

John 4:27-54
Isaiah 55
Psalm 46

“The Savior of the World”

May 3, 2020

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”
Jesus echoed the language of Isaiah in calling the Samaritan woman
to come to him as the living water.
He calls you now to come to him!

Come to Jesus.
His word never returns empty.
It always accomplishes its purpose.

And what is that purpose?
“For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

Isaiah promised that the day would come when the whole of creation would rejoice
in the everlasting sign that would endure forever.
That sign has been performed in the resurrection of our Savior.
If you desire a sign, look to Jesus, the everlasting sign.
If you wish to hear a Word from God—hear him,
the Word who is God, who was in the beginning with God!

Sing Psalm 46
Read John 4:27-54

How do you respond to God's Word?

Jesus once told a story about different kinds of soil.
What kind of soil have you been?
A man sowed his seed on his field.

Some fell on the pathway.
Please don't tell me that you are like the pathway--
that the Word of God has just bounced off your heart,
with no effect at all!

But are you like the stony ground--do you receive the Word with joy,
but then it just withers and dies...?

Or are you like the thorny ground--do you receive the Word,
but then it gets choked by the busyness of your week,
and it bears no fruit?

Or are you like the good soil--is the Word bearing fruit in your life?
Are you becoming more like Christ?
Are you learning to forgive those who have sinned against you?
Are you learning how to rejoice in the midst of trials?
—even when life is hard?
Are you trusting in the grace of God to make it through each day?

Of course we will never be perfect in this life,
but are you growing?
are you bearing fruit?

I ask these questions because in John 2-4 we hear many different responses to the Word of God.

- 1) we heard the disciples who believed in Jesus after his first sign in Cana (2:11)
- 2) we heard many believing in Jesus because of the signs in Jerusalem (2:23)
- 3) we heard Nicodemus, who initially did not believe the Word (3:12)
- 4) we heard John the Baptist declare that “whoever believes in the Son has eternal life” (3:36)

And in today’s reading,

- 5) we hear the Samaritan woman who believed the Word (4:29)
- 6) we hear of many Samaritans who hear the Word and believe--even without signs and wonders (v41)
- 7) but we also hear the people in Galilee who do not believe without signs and wonders (4:48)

1. “Many More Believed Because of His Word” – Jesus in Samaria (v27-42)

a. Prophet and Christ – the Response of the Woman (v27-30)

²⁷ 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?” ²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” ³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him.

The Samaritan woman had recognized that Jesus was a prophet –
and that he was greater than “our father Jacob.”

But after *hearing* Jesus, the Samaritan woman is convinced that he is the Messiah.

But then his disciples return.

They don't say anything, but their very silence makes it clear
that they do not understand what is happening.
They may not be saying, "why are you talking with her?",
but they are thinking it!

But the woman has heard all that she needs to hear.

She returns to the town and tells them to come and see this man
who has told her all that she has done.

In spite of her sin, he has offered her salvation,
and now she comes to her people to tell the good news of the Messiah.

This woman has had five husbands – and is currently living with another man.

Many commentators have assumed that this was extraordinary –
but from what I have learned about marriage and divorce in the ancient world,
she may not have been that different from many.

Divorce was very common – and people often died at a younger age –
so with a couple of deaths and a couple divorces,
five husbands would be more than normal – but not unheard of.

The Word of God comes to you *right where you are!*

Jesus does not say: "you need to change so that you can come to me!"

Jesus says, "Come to me."

And as you come to Jesus, he changes you!

Uh – but what if you don't want to change?!

What if you are content with your comfy middle-class existence?!

What if you don't have the problems of those low-class Samaritans...?

He will change you too!

b. Food and Harvest – the Response of the Disciples (v31-38)

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. ³⁵ 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.

³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Watch the disciples:

The disciples think that they have gotten rid of her,
and they offer Jesus something to eat.

Jesus had *asked* the Samaritan woman for a drink.
Now the disciples urge Jesus to eat.

And even as Jesus had turned the tables on *her* – so now he turns the tables on *them*.

