

God's Harvest

John 4:27-40

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now, had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Church. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved....

The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now it is well that preachers be instructed, but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was—**"LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH" (Isa. 45:22)**

He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimmer of hope for me in that text.

The preacher began thus: "This is a very simple text indeed. It says 'Look.' Now lookin' don't take a deal of pain. It aint liftin' your foot or your finger; it is **just 'Look.'** Well, a man needn't go to College to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look.

"But then the text says, 'Look unto Me.' Ay!" he said in broad Essex, "many on ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some say look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, 'Look unto Me.' Some on ye say 'We must wait for the Spirit's workin.' You have no business with that just now. **Look to Christ.** The text says, 'Look unto Me.' "

Then the good man followed up his text in this way: "Look unto Me; I am sweatin' great drops of blood. **Look unto Me; I am hangin' on the cross. Look unto Me, I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again.** Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sitting at the Father's right hand. **O poor sinner, look unto Me! look unto Me!"**

When he had . . . managed to spin out about ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger.

Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, "Young man, you look very miserable." Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, "And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, **"Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live!"**

I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought . . . I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away.

There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, **"of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, "Trust Christ, and you shall be saved."** Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say—

**"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die. . ."**

That happy day when I found the Saviour, and learned to cling to His dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me . . . **I listened to the Word of God and that precious text led me to the cross of Christ.** I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced; there was no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of that hour. Many days of Christian experience have passed since then, but there has never been one which has had the full exhilaration, the sparkling delight which that first day had.

I thought I could have sprung from the seat in which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren . . . "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! **A sinner saved by blood!"**

My spirit saw its chains broken to pieces, I felt that I was an emancipated soul, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Jesus Christ, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock and my goings established

Between half-past ten o'clock, when I entered that chapel, and half-past twelve o'clock, when I was back again at home, **what a change had taken place in me! Simply by looking to Jesus I had been delivered from despair**, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, "Something wonderful has happened to you," and I was eager to tell them all about it. Oh! there was joy in the household that day, when all heard that the eldest son had found the Saviour and knew himself to be forgiven.¹

What I just read is the personal testimony of Charles Spurgeon. The thin looking, "below average stature and poor physical health"² man who led him to Christ was Robert



Eaglen. While Robert often did not have the physical strength to stand at the pulpit God used his words to etch awareness, repentance and belief into the soul of one of the greatest preachers of his time! I love this story because it exemplifies the truth that God often chooses the weak to proclaim the Gospel message. In reverence we are to be ready to give reasons for the hope we have in Jesus Christ to all who will listen. Even with the Great Commission ringing in our ears and our eyes gazing at the ripe fields all around us we let our laziness, sense of unworthiness, lack of compassion, lack of love

and lack of faith keep us from speaking what God has etched upon our very hearts! Today's sermon is going to look at John 4:27-40 and conclude that those who obey the command and privilege to plant seeds of righteousness in His kingdom will receive a bountiful harvest either in this lifetime or the next!

¹ Charles Spurgeon personal testimony – taken from the following website:
<http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/helpseek/spurgeon.htm>

² Taken from the following website: https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/people-2/primitive_methodist_ministers/e/robert-eaglen

Two Approaches to the Harvest – Verses 4:27-30

27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” 28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward Him.

The Disciples

When the disciples returned from Sychar (4:5) to purchase food (4:7) they were shocked to find Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. Their shock was understandable “considering the attitudes towards women reflected in the Jewish rabbinical writings.”³ For example one of the sayings was



“A man shall not be alone with a woman in an inn, not even with his sister or his daughter, on account of what men may think. A man shall not talk with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife, and especially not with another woman, on account of what men may say.”⁴

Also, the disciples were likely shocked that Jesus, a Jew, had spoken to someone from Samaria. In 721 B.C. the Assyrians conquered the Northern kingdom of Israel and renamed the district Samaria after its capital city.⁵ Many were exiled but those who stayed claimed to be direct descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. There was mutual hostility between the Jews and Samaritans. The Jews disliked the Samaritans for having intermarried with foreigners, for having worshipped many gods (2 Kings 17:24-41)⁶ while claiming to believe in the God of Israel and for only accepting the Pentateuch as their Bible.⁷ The Samaritans disliked the Jewish people for apostasy, for not allowing them to join the reformation of religion under Ezra (4:2-3) and

³ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 62.

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 243.

⁵ David Noel Freedman, ed., “[Samaria \(Place\)](#),” *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 914.

⁶ Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns, and Mark Strauss, eds., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 1470.

⁷ Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 907.

