

Opening Words

Who would have thought a conversation between Jesus and a woman could lead to a discussion with men and a turning point in the history of a village?

246 The Thirsty Woman – Part 4

As Jesus' disciples were walking back to the well, they could see from a distance that that he had been speaking with a Samaritan woman and were quite amazed that he was doing so. They had seen him talk to many men, but not to women. And they had seen him talk to other Jewish men, but to a Samaritan woman? They had a lot to learn about Jesus, but despite their astonishment that he would do this, they dismissed it and started getting ready for the meal.

Finally, when everything was ready and when one of them blessed the food, the disciples hungrily started devouring what was before them, but Jesus made no move toward the food.

“Teacher, eat,” they said.

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

The disciples looked at one another and said, “What’s he talking about? Did someone bring him food? Did that woman give him something to eat? But where would she get food?”

Jesus watched and listened to them for a few moments. Like the woman at the well, they were missing the point. She was focused on physical water. They were focused on physical food.

Finally, Jesus said,

“My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. We have a saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are ready now for harvest.

Then, Jesus pointed in the direction of the village and said, “Look, there is the harvest.”

The disciples looked and saw a group of men headed their way. But they didn’t get it.

“Uh, oh – looks like trouble from the Samaritans!”

Jesus laughed and said, “No. This is the harvest and I am asking you to help me reap this harvest. You will be paid good wages. The harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester!

“Here is another saying, ‘One plants, and another reaps.’ How true! I am asking you to harvest where you didn’t plant. Others have prepared the field, and now you will get to gather in the crops!”

But just as Jesus talked to the woman about water, and it took her a while to understand, it would take a bit longer for his hungry disciples to understand that he was talking about the Samaritans who were fast approaching. There were many lessons they needed to learn.

Let’s take a closer look at what Jesus said:

1. The most important nourishment man needed was not physical food. One wonders if, when Jesus said this, he was remembering his encounter in the wilderness with the tempter. The tempter had wanted him to satisfy his hunger by turning stones into bread but Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

And what was proceeding from the mouth of God now? – it was that there was a village in Samaria that were desperately hungry and thirsty and God’s will was for Jesus to focus on their needs rather than lunch.

It was obvious that God was at work in the hearts of needy people in Samaria. And if that is what God was doing, then Jesus would be right there working with him.

What a lesson for us! It is so easy to focus on daily needs – our food, especially, and to miss what God may be doing around us that may call for us to delay our gratification. Oh, for hearts that are sensitive to the work of God around us!

2. Jesus changes the metaphor. He goes from speaking of the work of God as a meal to the work of God as a harvest.

This was something that the people of God were more accustomed to. The prophets had long ago spoken of a great harvest.

You shall multiply the nation, you shall increase their gladness; They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of **harvest**, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. Isa 9:3

“Israel was holy to the LORD, The first of His **harvest**. All who ate of it became guilty; Evil came upon them,” declares the LORD.” Jeremiah 2:3

Also, O Judah, there is a **harvest** appointed for you When I restore the fortunes of My people. Hosea 6:11

And now Jesus was saying that this time of harvest was upon them. He said, “You plant your seed and then you say harvest will come in four months. That’s the way God has ordered

His physical world. But in the spiritual world, things can happen much faster! Lift up your eyes and see the fields that they are white unto harvest, the harvest is ready to be reaped.”

Surely at this time the men of the village had started their walk to the well and as Jesus said these words they were now visible to Him and the disciples. He had planted one seed in the heart of one woman just a few minutes before and now that seed had already grown up and was bearing a harvest of the souls of men. The fields were indeed white unto harvesting.

3. Jesus added a third image to explain what was happening to his disciples. When people work in the fields sowing and reaping they receive wages for their work.

When farmers work their fields, they do so that they might reap the crop, or, if they are hired help, they do so that they might receive a wage for their day’s work. And when all the work is done, the farmer who planted the seed and the workers who reaped from that planting rejoice together. One sows, and another reaps. But they all benefit.