But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”

Jesus’ food is to do the will of the Father.

But notice that here he simply refers to the Father as “him who sent me.”

It is only in the following chapter

that John will set forth the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Chapters 2-4 are focused on Jesus’ identity as the Messiah,
the one who came down from heaven.

Jesus wants his disciples to understand that the harvest of the kingdom is at hand.

They are to reap a harvest that they did not plant.

They were expecting a harvest of Jews.

They had not planted anything among the Samaritans,

for what self-respecting Jew would have anything to do with a Samaritan?

But Jesus is going to harvest a crop that he did not plant.

The Samaritans will believe in his Word,

and he will bring in an unexpected harvest.

This verse is often used to encourage missions—“the fields are white for harvest”—
and this is right.

But we ought to use it also to remind one another of the unexpected harvests,
the harvests that we did not plant.

We must be ready for God to do unusual things in our midst.

And if it is our food to do the will of him who sent us,
then we will be prepared.

God is doing *something* in this Covid-19 pandemic.

Are we ready?

Are we looking for the unexpected harvests?

I remember a Jewish friend in high school who debated me no end!

Years later he looked me up to tell me that those debates

had prepared the soil of his heart for coming to faith in Jesus.

c. This Is the Savior of the World – the Response of the Samaritans (v39-42)

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² 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.”

Look at the response that Jesus gets in Samaria.

The Samaritan woman hears the Word of Christ,
and then rushes off to tell others that Messiah is here.
Then the rest of the townsmen hear the Word,
and they urge Jesus to stay with them.

Notice what produces faith among the Samaritans:

“many more believed because of his word.”

He stays for two days,

and they are already convinced that he is the Savior of the World! (v42)

What does it mean that Jesus is the Savior of the World?

Remember what we saw last time?

Jews and Samaritans are both descended from Jacob,

but the Samaritans had been cut off from the true worship of God.

But Jesus proclaims the reconciliation between Jew and Samaritan (v21-24)

And so now the Samaritans proclaim Jesus to be their Savior.

Jesus is not only the Savior of the Jews, but also of the Samaritans;

and they understand that if Jesus is able to save Samaritans,

he is also able to save Gentiles as well!

Jesus is indeed the Savior of the World!

This does not mean that Jesus will save every single individual;

It means that Jesus will save people from every tribe, and every nation.

We saw this at John 3:16

"For God loved the world in this way,
that he gave his only begotten Son
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have everlasting life."

God loves his creation and will save humanity from destruction;

but God must also judge his fallen creation,

and he must judge sinful humanity.

All those who refuse to believe in Christ,

who reject the Word of God,

will be destroyed when God sends the fire of his wrath
upon this creation.

As John has said in 3:36,

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life;
Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life,
but the wrath of God remains on him.”

You see, human beings are creatures!

We may be the pinnacle of creation,

but we are part of creation nonetheless.

And so as long as we belong to this world;
as long as we belong only to this humanity,
we are under God's judgment
–the wrath of God remains on us.

But Jesus Christ has brought about the new creation in his death and resurrection.
Even so, he has established a new humanity,
that those who are called by His Word,
and believe on the Name of Jesus,
will live forever with him.

And so we may proclaim that Jesus Christ is truly the Savior of the World,
because in HIM we now belong a new creation, and a new humanity,
and we need not fear the judgment of God,
because HE has taken it for us!

So Jesus spends two days in Sychar, with the Samaritans.
And in two days, MANY Samaritans believe.
Now there is NO indication that Jesus performed any miracles there.
He simply preached the gospel,
and they believed.

Now look at the contrast in verses 43-54.

Those from Galilee received the Word but only with signs
Many Samaritans believe in two days with no signs!
Few Jews believed even after many days and many signs!

Why does Jesus go to Galilee? (read 43-45)

2. “A Prophet Has No Honor in His Own Hometown” – Jesus in Galilee (v43-54)

a. Why Galilee? – the Response of the Galileans (v43-45)

⁴³ After the two days he departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) ⁴⁵ 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.

Why did he leave Jerusalem?

