

Come One, Come All

John 4:27-42

Over the last few weeks, we have been listening in on a conversation between Jesus and a woman at a well in Samaria. We have seen Him establish rapport with someone that many others would have been repulsed by. We've seen Him establish a level of trust in someone that, under normal circumstances, would have been very suspicious of Him. Instead we have seen her develop a level of trust that allowed for her to come to a place where she would hear that Jesus is the Messiah and accept Him as her Savior. Let us again join them and see how things progress.

John 4:27-42 ESV:

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 the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, "He told me everything I ever did!"

40 When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days,

41 long enough for many more to hear his message and believe.

42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."

Now that we have taken an overview of the whole passage we will go back and attempt to extract the full meaning from each verse.

John 4:27-30 ESV

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.

As Jesus' disciples returned from town, the woman left and headed toward the town. The original language here carries the meaning that she left so quickly, in a state of such excitement and embarrassment, that she forgot to take her water jar with her.¹

It is possible that there was more said here than is written, but just as Christ had made himself known to her as the Messiah, His disciples returned. Jesus' disciples are surprised that He would be talking with a woman, which as we mentioned earlier was not considered proper behavior by a Jewish Rabbi. The fact that they did not say anything could suggest that they were so embarrassed by what they found Him doing, no one said anything. Or it could also have been that they respected Jesus so much that they knew He would not do anything improper. In any event, the woman, in her excitement of hearing that Jesus was the Messiah, forgot her water jar. She could not wait to tell the people in town about what Jesus told her. We would have to believe that this suggests she believed what Jesus had told her. It appears by what she says, "Can this be the Christ?" however, that she still is not certain He is the Messiah. But as we move on in these verses it becomes rather evident that at the end of her conversation with Jesus, she had accepted Him as Savior.

The people in town must certainly have been impressed by what she told them because they immediately headed for the well to get a glimpse of Jesus. Her words "*Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?*" were bound to grab their interest.

The Holy Spirit may well have been guiding her steps and her words as she returned to the village because after telling the people everything that Jesus had told her, she posed the question to them, "*This couldn't be the Messiah, could it?*" Presenting this information, and then asking them what they thought, probably was much more effective than running into the town square and announcing that she had found the promised Messiah. From everything we can surmise about this woman it is very possible she was not held in the highest regard. She may even have been a prostitute, and such a statement by her would not be readily believed. She was able to stimulate their curiosity in this way

¹ Robertson, A.T.: *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997, S. Jn 4:28-38.

and then everyone wanted to find out if this could possibly be true.

John 4:31-34 ESV

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."*

When the disciples returned from the village with supplies, they were shocked that Jesus was talking with a woman, and especially a Samaritan; but they did not say anything. They were learning to trust that Jesus knew what He was doing and did not need to be accountable to them. But, after the woman left, they urged Jesus to eat because they knew that He was hungry. The disciples showed their concern for Jesus' comfort by urging Him to eat.

"*I have food to eat that you do not know about,*" was His reply, and they did not understand. They thought He was speaking of the kind of literal food they had purchased in the village, and they wondered where He got it. Their conclusion was that someone else must have given Him something to eat while they were gone. Jesus must have scratched his head a few times when He heard the responses of His disciples. But as was His nature, He gently explained to them that doing the will of His Father, in this case, leading the woman to salvation, was food for His soul. The disciples were satisfied by bread; Jesus was satisfied by doing the work of His Father.

"*'Seek your life's nourishment in your life's work,'* said Phillips Brooks. The will of God ought to be a source of strength and satisfaction to the child of God, just as if he sat down to a sumptuous feast. If what we are doing tears us down instead of builds us up, then we may well question whether it is the will of God for us"²

Jesus did not consider His Father's will a burden that one had to do. He considered His Father's work that He was sent to do to be food for His soul. Doing the Father's will both strengthened Him and provided a very pleasant feeling of satisfaction. As we read in Psalm 40:8: "*I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart.*" (NLT)

Jesus' number one desire was to do God's will. John 5:30:

"I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me. Therefore, my judgment is just, because I carry out the will of the one who sent me, not my own will." (NLT)

John 8:29 NLT:

² Walvoord, John F.; Zuck, Roy B.; Dallas Theological Seminary: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:287

And the one who sent me is with me—he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him.”