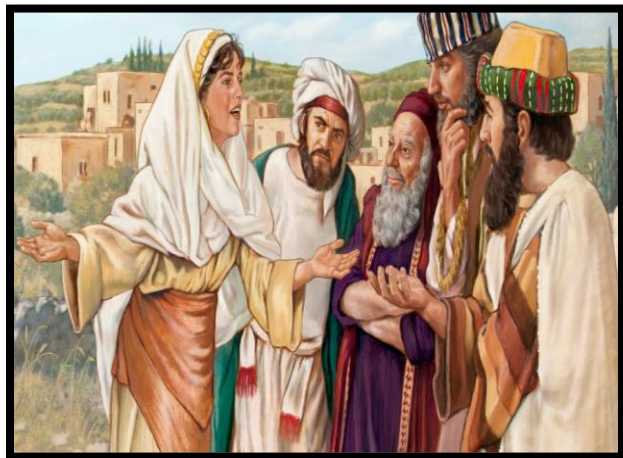
Nehemiah (2:20)⁸ and for setting up a holy place other than Mount Gerizim.⁹ Both of these groups had strict rules to not associate or speak to one another.¹⁰ For Jesus to be found speaking to a Samaritan was shocking because He went against cultural norms of His day.

“There are few things in life so tragic as having missed a great opportunity.”¹¹ Since the disciples did not question Jesus as to why He was talking to a Samaritan woman they missed a great opportunity to witness. They ignored the Samaritan woman’s needs¹² partially due to the cultural divide between the Jews and Samaritans, but also due to Jesus’ earlier command to not go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans but only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6). Out of respect for their Master the disciples chose not to ask Him any questions but instead ignored the situation entirely.¹³ Had the disciples asked Jesus why He was talking to a Samaritan woman they would have found out that while Jesus chose to first minister to His own, the



“Savior of the World” (John 4:42) would not refuse to feed the “dogs” at the Master’s table (Matthew 15:21-28)!¹⁴ The Good Shepherd had other sheep that would listen to His voice (John 10:16) besides the Jewish nation and one day graft in the Gentiles into His family (Romans 11:11-24)!

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The Samaritan Woman

The Samaritan woman was so overwhelmed with joy that she went back to her town and told them about her encounter with Jesus.¹⁵ O the joy that gripped her soul as she reflected on the Good News that she had heard! A Samaritan had been offered

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Samaritans,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1886.

¹⁰ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, 1887.

¹¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 324.

¹² James Montgomery Boice,.

¹³ Merrill C. Tenney, “John,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 57.

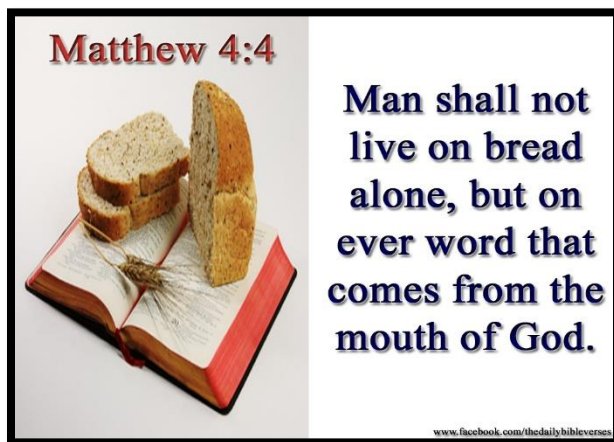
¹⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 74.

¹⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 243.

living water that once drunk would lead to eternal life (4:14). Jesus told her that a time was soon coming when worship of God would not be on Mount Gerizim, nor Jerusalem (4:21) but instead anywhere people worshipped Him in Spirit and truth (4:23-24). And the greatest news of all was that the one whom she gave her this Good News was none other than the Messiah Himself (4:25-26)! Despite her being a social outcast of society, despite the cultural hostility between the Jews and Samaritans and despite no evidence that the Messiah could come from the house of David in the Pentateuch,¹⁶ she abandoned¹⁷ the waterpot that she had come for at Jesus' feet in hopes she would soon return with a town thirsty to find living water!¹⁸ While the Samaritan woman might not have been 100 percent certain about what she had heard,¹⁹ she had enough faith to ask her fellow villagers "could this be the Messiah?" and in doing so planted seeds that compelled them to seek and find Christ! **This brings me to my first point in relation to missions: To be effective in spreading the Good News one must have faith that no one is beyond redemption!**

Opening Our Eyes – Verses 4:31-35

³¹ Meanwhile His disciples urged Him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." ³³ Then His disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought Him food?" ³⁴ "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work. ³⁵ Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.



While the suggestion that Jesus eat something was "eminently natural" and the purpose of their trip to Sychar,²⁰ the disciple's request proved they did not understand the words of Christ in the wilderness temptation: "man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)!²¹ Jesus used their suggestion to eat as an opportunity to teach the disciples²² about the priority of spiritual over physical things.²³ What good would it be to gain the whole world and yet forfeit one's soul

(Matthew 16:26)? "The **food** of which Jesus spoke was obedience to God and the completion of

¹⁶ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "[Samaritans.](#)" 1887.

