

Beloved in the Lord,

God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him. This is powerful language from a powerful God. We believe these things, as do most. Again, John's gospel has been much maligned, but to us who are being saved, it is the savour of sweetness. And we look with the eyes of faith on a tired and thirsty Jesus Christ giving the water of life to a Samaritan woman by His father Jacob's well. And to the Samaritan woman, he makes clear that He is the Christ. He did that without fear, for He knew the Samaritans were not like the Jews who would have picked up their stones. Through the gift of the Spirit and John's writing, we get a look there in Samaria at the wonder that Jesus is building his church. And we believe these things too, and we rejoice as reapers with the sower this morning, the bride with the bridegroom, kingdom making a joyful noise to the King! I bring to you the Word of the Lord under the theme:

Jesus Sows and Reaps the Harvest in Samaria:

1. The Woman's Testimony 2. The Rabbi's Teaching 3. The Samaritans' Testimony

The Woman's Testimony: The story, as it reads, gives us little time for breath. Jesus has identified Himself as the Messiah. There can be no missing it now. The Jew in the synagogue or the Gentiles who wonders what Jesus thought of Himself wonders no more. Now, of course, one must believe it.

Do you see it there? She left her water jug behind just as the disciples were coming. Excited, she had to tell someone. Like the disciples before, when they were called, she had to tell someone else. So, it goes with the believer and the desire to witness the joy in his heart, and he loves to tell the story. So, she has no trouble finding the men and women who are usually lounging and relaxing in the heat of the day. But she leaves that water jug behind. The material water is not as important now as that living water springing up inside her. She hopes others will thirst no more!

Note the way she goes to the men (and probably women). She does not come asserting anything like she is bringing the latest gossip but brings the good news with humility. If she is, as we speculated, a woman without social status, a less-than-stellar reputation, and a bit of a loner, then it is

remarkable that she will bring this message to the city. But it is no less important that these Samaritans are willing to hear her. But recall that this was a time when eschatological expectations were high. People were excited about the possibilities of the end times and Messiahs, and the Samaritans waited for their version of Messiah no less than many Jews. And for the Samaritan, the restorer was a prophet after Moses and even greater. And to this, she appeals. Jesus looked into her life and saw her sin there! And he spoke with her. She was a Samaritan, and he spoke to her. She was a woman, and he spoke to her. And He knew her like He knew Nathanael remember? He was excited then too.

Then she asked a question. The question is phrased so that it expects a negative answer but hopes for a positive one. Could this perhaps be the Messiah? No, of course not! But perhaps! And she, by the power of God, provokes some curiosity. She speaks in hope and seeks the confirmation of others! I may have found the Messiah. (It makes you wonder about those who know the Messiah and say nothing!) And by the power of God, the flock gets up and comes to the Shepherd to be watered at Jacob's well by Jacob's Son. The one greater than Jacob has come! The One greater than Moses has come! A great Jewish man has spoken to a less-than-respectable Samaritan woman, and great things are happening not in Jerusalem nor Judea but in Samaria! Never doubt the power of Jesus Christ! Never doubt the power of the Word.

Look ahead for a moment, won't you? On the side of Jesus hangs a man on a cross. He laughed for a moment and then, moved by what he heard, knowing that this Jesus was the Christ, called out to the other criminal on the other side of Jesus. We are guilty, and we deserve to die, he said. But not this man! On the cross, Jesus brings another man, a sinner, a dying sinner, to Jacob's well, and he gives the water of life so that through this man dies, he would live again. Jesus said to the criminal, this day, you will be with me in paradise. And this kind of power has been seen repeatedly. The power of Christ to move men! And move they do, and they come to Jesus.

The Rabbi's Teaching: While the Samaritan woman was still talking with Jesus, an odd couple, as we saw last time, the disciples came, and they were also curious. But they are unsure what to make of it, for Jesus is

speaking with a woman, making them uncomfortable. Rabbis were not to speak to women, and men were not to speak to their wives about the law lest it led them away from Torah into Gehenna! In one Jewish prayer, there is praise to God, who has not “made me a woman.” This is sexist nonsense, and Jesus is not burdened by the social mores of the day but by the law of love and the guide of grace.

John notes that no one asked Jesus why he was talking with this woman or if Jesus needed anything and so was talking with this woman. They leave it alone out of respect or simply a sense of shame. But it may well have been that they are worried about their Rabbi and want to ensure he gets something to eat and drink now. But there is something remarkable here, for Jesus seems no longer hungry, thirsty or tired. He seems to be refreshed! Something must be going on!

The disciples press Jesus to get something to eat. Taking food and eating it is the sense of their petition. After all, they had to go into town to buy it, and Jesus had been walking all morning. But Jesus answers them in that curious way that confuses mere mortals.

I have food to eat that you know nothing about. They look as Nicodemus looked when taught about being born again when the Jewish leaders looked at Jesus and wondered how he could rebuild the temple in three days or how this woman looked at him when he talked about living water. They can hear him only with the ears of human rationality. Food? What food? Did someone else bring him food? Maybe that woman brought him food. They do not want to appear ignorant, which is the precedent for so many disciple meetings that they look at each other and ask each other. They do not ask Jesus. But Jesus knows exactly what they are thinking.