Jesus had sown the seed in the heart of the woman. A great harvest was about to be reaped and Jesus was calling his men to join with him in this great harvest. Yes, it was time to eat but a great meal was coming down the road for them. Not a meal of meat and bread but a meal of satisfying the needs of human hearts. And this harvest was not a harvest of wheat or barley but a gathering of fruit for life eternal.

4. And then Jesus challenged them – “I sent you to harvest where you didn’t plant; others have already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest.”

Yes, Jesus was talking about his work with the woman that would lead to His work with the men in the village and Jesus was inviting his disciples to join him in this big job that was about to begin with these village men.

And my friends, I find this to be comforting, challenging, and exciting as we think about the same truth that Jesus is at work in the hearts of people around us and He invites us to work with Him in this great harvest.

The Samaritan men arrived at the well and met Jesus and his followers. What a strange sight that must have been to others who were passing by at that moment. Think of it. Here is a group of Jewish and Samaritan men talking freely to one another and seeming to enjoy it – like a family talking around a camp fire at night. This is not a random isolated conversation between Jewish and Samaritan men that happened from time to time. This was a group of Jewish and Samaritan men conversing without animosity at the village well.

What did they say? What did the men ask Jesus? What did Jesus tell them? We don’t know, but what we do know is what it led to. The Samaritan men were intrigued enough by this Jewish teacher that they invited him and his disciples into their homes! They were offering Middle Eastern hospitality where they would seek to meet every need of their guests in an honorable way.

And so, Jesus and his disciples picked up their belongings, the food that they had made, and walked with the Samaritan men into their village and into their homes and stayed there two days. What a sight this must have been in the village! What a topic of discussion it was for everyone!

Do you remember what had happened when Jesus' first disciples stayed with him for a day? Their lives were changed. And now these men have Jesus all to themselves for two days and their lives were changed as well. The story tells us that they believed in Him because of the woman had first told them, "Look, he revealed every secret of my heart!"

What did Jesus speak to them about?

1. He talked about their hearts. Jesus had revealed to the woman the depth of her sin that she thought no one else knew. Jesus had done this with her, and he now did it with them. But they were not afraid for they learned that He would do this with compassion and not condemnation.

I want to ask you today, have you let Jesus talk to you about the depths of your heart? Don't be afraid. Tell him everything. He knows it already anyway, but He wants you to be open and honest with Him and here is the good news - He will not condemn you. Remember the story of the visitor in the dark. Remember John's reflection on that story?

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

This is what those men were experiencing – revelation of sin without wrath for their hearts were humble and God's heart was full of love.

2. He talked to them about living water. This is what started the conversation in the first place with the woman. He asked her for a drink of water as a prelude to His offer of living water. As they drank water from the well during their many meals together over the next two days, water from the woman's water pot that eventually got filled, they must have thought about his living water. As the water from the well would pass through their mouths and satisfy their thirsts, they found the living water of Jesus' words going deep into their souls and quenching the deep spiritual thirst they had suffered for years.
3. They had never heard any man speak like this. He spoke to them about the nature of God. God was spirit, not flesh, and God was served better by the hearts of people who were humble before Him rather than by temples made with hands whether temples in Gerizim or Jerusalem. Yes, it was true that Jerusalem was the place that God had appointed for his people but that was just a prelude to what He really wanted – people who would worship Him anywhere and everywhere – Jew, Samaritan, and Gentile. The Father was seeking for people who would worship in spirit and in truth.

The two days were now ended. It was time for Jesus to move on. The village men and the woman said their goodbyes to Jesus and His disciples. They escorted him to the boundaries of their land toward Galilee.

The men turned to the woman who had first talked with Jesus and said, “We first believed because of what you said, and we thank you for telling us about him. But now, after these two days and after hearing him ourselves we believe that He is indeed the Savior of Jew and Samaritan, male and female. Indeed, He is the savior of the whole world!”