

Introduction

When Jesus was speaking with the Samaritan woman beside Jacob's well in Samaria the primary topic was that of water.

Jesus asked the woman for water and he told her that she should have been asking him for water, so that she might receive the *living waters* of Christ!

I spoke last week about how water is symbolically described in the Bible.

Waters cleanse and waters glorify.

This week, the topic turns from water to food.

Jesus' disciples return from the nearby Samaritan town where they went to buy food and marvel to find Jesus speaking with this Samaritan woman.

After the woman leaves, they turn to Jesus and urge him to eat.

No doubt Jesus was still hungry and thirsty, but rather than eating, Jesus decides to take the occasion to speak to his disciples.

He came to do the will of his Father, and he would rather meet the true needs of others than satisfy the desires of his own flesh for food and water.

For this morning's sermon I am going to focus on the first part of our Gospel Lesson and I will do so in two parts:

1. The first part is that you are called to Labor in God's field
2. The second part is that you are called to be satisfied with God's harvest.

Labor in God's Field

The conversation between Jesus and his disciples begins with confusion and misunderstanding.

They ask him for something to eat and Jesus tells them that he has food they don't know about.

The disciples start wondering if someone else has brought Jesus something to eat.

But Jesus tells them that his true food is to do the will of his Father who sent him and to do his work.

While I will come back to this in the second part of my sermon, I want to now focus on what Jesus next says to his disciples.

The Fields are White for Harvest

In the following verses Jesus says, "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...For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

When Jesus speaks about the fields being white for harvest he is making a point to his disciples about the history of salvation.

Many prophets have gone before John the Baptist, but John the Baptist represents the last and greatest in the line of the prophets.

The way has been prepared and the Lord has now arrived.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the hour was coming—and now here—when true worshipers would worship the Father in spirit and truth.

The old debates about *where* are giving way to the new reality of *who*.

And now he tells his disciples the same thing in different terms: lift up your eyes, the fields are white.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the prophets spoke of and prepared for and in his ministry he is beginning to bring salvation to the whole world.

The fields are white for harvest!

Samaritans and Gentiles

The prophets foresaw this.

Reading the Old Testament prophets you find a consistent pattern: Israel is in a bad place.

But, God will come in the future to bring salvation to Israel.

He will forgive their iniquities and he will exalt them and bring them into the fulness of his salvation.

But the fulness of salvation for Israel has consequences.

When God restores Israel, Israel will begin to fulfill the original purpose that God gave to Abraham.

When God promised to Abraham that he would build him into a great nation he told him that ***all the nations would be blessed through his seed.***

The seed of Abraham would be the conduit through which God's blessings would come to all nations.

As Paul states in Galatians, Jesus *is* this promised offspring of Abraham.

Thus, Jesus is not only going to bring about salvation to Israel, as the promised seed of Abraham he will bring salvation *to the whole world.*

The Samaritan woman and the town of Sychar in Samaria are just *one example among many* in the Gospels where gentiles are blessed by Jesus.

What Jesus is telling his disciples here is that the time has come for harvest.

He is reaping a harvest that has been prepared for many long years and he calls them into this work.

“First Fruits”

Brothers and sisters you too are called to participate in this great harvest.

But you must first understand that you are a part of this harvest.

You are the recipients of the blessings of Christ.

And as recipients of these blessings you partake in the Spirit of Christ that is on a mission to bring salvation to the whole world through the ministry of the Church.

The New Testament uses the language of “First Fruits” to describe this phenomenon.

Beginning with Jesus’ own ministry, extending into the ministry of his Apostles in the book of Acts, and continuing throughout the entire age of the Church, the Spirit is bringing in the first fruits of a great harvest.

But this harvest is going to be so great that the season of sowing, the season of gathering in the first fruits, and the season of reaping the full harvest will all begin to overlap with one another.

It is likely that Jesus has [Amos 9](#) in mind as he is speaking these words to his disciples.

In [Amos 9:13](#) the prophet is speaking about the great coming day of the Lord when God will bring his salvation through the Messiah.

Amos declares

Amos 9:13 ESV

¹³ “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.

Jesus knows that his disciples do not yet fully understand that it is prophecies like this that are being fulfilled in his advent.

They are still waiting for the day of harvest, but Jesus is telling them that the time is now to begin reaping.

Yes, a fuller and greater harvest is yet to come, but even now the reaper can go into the fields.

Indeed, in the fulfillment of God’s blessings, the sower and the reaper will be in the fields at the same time.

You too are called to this same thing.

God’s harvest is ripe, you can begin to reap.

And when you begin to reap you should realize that you are reaping what someone else has sown.

Likewise, you are called to sow.

And as you sow you should realize that it is likely someone else who will reap what you sow.

So this is the first point, labor in God's field.

But this labor is only sustainable if it is satisfying labor, and that requires that we share the food Jesus had which his disciples did not know about.

Be Satisfied with God's Harvest

I mentioned already that Jesus' disciples are confused when Jesus told them he has food to eat that they don't know about.

This is a recurring device in John's gospel.

The confusion of Jesus' interlocutors leads to revelation for us.

The Will & Work of the Father

The disciples' response is to ask if someone else has brought Jesus food.

But Jesus responds that his food is to do the will of him who sent him and to accomplish his work.

Jesus here, as he does elsewhere in the Gospel is making a reference to [Deuteronomy 8:3](#).

In [Deuteronomy 8](#), Moses spoke to the second generation in the wilderness and told them "that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

Remember, the entire context of this scene is that Jesus is wearied from his journey.

This is part of the glory and mystery of the incarnation.

The Eternal Word of the Father — by whom and through whom all creation was made and is upheld — finds himself wearied, hungry, and thirsty in our humanity."

The whole reason his disciples go to town is to get food for him.

But when they get back Jesus uses the occasion to teach his disciples.

More precious to him than food or water is to do the will and work of his Father who sent him.

And Jesus wants his disciples and he wants you to know that this is true for you too.

You are to find your ultimate satisfaction in God.

The satisfaction that you find in the things God has made points beyond itself.

These satisfactions are signposts that point to their maker.

When you place your priority on God and his word you will find a satisfaction deeper than anything created things can give.

Rejoice Together

Of course this connects with the first point of laboring in God's field.

The labor God has called you to is ultimately satisfying labor.

Doing good and investing in the kingdom of heaven is satisfying work.

Whether you find yourself sowing seed through your words and your work or reaping the fruit of seed that was sown by someone else, you are to find joy in this labor.

This is exactly what Jesus stated in verse 36, "Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so *that sower and reaper may rejoice together.*"

There is deep and lasting joy and satisfaction that comes in laboring in God's field.

Jesus himself shows us this in his own life and ministry.

He came to give away his life for the life of the world.

And now, because of the work of the Spirit, applying the work of Christ to us, we participate with Christ in this work.

Now, as his body, we give ourselves away for the life of the world.

For, by the Spirit, Christ makes himself present to the world through us.

And as he does so, we find our satisfaction in him.

And of course, this offering of himself is re-presented to us each Lord's Day at the Lord's Table.

So, come this morning, ready to receive Christ's body and blood and be satisfied.

And as you are filled and satisfied with him, pour yourself out for others as he poured himself out for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **AMEN!**