

Greater Harvest, Greater Food

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good evening, everyone. If you're new, my name is Aaron. I'm one of the ministers around here. So just to give you a catch up, so we are at a, we're in John, the Gospel of John.

And these last few weeks, we've been focusing on a particular story in John, where Jesus meets a woman by a well.

A woman's an outcast. And the story begins, you remember a couple of weeks ago, with Jesus offering this woman living water. And it was a metaphor. Jesus is saying, I want to give you life. You know, she'd had this series of failed relationships.

She was kind of trapped in this cycle. And she went to the well every day. And it was a picture of this never-ending sort of cycle of relationship after relationship. And Jesus said, listen, I can give you something to satisfy your soul.

And that was the first week of the story. And you could summarize it by saying it was about what God offers, which is living water. Last week, Jesus and the woman go on and have a sort of theological discussion.

[1 : 0 3] And I think you could summarize that as what God expects, which is a life of worship. This week is on the work of God.

So week one was what God offers. Last week, what God expects. And this week is the work of God. And we'll find out it's the work of harvesting. So seeing people come to faith. That's a really important discussion for us to have.

And it's really important for us to think about this, particularly in a place like Vancouver, which is very pluralistic. I mean, in a place like this, how do you live out your faith? Knowing that exclusive truth claims aren't popular.

I mean, how do you talk about your faith in this kind of context? Well, I guess you've got three options. The first one is you don't. You just kind of hide it.

The second option would be you can share your faith in such a way that makes people angry. Or the third way is you can speak in such a way that it promotes peace and dialogue and transformation.

[2 : 0 9] I think that's what we're hopefully we're aiming for. The male passage tonight teaches us how to do that. It teaches us, one, a strategy for sharing our faith.

And two, a motivation. That's the basic structure of the sermon. One, a strategy for sharing our faith. And two, a motivation for doing it. First, a strategy. Let me remind you of what happened.

I'm going to read a couple of verses to remind you, just at the start and at the end. So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, Come see a man who told me all I ever did. Can this be the Christ?

They went out of the town and were coming to him. Skip to 39. Many Samaritans from the town believe in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that I ever did. So after this life-changing encounter with Jesus, the woman goes back to the town, preaches a very short sermon, and a chunk of people come to Jesus, and then through that, a whole lot of other people come to Jesus.

I regularly meet with interns at St. John's, and we listen to their sermons together, and they really enjoy my critiquing them. And if I was to do that to this woman here, if I was to critique her little sermon, which is pretty short, Come see a man who told me all I ever did.

[3 : 32] Can this be the Christ? If I was to critique that, I'd say on the negative side, not enough meat. Bit emotional, I think.

A little bit, I would think. Ends with a doubting question, which is generally not good form, rhetorically. But a whole lot of people did come to faith, so there must have been good things about it, and so here's what's really good about it, and here's what's a model for us.

It was enthusiastic. It was her story, and she pointed people to Jesus. I mean, she was honest and real and Jesus-focused.

That's a pretty solid presentation right there, I think. Now, in a bit more detail, let's look a little bit more closely, okay? It had two parts, a little sermon. It had two parts. One, he told me everything, and two, come to Jesus.

Come and see this guy for yourself. So first, he told me everything. So what is this? What is this? Jesus, she goes and she goes, he just told me everything. He knew everything about me. What's she doing here?

[4 : 35] She's just being honest. It's just transparency. She's just telling people what happened. This is wonderful evangelism. She's just explaining what happened to her. I think we can get into a trap of sort of limiting evangelism to learning a bunch of airtight arguments for the existence of God, or learning how to respond to people who question the canonist of the Bible, or, you know, what do you say if people talk about the crusades or something, or, you know, whatever.

It's all good stuff. But this woman said, oh, she just said what happened to her. She said, let me tell you about my life. Let me tell you my story. She's not a theologian. She's not going to talk theology. She's going to tell you what Jesus has done in her life.

It's a great challenge for us. Let me ask you, in your work, or at school, or amongst your friends who are not believers, are you open about how your faith impacts you?

Do you let people know how you deal with problems? I mean, how do you deal with your problems? Lots of things you do, Christianly. One of them is you pray. Do you let people know that? Do you let people know what motivates you?

Because if you're a believer, it's Christ, right? Do you let people know that? If you're talking to people on a heart level, do you cut out the Christian stuff?

[5 : 49] If you do, you're ripping them off. You're not being honest. This is a really big part of who you are. Let people in on it. As I've met people in my neighborhood of two years, I've gotten to know people.

If in the conversation I find out that they have some drama in their life, you know, some issue or something, I will, like they can't find a job or something, I'll tell them I'll pray for them.

I met a woman who, on Saturday, just walking up Hastings Street, and she was painting the outside of a cafe that had just closed down. I said, oh, what's coming in here?

What's going in here? And she goes, a gourmet hot dog shop with vintage arcade games. I said, that's fantastic. Is this your first, young woman?

I said, is this your first venture? She goes, yes, this is my husband and I starting. It's a big deal. I said, oh, that's probably really stressful and exciting. I'm going to pray for you. Now, here's the thing. If I didn't tell her I was going to pray for her, I would still pray for her because I've met her and I care about her situation.

