

Harvest

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. How are we all on this Harvest Sunday? I don't know about you, I expect you're extremely shattered because we've all been out in the fields, haven't we?

We've been working since dawn. We've been out there. We've had spent every ounce, every ounce and gram of our energy that we've had. We've worked side by side with people from morning until late at night in order to get the harvest in safe and secure, to bring the harvest home.

Yes or no? You see, it's all very nostalgic, isn't it? Really singing our hymns that we've sung for ages, our harvest hymns. But as we know that when Jesus is talking, is in our reading, that it isn't necessarily about all this produce, that it's about people. And so this morning, I may unashamedly to say how much food there is in the Bible, because wherever you look in the Bible, it's all about food.

And this morning's reading, if taken in isolation, you wouldn't be surprised if you think the disciples were fussing a little bit about food. It's like my mother-in-law. Bless her. If you're listening in, mother-in-law, thank you so much for looking after me and my food. Because if you're reading this morning, it's a bit like a Bible sandwich. And here we have, there is bread to eat. And we're going to start off this morning with the first slice, because what we've actually had this morning is the filling.

And I want to take you back to the beginning of this reading this morning, because if you put it in context, you can see why Jesus is talking about what he's talking about here, but why the disciples were so concerned. Because the top layer of this sandwich this morning is the woman at the well.

[2 : 16] Jesus is on his way. He's on a town in Samaria. He gets to a place by Jacob's well. And Jacob's well, he was there, he was tired from his journey. And he sat down, it was about noon. And there was a woman at the well, a Samaritan woman, who came to draw water. And Jesus said to her, will you give me a drink?

It says in brackets, the disciples had gone into town to buy food. What was it with the disciples that are so obsessed with food? They really are. What is it? I'm a bit worried about this obsession that they had with it. But that's okay, I'm getting over it. And they have gone off, I don't know, it says that they've gone off to find food for him, whether they've gone to the local Liddles or whatever. Anyway, they've gone off. But here's Jesus with this encounter with this woman at the well. And this is a prophetic encounter that will not only change her life, but will inspire the disciples afresh. Woman, Jesus replied, tell me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans, you do not know, but we worship what we know, for salvation comes from the Jews. Yet, yet, a time is coming, and now has come, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For they are the kind of worshippers that the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. She knows that this is a holy moment. The woman says, top layer, the woman says,

I know that the Messiah called Christ is coming, and when he comes, he will explain everything to us. And then it comes. I, the one speaking to you, I am he. What a revelation.

This is an awesome moment. Because if we know that the woman at the well, it's said that she is, quite rightly, I think we would term it a scarlet woman. Jesus is going to speak into her life. She hasn't just had one husband, she's had five, and she's living with somebody else at the moment. Jesus decides to reveal to that person the fact that he is the Messiah.

What a great filling for the sandwich. I love this quote. It was from Pope Francis. It doesn't matter what you've said or done, what you've thought about saying or doing, where you've been or who you've been there with, there is more grace in God than sin in you.

[5 : 30] I think that's an amazing quote. All of a sudden, this woman at the well is about to be fed, fed with something that she's never experienced before, which is grace and love. Because if you remember, she's there on her own at midday. All the rest of the women come in the morning.

They all come in the morning. They come together, fill up, but she's there because she is the outcast. She is on her own. She has this chance meeting, or is it chance? Because if we read on, here comes the meat in the sandwich. I was going to do cheese and pickle because I thought it was more sort of harvesty really, but we'll go for ham and cheese because it seems, but there's certainly no ham in this story. Because here comes the filling. Then, leaving her water jar, she leaves the one thing that she has brought, that she is about. Think of all the times in the Bible when there's an encounter with Jesus, when people leave what they're doing in order because they've had this amazing meeting.

The question is today, what do we leave in order to do what Jesus is asking us to do? What do we leave? Prejudice? What do we leave behind us? Do we leave behind our preferences in order to do the job that God is asking us to do? That's the meat in this sandwich.

Because as we read on, leaving her water jar, the woman who went back to the town and said to the people, said to the people, she's the outcast. She says to the people, come, come and see this man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah? And they listened to her and they responded.