As we have seen, Jesus moves the discussion for the hearer (and no less for our benefit) to get a glimpse of who Jesus is. And we read that His food and drink, his sustenance, his reason for being his greatest joy is to do his Father’s work and to finish His Father’s work. Spiritual refreshment comes upon the Son of Man, who is thirsty and dusty by the well in his humiliated state, asking that woman for a drink is gathering in sheep from another fold. And that is why He has come to save the world! And it is happening! Jesus is strong in His Father's work.

We read in Deuteronomy 8:3,

“He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”

Jesus spoke these words to Satan in the wilderness when he was hungry. Now we see again that connection to Jesus' being and existence and the work of God. He is the Word of God, and we see that the New Adam rules and works with God, as God for God as human. He has come for our salvation! Yes, it is His food and drink to do His Father's will and finish it. There can be no finishing this work until Jesus dies on the cross. In earnest prayer, he asked, may this cup pass from me but not my will be your will be done! He prayed,

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. This is eternal life: they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

Jesus was to go to the cross. Yes, His food and drink, the Father's will, was that he would put an end to sin and the dominion of the evil one. And so John in His gospel once more tells us that upon the end of His life, death on the cross, Jesus then thirsty too said, Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said,

"I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. ³⁰ When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

For me, dear Jesus, was Thine incarnation, Thy mortal sorrow and thy life's oblation (religious sacrifice), death of anguish and bitter passion, For My salvation!

Jesus looked at the disciples and reminded them of a saying- there are four months until harvest. One sow and one cannot speed up the harvest time. But Jesus is sowing, and the harvest is instant. It is time for them to reap! It is a time to look up for there coming to them is a group of Samaritans. Not your likeliest candidates for the Kingdom, perhaps, but there

they are. Like that thief on the cross. These disciples are reaping where they did not sow. But they will share in the eternal joy of such work. That means, on the one hand, they have this eternal life and, as such, share this joy with others and, on the other, share the joy of the sower, namely Jesus and the sower and the reaper work as one. This is the new principle of the Kingdom!

John quotes Jesus as saying,

I tell you the truth unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

The cross is what Jesus sows. It is his work and His life that is the seed. He is the Kingdom personified. This is the way it is in the kingdom of God. Amos said (9:3), "**The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman"** Beloved, these words of Jesus speak here not as a prophet seeking the future but as the Christ speaking of the new reality of the kingdom of God. The Kingdom of grace is given to the Gentiles. As Paul wrote,

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) -- remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

In Acts 8:14-17, we read that Philip went into Samaria, and many believed.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Do you see Jesus sows and reaps? The disciples would reap and sow and reap. As Jesus sows by that Samaritan woman, so he said to the disciples

(Acts 1:8), "**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**" The work is begun, and it will be finished in Christ's death and resurrection, and by the Spirit, Christ will sow the Word through the church who will rejoice in the eternal salvation of their own and of each one Christ brings to the church through the church! Psalter Hymnal 189 (a setting of Psalm 97), stanza six says, *For good men light and joy is sown, to bless them in the harvest time; ye saints your joy in God make known and ever praise His name sublime!* A woman in Samaria did that, and others came to see and hear Jesus. And they did just that!

The Samaritan Testimony: we have no way of knowing how many came. We know they were excited about Jesus and even asked him to stay. They urged him and petitioned him continuously to stay. Now in Jerusalem, they looked at Jesus with skepticism. Nicodemus did not have this kind of enthusiasm. The Pharisees were likely happy to have Jesus leave. Ah, but in Samaria, there is joy. And then Jesus is not like some bitter Jonah hoping for the enemy's end, but joy there is in Jesus, and we can also imagine for the disciples. This is somewhat revolutionary socially. Jews and Samaritans are getting along in joy! And then, from the mouths of the religious and ethnic half-breeds and pagans, we read a most beautiful testimony: They said to the woman, "**We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man is the Savior of the world.**"

That is living water bubbling up inside of a man. That is food and drink for the soul. The pagans used this term for kings and gods- but we might rightly use it for Jesus! Yes, God so loved the world that He gave his only son that whoever shall believe shall have eternal life. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. And so many in the days after Pentecost believed and received the Holy Spirit. And the power of the Saviour of the sower who reaps through His church continues even today. First, like these Samaritans, they learn who He is, and then by the Spirit, they know Him and drink deeply of the water of life.

In Genesis, we read about a young man who left his house with a jar of oil and a shirt on his back. He ran through the dry arid land of Canaan, and finally tired, he fell asleep. Then God appeared to him on a ladder filled with angels descending and ascending. God said to that young man, "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." That man, Jacob's Son, stood there by a well and gave living water, and Samaritans were blessed. For two days, they celebrated together. Yes, what a blessing when one can say **we know that this man is the world's Saviour!** Repent and believe for the Kingdom of God is at hand! Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Amen.