[6 : 54] All I'm doing is just telling her what I'm going to do because I'm going to do it. I'm just being honest. I'm just making sure that my faith part of my life is not hidden.

I just think this is what a good chunk of evangelism is. It's living out your faith publicly. It's not hiding it. It's transparency. And this is, I think, the first thing we learn from this woman. The second part of the sermon was pointing people to Jesus.

So it's transparency and pointing people to Jesus. She's just, come and see this guy for yourself. She's not saying, go and read a pamphlet. It's no, come and see this man. Here's the thing.

She doesn't know what she's really getting people to come and see. She doesn't really understand. Her Christology is probably not that wicked. She probably, you know, if you said, explain penal substitutionary atonement, probably fairly on the lower scale of understanding.

She's just met Jesus and has told others to meet him as well. That is the best thing you can do for somebody. You can't argue somebody into the kingdom of God because there's no slam dunk argument, right?

[8 : 07] I talked about this a few weeks ago. There's no slam dunk argument. There's no perfect argument, but there is a perfect person and that's Jesus. So it's him we point people to, not some philosophy.

This is the genius of Christianity. Truth, which people can debate. Truth, though, here in the Christian faith, it's a person. Point people to them. And how do we do that? Well, we tell them our story.

We can suggest that people start praying to God and meet Jesus. We could say to people, we could give people a Bible. Better yet, we could offer to read the Bible with them.

Get them to meet Jesus. I remember a couple of years ago running this thing for people that weren't Christians and it was great. It was great, but people would bring up crusades and, you know, and just weird, different, not weird, but philosophical objections, right?

Little barriers that they'd put. This is God. They put these little barriers up there. And there was this one guy in the group who was not a Christian, but he started reading the Gospels and one day, somebody brought up a philosophical disagreement with faith.

[9 : 30] And he said, he said, you know, since I've started reading about Jesus, all those philosophical questions I had that were barriers that really got in the way, he goes, to be honest, they seem way less important now.

They're not as big a deal as they used to be because I'm captivated by Jesus. I'm pretty sure those were his words. It's Jesus, I just find captivating.

Point people to Jesus. Okay, where are we at in the sermon? Okay, so we're looking at the story, we're learning from it. We've talked about a strategy for sharing faith and that's being honest about who you are.

Two, point people to Jesus. Now, the second half of the sermon, I want to deal with a motivation for sharing faith, which is very helpful because there's certainly a lot of things to demotivate you, isn't there?

Place like Vancouver, you don't want to be seen as pushy. You don't want people to think you're narrow-minded. You don't want people to think you're anti-science.

[10 : 31] You know, like, they can, somebody finds out you're a Christian or they will lump you in with a whole lot of nutty Christians who think science is evil or don't like dinosaurs or they'll think that you are giving all your money to tell the evangelist or they'll lump you in with a group of people that you might not particularly like either.

So, you don't want that, so maybe you kind of hide your faith a little bit. However, folks, this passage gives us three fairly significant motivations for sharing our faith and the first one is, well, let me, let's go back to this woman and we'll get there.

I just think this woman is just remarkable. What a remarkable woman. She met Jesus 10 minutes later. She was evangelizing her town.

She goes straight to the people who knew her. Remember, do you remember this woman, right? She's married five times, living with a guy who was not a husband, which, small religious town, it's not a great look.

She used to go midday to get water from the well because she didn't want to see people. She was trying to avoid people. So, that woman there went back to her town, the town that she was trying to avoid and tells them about Jesus.

[11 : 54] Her shame, obviously, has gone out there one day. Now, what changed? What changed in her? There's this lovely little line here in verse 28. So, the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, come see a man who told me all that I ever did.

She left a water jar to go on mission. Now, I think this jar represented the thirst that all these relationships she had couldn't meet in the cycle, right? She leaves it behind because she's met Jesus who knew her better than anyone, knew her at her worst and loved her.

Knew her at the bottom and loved her to the stars. That was her motivation. She received God's love and she's sharing it. Her reason, her motivation for evangelism, for sharing faith, it was just spillover.

She didn't need to be told. There was no program that she enrolled in in her church. There was just no stopping her. Her desire to tell people about Jesus was just overflow. She didn't have to, she didn't meet Jesus and then sort of think, I probably should tell other people about it and try and sort of ratchet it up in her heart.

Evangelism, this is not a duty. It happens when we're aware of the treasure we have in Jesus and we just want to share it. It's just overflow.

[13 : 20] It's first motivation. It's just overflow. Second motivation here, verses 31 to 38 are very helpful here. So the disciples come back, they're such doofuses, eh?

They come back and, do you have that word here, doofus? Okay, okay. It's not a kind word. But it, they don't, it doesn't show them in a great light, the disciples here.

So, Jesus meets this woman, offers her living water. she goes, she goes back, before she goes back, the disciples come back and then she takes off to evangelize the whole town and the disciples are just like bumbling fools coming in.

