

LIFT UP YOUR EYES!
John 4:25-42

15 June 2014

[Note: Preaching is a live event where God meets with His people, and that cannot be reproduced or duplicated. It is unique every time, and indispensable in the life of the Christian and the church. This is not a complete transcript; it is typically about 80% of the actual sermon. Some common abbreviations in these notes are: "NB" = *nota bene*, "note well" / "+" = an illustration / "[☒]" = an application / "BTW" = By the way / "Cf." = cross-reference / "I.e." = In other words / "b/c" = because / "E.G." = for example.]

Back to John 4 – back to a little known Samaritan city called Sychar (v. 5), now famous because of what happened on the day Jesus & His disciples passed through & stopped at Jacob's well for a drink of water...

What happens when God moves in a whole city? – What would real revival actually look like?...

Listen to how Jonathan Edwards describes the 1st Great Awakening, in the 1750s, which began in Northampton, Massachusetts: *This work of God soon made a glorious alteration in the town; so that in the spring and summer following, it seemed to be full of the presence of God* [image if that were said of Joburg!]...

...The [whole town] never was so full of love, nor so full of joy, and yet so full of distress as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought to them; parents rejoicing over their children as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands.

...The Lord's Day was a delight, and our [corporate worship] was then beautiful; the congregation was then alive in God's service, every one earnest intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in [the preaching of God's Word]. ...The [meeting in general were, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for their neighbours.

Who among us doesn't yearn for such a move of God as that? – But how? – What would it take for us to see that in our day? –

Another observer of true revivals writes, "I think that no extensive awakening has ever been produced by preaching on the work of the Spirit, but rather by awakening the conscience and setting forth Christ." (John Duncan)

I.e., Revival comes less from preaching about the Holy Spirit, and more from preaching Christ.

That's exactly how the revival at Sychar happens here in John 4. – Jesus awakens her conscience by exposing her sin and immorality (vv. 16-19). – And then He shows her Himself! – Image after image of the glory of Christ, the only Saviour for sinners:

- v. 1-15, Jesus our Living Water – refreshing your soul
- vv. 16-19, Jesus our Prophet – revealing your sin
- vv. 20-24, Jesus our Temple – relocating worship

Now for the climax & remainder of the story...

Stand, Read vv. 25-42 & Pray: often pray either 1:14,16, or 20:31...

Give title...

***THREE more IMAGES of our Lord – that you might believe His person & share His mission:**

1. vv. 25-30, Jesus the Messiah – Come & see the One who sees all.

v. 25 – Here Jesus had just taught on this radical shift in worship that was happening, as Christ Himself replaced the old temple. – But this was probably too much for this lady take in: ‘Jesus, what right, what authority, do You have to declare such things? That will be Messiah’s job one day when HE comes!’

v. 26 – Recall her earlier question in v. 12a (‘You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You?’) – Here’s her answer!

Lit., “I that speak to you, I AM.”

Jesus could *not* have said it more plainly. – Here is the one place in the Gospels, prior to Jesus’ final trial, where He openly admits that He is Messiah. – “I that speak to you, I AM.”

And to think that Christ did this in such a place (filthy Samaria) to such a woman? – What grace, what love & mercy for sinners, what a Saviour!...

WHERE did Jesus get this strong language from? – Exod. 3, the burning bush, God giving His covenant name to Moses, “I AM that I am. I AM is sending you.” – Here in John’s Gospel, we’ll soon see a whole string of these famous ‘I Am’ sayings of Jesus. – E.G.:

Jn. 8:24, “Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” – Jn. 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I am.” – The always existing, eternal Son of God.

No bolder claim to Deity could be made. – Only the God-man could dare say such a thing. – Only One who was the everlasting Word, now made flesh, the One who was with the Father from before time began, in His very bosom, equally God.

Repeat: v. 26...

v. 27a – Talk about bad timing, interrupting a worship service, these rude disciples!

v. 27b – I.e., ‘If it was us, instead of You Jesus, we would not have given her the time of day! Tired & weary from our journey, we would’ve ignored her. Proud of our Jewishness, we would have upheld every prejudice – toward Samaritans, toward the immoral, and toward women.’

