

Our Father in heaven, we pray
you would send help from the sanctuary to illumine this word
and to move our hearts, oh God, with concern for lost sinners
across this world. This morning you would save lost
sinners here and build up the saved sinners, oh God, of which
we are by your grace and mercy. We might run and not be weary
and walk and not be faint in your ways. For Jesus' sake we
pray, amen. Please take your seats. If you
would turn with me in your copy of the Word of God to John's
Gospel chapter 4, we're going to jump into the middle
of the conversation that Christ was having with this woman. Verse 25, this is the
Word of

God. Please take heed how you hear.

The woman said to Jesus, I know the Messiah is coming. He who
is called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us
all things. Jesus said to her, I speak to
you, I'm he. Just then, his disciples came
back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no
one said, what do you seek or why are you talking with her?
Remember, in those days, it was forbidden for a Jewish man to
speak even to his own wife in public, let alone a Jewish woman
or even a Samaritan woman. with whom the Jews were estranged.
So the woman left her jar, her water jar, and went away into
town and said to people, come and see a man who told me all
that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? They
went out of the town and were coming to him. Meanwhile, the
disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said to them,
I have food to eat that you do not know about. So the disciples
said to one another, has anyone brought him something to eat?
Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent
me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say there are yet
four months, then comes the harvest? Look, I tell you, lift up your
eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already
the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for
eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.
For here the saying holds true. One sows, another reaps. I sent
you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored,
and you've entered into their labor. Many Samaritans from that
town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He
told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans came to
him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two
days. And many more believed because of his word. They said
to the woman, it is no longer because of what you said that
we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that
this is indeed the Savior of the world. After the two days,
he departed for Galilee, For Jesus himself had testified that
a prophet is no honor in his own hometown. So when he came
to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he
had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone
to the feast. Amen. The grass withers and the

flower falls off, but the word of God endures forever. I wonder how you're doing spiritually this morning. Well, there are many ways you could measure that question or answer that question, you could think about your Bible reading. Do you enjoy reading the Bible? Are you reading the Bible more today than you were last year? You can think about your prayer life. You could ask about, do you enjoy praying? What are your habits of prayer? We could ask, too, about your battle against sin. Are you knowing more help of God conquering sin this year than last year? There are many similar questions we could ask. We could ask, do you long to be in heaven? Does the thought of going to heaven excite you? What is it about heaven that excites you? Is it meeting Christ? Or is it playing golf forever on celestial Augusta National Parks where the azaleas always bloom? We could also ask this morning about your heart for the lost. There are a few questions that get to the heart of the soul better than that. Do you have any concern for the billions of souls in this world who do not yet know Christ and are heading for a lost eternity? Every second, two people in this planet die, they say. As fast as I can click my fingers, souls leave this planet for eternity. By the time I finish this sermon, 4,100 souls will have entered eternity, and most of them will be lost forever. Does that thought bother you? Does it bother you enough to pray for them? Are you praying for the lost that you know, your neighbors around your house, your friends and your family? Does it bother you enough to give money to support the work of the gospels in this world, to tithe to this church, and perhaps to give above and beyond your tithe that the gospel will go forward? It's amazing how I can find money to buy stuff I want for myself. Maybe a new rifle or a new car or something that I want for myself. And if I try to figure out ways, how can I save \$50 here, 100 bucks there, and find the money? But I have to say, to my shame, I don't have that thought about how can I give more than I already give to see the cause of Christ spread across this world. Are you willing to go? Are you willing to encourage your sons and daughters to go and be missionaries in this world? We just sang it in the last hymn. Send your sons. Give your sons. Give your wealth to support them. Our concern for the lost is revealing because it reveals the appalling selfishness that grips our hearts, yours and mine. Sin, and I apologize for yet another cockroach illustration, but sin makes our hearts like a dead cockroach. The legs always curl in when the cockroach dies. And when our souls wither and die spiritually, all of our thoughts, all of our desires, all of our affections curl inwards, selfwards. Well, this morning in our text, we see the gospel conquer a city, the city of Sychar, near the well of Jacob, a city full of Samaritans. And you remember

