

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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Eyes For The Work

by Dan Trygg

“...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 were saying to one another, ‘No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?’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, 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.”

John 4:31-38

“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His Kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

2 Timothy 4:1-2

“...he who is wise wins souls.”

Proverbs 11:30

John 4 is a great example of how Jesus demonstrated spiritual awareness. There are many insights to be gained from a study of this passage, but the main story that plays out through the chapter involves how **Jesus was able to recognize spiritual opportunity, and skillfully turned a small incident into a protracted ministry encounter** that stretched out for several days. **It is also a vivid example of the persuasive power of personal testimony.** Beyond the surface story, however, was an understanding that Jesus had about spiritual work that is very important for us to grasp. It gives us a clearer understanding of evangelism, one that will help us to perceive what we need to focus on in our ministry efforts, both as individuals and as groups. Once we grasp what Jesus was talking about, we can see that this same understanding of spiritual work can be found throughout many of His teachings about ministry.

First, for the main story. Jesus and His disciples were traveling from Judea, in the south, to Galilee, to the north. To take the most direct route, they had to travel through Samaria. There was bad blood between Samaritans and Jews. It had to do with differences in religious beliefs and ethnic backgrounds (II Kg. 17:24-41), aggravated by a history of insult, abuse and bitter feelings. Many Jews avoided Samaria altogether, crossing the Jordan and travelling the eastern side of the river. This was especially advisable when heading from Galilee to Judea. Making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem flew right in the face of the differences in belief systems. Therefore, the Samaritans were even more inhospitable. Here, however, Jesus and His men were heading north, which was less likely to be met with harassment. **Coming to Jacob's well at Sychar in the middle of the day, Jesus was weary from the journey. His disciples went ahead to the village to see if they could purchase some food, and left Him by the well.**

After they left, **a Samaritan woman came to draw water.** This was the heat of the day, an unusual time to be doing this, ...but very timely for Jesus' need..., so He asked her for a drink. Her response was less than friendly, pointing immediately to their differences. Instead of taking offense, however, **Jesus used their common concern to draw her into a spiritual discussion.** While He had no means to gather natural water from the well, He said that He possessed something far better. He said, “If you knew the free-gift of God, and who you are talking to, you would have asked Me, and I would have given to you living water.” This engaged her interest. She scoffed, “You have no means to draw water from the well, where would you get ‘living water’?” He then said **He could offer her water that would not only alleviate her thirst, but could even keep her from being thirsty again. The water He would give her would become a well-spring or fountain inside of her, bubbling up unto eternal life.** (This latter comment was in stark contrast to the well by which He was sitting. Jacob's well was only a cistern, a pit where rainwater collected, and the water level was often 100 feet below the surface. A bucket was kept by the well, but in order to get water, you needed a very long rope. Typically, the “well” would only last until May, when it dried up until replenished by rainfall in the autumn. During the summer, water could be gathered from the abundant springs of ‘Ain ‘Askar, a village located a half mile away.) That was enough for the woman. She was definitely interested. “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty again, nor come all the way here to draw water.” **It is clear that she was not fully following the spiritual line of thought Jesus was attempting to lead her toward.** She was only hearing and understanding the surface meaning of His words, totally missing the deeper implications of what He was hinting at.

“Go, call your husband, and come back.” **To break through the spiritual blindness, Jesus directly addressed the most obvious area of brokenness and pain in her life, ...her problem with relationships.** In her response, she was honest, but downplayed what was really going on. “I have no husband.” Jesus commends her for the truthfulness of her statement but also, **through a word of knowledge, He underlined how this was a very problematic area of her life.**

She had had been with *five* other men, and the man she was now with was not her husband. **This unexplainable insight convinced her that God was with Jesus. She thought that He was a prophet.** To divert the discussion away, once again, she brought up the religious disagreement between Jews and Samaritans, which Jesus brushed away. What mattered was that we worship God (submit to, and offer our willingness to serve, Him) in the Spirit and in truth (honesty, integrity). **When she finally came to see that He was the Messiah, she left everything by the well and ran into the town to tell everyone she knew about Him, and to invite them to “come and see”.**