+ The rabbis of the day would say, ‘Rather burn the sayings of the Law than teach them to women!’ –

~ Spurgeon: “My beloved Sisters, you owe much to the Gospel, for it is only by its agency that you are raised to your proper place.

...My Sisters, we do not think that you are *superior* to us, though some of you, perhaps, fancy so; but we are right glad to acknowledge your *equality* and to know that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female! Jesus has lifted you up to your true place, side by side with man!”

☒ Let's learn from TWO failures of these dull disciples. – *They failed to know themselves, and to know their Master.*

(a) They didn't understand their own sin & depravity in light of God's holiness. – They had too high a view of self, and too low a view of God. – Because if they did view themselves rightly, here's what *would've 'amazed/surprised' them most:*

'Not that Jesus talks to her, but that he talks to me!, let alone invite me & call me to be His disciple?!'

(b) These dull disciples still did not understand Jesus' person or His mission (like us too often). – This woman was not some interruption in Jesus' day or some obstacle to His journey. – She was the VERY reason He came, the very kind of sinners He would die for!...

These disciples would pull this same stunt later when Jesus invited children to come to Him and He sat them on His knee (Mk. 10). – The Pharisees showed this same arrogance when Jesus befriended tax collectors & sinners (Mk. 2:16; Lk. 15:2).

Jonah showed this same snobbery when God wanted to save wicked Assyrians in Nineveh. – And on & on we see this self-righteous attitude in Scripture, and in church history, and worst of all, in our own hearts.

☒ See, the wideness of God's mercy, the scope of His love, is scandalous. – When God saves people who are so different to us, it makes us uncomfortable.

Expect to be “amazed” when you see the kind of people Christ came to save. – Then, let's look in the mirror, and be even more amazed that He would save filthy me and you! (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15)...

v. 28a – Perhaps deliberate (for Jesus to drink; to return later & fetch when not in a hurry)? Perhaps accidental? – Either way, as she ran off, that water pot stood there as a monument to higher priorities, as a picture of a woman who was now 'seeking first God's kingdom'.

☒ Beloved, what water pots have you left behind, or do you still *need* to leave behind? – What monuments are standing there behind you as proof that you have answered Christ's call?

Remember when Jesus called, the disciples left their nets behind. – Levi Matthew left his job as a tax-collector.

To another man, Jesus said, 'Let the dead bury their dead – you, follow Me.' – When God saved Paul, he said, 'I count all things loss, as rubbish, for the sake of knowing Christ' (Php. 3)

Beloved, what have *you* left behind in your devotion to Christ? How has love for the Saviour *reordered* your priorities and *redefined* what's important to you?...

v. 28b – Now she's really lost it – preaching to the men, as a woman, and a defiled, immoral, outcast woman at that?! – When she saw her running towards them, the men must've wanted to bolt, lest their own wives see this!...

v. 29 – Ah, again the language of a true witness (cf. Jn. 1:46, from the lips of Philip), 'Come and see. Don't just take my word for it. Decide for yourself, firsthand, what Christ can do for you. You don't need elaborate arguments or eloquent speech. You need Him, the Saviour.'

'Come. You must decide – I cannot do it for you. I'm inviting you with me, but *you* must step out in faith & get moving. All I ask is that you 'Come to Christ, come & see'!

What progress she has made in one day! – Moments earlier, v. 25, she was sure that Messiah's coming was still future. – But now!:

v. 29c...

Telling the whole town, 'Come and see this Man, He could be the Christ, the long-awaited, promised One!'

NB, back in v. 16, Jesus told her to go & call her husband. – Instead, she calls all the men! – I wonder if any of her ex-husbands were in this crowd, or her current boyfriend?! – Didn't matter. – Nothing could stop her now.

☒ Out of the abundance of her heart, her mouth spoke. – 'We believe, therefore we speak', Scripture says. – 'We cannot stop speaking of what we have seen and heard', said the first Christians.

~ It's been said, 'Every Christian is either a missionary, or an imposter'. – To be saved is to go & tell others of this great Saviour.

