

Reaping The Harvest

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[0 : 0 0] from verse 39 to verse 42. We've looked this morning at the previous verses 31 to 38 and so we're following on from that this evening at verse 39. Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony he told me all that ever I did and so on through to the end of verse 42 there. This morning we looked at the previous verses under the title of Ready for Harvest. We saw how the Lord was emphasizing for the disciples that the harvest time actually was there and then and how that related to our own view of our mission work, of our evangelism, of our outreach, not just in terms of what we're seeking to do this coming week at Mackenzie Park but on an ongoing way as we reach out as a congregation, as a gospel congregation with the message of the gospel. This is really what we need always to bear in mind that it's always a time together for sowing and reaping because we're reaping what others have sown before our own generation and we are sowing for the succeeding generation as well was part of the passage, part of the meaning of the passage that we sought to bring out but especially we noticed how in this emphasis that Jesus was saying this is now the time for reaping. It's not tomorrow, it's not in the future, it's here and now and that's true of us at all times every single successive week or day indeed and tonight we're looking at reaping the harvest because this is really the result of what this woman had done and going to her own native town and telling her own people about what she had found, what Christ had revealed to her. Go back to verses 25, 26 especially when she said at the end of this interview she came to this point. Jesus of course had wonderfully led her to that and she spoke about the Messiah and Jesus said, I who speak to you, I am he. So that was really the climax of the interview that he revealed himself to her as in fact the Messiah that was expected and that had been prophesied for all of these previous generations. And so that's really what you find in the connection wonderfully between these passages. You find a connection between the woman and her coming to know Christ and then immediately going to tell her own people about him and then their response to that is they come as we'll see tonight towards Jesus, they're coming out to Jesus and as the disciples speak about ordinary food to him, he says lift up your eyes, look at what you're seeing because the fields are already white to harvest are ready for the harvest. As we saw this morning he was indicating that spiritual harvest comprising all of these people that were coming out towards him that would come to believe in him but the harvest had already begun with this one woman and as she went to witness to her own people so the harvest continued from that and multiplied as we'll see tonight into all of these people, these Samaritans that came to believe on Jesus. I want to look first of all at the confession of one woman and then more fully look at the conversion of many people. So the confession of one woman there is in verse 28 to 29 and then we'll look at the conversion of many people in verse 30 followed by verses 39 to 42. So here's the conversion of this one woman and I'm emphasizing that deliberately because it's important for us to realize that this harvest, these people that were coming to Jesus that would come to believe in him, that whole movement began with this one individual,

with this one woman. That's so important for us to realize tonight when we think that maybe our own lives are just so uninfluential and so unproductive and so unfruitful that who are we to think that I should actually contribute to the mission work of the church, to do something that would lead to a whole harvest of people coming to know the Lord and coming into the church. Well, as we said this morning, who would have thought that this woman, as she's described earlier in the chapter, would actually be the means by which the Lord would come to bless her people. Don't ever write anybody off and don't ever write yourself off as we sometimes tend to do. Well, there are two things about her confession in verses 28 and 29 that really stand out as we read through them. First of all is her excitement.

She left her water jar. And as you read there, she left her water jar in verse 28 and went away into the town and said to the people there, come. She left her water jar. A whole lot has been made of that over the years. But whatever else it means, it means that she was filled with excitement. She was moved.

She was actually taken over by this discovery, if you like, that she had made of Jesus, or rather Jesus revealing himself to us, to who he was. And you can just see the excitement in her words. And in the very action of leaving her jar, she had come there to draw water. She had done that dozens and dozens of times before, no doubt. And this was just going to be like all the previous days. She had come to do this task that was so important for them in those regions, coming to draw water from this well. But she left her water pot there.

She left the well without having drawn any of that ordinary water. Why? Because Jesus, as you read through the chapter, had revealed to her himself as the living water. The salvation that he himself had, or was in himself, was something she was now coming to appreciate. And you can see the excitement. She forgot her water jar. The initial purpose for which she had come there was taken over by a higher purpose. A purpose that you could really say is captured in the very way in which she went to her own people, and excitedly said, come and see a man who told me all that ever I did. Can this be the Christ? Are these words that translated, must this not be the Christ? So there's that excitement in her voice, because she had found a different life. An excitement that just meant she left her water pot. She had moved to a different kind of service now. Let me ask myself before I ask anyone else. Have I lost something of that excitement that I once knew when I came to know the Lord? Are we in need of recapturing the sense of wonder and the sense of excitement that ought to fill our hearts and remain with us as we actually appreciate what Jesus has done, who Jesus is, what he's done for ourselves? Or perhaps you're here tonight and you haven't yet come to the point where by accepting Jesus, by receiving him as your Savior, as he offers himself, you haven't yet come to know of that excitement. Well, there's no other excitement compared to this. Nothing can compare with it, because here is a woman who really exemplifies for us what it means to come from living her life as she'd done up to that point, and now finding Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

[7 : 56] I, he said to her, am he. Are you filled tonight with excitement? Is there an excitement in your life because you found life in Jesus Christ? Well, we have many things happening in our lives that perhaps causes that excitement to wane and to recede and to go back somewhat, but we can recapture it.

