

The Harvest

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 September 2016

Preacher: Steve Aiken

[0 : 00] Good morning. No matter how old those hymns are, they're still powerful, aren't they? I really love those hymns. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for all that you've given us, for the freedom and liberty we have in this country to be able to come and worship you without fear.

We pray for our brothers and sisters that are persecuted for their faith, those that have to meet in secret or those that cannot declare outwardly their faith in you.

And I pray that you would bless them, that they would know that they're not for God, that we remember them. Pray that they would stand steadfast in you and that you would provide for every one of their needs according to your riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

We pray that our hearts would be open to receive what you want to say to us today and that you would anoint me to say it. And Father, we give you thanks in that wonderful and powerful name of your son Jesus. Amen.

The Bible speaks a lot about harvest. From Cain's harvest that got him in trouble in Genesis to the angel of the Lord harvesting souls in Revelation. It was during a harvest that Ruth met Boaz and continued the line of the Messiah.

[1 : 22] The Lord even commanded Israel to set a special holiday to celebrate the harvest. When Gerald asked, would I mind taking into consideration that you have your harvest Sunday?

And I thought, well, I don't know what to say about it. And when I began to look it up, the Bible is just full of the harvest. And this morning, I want to share a certain aspect of that.

But I wondered if we really know about harvest. Do we really wonder where things come from? And I was thinking, how many know, do we really know where harvest, where pasta comes from?

He says, well, this one comes from Morrison's. And that's probably as far as we get, isn't it? And we forget.

I remember a newspaper. Every once in a while, certain newspapers or news media play along with April 1st. And so they had a photograph of all the pasta hanging on a tree.

[2 : 28] And everybody thought, boy, that tree. I wondered where pasta came from. I grew up in a small farm in Oregon. So I grew up and I knew where things grew.

And I worked during the summer and after school, worked on some wheat ranches. So I witnessed where the fields were plowed up. The kernel of grains were seeded and watched as the wheat crops grew.

And then I was part at certain times of harvesting the wheat as these friends brought these big combines in to harvest the grain. And Jesus was interested and excited about a harvest of souls. And I want us to read from John chapter 4, verses 3 to 35. It's a long reading, so I hope you don't mind. But I felt I needed to read all of it.

So John chapter 4, verses 3 to 35. Now this, I think, is a New Living translation. So it may be a little different than yours. Beginning with verse 3.

[3 : 42] So Jesus left Judea and returned to Galilee. He had to go through Samaria on the way. Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, Please give me a drink.

He was alone at that time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. The woman was surprised, for Jews refused to have anything to do with the Samaritans.

She said to Jesus, You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink? Jesus replied, If you only knew the gift God has for you, and who you are speaking to, you

would ask me, and I would give you living water.

But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket, she said, and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? And besides, do you think you are greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well?

[4 : 52] How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed? Jesus replied, Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again.

But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life. Please, sir, the woman said, give me this water.

Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water. Go and get your husband, Jesus told her. I don't have a husband, the woman replied.

Jesus says, You're right, you don't have a husband. For you have had five husbands, and you haven't even married the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth. Sir, the woman said, you must be a prophet.

So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshipped?

[5 : 54] Jesus replied, Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, but we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes to the Jews.

But the time is coming, indeed it's here now, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

For God is spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth. The woman said, I know the Messiah is coming, the one who is called Christ.

When he comes, he will explain everything to us. Then Jesus told her, I am the Messiah. Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to see him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, What do you want with her, or why are you talking to her?

The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, Come and see a man that told me everything I ever did. Could he possibly be the Messiah?

[7 : 09] So the people came streaming from the village to see him. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, Rabbi, eat something. But Jesus replied, I have a kind of food you know nothing about.

Did someone bring him food while we were gone? The disciples asked each other. Then Jesus explained, My nourishment comes from doing the will of God who sent me, and from finishing his work.

You know the saying, Four months before planting and harvest. But I say, Wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest.

Having grown up on a farm and having friends who own ranches, I know that farming is a tough and sometimes unrewarding job. And maybe those of you that know more about that.

Still for many, that farm, there's a great love for the land. And just to be able to see the crops grow. There's a great love for it and the fruit of their labors.

[8 : 14] And Jesus reflects this in verse 34 where he said, My nourishment comes from doing the will of God who sent me, and from finishing his work. Jesus came to earth and lived and died for the harvest.

This was his whole purpose in enduring what he did. He looked forward to the harvest. And if you read Revelation, you'll see how that's confirmed. This is why he deliberately traveled to Sychar, a place the Jews normally avoided because the despised Samaritans lived there.