☒ GOSPEL: My unsaved friend, if you don't want to 'come & see' Christ, then the day will come when you won't even be able to if you wanted to. – Instead of these gracious words of invitation, 'come & see', you will hear horrible words of condemnation: 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.'...

v. 30 – NB the tense John chooses here, v. 30b: Past continuous, vivid action, "were coming", flocking to this Stranger, streaming to this Man who had so transformed the most wicked woman in their village!...

But wait: Why did they listen to her, the 'Gomer' of their village? – What gave her credibility all of a sudden? – It must've been her obvious repentance:

v. 29b, i.e., 'I'm wrong, I'm immoral, I've been living in sin. And this Man saw straight through me. He confronted my sin, exposed my guilt, revealed my true, wretched self'

NB, the disciples had just been down to this city (v. 8). – They had know the Master much longer and better; yet all they brought back was food. – This woman had just met Jesus; but she goes down to this city and brings back people, souls seeking Christ!

☒ For how long have you known Christ? – Has He become too familiar to you? – Praise God for how new converts can rebuke us by their newfound enthusiasm & zeal for Christ!...

+ I love the way some of you are witnessing to lost friends & family! You just cannot keep quiet!...

...Do you believe Christ's person & share His mission?

2. vv. 31-38, Jesus the Son & the Sower – See the harvest!

v. 31 – ‘Teacher, you’ve had a very long day, aren’t you hungry? We went all the way into the city and got you takeaways. Dive in!’

v. 32 – I.e., ‘I’ve eaten already, I’m full, satisfied’ – BTW, has Jesus gotten a drink yet either? (v. 7)...

Here was another teachable moment that Jesus would not miss:

v. 33 – Just picture their puzzled faces as they looked around: ‘Hey, did we miss the picnic?’...

v. 34 – Here was the secret to Jesus’ strength, and the reason for the disciple’s weakness. – One of my favourite lines from our Lord in all the Gospels. – This was His heartbeat, here’s what made Jesus tick:

Deut. 8:3, “Man does not live by bread alone, but?...by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Cf. Matt. 4:4). – I.e., *What truly sustains life – the real bread & butter of life, is obeying My Father’s voice – hearing His Word & doing it.*

We’ll see this throughout John’s Gospel – this was Jesus’ true meat & drink, what satisfied & nourished Him more than any physical feast that the world’s best chefs could put together:

Jesus was the perfect Son, consumed with doing His Father’s will (5:36; 6:38; 8:29). – His works were His Father’s works (9:3-4; 10:25,32,37-38; 14:10; 17:4). – His word was His Father’s word. –

His will was His Father’s will. – His mission was His Father’s mission.

That’s why Jesus constantly refers to God the Father as “the One who sent Me”. – I.e., ‘I’m not just on another human errand, sent by some earthly authority. I’m on a divine mission, commissioned by the very King of Heaven.’ (5:23-24,30,37; *6:38-40; 7:16,18,28,33; 8:16,18,26,29; 9:4; 12:44-45,49; 13:20; 14:24; 16:5). –

You cannot understand Jesus unless you understand what energised Him most, what He lived for, *what He would die for*: to accomplish God's mission on earth. –

To win lost souls like religious Nicodemus, like this pagan woman at the well, like you when He saved you, like your lost friends & loved ones that are still to be reached.

Repeat: v. 34...

☒ Jesus is saying to the Twelve, and to us: 'You're thinking about your stomachs, I'm thinking about a lost soul. You're more burdened about hunger than about a harvest.'

'Your horizon doesn't extend beyond your next meal. I'm staring into eternity. I'm looking out on the masses of people headed down the broad road that leads to destruction, stepping into a Christless eternity....

'And I'm looking into the empty eyes and broken hearts of people like this woman at the well. She just traded in her waterpot for eternal life. She just drank for the first time of My living water, and she will *never* be the same.'

'This is what I'm busy with – God's will, God's mission. And you're still wondering, 'What's for lunch?'

Do you realise how superior this satisfaction is – being used of God to change lives for eternity and bring Him glory?!'...

~ A long-time missionary once said, "If there be happiness on earth, it is in labouring in the service of Christ."