Why didn't he stay in Samaria where people believed in him?

Well, what was happening in Judea?

People were flocking to him and the Pharisees were getting upset.
But he needed to find a place where he wouldn't attract a whole lot of attention.
The best place to do that was Galilee,
because in Galilee, the people received him as a miracle-worker,
but they didn't flock to him like those in Judea.
They didn't believe in him--they just wanted a few miracles!

His “time” had not yet come.
He needed to go to a place where he would have no honor.
As the synoptic gospels make clear,
Jesus needed some time to train his disciples before leading them back to Judea.
So he takes them to Galilee.

Augustine pointed out the difference between the Samaritans and the Galileans:
The Galileans wanted signs and wonders;
The Samaritans were content with the Word.

Look at v39-42--notice the focus on the Word
v39 – “believed in him because of the woman’s testimony”
v41 – “many more believed because of his word.”
v42 – “we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is the Savior of the world.”

Now look at v46-54

b. Signs and Faith – the Response of the Official (v46-54)

⁴⁶ So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ So Jesus said to him, “Unless you^[c] see signs and wonders you will not believe.” ⁴⁹ The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. ⁵¹ As he was going down, his servants^[d] met him and told him that his son was recovering. ⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour^[e] the fever left him.” ⁵³ The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” And he himself believed, and all his household. ⁵⁴ This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

Jesus returns to Cana--the same place where he had turned water into wine--
the same place where he had performed his FIRST sign.
And now this nobleman comes and begs him to come and heal his son.
Jesus replies: (v48)
This man does not really believe in *Jesus*--he just wants a miracle!
So what does Jesus do?
Does he say, "forget you, buddy!"
"If you won't believe in me, I'm not going to heal your kid!"
No, because Jesus wants to change this man's heart!
And his Word is powerful enough to do that.
So he rebukes him--and all Galileans as well! (the “you” is plural)
He rebukes him for putting his trust in miracles instead of trusting in the Word.

But the nobleman thinks that Jesus only has local power
--that he would have to come all the way to Capernaum to heal his son.

Again, Jesus wants this man to trust in the power of His Word!

So he says, "Go your way; your son lives"

Notice: the man does not believe in Jesus--rather, he believes this particular *word*, this statement, of Jesus.

That is a start--but it is not yet the whole story.

Only when his servant meets him and tells him, "Your son lives", does he believe.

And THEN--when he discovers that it was at the very moment when Jesus spoke, that his son was healed,

ONLY THEN does he and his whole household believe in Jesus!

The reason why he believes in Jesus is because he has realized

that Jesus is more than a healer: he ALSO knows the hearts of men!

Isn't that what John 2:25 says: Jesus had no need of anyone telling him about men, because he knew all men.

And John 2-4 is all about how Jesus knows the hearts of all men:

Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the Nobleman and his servant.

John 2-4 is all about how Jesus changes the hearts of these people by the power of his Word.

And just as John 2-4 begins with Christ's first sign in Cana (turning water to wine);

so also it ends with Christ's second sign in Cana (healing the nobleman's son)--v54.

John 2-4 tells us that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the World:

that if you want to have everlasting life,

you must be born again,

you must believe in Jesus, the one who came down from heaven,

you must be born of water and the Spirit,

you must drink the living water,

you must hear His Word, and bear fruit!

you must worship in Spirit and in truth!

So it is very clear that you have the responsibility to believe in Christ.

YOU must believe.

YOU must be born again

YOU must not run after signs and wonders, but you must believe in the word of God!

But, you say, "if it's up to me, I'm in trouble!!!"

I'm a sinner! How can I believe?

That's where we're going!

In John 5-6, Jesus is going to explain

how human responsibility and divine sovereignty fit together!

Having heard about who Jesus is,

we are about to hear how he relates to the Father.

You have heard the Word of God.

How will you respond?

Will you believe the Word? Or will you wait for signs?

And if you want a sign—what greater sign can there be
than the sign that Jesus gave in his resurrection from the dead?

As Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24,

“Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified,
a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,
but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Hear him!