Is that our Number One priority? To always be doing the will of God? Do we even know what we are talking about when we say, “*doing the will of God*”? There is the revealed will of God, which we find in the Bible. This includes receiving Christ as Savior and being obedient to all the commandments in Scripture: put God first, love one another, tell others about Jesus, be honest and truthful, be filled with the Spirit, exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, and many other things that God tells us to do in the Bible. Then there is the will of God for you personally, for your entire life. That is revealed to you through your spiritual gifts, through your skills and talents, and through your God-given desires (Philippians 2:13; Psalm 37:4). God shows you what He wants you to do through prayer, through Scripture, through godly counsel from other people, as well as by the open and closed doors He provides. God may want you to be a plumber or a computer programmer who does their job well and who teaches their children to be godly. Or He may want you to serve Him as a pastor, teacher, musician, or by ministering in a foreign country. There are no cookie-cutter plans, no one-size-fits-all ministries. But whatever plan God has for your life, you can be sure of this. He is more concerned about who you are and how you live than about what you do. He mentions this several times in Scripture:

Micah 6:8 NAS

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Colossians 3:17 NAS

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

1 Corinthians 10:31 NAS

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

When you are living that way, you will be eager to serve and will have the joy of the Lord.

Psalm 40:1-3 NIV

*1 I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.
2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.
3 He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.*

Nehemiah 8:10 NAS

“ . . . this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Jesus is our Example. Jesus knew better than anyone His Father’s message in

Deuteronomy 8:3: *“People do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” (NLT)*

Jesus is not concerned about material pleasures, although I do not doubt He enjoyed a good meal and celebration now and then. But far and away His number one priority was the work His Father sent Him to do and which must be done. Jesus said in John 17:4 NLT: *“ I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”*

John 4:35-38 ESV:

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.”

What the disciples had already reaped was due to the work of others before them. In other words the people that were coming out from the city toward Jesus were responding to the work of the prophets who had sown the Word and teachings of God throughout the Old Testament period. If it were not for what the woman knew about God and the coming of the Messiah, she could not have understood who Jesus was and what He was telling her. The lesson that He is trying to teach His disciples is that no single person can claim sole credit for successfully leading someone to faith. The harvest belongs to the sower as much as to the reaper. This means it belongs as much to those who plant the seed and water the seed as much as it does to the one who collects the full grown stalks at the time of the harvest. Some people plant the seed of God and Christ in an unbeliever’s heart. Others come along and water it by explaining the meaning of the Bible to them. Then when they are fully ready, someone asks them if they are ready to invite Christ into their life as Savior. The woman at the well, after hearing the message from Jesus, took it to the others in the village and they responded by seeking out Jesus.

The Bible frequently compares a harvest with winning unbelievers to faith. We see it in the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Tares in Matthew 13. Paul used it several times as well in his letters. Galatians 6:9 NLT: *“So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.”* Also 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 NLT:

6 I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow.

7 It’s not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What’s important is that God makes the seed grow.

8 The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work.

9 For we are both God’s workers. And you are God’s field. You are God’s

building.

We plant the seed of God's Word in the hearts of people who hear it, and then we cultivate it by praying with them and for them, by helping them understand the Bible, and by showing them that we love them. In time that seed may bear fruit to the glory of God.