☒ Beloved, what is your real food & drink, that makes life worth living? – Fathers, on this Father's Day, I ask you: What fuels your engines, fires your heart, gets you up early, keeps you up late? –

What do you speak about most, spend on most, dread losing the most? – What are you so 'into' that sometimes you forget to eat?!...

☒ Are you on *the 'Jesus Diet'*? – Feeding on what fed Jesus, sustained by what nourished your Master?...

I think many Christians today would find their spiritual (& even physical!) health improved if they were on the 'Jesus Diet', more busy doing the Lord's work! – I think some believers are weak and depressed because they've been eating the wrong food – they are malnourished Christians. –

They still think that the things of this world are what will satisfy. They've forgotten that Jesus alone offers living water, and that His food was to fulfil God's mission on this earth.

Too many Christians just drive to church, drive home, 1x a week, and sit around waiting for Jesus to return. – Then they wonder why their souls are still hungry, why they lack energy, motivation & joy in life?! – No wonder they are malnourished!...

Repeat: v. 34...

Do you believe in Christ's person & share in His mission?

Then Jesus explains this further...

v. 35 – Jesus is probably alluding here to a proverb of the day among farmers: I.e., 'Don't rush the harvest. A watched pot never boils. Give it time, be patient. You sow & plant, then it's a few months before you harvest. Good things come to him who waits.'

Always true in the natural realm. – NOT always true in the spiritual realm. – Especially not on that day in Samaria. – Cf. back to v. 30...

+ Just picture it – what a sight: Probably as Jesus was speaking, He may have looked out and seen the sunlight faces, or white garments, of the Samaritan people coming towards Him! –

Young and old, men & women, boys & girls, families, grannies & grandpas, streaming to meet this Man whom this woman could not stop talking about...

Repeat: v. 35b...

☒ Christ is saying to His disciples and to us: 'Don't you see it? Lift up your eyes. Lift them up from earthly agendas and selfish concerns. Stop seeing the world the way the world sees the world. Start seeing the world the way Jesus sees it.'

Want a great test to know if you are seeing the world the way Jesus sees it? – How is your burden for missions & your heart for evangelism? – How central is soul-winning in your prayers and your priorities?...

+ Are you ready for this? – There are some churches where people are actually afraid of the harvest. – They love being in the barn, i.e., the church, they love its doors, its rafters, the owl, the hay, the smell, the tractor, the cows, the memories, the familiar faces, the friends, etc. –

They love church life. – But when harvest time comes and new people start showing up?! – 'Hey, what are they doing here? Who are they?!'...

I.e., they forgot the whole reason that the barn, i.e, the church, exists! – Repeat: v. 35...

Do you believe in Christ's person & share in His mission?

v. 36 – Listen to what the prophet Amos said would happen when Messiah comes: Amos 9:13, 'The days are coming, declares the LORD, when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughmen and the planter by the one treading grapes.' –

The coming of Christ would be the dawning of a new age. – The power of Christ would bring times of abundance & prosperity. –

+ Just picture what Jesus is describing here (in v. 36): A time when the guy plowing will look over and see the reaper harvesting right next to him! – No delay between sowing &

reaping. No delay between preaching and conversions. – Gospel seed planted, new converts harvested.

Like what just happened with the woman at the well. – Like what happens all over the Book of Acts. – Power of the Gospel on display! – Now that Messiah had died & risen & ascended, now that His Spirit had been poured out at Pentecost!...

☒ Please realise: Much of church history & missions' history is NOT like this! – Often it is a season of long sowing and little reaping. – Ask Judson, Carey, Taylor, Moffat, Livingstone, et.al.

Much patience and perseverance are still required.

Which is *all the more reason* for what Jesus says here:
SEIZE the opportunity when reaping time comes, when we see low-hanging fruit, ripe for the picking! – Carpe Deim!

It may not always be that way, so we walk through those gospel doors when the Lord opens them (those 'women at the well' that He puts across our path). – We must all be faithful witnesses, wherever the Lord puts us, no matter how meagre the results. –

HOWEVER: We must also scan the waters for where the fishing is best, for where the Lord may especially be calling us to cast our nets (individually, or as a church).

☒ I'm praying the Lord would even use this feeble sermon to call some of you into full-time gospel ministry of some kind!...

v. 36d, there is no greater joy than this – seeing people saved for all eternity, and seeing lives transformed by the gospel!...