We ask that the Lord will come to again renew that sense of wonder and excitement, and especially that we'll be able to convey something of that to the world around us in our outreach and our evangelism.

Not in a manufactured way, not in a way that tries to just produce some more of it ourselves, but through the Lord's blessing again that people would come to see that this Jesus we're speaking about fills us with excitement, fills us with that joy and with something that the world may see they don't have. Many of yourselves possibly in coming to know the Lord came to have this as part of your experience towards that, that you saw in the lives of some Christians at least something that you recognized you did not possess. There was something about their life, something about their view, something about how they saw themselves and the future and how they spoke about their faith.

There was a sense of excitement to it, and you knew you lacked that. And if you lacked that tonight, well, this same Jesus, you might say, in a spiritual sense, is just sitting by the well tonight, speaking to us through the gospel. And he's saying, I am the one you need. I am he. I am the Messiah.

Not any other. I alone am that. And there's that excitement, but there's also exhortation. She went directly to her own people and she said, come, see a man who told me all that ever I did.

[10 : 05] Must this not be the Christ? Of course, the excitement continues into the way she spoke. Having left her water jar behind. And the words that are used there are very important in John's gospel because they're full of theology. They're full of meaning. If you go back to chapter 1, just flick back with me to chapter 1, verses 39 and 46. Here are two disciples that were disciples of John the Baptist who belonged to the Old Testament age. But now John was pointing out Jesus as a new beginning in history, if you like. And so as Jesus was pointed out to him as the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, two of his disciples began following Jesus. And as Jesus turned around, he asked him, what are you seeking? Verse 38. And he said, Rabbi, where are you staying?

He said, come and see. And then you go on further in the chapter to verse 46. You find the same words where you find Philip finding Nathanael and saying, we have found him. You see the same theme continues, finding Jesus, coming to know Jesus. We have found him in the law. Moses, who Moses in the law spoke about Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael said to him, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, come and see. What a great response. You're somebody who's skeptical, somebody who's not prepared at all to accept that this Jesus of Nazareth that he's known about or perhaps even met before, that he can possibly be the Messiah. Well, Philip says, okay, come and see. Come and see for yourself. And that's really such an emphasis we have in our outreach work, in our evangelism, because really that's what we are about. For people to come and see for themselves who Jesus is, what Jesus can do for them. There's a whole lot of other things that sometimes are presented to people in the name of evangelism, miracle working, speaking in tongues, all sorts of stuff. And really very often these things just tend to obscure Jesus himself. It's not about us. It's not about who we are. It's not about any abilities we have. It's not even about any gifts with which God might have gifted us. Come and see. Come and see himself is what it's saying. That's the exhortation that she had to the men of our, to the people of our own town, where she said, come and see this man, this one who spoke to me, who told me everything that I ever did. And that's the emphasis really at the heart of our evangelistic endeavors, of our outreach or mission, come and see. However we put it, that's what it amounts to. Different ways of presenting the gospel, bringing a gospel message, but at the heart of it, that's what you really want the outcome to be, for them to come and see. As we'll see in the later part of the passage, that's what these people of the town actually came to see and express for themselves. So the focus is on Christ. The focus is not on herself, not on her faith, it's not on the church, it's on Jesus. Come and see.

That's the confession of this one woman. And the outcome of that is the conversion of many people. Notice in verse 30 there, they went out of the town and were coming to him. They were captured by this message. They were taken up by the emphasis and the excitement of this woman, so they wanted to go and check this out for themselves. And that's really what we want to see, isn't it? However many steps there might be to them coming to the gospel, you want people to come and see for themselves what this Jesus is about. What does he mean? Why is he important? Why are we so excited about him?

