Jews; it is also for Gentiles, truth that the apostle Paul will later expand in his epistles (e.g., see Eph. 2:15).
- Whether she realizes it or not, Jesus has just declared new revelation that Jew and Gentile will be one in Christ.
- Jesus continues to describe the new mode of worship that Messiah is bringing:
- 24 “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

In the statement, “God is Spirit,” the definite article “a” is absent in the Greek text.

- When the article is present, it refers to the person’s identity, but when the article is absent, it refers to the person’s essence or character.
- In other words, Jesus is not saying that God is a spirit being, a non-human.
- Rather, just as He might say that God is love or God is holy, so in this case He is saying that God is spirit or, better, *spiritual*.
- What that means is that man can neither be natural (unsaved) nor carnal (a fleshly believer) and expect to worship God (see 1 Cor. 2).
- The only way anyone can truly worship (give glory to) God is if they are *spiritual*, walking in the Spirit.

The second requirement for worshipping God is *truth*.

- In John 17:17 Jesus proclaims, “Your word is truth.”
- Thus, to worship God one must be anchored in truth, not error.
- That necessitates correct interpretation of Scripture.
- Jesus says to the woman, “The Father is seeking such to worship Him.”
- He is seeking out those who are rightly dividing the Word (2 Tim. 2:15) and walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).
- In the context, these are believers who are continuing to believe God, drawing upon their divine provision.
- They are appropriating eternal life, the life of Jesus, so that they become a fountain of water, springing up.
- They are the only ones who can truly worship (glorify) the Father.
- That leads to a fifth profound truth from Christ’s conversation with the woman.

5. Jesus emphasizes the importance of spiritual vision

- The woman at the well is greatly impacted by Christ's Messianic claim. As the disciples are returning to the well, she goes back to the city and says to the men:
- John 4:29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"
- As mentioned earlier, this could be construed as confessing Christ.
- While the woman is in the city, the disciples have an important spiritual conversation with Him.

John 4:31-35

- 31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."
- 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."
- 33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?"
- 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."
- 35 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!

By focusing on physical food, the disciples miss the spiritual opportunities.

- Jesus, on the other hand, seizes those opportunities because He has spiritual vision.
- The disciples press Jesus to eat. He must surely be hungry; they have traveled all morning, and it is now long past noon.
- He claims to have food they don't know about.
- The disciples, who are at this point very temporally focused, ask, "Did anyone bring you food to eat?"

- Jesus clarifies, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me" (v. 34).
- In other words, "Men, I do not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).
- That is much more important than physical food.
- What is it that drives you?
- Physical food or spiritual food?
- Physical rest or spiritual rest?
- Physical comforts or spiritual opportunities?

While the disciples are eating with Jesus, the woman has climbed the hill and arrived back in town.

- She immediately tells the men of the city about her encounter with Christ.
- They join her and start back down the hillside toward the well.
- Jesus is very likely looking up at the hill, while the disciples have their backs to what He is viewing.
- When He sees the men pouring down the hillside, He says to His disciples, "Do you think there are four months until harvest?"
- (He is likely referring to the seasonal grain harvest, which was still months away).
- "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are already 'white' for harvest!"

He points at the hillside. The disciples turn.

- They see the men of the city, clothed in long white flowing robes, and they grasp Christ's analogy.
- What He means is this: "Get your eyes refocused up the field; here come men from the city wanting to find the Messiah."

- The harvest to which Jesus refers is not a physical grain harvest.
- It is a spiritual harvest.
- The disciples have been temporally focused.
- Now they can see that Jesus is not referring to physical food; it is spiritual food.
- Jesus has deliberately traveled through Samaria because these people need the fountain of water that springs up to age-during life.
- What do you see when you look at the world?
- The temporal or the eternal?
- Headaches, frustrations, traffic — or people who are hungry to know more about spiritual things.

John 4:36-38

- 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.”

Sowing seed is labor-intensive.

- It is difficult work, especially because you cannot see the product of the labor.
- It requires tremendous patience and great endurance through persecution.
- Oftentimes we have the privilege of reaping even though we have not sowed in that particular person’s life.
- Others sow the seed of kingdom truth, and we are privileged to enter into their labors.

- In this case, Jesus sows and the disciples enter into an almost immediate harvest.
- John 4:39-41
- 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.

The harvest doesn’t end after the two days, it continues.

- Several years later Philip goes to Samaria and preaches Christ. The harvest is glorious:
- Acts 8:5-6, 8, 12
- 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.
- 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.
- 8 And there was great joy in that city.
- 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

Later, Peter and John travel to Samaria and the believers of that region receive the Holy Spirit.

- Both sower and reaper share in the dividends.
- They rejoice together, because the fruit is eternal (age-during).
- This is an obvious reference to the *reward* of eternal life.
- As a pastor, my greatest joy is seeing those to whom I am ministering growing in grace, appropriating the fountain of eternal life within that leads to abundant living.
- Paul expressed that same joy:

- 1 These. 2:19-20 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.
- We are rewarded, not merely when a person believes on Jesus for eternal life (harvesting), but also when we are faithful to give the gospel (sowing), even if another person reaps the harvest.
- Additionally, we are rewarded for sharing truth about sanctification and discipleship.
- That is seen in the ministry of Philip, mentioned above.
- According to John 4:37, it typically takes sower and a reaper — oftentimes, two different parties — before harvest takes place.
- Incidentally, cooperation in sowing and reaping makes it impossible for any one individual to take the credit or get the glory for someone being saved; the glory is given to God alone.

1 Cor. 3:6-9

- 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.
- 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.
- 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.
- 9 For we are God's fellow workers.
- The fields are white already to harvest.
- Jesus said so. That means there are always people who are seeking truth and ready to believe.
- How many? We don't know.
- Who are they? We don't know.
- We must simply believe God when He says the fields are white to harvest and then go forward sharing truth, with a harvesting mentality.

When someone is rude and resists the good news, our attitude should be: "That one wasn't ready for harvest."

- At least I was given the opportunity to sow the seed or water it.
- I will trust God to give the increase and continue telling others who may be ready for harvest."
- The problem is that we so often don't have this attitude, because we really don't believe the fields are white already to harvest.
- We get discouraged and defeated in our witness because we do not believe the promise of Christ.
- In Matt. 9:37 Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few."
- Plenty of people are seeking truth, but so few are ready and willing to share it, in large part, because they are temporally focused.
- That is the problem with the disciples here in John 4.
- Jesus, on the other hand, is eternally focused.
- As a direct result of His spiritual focus, many people believe on Him to receive the fountain of water spring up to everlasting (age-during) life.

John 4:39-41

- 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.
- Are you focused on spiritual matters, like Jesus, or is your focus merely temporal, like the disciples?
- I challenge you to: THINK ON THESE THINGS!