About this time, the disciples returned with the lunch they had purchased. When they offered some to Jesus, He declined to eat, saying, **“I have food to eat that you do not recognize.”** This was confusing to them, so He explained, “My food is the do the will of Him who sent Me, and to complete His work. Don’t you say, ‘It is yet four months, and the harvest comes’? **Look, I say to you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white (ripe) for harvest!**” In other words, something was happening that *He* could see, but they were totally *unaware* of. **They were preoccupied with their own affairs, their own hunger and comfort. Consequently, they were not in tune with their surroundings. They did not see what was taking place around them.** Their field of vision was limited to *themselves*. It was because that was where their priorities *truly were*, in actuality. **Jesus’ priorities were to do the Father’s will, and to fulfill His working. That really was the most important thing to Him.** Consequently, He was more attuned to the opportunities and activities around Him. **He was looking for what the Father was doing, so that He could act in accordance with what the Father was causing** (Jn. 5:19).

What was He talking about? What was happening that they were unaware of? Why would Jesus choose *not* to eat, right then? **When they looked up, they saw a crowd of people coming down the hill from the town!** Why would people be coming out to the well *now*? **What was going on? These villagers had come out of their houses to see what the woman who had been with Jesus at the well was so excited about.** She was sure acting strangely. She normally kept to herself, and avoided public attention. (It may be hard to understand from the standards of *our* culture today, but a woman who had been with six men would have been considered a woman of ill repute in that day. She would have been thought of as “trashy”, maybe even the village whore, though she wasn’t actually a prostitute. Undoubtedly people gossiped and joked about her, adding to the shame she felt at being repeatedly used and rejected. Interesting that God used *her* to initiate His evangelistic strategy to reach the entire town!) What would be so important that *she* would go door to door in the heat of the day, saying, “Come and see, come and see!”? Her enthusiasm and excitement had motivated them to see for themselves what she had been talking about. **The change in her behavior, her excitement and her persistent invitation rallied the entire city to come and investigate what had happened.** Why was she so animated? She probably assumed that He would eat and then move on from their village. She wanted to roust people from their houses to meet Him before the opportunity was gone. The truth is that **such opportunities are often temporary. We must respond to what God is doing now. We may not get another chance.** “Behold, *now* is the acceptable time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).

As the people were coming down the hill, Jesus expressed a couple of other important lessons from this incident. The first is that though there are set periods of time required for natural crops to develop before they can be harvested, **we must be ready and watchful for spiritual harvesting at all times. Why is that? Because others may have done the work of sowing the seed of the gospel.** In this circumstance, it was the woman who was busy sowing the seeds that were beginning to quickly bear fruit. Jesus specifically told *the disciples*, “I sent *you* to harvest what *you* have not labored for. *Others* have labored, and you have entered into *their* labor.” **Some sow; others reap. These are two very different, but necessary, functions.** Without someone to sow the seed, there would be no harvest to reap. This is very clear from Jesus’ parables of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:1-23; Mk. 4:26-29). The word must be preached, if there is to be a harvest. Also, no one will benefit if someone does not bring in the crop. **Some of us will invest in the lives of people repeatedly and faithfully, and may not see all the results of those spiritual investments. Others may come through who are especially appointed by God to do the work of harvesting.** *If the goal is to get people to come to Christ, then whether we happen to be the ones to directly benefit, or not, we will rejoice if they do respond to the gospel and follow Jesus.* In this case, *both* the sower and the reaper will rejoice together. So, **whether we are sowers or reapers, we need to faithfully fulfill our duty in order for the Kingdom of God to advance.**

The main point I want to emphasize in this study is how important it is to have a Kingdom perspective. **When watching for and expecting God to be actively working in your life is more important than everything else, then you will begin to see the opportunities He brings, and respond to what He is doing.** A Kingdom perspective is so crucial also to recognize and understand the spiritual warfare that the enemy would set in our paths to keep us from God’s best, or to grieve the Spirit and remove the blessing. **When you truly have a heart for the work of God’s Spirit, you will begin to see the significance of things from a spiritual perspective.** When our hearts are passionless toward God, then we tend to become enamored with our own concerns and comforts. *We can* direct our hearts toward God and Kingdom things (I Sam. 7:3; Job 11:13; Prov. 23:19; Col. 3:1,2). **If He is first, you will keep first things first.**