And so in the conversion of many people, I want to just mention three points, a little bit under each of those. First of all, in verse 30, they believed because of her witness. You find in verse 30, they went out to him and were coming to him. Now just pause for a moment. What if she had not gone back to her own town? What if she had just said, well, I'm so pleased that I've come to know this Jesus, this Messiah and who he is, but I'll keep that to myself. If she thought that the best thing to do would be just not share this news with others, just imagine if she had done that. How would they have heard about him? Well, you might say Jesus might have gone back there. They might have heard from somebody else. All of these are fair points. But the emphasis is if she hadn't, in all likelihood, they would never have heard. If we don't go to the Mackenzie parks, to the other areas of the town, wherever people are as Christians, if we don't go to say something about this Jesus and bring the gospel to them and invite them to come and see for themselves, who's going to tell them? Where are they going to find the news that they need in their lostness, in their sin? Where are they going to actually find a door that opens to eternal life if we don't go and tell them? Because they're not going to find it in the news reports. They're not going to find it in the media. They're not going to find it in the world around them. They're not going to find it in themselves. You see, this is the point. [15 : 54] They came to him, they were coming out of the town, as a response to that one woman's testimony. She went and she told him. And that's the aim that we have ourselves in our personal lives, in our congregational life, that people will actually come and make that way to Jesus himself.

That's really important for all of us here tonight too, isn't it? Because the emphasis in preaching the gospel, as we try to do week by week to you, the emphasis there is not, come and see what we're like as preachers, come and see who such and such a person is, come and see what the church is like, come and see the activities that we have for all our children and for the young people, for the Sunday school, for the creche, for the campaigners. All of these things in these activities are so important, but that's not where you want to end things. That might be a step towards it, but what do you want to be as the final end, as the final ultimate aim? It's to come to Jesus. That's to come to himself.

It's to come to discover who he is. Come and see him. You see, this is what it says, they went out of the town and were coming to him. And that's really emphasized by John. They were coming to him. Not to anyone else, not to the disciples, not to the woman herself, coming to him. And that's one way of John and his gospel presenting, as he does many, many times, this great figure of Jesus and how it is to him that we must go. And it's at him that our journey really ends. The search, if you like, for satisfaction for eternal life, it's all in him. They believed because of her witness. Secondly, in verse 40, they asked Jesus to stay with them. When the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them. And he stayed there for two days. Now again, if you cast your mind back to chapter 1, verses 38 and 39 again, you come across this other great theme in John's gospel. There's the theme of coming to see Jesus, coming to a personal knowledge of him. But there's also this, abiding with Jesus, being with Jesus, and Jesus being with us. See what he's saying there? Where do you stay, is what they said. And they came and saw where he was staying. And in the older translation, we're probably more familiar, the older ones of us anyway, with the word abide. Of course, some of the great hymns in history have one of the best known ones, abide with me. And that all goes back to John's gospel here and the emphasis of abiding with Christ and Christ abiding with us.

You find it in chapter 15 as well in the great imagery that he has there of the vine and the branches, where he emphasizes that every branch of mine that does not bear fruit, he takes away every branch that bears fruit, he prunes it. And then verse 4, abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine and so on. Abiding in Christ, Christ abiding in us and with us. It's that wonderful living spiritual connection with Jesus, just as the branch connected to the vine brings forth fruit. So the life connected to Jesus has the life that Jesus gives running through it, an enabling life, a life that helps and enables us to live for him, to witness for him. So what she's saying, what is said here by John is that the Samaritans, when they came to him, they asked him to stay with them, to abide with them, and he abode there for two days. Now that's something important that we teach not just new converts, but also apply to ourselves in the ongoing experience of the Christian life. How important it is to look after your relationship with Jesus. How important it is to abide with him and he with us, to make sure that Christ is indeed our true companion, that he lives in our lives, that we live in him, that he accompanies us on the way through life, that we are pleased to have his companionship, that he is our best, best friend. And how do you do that? How do you continue to abide with Jesus? How do you continue to have Jesus abide with you? Well, the answer to that is really very simple. You go back to the very basic things in our Christian exercises, our Christian activity, and that is reading the Bible for yourself, praying to him, worshiping together, and worshiping yourself individually, and coming to be part of an ongoing fellowship that values the presence of Jesus, that shares spiritual truth with one another. That's how you do it. You cut yourself off from any of that, that's going to have a very obvious effect negatively on your life as a Christian, as a human being.