It's a great message. I was just thinking so often that we have often prided ourselves, and pride is in the worst possible term, on our pastoral care and on our teaching. And yet so often, here is this news for today of moving in the prophetic. He told me all about myself. How did this person know this?

[7 : 59] He seized my attention. He's about to change my life. If any of you have moved in the prophetic, you will know, as I have, how that changes your life when people speak into it in a prophetic way that moves that. If you want to experience that more, come at 7.30 tonight to the gathering. You will experience that. And here this woman has changed. She goes back, she listens, she responds, and it says in verse 30, here's the meat. They came out of the town and made their way towards him.

What were the disciples doing? You've guessed it. The next line, Rabbi, have something to eat. What is it with them? Jesus reads the situation. It couldn't have been better, could it really?

They're bothering about earthly food. They're bothering about the earthly food that they're thinking about to sustain themselves. And here is Jesus talking about the spiritual food.

He said, I have food to eat that you know nothing about. Let's finish the sandwich off, because here it comes. It is complete.

Then the disciples said to each other, could someone have brought him food? You know, what did they expect? You know, a camel with delivery written on it or something?

[9 : 41] Why are they so worried? They need to be, because people are about to be fed, and the harvest is about to be fed, but not as they expected it. So Jesus, as he does, grabs the opportunity. My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and finish his work. Don't you have a saying, still four months until harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields.

Open your eyes and look at the fields. Open your eyes and look at the fields, because they are ripe for harvest.

To see things through Jesus' eyes, prophetically, is an amazing thing. I don't know whether you look through Jesus' eyes and see the harvest that is ripe to be brought in.

I think it's an exciting moment in our times. I'm wondering if in the corner of Jesus' eye, he could already see the whole village coming to him, being led by the woman at the well.

Even now, the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Isn't that a great picture of our oneness with God?

[11 : 15] That the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying, one sows and another reaps is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor. That's humbling. He had done the hard work. Jesus had done the hard work that day. He had met with the woman at the well. He had sent her off. He'd given her a prophetic word.

She had gone off. She was going to bring the village to him. The disciples were just about to see this amazing thing happen. And here's where the bottom of the sandwich comes in. The beautiful thing is many of the Samaritans from that time believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

All it took was one woman to go, and she wasn't the most popular flavor in the village. And she goes and brings a whole village to meet with Jesus. And so when the Samaritan came, he said, he told me everything I ever did. We need more and more of the prophetic because people will sit up. We can quote them. We can do whatever. If somebody speaks into your life, that is the thing that seizes your attention. That's the burning bush moments that makes you hungry for more. And she was hungry. She wanted to be fed. She wanted to be filled with more of this. So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them and stayed for two days. And because of his word, many, many more became believers. 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 really is the savior of the world.

I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest. And sometimes I sense at harvest time, we all get a bit complacent. It's all very nice. We're all gathered in.

But there's more together. Because the fields are ripe with harvest. We may not think it is, but they are ready. Because they are ready because Jesus goes before us. And Jesus said, they are ripe for harvest. We put the idea, this romantic notion of straw and hay and horse-drawn vehicles. And it's very nostalgic. And it's lovely for that age. But people, this age is to bring a harvest in. And there are people waiting to come and meet with Jesus. I think there's a bay, I'm not sure how many were gathered this morning. But how many ever we are, that is the number of encounters that there could be this week? Who will be your woman at the well this week? Who will you speak to about Jesus?

[14 : 32] Who will we pray for a prophetic encounter? So that that person will go and bring even more to meet with Jesus. You see, people were coming in their droves. And she was categorized as a sinner.

What a great person to bring our whole village to know Jesus. What a great, I can't wait to meet with him. You know, Jesus, as we move more and more in the power of the Holy Spirit, you see, Jesus has done the work on the cross. We think we've got to do so much more. Jesus has done the salvation work. You know, all the hard labor is done. And we think it's hard work, don't we? We think, oh, it's hard work to go and fill our churches and to bring people to Christ. It's not. Because the work has already been done. And all that is left for us to do is to move more and more to see where it's ready to be harvested and to go and do it. Day by day, week by week, year by year.

I pray that more and more this year through us will come to know Jesus. Because I don't know about you, I look at the harvest field and I don't want to leave it to rot.

Because it's ripe for harvest. Thank you.