there was enormous animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. And even though Christ shared none of that animosity, he was very blunt about this woman's religion. There was no truth in her religion. There was no salvation in her religion. Salvation is from the Jews. You worship what you do not know. Jesus said to her, this is a time born for a lost eternity. But all that was about to change. Christ was coming to this time. The gospel was coming to this time. Salvation was coming to this time. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the gospel came to our city? If salvation came to our city, if we saw a revival come to Columbia, how would that happen? How would God go about bringing the gospel to Columbia? And we see in our text this morning three principles, three things that must happen if the gospel is ever going to conquer any place on this earth. And two of them are not in doubt, only the third is. First of all, God must be at work, and he is. Secondly, the word must be at work, and it is. But thirdly, you must be at work. Are you? That's the question. Let's look at these together this morning. First of all, God must be at work, and he is. Jesus says in verse 34, my food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Now remember, Christ has been walking for a day and a half. He's exhausted, he's dog tired. He sits down by the well. His disciples go off into Samaria, into the Sychar, presumably at his command, to get some food. They're looking for anything, like a 7-Eleven, preferably a Chick-fil-A, even a McDonald's would do, right. You're always glad to come off the interstate and find a Chick-fil-A there. when you're hungry. And they come back, and they've got bags of food. It's hot, and it's ready. But Jesus has a different dinner in his mind. He's standing up. He's looking out away from this well. And the disciples are going, Master, get it while it's hot. There's nothing worse than cold waffle fries from Chick-fil-A. Get them when they're hot and crispy. And Jesus says, no, my food and my drink is to do the will of him who sent me. He can already see the town of Sychar coming out, middle heat of the day. They've heard the message of this woman, the greatest sinner in the town. Christ saved the worst, and now he's going to save the rest. He said to them, come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. And it wasn't pretty, but he told it to me, and he saved me, was the message. And the town were coming out in their droves, dressed in their white cotton like a cotton field, ready for harvest. I think that's where Christ is getting the metaphor from. And they're coming out to him over the hills. And Jesus says, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. That's interesting. Saving sinners isn't just the work of Christ, it's the work of the Father. And just like the children's sermon this morning, we often think of the father as kind of a little bit reluctant, a lot

bit angry in heaven, like full of wrath and fury. And to an extent he is. The psalmist

says, who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has known the anger of the Lord? Who has known his fury? He, God, is furious with this world for despising his son. And the son is furious with this world for despising his father. But there are layers to the heart of God that are deeper than his anger, which is just and right and true. He also loves this world and he's concerned for it. Otherwise, he would never have sent his son into the world to do his work, which is the salvation of sinners. Like I would never send my son, one of my sons of three, I'd never send my Benjamin, my Josiah, my Samuel to Ukraine to fight. They aren't my people. It's not my fight. And frankly, I love my sons more than I love the people of Ukraine. I wouldn't want them to waste their blood there. But God sent his son into this world, and he did so with all of his heart to seek out sinners. and to bring them back to God.

He sent him here this morning. Jesus is here by his spirit. For you this morning, if you hear a visitor or maybe a member of this church, you've never come to him for salvation. Jesus is here and he offers himself to you. He's seeking you out. He wants to bring you home to God. Listen to Spurgeon describe the Father. It is peculiarly pleasing to the Christian to observe the interest which God the Father takes in the work of salvation. In our earlier days of childhood in grace, we conceived the idea that God the Father was only made propitious to us through the atonement of Christ, that Jesus was the Savior, and that the Father was rather an austere judge than a tender friend. But since then, we have learned the Father through the Son, for it was not possible we could come unto the Father except through Jesus. But now, having seen Christ, we have seen the Father also, and from henceforth we know both the Father and the Son. We have felt the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts. It's always refreshing then to the enlightened Christian to call to mind the intense interest which the Father takes in the work of salvation. Here you find in this verse, it's three times hinted at, salvation work is called the Father's will. It's not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish, but more, it is will that has chosen the blood-bought ones of Christ should every one of them be redeemed from the ruins of the fall and brought safely home to their Father's house. Note again, we're told that Jesus was sent of the Father and by the Father. Here again, you see the Father's interest. It is true that Jesus rent himself away from the glories of heaven, from the felicities of the blessedness and the glories of the worship of angels. And he voluntarily descended to the scorn, the shame, and the spitting of this lower world. But yet his father had a part therein. He gave up his

only begotten son. He withheld not the darling of his bosom, but sent away his well-beloved and sent him down with messages of love to man. Jesus Christ comes willingly. but he comes by his father's appointment and sending. Let us look then, Spurgeon says,

with eyes of delight to our reconciled God and Father. Our Lord, our God, thou art not an angry one. Thou art not an austere ruler. Thou art not merely the judge, but thou art the grand patriarch of thy people. Thou art their great friend.

Thou lovest them better than thou lovest thy son. I would never dare say that, but it's Spurgeon. Thou lovest them better than thou lovest thy son, for thou didst send him down to suffer and to die, that thou mightest bring thy children home. Glory be to God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Spirit from this day forth, and hence, Spurgeon says. The father's heart sent his son to do his work. So the father's at work, and we could say more, but we need to move on. But the word, so the God is at work, and he is, and the word must also be at work, and it is. Notice how the stress in the end of the passage falls on what they heard. Verse 39, many Samaritans from that time believed in him because of that woman's testimony. He told me all that I ever did.

So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed, why? Because of his word. They said to the woman, it is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the savior of the world. It was the word of Christ that did the work. That shouldn't surprise us. His word made the cosmos. His word sustains the universe. He opposed the universe, the writer of the Hebrew says, by the word of his power. For by the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth, all their host, the psalmist says. He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast. What a powerful word we have in this Bible. It contains the very word of God, the most powerful creative force in the universe. He speaks to the darkness, let there be light, and there is light. He speaks to the emptiness, let there be a heavens and an earth full of teeming living creatures, and the emptiness is banished in a moment. You can speak to a hard, unconverted soul and say, let there be faith. For faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. And immediately the unbelief is gone. And a new life grips that soul because of the power of his word. So for a town to be saved, God must be at work, and he is. And the word must be at work, and it is. When we share the gospel, we've got to get the Bible out there as quickly as possible. Your words are the words of a worm. If you don't believe that, go into the graveyard and speak. I command thee, rise from the dead. Do it by yourself or they'll

lock you up and put you in a dark room, but see what happens. Nothing will happen. But when

Christ comes back and says, I am the resurrection and the life, graves, disgorge thyself of every human being, what a rattling and a rumbling there'll be as all the boons come back together again and the dead rise again." Get the Word of God out there quickly in the conversation. And if even that frightens you, just a testimony. Come to church on Sunday and meet a man who told me everything I ever did, and took away the shame, clothed me in his righteousness, and saved me by his own death. God must be at work, and he is.

The word must be at work, and it is. But thirdly, you must be at work. Are you? Now our text, we need

to be quick here, exposes three great impediments to your working in the gospel. First of all, spiritual dullness.

Spiritual dullness. When the disciples come back with their food, the bags full of, oh, Chick-fil-A's wonderfulness, and they come back to Jesus, they urge him to eat. He said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. And the disciples think, somebody

else must have gone to the 7-Eleven first and brought him some food back. They have no concept of what

he's speaking about. Their minds are blind to it, their hearts are dull to it. They think he's speaking of earthly food because they're blind to the spiritual realities of a lost world needing to be saved. And aren't we so often the same?

We go about our business and all we think about is this world, where we work, where we live, where we work out, where we play, our hobbies. We think about who's gonna win the Masters. How many of us think about who can win their souls? Spiritual dullness.

Secondly,

spiritual delay. Verse 35, Jesus says, do not

say there are yet four months and then comes the harvest. But I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields. They're white for harvest. Isn't that so often true? We

think we can do it tomorrow. Well, share the gospel with that person tomorrow. When I was a child, mom called me manana, tomorrow. She said, Neil, tomorrow never

comes. It's always coming, never arriving, tomorrow. And God forgive us. Now, we have to have grace and tact, right? You can't be too weird about it. It's always weird sharing the

gospel, but you have to be wise and wait for an opportunity, but if you're always waiting and never speaking, how will they hear? The harvest is today, Jesus says.

Be praying, Lord, open up an opportunity. I remember once, I need to be quick, when I was a medical student, I told this to the Wednesday crowd one lunchtime, but I was convicted, I was actually a physician, pediatrics, and I was working in the NICU, and I was convicted I wasn't sharing the gospel. And so then I would

fast and pray that God would give me an opportunity to share the gospel. And I did that. The problem was the best opportunity to share the gospel was at lunch in the doctor's room. I couldn't do that. I couldn't be sitting fasting.