We can just imagine what Jesus' disciples were thinking as they trudged behind Jesus on the way to the village of Sychar. *"Why is He dragging us through this God-forsaken country that is only inhabited by these detestable Samaritans? We're supposed to be fishers of men but the only thing we'll catch in Samaria is sunburn. These people hate us. They'd never listen to a thing we would say."* Did you ever feel that way as a Christian when you were in a hostile environment? I think it far more often than I would like to admit. I have tried telling some people about Jesus and they do everything but tar and feather me and run me out of town. So the next time I am around them I think, *"What's the use? They have no interest in Jesus Christ and what He has to say. I don't know what's wrong with them but they have no interest in knowing how they can be assured of eternal life in Heaven, and peace for the rest of the time they're on this earth."*

But in the case of the Samaritan woman just the opposite was true. The seed had been planted and all that was necessary for a full harvest was for Jesus to do a little watering. That speaks a lesson to me. So every time I find myself around those people who want to tar and feather me for my belief, I look for an opportunity to witness for Jesus, and if that opportunity does not open up, I can still do a little more watering by showing how much I care for them. Even when the odds seem to be totally against us, we must do the work the Father has sent us to do. Ecclesiastes 11:4 NLT: *"Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest."*

Perhaps some of these people had heard John the Baptist preach, or perhaps some of John's followers had reached this part of Samaria. Some archeologists have located "Aenon near Salim" where John baptized (John 3:23) near the biblical Shechem, which is close to **Sychar** and Jacob's well. If this is the case, then John the Baptist prepared the soil and planted the seed, and Jesus and the disciples reaped the harvest. Of course, the woman herself planted some of the seed through her witness to the people of the village.³

The disciples were not alone in the work of the Lord and neither are we. They were not to look on any opportunity for witness as wasted time and energy and we should not either. So do not get discouraged if you keep witnessing and do not see results. It is not up to you to get results, that is God's job. Your responsibility is to be faithful in planting the seed and watering it. It takes faith to plow the soil and plant the seed, but God has promised a harvest (Psalm 126:5-6; Gal. 6:9). In a few years, Peter and John would participate in another harvest among the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-25). Those who sow may not see the harvest, but those who reap will see it and give thanks for the faithful labors of the sowers. Sowing, cultivating, and harvesting are difficult tasks, not only in the physical realm, but also in the spiritual. There is no place in the harvest for lazy people.

³ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 4:31.

The work is too difficult and the laborers are too few.⁴

According to this passage in John it is entirely possible that a number of people believed because of what the woman had told them. But **it was the Word of God** that Jesus taught them that must have made their reaction in verse 42 possible: *“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.”* The fact that Samaritans would invite a Jew to stay with them proved that they believed Him to be who He said He was.

John 4: 39-42 NAS:

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.”

The Samaritans must have been quite excited that the Messiah had chosen to come to their village and speak to them. They asked Him if He would stay with them a while and He stayed for two days. During that short time, His word produced a rich harvest in their lives.

It is important that new believers be carefully disciplined after inviting Christ into their life. **Lon Allison**, the director of the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, Illinois, has put it this way in one of his monthly newsletters:

“The first days, weeks and months following the commitment are times for the church to provide **‘urgent care.’** Different churches do it differently. In my opinion, very few do it well. We put so much effort to get people to commit to Christ (cross the finish line) that we poorly provide the all-important and pervasive aftercare. This aftercare must be given by real people providing prayer, care, counsel, friendship, and the like. The relational nature of aftercare is more important than the curriculum utilized. It is about God’s people wrapping people in Christian warmth, offering them the food and drink of the Word and worship, and giving lots of instruction on stretching the new soul into Christ likeness.”⁵

I do not know about you, but it seems somewhat strange that the Samaritans would so readily embrace Jesus. Considering how much the Jews and Samaritans despised one another, you would think it would take them a while before they declared Him to be the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Allison, Lon, *Director’s Devotional*, Wheaton, Billy Graham Center at Wheaton college, Spring 2007.

Savior of the whole world. That would indicate to me that when people were in the presence of Jesus they knew they were in the presence of someone who was more than just a human being. This is certainly only speculation on our part, but we would have little doubt that when one was in the presence of Jesus, they could tell they were in the presence of someone who was more than a man. After all, even though He was fully man, He was still fully God as well. He must have had a way about Him so that when He spoke all those who listened knew He was speaking the truth, even if they rejected it.

