

# Inner food

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[0:00] Am I on now? Yes? Oh, yeah, you can hear me. Good morning everyone. Good to see you.! Well, have you been watching Wimbledon this week? Yeah? A few of you? No? Joe. Oh, it's brilliant! I have. And it's been astounding, hasn't it, if you have watched it, to see some of the shots, some of the rallies that they play, how talented these athletes are. Did you see the men's singles this week, where both players did a hot dog shot? Do you know how that is? When you hit the ball between your legs like this. And two players did it, and that was astounding. Or Fritz, you see Fritz when he dived, and he flicked it over the net.

It was beautiful stuff. A double hot dog. Well, likewise, as we've been going through John's Gospel, I hope we've been blown away by Jesus. That the Creator God came as a man. He dwelled with us. He calls people by their name, the disciples. We saw the miraculous sign at the wedding feast. We see his righteous anger in the temple courts. His conversation with Nicodemus. How he fulfills Old Testament prophecy, and much more. Well, today we are bowled over once again by Jesus. So, my talk is entitled, The King's Harvest, as we'll see.

So, please turn to your Bibles, if you haven't done so already, to chapter 4 of John. And we're looking at verse 27. Well, my first point is bowled over by Jesus. Bowled over by Jesus. Looking at verses 27 to 30. Well, firstly, the disciples are bowled over. Did you see it? Look at verse 27. Just then, his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman.

[2:29] Christ's disciples are amazed by Jesus. They come back from town with food to eat and see their master at work.

But how controversial. They are gobsmacked. Their rabbi is speaking to a woman in broad daylight, and even worse, a Samaritan foe. In that culture, women were seen as second-class citizens. There were rabbinic, rabbinic, rabbinic, yeah, sayings by rabbis. Let no one talk with a woman in the streets. No, not with his own wife.

Better than the words of the law should be burned than delivered to a woman. Apparently, women were so despised by rabbis that they were incapable of receiving teaching.

And this still happens, sadly, today in some cultures. The disciples are gobsmacked by what Jesus is doing. They're left speechless. And did you see, the woman is bowled over.

[3:49] In contrast, the woman at the well is overjoyed as her life has been changed by Jesus Christ. She's amazed by how much Jesus knows about her sordid life.

She recognizes that he is a prophet. He told me all that I ever did. Did you see that? She's amazed at his offer of eternal life.

He satisfies her spiritual thirst. She's stunned by his loving kindness. The fact that he's speaking to her, an enemy of the Jews.

And she marvels in the possibility that she has encountered the Messiah. Verse 29. Can this be the Christ?

Her encounter with Jesus has totally changed her. No longer does she feel like a stigmatized woman. She leaves her jar. Did you see that?

[4:58] She's already received refreshment, I think, from Jesus. And hurries back into town. And tells her neighbors all about this man. Come and see him. She invites them.

Remember the disciples said that? And they come. She's no longer hindered by her past. She's a new woman with a new story. Do you notice the villagers are bowled over too?

They must have been this loose, dishonorable woman. Who would have felt shame in their town. She probably hid from folk. She's now set free.

She's talking with everyone. They must have been staggered. What? This lady. What happened to her? Who is this man?

Who is this man? It's like the woman has been changed from a caterpillar to a beautiful butterfly. She's fluttering around with pure joy.

[5:59] She is a new creation. No more living in condemnation. There's a song about there, isn't there? In His grace I stand, I think it says.

This is marvelous to behold, brothers and sisters. For you, are you bowled over by Jesus today? Are you amazed at the fact that He knows all about your life, your past, your thoughts?

He knows your devious ways. He knows your life inside out. Nothing is secret to Him. A bit scary as well, isn't it? And in Psalm 139, David pens it beautifully.

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down. You are familiar with my ways.

Before a word is in my tongue, you know it, Lord, completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

[7:07] Are you bowled over this morning about how much Jesus loves you? Marvel, brothers and sisters, at the loving kindness of Christ, that He would choose you.

You who are an outcast, far from Him, alienated from Him, a stranger, without hope in the world. Doesn't it amaze you that He still seeks to speak to you today, to us today, by His Spirit?

Christ speaks His Word into our lives, just as He did that day in Samaria. This woman shares her testimony of Jesus, a powerful testimony.

And we all have a testimony, don't we, brothers and sisters, to share. It's powerful, and Christ will use it. Look for opportunities this week to share your testimony.

And if you're a non-Christian here this morning, come and see. Come and see this man. Aren't you marveled by him? Don't you want to surrender your life to him?

[8:21] Come to our Christianity Explore course this Tuesday to find out more. That's my first point. Bowled over by Jesus.

My second point is baffled by Jesus. Baffled by Jesus. Please look at verses 31 to 38.

If you've ever been on a long, tiring walk or hike, you know how you feel, don't you? Well, the disciples are presumably very hungry and thirsty, as well as Jesus, as they've been on a long journey.

Last week, we looked at that, and we read that Jesus was tired. Understandably, do you see in verse 31, they urge him to eat. Rabbi, eat something.