[21 : 31] You need to have Christ abiding in you and with you, and you need to abide with him and abide in him, and have your life rooted in him as you can through the Holy Spirit. And it's, of course, important that we also go on retaining our obedience to Christ. You stay through to Jesus in the way that you live, and in these things to do with Bible study, with prayer, with reading, with fellowship, and belonging to the church, and all of these things. It's important. You go forward to chapter 14, just for a moment, chapter 14, verses 21 to 24. And you'll find there how Jesus spoke to the disciples. Here is Jesus in the upper room now with the disciples, with the twelve, as he's going to prepare them for his crucifixion in a short time. And as you read there in verse 21, this is what he said to them, whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas, not Iscariot, said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered him, and these are words, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him, make our home with him. You see, all that comes together there, so that he abides with us, we abide with him. It's on the basis of an ongoing obedience and observance of his ways and of being true to him. If we lose the sense of Christ's presence, we don't have that nearness to

Jesus that we once had, it's very likely the cause of that is in ourselves. Somewhere there, you can detect an element of disobedience. Maybe you've stopped reading your Bible regularly. Maybe you're deflected from prayer. Maybe you're just going through the motions as a kind of formality as

a Christian. That comes to every Christian, or most at least from time to time, myself included. You need to get back to these things so that being true to Jesus and living close to him, your life goes on receiving from him the life, the vigor, the spiritual sap that comes from the vine itself through to you as a branch so as to produce fruit for him. But here is a question.

Is there anyone here tonight who doesn't know the companionship of Jesus? Do you value his presence the way that it's said out here? I'm not saying that that doesn't wane from time to time, that things don't interfere with that. But do you know him as your companion? Is he your best friend? Is he someone in your life?

Is Jesus someone you would not notice if he disappeared from your life? That wouldn't matter very much. Or is he someone to you as he is surely to every Christian? Someone that you are saying of, I just could not possibly live and manage without him. And I have nothing more valuable to me in this world, not even my nearest and dearest in this life, that is more value to me than this Jesus, this Savior, this Son of God, this Messiah.

[25 : 20] I am he, he says. And he says that right into your life, right to the very roots of your being. And once you're rooted in him, you realize there's no one else I desire besides you.

Remember, the psalmist in Psalm 73, where he brings the testimony that he had just almost slipped away. He was envious at the world. He saw many people in the world not having some of the troubles that believers like himself had.

And he thought, well, they've got a much easier life than I. Why am I struggling the way I am? I'm a believer in God. Why are all these struggles in my life? And then he went to the temple and he realized, again, as he went back to the Word of God, he realized that he had been foolish.

I was like a beast before you. And he came back to himself and he came back to realize, as he himself put it in his wonderful words, Whom have I in the heavens beside you?

And on earth there is none I desire above you. In other words, he's saying, Whatever I can afford to be without in my life, whoever I need to be without in my life, Lord, I cannot manage without you.

[26 : 46] You are the basis of my whole life, of my hopes, of my eternity. And surely that's for every one of us tonight. The testimony that you yourself would want to have.

That you abide with and in Christ, that he abides with you. A living companionship. A companionship that death does not bring to an end.

Every companionship in this life, death will bring to an end. Even the person you most love in this life. That Jesus goes through death with you.

He goes on into eternity with you. His pastoring of you goes on throughout all eternity. As he leads you, as Revelation 7 says, to living fountains of water.

The bliss of heaven. The same Jesus that met with this woman. That we're seeking to bring to the world around us. They asked Jesus to stay with them.

[27 : 52] And whatever else you and I ask in this life, ask Jesus to remain close to you. Do nothing as far as possible that will jeopardize that relationship.

That's the second thing. Thirdly, they became convinced of who Jesus was. Verse 42. I'm just going to hurry on through this point. Verse 42. They said to the woman, It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, but we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.

Now you can see what's being said there. It's very plain. It's very clear. They're saying to the woman, Yes, we came to believe in this Jesus. From what you said, that was the starting point. But we came to hear him for ourselves. We came to see for ourselves. We came to know him for ourselves. And now we've come to be convinced. We believed it before, but now we're assured. Now we're convinced that this is in fact the Jesus.

Not just for your word, but we heard him for ourselves. And we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world. I know Kenny will share in this with me.

[29 : 03] As we preach the gospel in this congregation by God's grace, by God's privilege given to us, he and I will say to you, we hope there's nothing presented by us before you that you would not believe.

That is untrue to the word of God. That is untrue to the gospel's own message. But don't just take our word for it. Go to God himself.

Go to Jesus. Test what we are saying in preaching the gospel by his own word. Go and ask the Holy Spirit to show you more of his word.

To enable you to go deeper into your understanding of Christ. This is what they said. It's no longer because of what you said that we believe what we have heard for ourselves.