Jesus led by example. In Acts 1:8 He said:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
(NLT)

If we follow Jesus and tell others about Him, He will bring in the harvest.

Jesus is the Savior of the world, but this does not mean that everyone will be saved (universalism). Rather it means that He makes salvation available to everyone in the world. His light shines upon all people as we read earlier in John 1:9: “*The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*” The light is not limited to the nation Israel, but is for “*every nation, tribe, people, and language*” according to Revelation 7:9.⁶

For Jesus to stay with these Samaritans for two days would have been unheard of according to Jewish customs. But Jesus did not concern Himself with customs. His first concern was saving people. By joining in fellowship with the Samaritans Jesus did something that would have been considered equivalent to defying segregation at the beginning of the civil rights movement in the United States back in the 1950’s and 60’s. Jesus could have been in a great deal of danger if some other Jews had come to town and seen this.

We have now seen how Jesus presented His message of salvation to two very different people. With Nicodemus, Jesus pointed out that all people are sinners and under the judgment and condemnation of God. There is no one capable of saving themselves. Nicodemus, a religious man, took pride in his keeping of the Law and did not recognize his need for God’s grace. But the woman at the well knew she was a sinner. Jesus did not mention to her that she was under judgment because she knew it. He did not need to mention it to her because while Nicodemus needed to see himself as a sinner in order to understand grace, the woman who knew she was a sinner needed to see herself as a person of worth and value. God finds us worthy of His salvation no matter how bad we think we are, or for that matter how good we think we are. God values us enough to actively seek us, to welcome us to intimacy, and to rejoice in our worship.⁷

⁶ Walvoord, John F.; Zuck, Roy B.; Dallas Theological Seminary: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:287.

⁷ Richards, Larry; Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Teacher’s Commentary.* Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1987, S. 718.

Only a person like the Samaritan woman, who was perhaps a prostitute, or at the least a woman with very loose morals, an outcast from the people of her village, could understand what this means. “To be wanted, to be cared for when no one, not even herself, could see anything of value in her. This is grace indeed.”⁸

Faith did not come easily to either Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman. It was hard for Nicodemus because he had earned a reputation in the city as a righteous man. Because of this Nicodemus not surprisingly thought very highly of himself. It must be very difficult for someone who honestly thinks they have lived a good life to come to the realization that all of that effort means nothing to God as far as their salvation is concerned. They too stand condemned before God. Such people need the same kind of salvation as the most evil of sinners. The kind of salvation which can only come as a gift from God.

For the Samaritan woman, faith came hard because she knew she was a great sinner. Her sense of worth had been worn away. How hard it was for her to realize that God valued her, loved her, and wanted her to become His child. How difficult it must have been for her to believe that Jesus was offering her the gift of salvation with no strings attached, simply because He loved her so very much.

“Grace says to each of us, ‘You count.’ God knows you as you are, and God still cares. He cares enough to send the Son, that you might have eternal life, become His child, and worship Him.”⁹

Warren Wiersbe has pointed out that “we might note the example Christ sets as a soul-winner. He did not allow personal prejudices or physical needs to hinder Him. He met this woman in a friendly way and did not force her into a decision. Wisely, He guided the conversation and allowed the Word to take effect in her heart. He dealt with her privately and lovingly presented the way of salvation. He captured her attention by speaking about something common and at hand—water—and used this as an illustration of eternal life. (Likewise, at the cool midnight hour, He spoke to Nicodemus about wind.) He did not avoid speaking of sin, but brought her face-to-face with her need.”¹⁰

“This woman did not come to faith in Christ immediately. Jesus was patient with her, and in this, He sets a good example for us in our own personal work. Certainly she was the least likely prospect for salvation, yet God used her to win almost an entire village.”¹¹

Who have you been praying for and witnessing to for years? Keep on being faithful and do not give up hope. It is God’s will for you to witness. It is also His will for you in faith to leave the results to Him.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wiersbe, Warren W.: Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 222

¹¹ Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 4:1