The Jews didn't like the Samaritans because they believed in a mixture of Jewish faith and paganism. To the Jews, they were unclean, the bottom of the heap. But Jesus deliberately went there.

He saw something that neither his disciples nor others saw. He saw needy, hungry souls raiding to be harvested. When you harvest, though, you need implements.

In Jesus' day, size would be used to cut the stalks. The stalks would then be stacked for later threshing. My friends used huge combines to harvest.

[9 : 23] Jesus used a woman even her own people despised. Jesus wasn't there by accident that noon, the hottest hour of the day.

That woman probably stayed at home until she knew no one else would be around. Maybe she was tired of the dirty looks and constant gossip about her immoral lifestyle.

Jesus, though, was waiting. And he knew how to reach her. He offered her living water to nourish the dryness of her soul, eventually revealing that he was the answer to her need.

Not the five husbands or the man she was living with. The Samaritan woman tried a few diversions to change the subject and take Jesus off her need, but he focused in.

He was hitting her with the truth, but not to condemn her. He wasn't trying to tear her down, but to get her to face up to her needs so he could give her life.

[10:27] When the answer hit home, she believed and ran off to tell others. The greater harvest began with verse 29, when she said, Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did.

Could he possibly be the Messiah? I don't know if I would want somebody going around telling everybody else everything I ever did, but that started a harvest.

A great harvest doesn't have to start by renting a football stadium, spending thousands on advertising, and bringing in a famous evangelist. Excuse me.

It may be as simple as that woman at the well declaring, Come and see a man who told me. It may begin with one messed up hungry soul hearing that Jesus has a water of life to quench their thirst and transform their life.

A whole city came to faith because of the testimony of that woman by the well. Jesus got the harvest started, then let the Holy Spirit move through that Samaritan woman to reach others.

[11:42] Meanwhile, the disciples were coming back from McDonald's, totally clueless as to what had been going on. What was Jesus doing talking to that despised woman? Who gave Jesus something to eat?

What is going on? They were totally clueless about what was going on. We are called to be harvesters, to go into all the world and to share the good news, making disciples of those who believe.

Other titles include ministers of reconciliation, ambassadors for Christ. We're called to be salt and light. We're called to wet people's appetites for God and lead them out of darkness.

We are here to harvest. Some people, like that Samaritan woman, are hungrier than others, but no one is hopeless. And I think that's something that we need to remember.

No one is hopeless. There is hope for every human being as long as they're still breathing. We must never say somebody's too hard or they'll never come to faith because that's a bad confession and it's a lie.

[12:57] There's hope as long as that person is breathing and able to understand. And we need to pray for people and believe that they can come to faith.

I mean, how many people would have given up on that Samaritan woman, but that is the one that Jesus went to and she's the one that brought her whole village to the Lord.

So how do we prepare for the harvest? I have five things here. One is we must be aware. We need to recognize a vast harvest of unsaved peoples around us, desperate for the forgiveness, life, and hope we take for granted.

Are we aware of the people around us that are going to hell without Jesus? And that's the first step in being ready to be harvesters for the Lord.

There are billions of people around us that are going to hell without Jesus. We need to be aware of that. We need to be aware of people in our own families or our neighborhood, at work or elsewhere, that they are going to hell without Jesus.

[14:11] There aren't many ways to God. There's only one, and that's Jesus Christ. And I know that the media, you know, they will call us bigots and narrow-minded and all kinds of other things, but the thing is that the Scripture says there's only one way to God.

Not many ways. There's many ways to come to Jesus, but there's only one way to heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ, faith in him. So we must be aware that there is a harvest.

And the second one I have is we must desire it, to have a heart that Jesus had, that he would be willing to leave the glory and the wonder of heaven and come to earth as a little baby and grow up in this messed up world and to be willing to endure what he endured, the horrific, I mean, even before he got to the cross, all the mockings and everything else.

Can you imagine knowing who you are? I don't know if, have you ever read or watched The Prince and the Pauper? There's been a couple of films about The Prince and the Pauper, and there's

these two boys that look identical.

One is a pauper or impoverished kid. The other one is a king of England, and they trade places. But the problem is he's trying to get the king back into the palace.

[15 : 44] And he goes around telling everybody, but I'm the king. He's the imposter. Well, how do they know? And so Jesus was accused all the time.

But he endured everything he did in order to bring about the harvest. Do we have that desire?

Jesus says that it was his passion to win souls, to do the Father's will.

The third thing I have is that we must be ready to go where the fields are. Are we willing to go where the fields are ripe?

Jesus knew where the field was ripe, the right time. He knew if he was there at noon, the woman that would make a difference to that town would be there.

You know, and God can guide us. The Holy Spirit wants to guide us to people that are ready. And it may just be a little world, just one little word. It just may be an encouragement or getting to know somebody.