Hey, not sort of questioning, did you, did you tell them about God and about the new creation and stuff? They're just like, Jesus, you've got to eat something. You should eat something. We bought, we got some kebabs and some tabbouleh and some moussaka from the local guys.

You know, like, here's some, here's some food. You should eat some food and Jesus says, I have food to eat you don't know about in verse 32. I have food to, and so what's their response?

[14 : 29] Ah, yes, spiritual truth. No, no, it's, oh, did somebody else get you some food? Did you go, is that what, did you get some Greek salad up the street?

So, Jesus has to say incredibly clearly to them. Like, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

You see what he's saying here? He's saying, what gives me sustenance is doing God's will. What nourishes my soul, what feeds me, it's doing God's will.

It's being on God's mission. It's like food. Is that how you feel about being on God's mission? Do you think the most satisfying thing you can do with your life is God's will to be on board with what God is up to in the world?

Jesus says to his disciples, he says, doing God's work is like food. It's like eating a great meal, being public with your faith. It's like meat and drink. It's what feeds me. Like, I suspect when we think about that, we think of cost and we think of being embarrassed and we think of pain and drama and that's taking something from us.

[15 : 58] You know, where we are on the social ladder, we might move down a notch and Jesus is going, no, you don't understand. This is what gives you life.

Folks, it makes sense that serving God is like sustenance, of course, because we're made to serve him. So it makes total sense that this is the way, this is what it will do to our hearts. So the passage has given us two motivations so far.

It's just overflow from our experience of being loved by Jesus and secondly, it's just, it's satisfying. It feeds us. And the third motivation from the passage, urgency.

Verse 35, 36. Do not say there are yet four months and then comes the harvest. Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see the fields are white for harvest. We're really the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

So the harvest is people coming to Jesus, right? So Jesus is saying to his disciples, you guys are looking far down the track and you're thinking, yeah, maybe, maybe God will do something in the future, big, with, maybe he's talking specifically about the Samaritans, maybe God will do something in the future about these guys, but, you know, but you're not thinking that now, you're thinking the timing's not right or it's a bit weird, they're Samaritans.

[17 : 23] He's saying, don't think like that. God is doing something now. They're thinking like this, man, they're thinking about this narrow. I think about this narrow. The great example, that wonderfully beautiful example of this is whilst, so Jesus talks to the woman, Jesus talks to the woman, right?

Woman, disciples come back, woman goes off to the town, he's talking to the disciples and saying, he's saying, the harvest is now, it's happening now, God is doing something now.

Whilst he's telling that to the disciples who are trying to just give kebabs out to people, right? This woman, who was a moral outcast, is bringing her town to Jesus.

she's not waiting to get her reputation in order, she's not thinking, you know what, I need to, I need to, what's the American phrase?

Like you get the, get my, get my ducks in a row. I was thinking something a bit more high level than that. Like, like, I need to get all the groundwork done.

[18 : 40] Actually, I've got ducks in a row written down here actually. Look at that. Ducks in a row. Maybe that's what I was thinking. Should read my notes.

Get myself established, get my reputation in order, get some training. She's just off doing it, mate, because it's just now, it's now, it's now. And sort of at the end, it would have been great to be there at the end, you know, kebab, kebab, kebab, and Jesus is going, the harvest is now, the talent starts coming over the hills towards them.

Wouldn't that be cool? When's the right time to be honest and open about your faith and your community? It's now. God's come, the Holy Spirit's at work, time is now.

There's this great old story, it's a bit cynical, but it's fabulous, about three apprentice devils being trained by Satan. And he's asking them, these devils, he goes, how are you going to discourage Christians?

You may have heard this story before, it's great. What are you going to, what are you going to try today, says the leader, Satan. And the first apprentice replies, I'm going to tell them there's no God. Well, says Satan, you can try, a few fools will believe you, but the universe shouts the existence of God, there is evidence all around you, you will not do very well.

[19 : 59] Any other ideas? So the second apprentice tries this, he says, I'm going to tell them there's no judgment. That's a better idea, says Satan. You will persuade more people of that, especially some of the clergy.

But human beings have a gut sense of accountability, their actions have consequences, they know what it is to feel guilty even when others tell them not to, so I think you'll find it an uphill struggle.

Anyone else got any other ideas? So the first guy says, tell them there's no God. The second guy says, tell them there's no judgment. The third apprentice pipes up and says, I'm going to tell them there's no hurry. Brilliant, says Satan.

That's just what you want to say. You'll have great success. Let them listen to the word of God and whisper in their ears, that's good stuff. One day you ought to do something about this, but not right now.

Maybe later. So the passage gives us three motivations for sharing our faith. One, when we truly know how God has changed us, we want others to know. It's just overflow. It's not duty.

[21 : 01] Two, it's food for our souls. It nourishes us. It doesn't take from us. It gives us life. And three, there's no reason to wait. God is out there and he's working. Get on board.

Let me finish up very, very quickly. Folks, live your faith publicly. Live it transparently. This woman had so many reasons to keep her encounter with Jesus to herself.

She had so many reasons to do that. And she understood about this much of Jesus compared to you. Folks, what's your excuse? Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.