They are concerned for him. Naturally, you'd have thought that he would have jumped at the chance of eating something, wouldn't you? To satisfy his hunger and tuck into some Middle Eastern food.

[9:28] But no, he overrides his physical hunger. He speaks about a different, more satisfying meal.

His appetite is so much different from what the disciples think. They're baffled. They can't understand. And he talks in a rather odd way, doesn't he?

The question is, what is this special food that his disciples haven't got a clue about? Like the conversation with Nicodemus.

Remember that in chapter 3? You must be born again. What? Be placed back in my mother's womb? Nicodemus is baffled. And now the Samaritan woman at the well.

Whoever drinks this water, I give them whenever first. Sir, give me this water, so that I don't have to keep on coming back to this well. Likewise, she's baffled.

[10:27] And the disciples don't understand what Christ is saying. They're nonplussed. I have food to eat that you know nothing about.

Verse 32. They think he's already had something to eat. Where did he get this food from? Look at verse 34.

In other words, I exist to do the Father's will and to finish what he wants me to do.

You see, Jesus was always desiring what the Father wanted. He did not have a preference which did not match the Father's.

His food was the Father's food. It can be truly said that Jesus is the only person in all the world who never did what he liked, but always what the Father liked, says Barclay.

[11:33] John 5.19 says, I tell you the truth. The Son can do nothing by himself. He can only do what he sees his Father doing.

Because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. You see, brothers and sisters, friends, Jesus' priorities are very different here in Samaria.

He might be famished, really hungry, but he is hungrier to feed others and refresh others, to seek and save the lost in Samaria.

His choice, and the Father's choice, is to befriend and reveal himself to an outcast woman and offer her everlasting life.

His task at midday, perhaps in this sweltering heat, is to show and speak Christ's love, his love, into a broken life. You see, God the Father and God the Son are working in tandem.

[12:40] They have other priorities. Really, it's the other way around, isn't it? I have food to offer, says Jesus.

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry. If you want to be satisfied, come to me. Eat my food.

Taste and see. This food is everlasting, like the water I've just offered. It won't run out. It's free. I'll pay for it. And you can keep coming back for more.

It won't rot. What an incredible offer. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me, Jesus says.

God the Father sends the Son out. And you see it everywhere through John's account. Jesus is sent by God. But the world must learn that I love the Father, and I do exactly what the Father has commanded me, Jesus says.

[13:49] He loves to do his Father's will. My *raison d'être* is to be about my Father's business. And this is at the cross, isn't it? The culmination. It is finished.

That was his task. This is satisfying food. Barclay again gives two anecdotes, two pictures. It's strange how a great task can lift a man above and beyond bodily needs.

Remember Wilberforce? William Wilberforce, who freed the slaves? Apparently he was a little, insignificant, ailing creature. When he rose to address the House of Commons, the members at first used to smile at this queer little figure.

But as the fire and the power came from the man, they used to crowd the benches whenever he rose to speak. As it was put, this little minnow, this little fish, became a whale.

His message, his task, the flame of truth, and the dynamic power conquered his physical weakness. There's also another picture of John Knox, the preacher.

[15:04] I think he was Scottish, wasn't he? Preaching in his old age. He was a darn old man. He was so weak that he had to be half-lifted to the pulpit steps and left supporting himself on the book board.

But before he had long begun his sermon, the voice had regained its old trumpet call. And he was like, To ding the pulpit into blads! Which in Scottish means, To knock the pulpit into splinters.

And to leap out of it. The message filled the man with a kind of supernatural strength. Brothers and sisters, these were weak men, but they sought better food, doing the will of God, and accomplished great things in God's strength.

Well, let's look at verse 35 to 38 in the text. Do you see that Jesus now changes the metaphor to the agricultural year?

In the Hebrew mindset, there were six stages to farming. Sowing, winter, spring, harvest, summer, and the season of extreme heat.

[16:22] Six stages. So, in verse 35, do you see that? When he says, It's still four months until harvest. This was a common proverb.

He's saying, Usually, you must wait at least four months for the harvest. But no! Look up! See! The harvest is already here.

In Samaria. The fields are white for harvest. Now, this white harvest could literally be referring to the fields, you can imagine it, couldn't you, of corn in front of them in Samaria.

Apparently, Samaria, this part of Samaria, is famous for these fields of corn. Apparently, agricultural land is very limited in Israel because most of the ground is very stony, rocky, so they couldn't sow corn there.

Or it might have been the villagers coming towards Jesus, perhaps up the hill, in white robes, in search of this Messiah.

[17:36] He could be referring to this. As we see from the text that follows, the Samaritans were ripe for the picking. Perhaps it was two. It was both of these pictures.

Jesus could be alluding to the fact that broadly, ooh, a bit strong, that the harvest is ripe for picking throughout Israel.

While sowing and reaping are pictures woven through the Bible, sowing is that hard graft of tilling the land, planting and watering the seed. And the results are months later.

And it's a reaping of a crop. It's a picture of pure joy, delight, and celebration.

When the food barns are full, those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. And here, in verse 36, we see the sower and the reaper rejoicing together.