+ But few things in life are more tragic than wasted opportunity. – In July of 1863, during America's great Civil War, the armies of the North & South met for battle at Gettysburg. –

On the 4th day of battle, the tide began to turn against General Lee and the Confederate/ Southern forces. – Lee's troops were backed up against the Potomac river, which was swollen with rain. He was trapped, and the Northern troops had them.

However, General Meade, leader of the Union/Northern armies, hesitated. – He delayed, held a council, then delayed further. – Eventually, the Potomac river subsided, and Lee's troops escaped. –

Meade had missed his golden opportunity. – He could've ended the war right there. – Instead, the Civil War continued by two more years, full of bloodshed and heartache. – All because of a man who would not seize the moment.

☒ Christian, don't let that be you. – Church family, may this never be true of us. – Repeat: v. 35...

~ Farmers' motto, 'Reap or rot, reap or rot!' (+ WWI, when crops left unharvested & rotting b/c men called up urgently to battle)...

☒ Where are the white harvest fields most urgently needing reapers? – Most in danger of rotting if we don't go?! – Not a time of panic or impulsiveness, but for determined obedience and sacrifice, and for fervent prayer.

☒ In my 15 years of ministry and in South Africa, I've never seen the kinds of opportunities the Lord is giving us here at Antioch...

COME to Bible Hour to hear more & pray together...

~ Quote stuck on my picture of our new building: "A church should be measured more by its *sending capacity* than its seating capacity." (repeat 4:35...)

Do you believe in Christ's person & share in His mission?

vv. 37-38 – 'We owe a tremendous debt to those who've gone before. Realise all that it took for us to enjoy the spiritual opportunities and privileges we have today.'

Not only Jesus' sowing into the woman at the well, which the disciples would now reap the benefits of. – But also: OT prophets – Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, et.al., pointing the way to Messiah who would come, giving us the precious gift of the OT.

And John the Baptist, preparing the way for the Lord. – Preaching out in the hot desert, pleading with lost sinners, calling them to repentance, baptising them in the Jordan.

Repeat: vv. 37b-38....

(And what about Acts 8, when Philip's preaching would see revival in Samaria, some 4-5 yrs after this? Further reaping from the work of Jesus and this woman at the well?...)

☒ What about today? – God's mission didn't begin with us. – And it won't end with us, unless Christ returns. – Someone ran hard before us and handed us the baton: godly parents & grandparents; faithful pastors, Sunday School teachers, disciplers, mentors. -

Then look further back at church history: Brave martyrs spilt their blood for us. – Bold apologists and careful theologians defended and articulated the faith for us. –

Devoted missionaries brought the gospel to our lands. – Earnest church planters established the first congregations. – Diligent authors wrote the books we devour. – Skilled musicians and poets wrote the songs we sing.

On, and on, and on, the faithful kept sowing, so that we might reap:
Repeat: vv. 37b, 38b...

☒ How humbled, how grateful we should be. – And how willing we should be to sow, even if we don't get to reap but only others after us. – No matter, keep sowing! – As long as there is a harvest, and God is glorified!...

+ In 1527 in Germany, as fruit of the Protestant Reformation, a man named Leonard Keyser was burned at the stake. – Before they lit the flames, Keyser looked out on the crowd and exclaimed, "Behold the harvest! O Master, send forth Thy labourers."

Do you believe in Christ's person & share in His mission?

3. vv. 39-42, Jesus the Saviour of the World – See the Saviour at work!

v. 39 – Many were saved. – Many were turned from that dark path leading to the City of Destruction. – They were put on the bright road that leads to the Celestial City. – HOW?

v. 39b – All because of one lady's witness, the last person they'd ever expected. – She went to Jacob's well an adulteress, searching for water. – She returned a new creation!, forgiven & repentant, (v. 15) with a well of water inside of her springing up to eternal life.

~ Origen: She became the 'Apostle to the Samaritans'.

But wait: Where did she go to Bible school? – What degree did she have? – Was she ordained or qualified?! ☺ ...