You know, one of the things that thrills us immensely as preachers of the gospel is to see people coming out on the Lord's side, coming to not just take communion, but to, along with that, involve themselves more fully and more openly in the Christian life.

[30 : 13] Why does it give us delight? Well, because it means that the we might have been a means of bringing God's blessing to them, a channel, if you like.

What's really satisfying about all of that is that they've come to Jesus himself. They haven't stopped with us. They haven't said, what a great guy he is or what a great guy Kenny is.

Well, that's true. They're saying how great Jesus is. How wonderful he is. What a magnificent person this is.

What a great thing it is to know him. To abide with him. To have him live with me. To accompany me through life. That's what we are surely burdened for you to come to understand and live out for yourselves.

We have come, they say, to know that this is indeed the saviour of the world. Now that was a description given in pagan religion to many different figures.

[31 : 21] And the emperor, Caesar himself, went by this title, the saviour of the world. As you go out into the world, you'll find many claimants to that title.

You'll find other religions that present to you Buddha or Mohammed or whatever other figure lies behind the different religions of the world.

And you'll find out that in every sort of creed and every kind of belief system that human beings devise for themselves. Notice what this is saying. And it's, it's a glorious, unchangeable truth. Nothing of the challenges of this world, great though they are and difficult at times though they are. They cannot change this. This is indeed the saviour of the world.

There may be many claimants to the title the saviour of the world, but there are no co-saviors. There is only one and that's this Jesus.

[32 : 25] And they came to make, to have this testimony that he is indeed the saviour of the world. Now remember who they are. Remember who these people are. They are described deliberately in this passage as this woman herself is a woman of Samaria.

The Samaritans were looked down upon by the Jews. The Samaritans were seen as second rate people. They were not looked upon at all as at the same level as the Jews themselves.

And here they are. And what are they doing? This so-called low class of people. They are coming to Jesus. They are coming to know Jesus. They are coming to believe in Jesus.

They are coming to know him as their companion and saviour. And that of course is so important. And out of evangelism too, you never look down upon people however poorly off they may be. However they may be in relation to your own life. You don't look down on them nor do you write them off. You never say about them, well they'll certainly never be any use for the church or for Christ or for his service.

[33 : 38] They would have said that of this woman and many others the Bible tells us about and many others in the history of the church. Look upon them as part of the harvest field.

Part of those you sow seed to. Part of those you pray will come to be reaped into the kingdom of God. God. And now these people, these Samaritans that are so frequently looked down upon, they are welcomed by this Jesus.

And so will you. And so will everyone who comes to him. And tonight is this your experience, verse 42. Now we believe not because of your word, because we have heard him for ourselves and know that indeed this is the saviour of the world.

And importantly too, that you can say he is also my saviour. Let's pray. Gracious God, we give thanks for your salvation.

We give thanks for the person of your son. We give thanks, Father, that you sent him into this world, that you gave him a specific commission and a task to accomplish.

[35 : 01] We thank you, Lord, for the way that this passage teaches us the relish that you had in fulfilling the will of the Father and accomplishing his work. We give thanks that you finished it so victoriously.

We give thanks that you offer yourself now to us as lost sinners in this word of the gospel. We give thanks that you accompany your people through life and give thanks for your own abiding presence

with them.

Lord, we pray for continuously thankful, dependent hearts as we realise these great truths in your word. Receive our worship now, we pray, and cleanse us from sin for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Well, let's sing now in conclusion. This time we're singing again in the Scottish Psalter. It's from Psalm 85. Psalm 85, and that's on page 340, and verses 8 to 13.

The tune is, Come thou fount of every blessing. Sing Psalms. Oh, sing Psalms, I'm sorry. Psalm 85. I had the wrong page number down.

[36 : 12] Good to have presenters that are on their toes. So, Psalm 85, at verse 8. And the tune has come, thou fount of every blessing.

That's page 113. I will hear what God the Lord says to his saints he offers peace, but his people must not wander and return to foolishness.

surely for all those who fear him his salvation is at hand, so that once again his glory may be seen within our land. 8 to 13 in conclusion.

I will hear what God the Lord says to his saints he oversees, but his people must not wander and return to foolishness.

Surely for all those who fear him his salvation is at hand, so that once I get his glory may be seen within our land.

[37 : 32] Love and truth come made together, righteous death and peace and grace, righteous death first died from heaven, from the earth slings faithfulness.

What is good the Lord will give us and around its fruit will be? Righteousness will go before him and his loyal way prevail.

I'll go to the side door here to my right this evening. And now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen.