

SENSITIVITY TO GOD'S BIDDING

(Explaining How Jesus Knew What To Do Before Facing Palm Sunday And The Cross)
John 4:43-45 and Matthew 21:1-11 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

As our text in John 4:43-45 begins, we read “after two days.” What two days was John writing about? They were two days with the Samaritans in the town of Sychar because they asked Jesus to stay with them and teach them. Why did Jesus do that? He was sensitive to the will of His Father in heaven. He knew those Samaritans were people He came into the world to die for. Those were two days of intense instruction from Jesus and many of the Samaritans came to know Him personally, in their hearts. John 4:41-42 tells us “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.” So, after these amazing two days, Jesus departed for Galilee. Galilee was Jesus’ original destination. We read in John 4:3, “Jesus left Judaea and departed again for Galilee.” Jesus was walking northwest to Cana of Galilee again, having proved to His disciples what the Samaritans confessed to Him, that “He was indeed the Savior of the world.” Jesus was not just out to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He came to save the world, as He told Nicodemus in John 3:16.

As soon as John wrote about Jesus going on to Galilee from Sychar, we read almost parenthetically, in verse 44, “For Jesus Himself had testified that “a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.” Did Jesus go to Galilee to prove that? Hardly! That proverb is another way of saying, “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Or “Man’s corruption is proved by him never valuing what he’s familiar with.” The idea is “to be an expert, you have to come from out of town.” This statement John remembered Jesus speaking, and it was recorded by Matthew in Matthew 13:57. “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.” The Greek word for country or hometown is the same word, “**patris.**” **Patris**, coming from the word for father, **pater**, means fatherland, native-land or native town. Jesus was not speaking of His birthplace in Bethlehem, but he was speaking of the country He grew up in—Galilee, and his hometown, Nazareth. **Patris** is used of Jesus’ country of Galilee and especially of His hometown, Nazareth 6 times in the Gospel records. In Nazareth, Jesus preached one sermon after which they tried to kill Him to death. No honor doesn’t mean “no honor at all, anywhere. There were exceptions, but the exceptions prove the rule.

Jesus knew He must go to Galilee through Samaria, to do His Father’s bidding. Jesus knew there is a time for everything. He followed His Father’s will always and was ever sensitive to His Father’s bidding. He kept in step both with His Father’s bidding and His Father’s timing. When Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem came, the timing was right—the hour came. Many events happened first before Palm Sunday happened. The triumphal entry was the gateway to the cross of Calvary. In our text and its context, there are five times that stand out which Jesus observed in obedience to His Father’s will. As Jesus’ disciples we must observe these same five times ourselves, if we are to obey the Father’s will. What are they?

TIME TO GET ALONE WITH GOD IN THE FACE OF DEEP GRIEF, BUT ALSO TIME TO GO ON SERVING HIM IN SPITE OF OUR GRIEF. (III.)

Notice Matthew 14:1-13. This is a flash back of Herod the tetrarch, after putting John the Baptist in prison and beheading him. What a time of deep sadness this was for Jesus, leading him to go and get alone by Himself with His Father. There are such times when we need to do the same. Listen as I read this story to us. “At that time, Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.” For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had been saying to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus. Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by Himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed Him on foot from the towns.”

Jesus' trip into northeastern Judaea, then into Samaria, and then going into Galilee, followed this awful time of intense grief for Jesus, after John the Baptist, the friend of the Bridegroom, Jesus' forerunner, was beheaded. No doubt, Jesus knew well, that John's death preceding His death, would come in a few short years. Jesus knew as you and I need to know, that deep grief needs to be talked over with the Father. There are times when we have to get alone with God, away from the crowds, and completely alone to pour out our souls to our Father in heaven as Jesus did. Jesus went to a desolate place. The word for desolate or desert place is **eremos**. It means lonesome, solitary, where no one else is. Sixty-one times in the Bible, God speaks about us getting alone with Him, and deep grief is one of those times when we need God's “reboot” of grace. Time alone with God is a jumpstart for us to go on, as God gives us new breath and breathes new life and hope into our crushed and broken spirits. God wants to weave our deep grief and sadness into His bigger story for our lives. After this time alone, we must go one serving Him.

Dr. Ben Haden in Chattanooga, Tennessee, served the First Presbyterian Church from 1968 to 1999. That great man of God had a music director named Glenn Draper who told his church about sitting beside a man on a plane who told him, “My wife and I have been mourning the loss of our two children, age 3 and 5. They both got very ill and died 17 years ago. We have been paralyzed with grief ever since, until a couple months ago. I had a dream that our doorbell rang. When I went to the door, my two children were standing there drenched with rain. I asked them, “Where are your yellow raincoats?” One of the children said, “Dad, we are in heaven, and it's not raining here. We are happy but we are drenched with your

tears.” The man woke up and told his wife. I had a strange dream, and she said, “So did I.” When they compared their dreams, they realized God was speaking to them because their dreams were identical. After 17 years, that couple finally quit mourning the loss of their two children and started anew to serve the Lord. 2ndly,

TIME TO REJOICE IN SERVICE TO GOD WHEN HE PROVIDES US A REFUGE FROM OUR STORMS AND PREVENTS PREMATURE CRISES.

(II.) Notice John 4:3-4, “Jesus left Judaea and departed again for Galilee.” And He had to pass through Samaria. Also, see our text in John 4:43. “After the two days (that Jesus spent in Samaria at Sychar) He departed for Galilee.” Jesus’ hour to be crucified had not yet come. This time He must not welcome a premature crisis. When we first read the parenthetical word in John 4:44, “For Jesus Himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown,” we know Jesus never wanted a premature crisis in Jerusalem, so He left for Galilee. Galilee wasn’t home free for Jesus. Jesus knew what would happen in Nazareth, as they would try to kill Him by pushing Him over a cliff after He preached to them from Isaiah chapter 61.

Jesus didn’t go to Nazareth first, but to Cana in Galilee, where earlier Jesus had enjoyed a good reception when He turned the water into wine. John 4:45 tells us, “So when Jesus came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him, having seen all He had done in Jerusalem at the Feast. For they too had gone to the Feast.” Jesus was given by His Father a refuge in Cana, a refuge from the storm. Going to Galilee was for Jesus, an immediate relief from an almost certain collision with the Jerusalem religious leaders. The appropriate time for Jesus’ death had not yet come, when Jesus would lay down His life for us on the cross. We read in John 4:46, in our next text, that Jesus arrived in Cana in Galilee where He had turned the water into wine.” The Galileans in Cana treated Jesus differently from what Jesus would soon face in Nazareth. They were glad that Jesus had arrived there. Jesus must have welcomed that break from persecution in Cana. All of us as believers face attacks, bitter words and actions, and attempts to stop our ministries, Yet, there are times when we realize God is providing a haven for us in the midst of hostility. In Judaea, Jesus found a house of refuge in Bethany, just outside Jerusalem in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. There have been times in ministry when God has timed a vacation for us as a family that has come at a strategically important time. And there have been times when miraculously God has intervened and brought His peace right in the eye of a storm. Yes, there are times to get alone with God in the face of deep grief. Yet there are times to go on serving God when He arranges for us and provides for us times of refuge, havens in our storms. Thirdly,

TIME TO KEEP SERVING GOD IN PLACES WE ARE NOT HONORED.

(III.) Notice our text in John 4:43-44. “After the two days (in Sychar) Jesus departed for Galilee. For Jesus Himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.” Most of us will have to face the truth that not all people will speak well of us, as Jesus said, “Watch out if they do.” (Luke 6:26) Turn with me to Luke 4:14-30, as we see Jesus left Cana to walk 12 miles north to Nazareth where He grew up. After that time of refuge, hear carefully to the dishonor Jesus received. Paul prophesied in II Timothy 3: 12, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in

Christ will be persecuted.” Paul added in II Corinthians 4:7-11, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death/and dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

As you can see from what Paul is saying is that there are times when we keep on serving God when we are dishonored, disrespected, and when even people professing to know Jesus wish us harm and wish us to resign, retire, or die soon. But we just learned that Jesus when it was not His time to face the cross, withdrew from Judaea to go to Galilee through Samaria. Yet after a great start in Galilee, Jesus left Cana, and having left Jerusalem, seemed after entering Nazareth, to be going from “the frying pan into the fire.” You may ask as I have asked the Lord, “When is the time to move on, and when is the time to stay?” I declare to you and testify to you that there is no standard answer, for God alone by His Holy Spirit, will show each of us when such times come. When Jesus withdrew/or departed from Jerusalem and Judaea to go to Galilee, the Greek word for withdraw means to leave a space or place for another behind us. The word is **anachoreo** which means to withdraw oneself, give place, recede, retire, or make room for another. When Jesus stayed in Sychar, the Greek word for stay is **emmeno**. Emmeno means to stay in the same place, to tarry there, to persevere. Jesus knew He could only stay—emmeno two days in Sychar. Emmeno not only means to remain in one place, but to persevere in faith, to hold fast, to stay true, and to abide in the Lord. As men and women of God, we can judge how long or how short people stay some place God sends us, but that is a matter of the Lordship of Christ. What is always the case however, is that we must emmeno—remain and hold fast to the Lord. In Acts 14:22, we are exhorted to continue—emmeno in the faith. In Galatians 3: 10, we are told we are cursed if we refuse to emmeno/continue in the faith. And in Hebrews 8:9, we are told that the Israelites in the wilderness did not emmeno—continue in God’s covenant. God will lead some of us to stay in a place He brings us to for a long time, while others of us may be released after a short time. Yet all of us must remain/persevere in the faith, which relates to our fourth time. Fourthly,