[18:44] What a beautiful picture. One sows and another reaps. The hard work has been done, the sowing the seed. Others have labored in the vineyards, in the harvest field. The prophets had labored.

John the Baptist had labored. They'd waited for the Messiah. They'd pointed to him. Now he's here. History was waiting for him.

It's harvest time. A joy, a time of joy and celebration. The bridegroom has arrived. Or we could use the image another way.

Jesus is the seed sown. And we see that his life, his subsequent substitutionary death, brings forth much fruit. And the disciples are to reap the benefits as they go from town to town announcing the good news of Jesus, reaping the harvest in Palestine.

Barclay says that it's as if Jesus is saying, someday you will labor and you'll see nothing for it. Someday you will sow and you'll pass from the scene before the harvest is reaped.

[19:55] Never fear, never be discouraged. The sowing is not in vain. It's like planting a seed. I know some of you like botany and planting.

If you plant a rhododendron seedling, and especially if you're well on in years, you most probably will never see it grow to its fruition. Apparently it takes 25 years to grow a rhododendron plant.

If you go to Nyman's, you'll see lots of rhododendrons. But others will benefit from it, won't they?

So, brothers and sisters, let's take the opportunities in our harvest field, here, where we live, where God has placed us.

There will be opportunities. We can speak of Christ. There is a harvest for him. We might have to wait. And we might not see the result in our lifetime.

But we will see the results one day when he returns. And what opportunities has God given you in your workplace, as a mum perhaps, in your retirement, in your social club, in your streets.

[21:06] Be prepared this week for opportunities in your harvest field. And it's hard graft, isn't it? Sowing. It's not easy telling others about Jesus. I go on the level with others and try and do that.

It's not easy. And also living a godly life. Waiting can be tough. Sometimes there won't be a harvest. Let's be real. Many do reject the good seed and that is sad and discouraging.

Some seeds fall on stony hard ground and will not germinate. Some get choked by the worries of this world as we know. But other seeds do bear good fruit.

So be encouraged and we leave the results in God's hands, don't we? And be encouraged that despite your weakness, God can still use you for his glory.

I want to encourage Sunday school teachers and assistants. You are planting seeds into children's lives and parents as well and grandparents that hopefully will bear fruit in years to come.

[22:15] What an exciting work. One of the best ministries in the church is children's work. Yeah, I want to get back into that actually. I'd love to teach the children. Baffled by Jesus.

And my last point is blessed by Jesus. Verses 39 to 41. Blessed by Jesus. Have a look at those verses. Jesus. So, meanwhile, the people of Sychar, where the woman presumably lives, and they come out to the well.

We see that, don't we? Who is this Jesus, they ask? And they ask him to stay with them. Don't they? They urged him to stay with them.

They want to find out who Jesus is. Do you notice that Jesus makes time for them in his diary? Even though he wants to get to Galilee.

He remains with them for two days. It shows us his desire to reach the unreached. He's doing his father's will again.

[23:34] Giving people time. Preaching the good news of the kingdom. And what's the result? Because of this, we read that many people believed in him.

41. And because of his words, many more believed, became believers. A harvest is one. Here, we see the blessing of God transforming the nations, different peoples.

The world, cosmos. His job is to reach these arch rivals, these Samaritans. Not just the covenant people of God.

Incredibly. The Jews. He has different ambitions, a different task. Here we see the new covenant coming into play. Here we see the blessing on the nations.

And you see that at the end. They say, this man really is the saviour of the worlds. Wow.

[24:41] They are truly blessed by Jesus, this community. So in conclusion, this Jesus testimony that we've seen and the woman's one has blessed this town incredibly.

God is moving. And now a bigger harvest is being reaped. Within two days, Psyche is changed by Christ and this woman.

What a blessing they received. Again, going back to the agricultural metaphor, it's like planting strawberries this time of year. We're eating strawberries, aren't we? And if you plant strawberries, they branch out.

And soon, you get loads of them. I've got loads of them now in my garden. And hopefully, they're bearing lots of juicy fruit. Well, here, that's what the picture we see, don't we?

Of Jesus' ministry. And the application really is, are we spending time with people, getting alongside them like Jesus? Be encouraged.

[25:45] The kingdom of God increases in surprising ways. Sorry, surprising ways. Psyche is an example. And we don't have Jesus today.

It would be great, wouldn't it, if we had Jesus here up at the front. We can invite all of Brighton and Hove to see him and hear his words. But we do have his Holy Spirit. And by his Holy Spirit, he draws people to believe in him.

The Holy Spirit has power to draw people to the Saviour, to make people believe. So this morning we've noticed how Jesus bowls people over their stereotypes, their prejudices.

He amazes people with his prophetic insight and his generous love. We've seen that he baffles his disciples and shows them what it means to be a Christian, giving to others more than receiving, delighting his father, overriding his physical hunger.

And we've seen that he goes out of his way to bless those and to testify who he is. He takes opportunities when he gets them and there are results. So let me encourage you brothers and sisters this week, let us focus on the king's priorities in his harvest field.

[27:07] let's pray.