☒ My fellow witnesses: What an incentive to evangelism – that Christ would use the simple words of a rejected woman to win a whole city to Christ! –

That God would use one conversation at a well, when a weary traveller (Jesus) chose to deny Himself and reach out to this needy woman. – That one conversation sparked a chain reaction that converted a whole city!...

If God can do that, what might He do through you?! – As Jesus tells us, one tiny mustard seed of gospel witness can grow into a mighty tree that all the birds of the air, the nations of the world, come to rest in (Mk. 4)!

☒ *The gospel comes to us in order that it might spread through us, not stop with us!* – The gospel is personal, but it is NOT private!

v. 40 – Here is the heart of every new believer: You want to be with Christ, go where He goes, stay where He stays. –

+ Mark 5, like the Gerasene demoniac who roamed the tombs, once he was delivered & healed ('clothed & in his right mind'): 'Jesus, can I go with you back across the lake, please?!'

NB, v. 40c, Jesus stayed where? – There?!, among them?!...

For Jesus to defy social custom like this would've been like a white man eating in a black home in Mississippi in the 1950s, or in Soweto in the 1980s. –

Shocking, difficult, and dangerous. – But are you surprised? – Jesus always cares more about people than custom, about saving the lost more than preserving prejudice.

v. 41 – An even more powerful witness than the woman at the well: Christ Himself, the living Word, evangelised them. – Imagine: 'Who led you to Christ? Ummm, Christ Himself.'

NB, 2x now, vv. 39b, 41, “they believed...because of the word” – As we heard from AI last Sun. PM in Jam. 1:18, we are regenerated through?...“the word of truth”. –

For people to be saved, we must open our mouths and witness to them. – There is NO other way! –

And when we do speak this gospel word, it has a power beyond our wildest imagination. – Rom. 10:17, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

v. 42 – NB, this was not the kind of Saviour any one wanted. – The Jews wanted a saviour of the Jews. – The Samaritans wanted a saviour of the Samaritans. – The Greeks wanted their own saviour, as did the Romans. – People today want a saviour from sickness, from poverty, from all troubles in life.

But instead, different from that, better than that, greater than that, God shows us the true Christ: v. 42c...

Isa. 43:11, “I, even I, am the LORD and there is no saviour besides Me. – Isa. 45:22, “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth.”

1 John 4:14, “We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

~ Recent testimony of one converted Jewish lady, ‘If Jesus is the Christ *at all*, then He is the Christ FOR all.’

☒ Beloved, can you share in the gladness of these Samaritans on that day? – Have you heard God’s Word and responded in repentance & faith? – What these new converts said to their spiritual mother, the woman at the well – is it also your story to tell to whomever brought you the gospel: repeat v. 42...

Do you know Him, not only as the Saviour of “the world”, or the Saviour of your friends & loved ones; but as YOUR Saviour & Lord’?!...

CONCL. – Repeat 3 points...

Do you believe in Christ’s person & share in His mission?

NOTHING is more delicious in life than this: Just in the past week, I’ve seen God at work saving souls. – Getting to give the gospel to lost people, hearing people admit that their lost & need salvation, seeing them make tough choices to follow Christ. – No greater joy!...

Hearing just on Friday of how one of our Monash students led her sister to Christ in the past few weeks – through sharing what she was learning from our Romans Bible study, and other gospel material. – Her sister said to her, ‘What if I had died thinking I was saved? Thank You for telling me about true salvation!...’

Hearing last night of how Telda’s mom, in her 70s, a very moral & decent & sweet lady from Durban that they’ve prayed for and witnessed to for years – how last year her Mom came to faith in Christ! – One key: ‘Look at the love these Christians show – for one another, and for the world’, esp. Chris Wooley’s adoption story...

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. (v. 34) What other foods do we tend to feed on? What does this 'Jesus diet' really look like for the average member, in the workplace, as a mom, etc.? What 'waterpots' are you still lugging around and need to leave behind?
2. v. 35, what things tend to steal our sense of urgency and lull us into lethargy about the harvest (creating spiritual procrastination)?
3. vv. 35b-36, where are areas that are RIPE for harvest today? Which crops are most in danger of rotting, or ripe fruit spoiling? (cf. Matt. 9:36-38)