¹⁷ Leon Morris, 243.

¹⁸ George R. Beasley-Murray, [John](#), vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 63.

¹⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, [The Gospel according to Saint John](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005), 179.

²⁰ Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to John](#), 244–245.

²¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, [John](#), 63.

²² Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to John](#), 244.

²³ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#), 325.

the task God sent Him to do (v. 34),”²⁴ to die as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of this world!²⁵ In their fixation on the physical task of obtaining food to eat the disciples did not notice the ripe Samaritan harvest whom were thirsty and in dire need of eternal waters!²⁶

As those whom have been purchased at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20) we must be willing at a moment notice to set aside our worldly tasks and plant seeds of righteousness amongst those



God has sent our way. Scripture tells us our top priority is to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20) and to always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks why we have hope in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:15). This does not mean one has to be a theological scholar to spread the Good News but merely willing to give a personal testimony of how Christ saved and changed your life! How many times have we missed opportunities to tell others about Christ simply due our fear of the spiritual differences between us and them or due to our selfish desire to further “our kingdom” rather than

His! Surely Christ’s love compels us to drop everything to tell those sent our way that Christ died for all (2 Corinthians 5:14). **This brings me to my second point in relation to missions: Those who want to be effective in evangelism are not at liberty to set their own priorities.**²⁷

The Fields are Ripe (John 4:35-40)

Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 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. ³⁷ Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. ³⁸ 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.” ³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days.

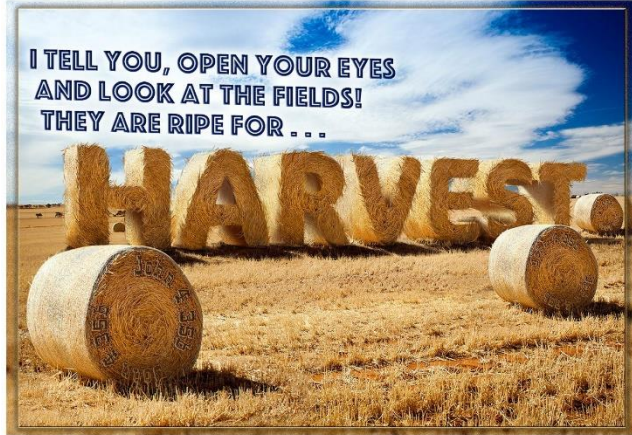
²⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels, [John](#), 74.

²⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, [The Gospel according to Saint John](#), 179–180.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary](#), 325–326.

Jesus now uses a proverbial saying, “it is still four months until the harvest” to teach the disciples that while it takes time for planted, physical seed to grow and be harvested; the planting and growth of spiritual seeds are a whole other matter!²⁸ First, unlike the harvest of physical seeds that have finite value because they are here today and gone tomorrow (Matthew



6:19-21), a harvest of spiritual seeds has infinite value for those who have gone from being without hope and God (Ephesians 2:12) to being eternally part of His family (John 3:16)!²⁹ And second, even though the time has come when people will no longer put up with sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3-4), the days have also come when the reaper will overtake the plowman (Amos 9:13).³⁰ Surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1) of the prophets,³¹ disciples and Jesus Christ Himself³² one should not doubt one’s efforts will lead to a crop of “a

hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:8). This passage finishes by stating that because of the Samaritan woman’s witness concerning Christ many in her town believed and drank from the living water (4:39-40)!³³ **This brings me to my final point in relation to missions: Those who want to be effective in evangelism must have faith that ripe fields can produce a harvest.**

Conclusion

I want to finish by saying that God chooses the weak, everyday Christians like you and me to plant seeds of righteousness in His kingdom. Robert Eaglen had no idea that a snow storm would keep his pastor from showing up to church and as a result would have to preach that Sunday morning. Despite his below average stature and poor physical health his message on Isaiah 45:22, “look unto Me and be saved” cut to the heart of Charles Spurgeon and as a result he drank deeply from the living waters! It was not that his message was theologically profound but that he was willing to drop everything to reap what was already planted in Spurgeon’s heart. Robert could have said that morning that he had too many earthly tasks to perform or could have said he knew nothing about Spurgeon and wrote him off as unredeemable, after all who gets saved after a single message from a weak speaker? Instead he preached with the spiritual gifts God gave him and as a result Robert got to see God redeem an unspeakable harvest! If you want to be successful in planting and reaping seeds in God’s kingdom then be ready to drop everything when He asks, write no one off as unredeemable and have faith that God will produce through your labor a great harvest, either in this lifetime or the next!

²⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 246.

²⁹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*, 326–327.

³⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*, 328.

³¹ Merrill C. Tenney, “John,” 58.

³² J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, 74.

³³ Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, 180.