What are you doing? I'm fasting. Why are you fasting? Because I want to share the gospel with you heathen. That wouldn't go down very well. And so I went into one of the doctor's bedrooms at NICU to pray that God would send an opportunity for me to share the gospel. I'm praying, thinking this is not working very well, but I'm praying. And there's a knock at the door. And the Indian doctor, one of the Indian registrars walks in, looks at me, reading my Bible. I'm really sorry, he says. I said, no, it's okay. He said, no, I want to use the restroom. I'll go to the next door. I said, no, come on in here. I'm fine. Go into the en suite. So he goes into the en suite, uses the restroom, comes out. He's walking past. He stops, looks at me and says, is that a Bible you're reading? I said, it is, aye. He said, I've been reading the Bible recently. It doesn't make any sense to me. Can you explain to me the message of the Bible? I said, there's a God in heaven. I told him, oh, the Bible is a great book. It's a book about God. It's one message in three words. God saves sinners. And we're off to the races. Spiritual dullness, spiritual delay. Thirdly, spiritual discouragement. Verse 37 and 38, for in this case the saying is true, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. Sometimes God will call you to a sowing ministry and not a reaping ministry, and it can be very discouraging. You're sharing the gospel. You never see anyone saved. Very few people have been saved through my direct effort at sharing the gospel. That doesn't mean those efforts are doing no good. I could tell you about William Carey, I could tell you about Adenarm Judson, it's in the notes, no time to go there, but they spent six and seven years between them, sowing the menace, sowing the seed, losing a son, William Carey, losing two children, Adenarm Judson. William Carey's wife went crazy and was bedridden with mental illness for many years during that time. Adenarm Judson's wife was very sick, he was very sick, and they labored for six and seven years and didn't see a single convert. People stopped supporting William Carey back in Britain because he wasn't seeing any fruit for his labor. Had to work in an indigo factory to earn money to share the gospel, but he kept doing it, translating the gospel, making a printing press and type to translate the gospel into the various languages out in India. Afar consumed it all, destroyed years of labor, burned up his dictionaries, his grammar books, and all of his Hebrew Greek literature, his New Testament he'd been translating for years, destroyed in a fire. But he kept laboring, kept sowing, because if you don't sow, you'll never reap. And after years of sowing, the

harvest came. We need to be sowing the gospel into the lives of our children, praying for opportunity to sow the gospel into the lives of our neighbors. I leave you this morning with two visions for the Christian life, and I want you to ask which one is yours. First of all, the heart of a missionary. This was written by John Venn. who was a rector in 1805. With the world under his feet, with heaven in his eye, With the gospel in his hand and Christ in his heart, he pleads as an ambassador for God, knowing nothing but Jesus Christ, enjoying nothing but the conversion of sinners, hoping for nothing but the promotion of the kingdom of Christ, and glorying in nothing but the cross of Jesus Christ, Jesus by which he is crucified to the world and the world to him. That's vision number one. Vision number two comes from Don Carson. I would like to buy about \$3 worth of the gospel, please. Not too much, just enough to make me happy, but not so much that I get addicted. I don't want so much gospel that I learn to really hate covetousness and lust. I certainly don't want so much that I start to love my enemies, cherish self-denial, and contemplate missionary service in some alien culture. I want ecstasy, not repentance. I want transcendence, not transformation. I would like to be cherished by some nice, forgiving, broad-minded people, but I myself don't want to love those from different races, especially if they smell. I would like enough gospel to make my family secure and my children well-behaved, amen, but not so much that I find my ambitions redirected or my giving too greatly enlarged. Oh, I would like about \$3 worth of the gospel, please. Oh, my brothers and sisters, I must let you get to Sunday school, but There's a city to save and a world to reach with the gospel. God is at work. He is. The word is at work. It is. You must also be at work. Are you? What a savior we have. What a message we have. What a gospel we have. Oh, my brothers and sisters, pray that God will change your heart. Pray that God will open doors for you to speak, and perhaps even for you to go, or your children, or your grandchildren, to pour out their lives serving Jesus. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for your word. It's convicting, oh God, it cuts us all. Draw near to us, oh God, and bless us as we take these things to heart. In Jesus' name, amen.