[16 : 55] And it's waiting upon the Lord and saying, Lord, I want to be a part of the harvest. I can't, maybe you're not called to Africa or Asia or someplace else, but we're all called to be, if we put our faith in Jesus, we are all called to be a part of the harvest and to ask God what part we're to play and where we're to go.

The fourth thing I have here is we need to be ready. Jesus knew who he is going to reach and what she needed. He knew what he is talking about.

And that means being prayed up, being in the word so we know what God thinks. And we're ready. We're ready to talk to people and to minister to them, to give them the living water and the living bread.

And the last one I have is we need to love the souls we're trying to reach. I remember a number of years ago, once in a while, many years ago when I was in Youth with a Mission, I may have mentioned this before, I would once in a while preach on the mound when I was invited.

I wouldn't, I am a shy person. You may not think that. So I wouldn't put myself out there. And even when I was invited to go, I was scared. And, but there was a young guy there who would stand there and he would yell at everybody and tell them all, they're all going to hell and all these terrible things, which all, he was telling the truth, but he, he came across as he, you know, he almost wanted to see these people go to hell.

[18 : 38] It was harsh and hard and unloving and nobody stayed. Nobody came. And he didn't feel the way it came across, it didn't seem like he cared about the souls that he was preaching to.

We need to love the people that are lost. Do we love the people? Do we have a real compassion and care about that person we're ministering to, we're sharing Jesus with?

Maybe that obnoxious relative or neighbor. And there are plenty of obnoxious people around, right? Do we love them? Do we love them? You know, Jesus went to a despised Samaritan woman that probably came out at noon because she knew it'd be too hot so everybody else would be away and she wouldn't have to look at their dirty looks at her and their gossip.

She came out to avoid people so Jesus knew right where she was. He loved her soul. He wasn't put off by her immoral lifestyle.

He loved her. Do we love the people that we want to reach? Do you love the people with the addictions, the broken marriages, the messed up lives just in these homes around here?

[20 : 09] Do we love them? Are we willing to lay down our lives to harvest, to be ready with hearts of compassion for them? A Samaritan village was radically transformed because Jesus passed through and reached out to a despised woman who needed the living water he offered.

He knew the harvest was ready and how to harvest. Each one of us, whatever our age or experience, are called to the harvest. Let's lift our eyes up and see what God sees.

Then go in his love and power to reach the lost. And I want to finish with, how am I doing? I want to finish with chapter 54 of Isaiah.

And I was thinking of this and I want to read, this may be for somebody specific here. I'm going to read the first eight verses.

This may be for somebody specific here, but I believe and just praying about today and the harvest and just your heart to reach this community.

[21 : 25] I believe that you folk need to get ready because God's going to do something special in this fellowship. In Isaiah chapter 54, the first eight verses, sing, sing, O childless woman, you who have never given birth.

Break into loud and joyful song, O Jerusalem, you who have never been in labor. For the desolate woman now has more children than the woman who lives with her husband, says the Lord.

Enlarge your house, build an addition, spread out your home, and spare no expense. For you will soon be bursting at the seams. Your descendants will occupy other nations and resettle the ruined cities.

Fear not, you will no longer live in shame. Don't be afraid. There's more disgrace, there's no more disgrace for you. You will no longer remember the shame of your youth and the sorrows of widowhood.

For your creator will be your husband. The Lord of heaven's army is his name. He is your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of all the earth.

[22 : 36] For the Lord has called you back from your grief as though you were a young wife abandoned by your husband, says your God. For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will take you back.

In a burst of anger I turned my face away for a little while, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your redeemer. I believe without a doubt God is going to give you full growth.

You have a heart, but we need to have a heart for the lost and to be prepared for those that God wants to bring in. Let's pray. Father, I thank you that you went to somebody that everybody else would ignore.

And I pray for some of us here that we were like that woman, somebody that nobody wanted to reach, but you did. And we thank you.

We're so grateful for your incredible love and patience and kindness and long-suffering for offering us what we didn't deserve, giving us life.

[23 : 49] And I pray that you'd give every one of us a heart of love and compassion that Jesus has for the lost, that we would have it for the lost of this community, for the lost in our family, for the lost in our communities, Father God.

That no matter what state they're in, no matter what they look like or how obnoxious or sinful they are, that we would have a heart that sees them as Jesus sees them and desire that they be one to you.

May we be effective harvesters, we pray. And I pray that you would expand the heart of this fellowship and that, Father, they would be packed out with people that are coming in because they know the water of life is here, the giver of life himself, the wonderful Savior and Messiah.

Lord, we thank you. Bless this congregation, I pray. And we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.