TIME TO KEEP ON CALLING THE LOST TO BELIEVE IN JESUS. (IV.)

Notice Mark 1:14-15. We read, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel. There is never a time when God releases us from calling the lost to believe. In Cana of Galilee, what happened to the nobleman or the official’s son? Jesus healed him and we read in John 4:50 that “The man believed the Word that Jesus spoke to Him.” Back in Sychar, we read in John 4:42 that many believed in Jesus’ word, and came to know for themselves that Jesus was and is “the Savior of the world.” The Greek word for believing is used 100 times in the Gospel of John. I was amazed this week in reading a message from John MacArthur that he said what we are finding out that “the most vital subject in the Gospel of John is the message of believing in Jesus.”

Let me quote what John MacArthur said about believing. He said, “Salvation is the work of God. We are born from above, as our Lord told Nicodemus, “You must be born again.” We make no contribution to our human birth, and we can make no contribution to our spiritual birth. It is the divine work of God. That is the divine side of salvation. But, he adds, “There is also a human side of salvation. The work of God is through the sinner’s faith. And so, while the Gospel of John emphasizes the divine sovereign work of God in salvation, it also rightly emphasizes the necessity of the sinner’s faith and believing. One could say that the Gospel of John is primarily about believing. It is the Gospel of belief. The word **pisteuo** is a verb that is used about 100 times in the Gospel of John. So, the idea of faith and believing is spread throughout this entire Gospel. This is not only the theme of the Gospel of John, but this is heart of the Christian faith. It is about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.” John MacArthur’s messages are long, but in his 16-page message, on my three-verse text in John 4:43-45, he spent 12 pages reading verse after verse after verse about the necessity of believing. So why did Jesus go to the Feast of Passover in Jerusalem? Why did He teach His disciples to baptize repentant sinners in the northeast part of Judaea? Why did Jesus head to Galilee, but stop in Sychar at Jacob’s well? It was all because His entire ministry was about bringing the lost to believing in Him as Savior. Why are you living here or wherever you live before visiting here? You are here because it is always time for you to believe in Jesus—even today, and it is always time to call others to believe in Jesus. So we have learned there are times of grief to get alone with God, until we can go on to serve Him more, There are times to rejoice in the refuges God provide for us in the midst of our trials. There are times to go and minister to people that dishonor us, and how long we stay is up to God. But every day is the time to present the Gospel of Christ so the lost will believe. Fifthly, and lastly,

TIME TO GO FACE THE STORM WHEN GOD’S TIME IS RIGHT. (V.)

Notice John 4:45. When Jesus came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, as the people did on Palm Sunday, having seen all that He had done in Jerusalem at the Feast. For they too had gone to the Feast. Only a short few years later, Jesus was back in Jerusalem. Palm Sunday was Jesus’ willingness to face the storm/the cross and die in our place. It started out looking beautiful, but Jesus knew though palm branches were spread before Him, five days later, the crowds would demand His crucifixion. Let me read Matthew 21:1-11. There is a time we know we too must face the storm. These are days when preaching/testifying of Jesus will lead us to initial popularity, but later even to martyrdom. We as servants are not greater than our Lord. The crowds were stirred as Jesus entered Jerusalem, crying, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest.”” When people asked who is this One coming into our city riding on a donkey’s colt, the answer was, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.” Jesus had spent much time ministering in Galilee. The word got around of who He was. If you serve the Lord, word will get around. Sooner or later, we’ll have to face the storm because of our commitment to Jesus. We need to confess delayed obedience, and start today to face the storm. We could lose our jobs, we could face persecution/even death, but on this first day of Passion Week, I call us to know the time is here today to take up our cross and follow Jesus. Bow your heads.