

Work That Pleases God, Part 2

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John 4:39-45

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I don't know about you, when you were younger, but when I was younger, I liked stories. And one of the stories I liked the most was spy stories. I was a James Bond fan. He's JB, I'm JB, so there's a little connection there. I also liked Mission Impossible, the old TV show, you remember that? The boss would say, "Your mission... " What? "... should you choose to accept it." Remember that?

We've been making our way through John 4, and I've been trying to make the point that where you work, whether that's at home or at school, at the office, on the road, at the store, at a restaurant, or behind a computer, that your job is not your real job, that your job, your real job is to tell people about Jesus. We've been given a mission, and we don't have the option of not accepting it. That mission is to make disciples of Jesus wherever we go.

Now, for some of you, that's your kids. That's maybe the kids sitting next to you right now. For others, that's the students at your school or the others on your sports team. For others still, that's your neighbors, your coworkers, your family, your friends. If you take stock of all the people you interact with, there's about eight to 15 people every single one of us interacts with most that need Jesus. This work of evangelism, of exposing people to Jesus, this is our job. But it's not just our job, it's our privilege too, right?

Think about it, the greatest message about the greatest person that did the greatest thing imaginable is not something to hide from anyone. It's the best thing we have. It is what the rest of our lives are to be lived for. It's the reason we're not in heaven yet. It's what God left you here to do, because this work is work that pleases God, the work of telling people, pointing people to Christ. As we come to John 4, our text concludes Jesus' ministry to this one town in the region of Samaria, a town called Sychar, which is about a quarter of a mile east of Jacob's Well, which is a place that you could go to today. So you can stand at Jacob's Well, take a drink, look to the East, and that's where Sychar was.

Samaritans, this group of people hated by the Jews, become the first non-Jewish people in the Bible to experience salvation at the start of Jesus' ministry. For centuries, they've been outcast among the Jews. Many Jews would go around Samaria so that their holy feet wouldn't touch this defiled ground. They weren't even second-class citizens to the Jews, they were enemies. And yet to learn that the God of the Jews did not see them as enemies, to learn that the God of the Jews had a mission that included them, to learn that the God of the Jews, though they were far away from His covenants, far away from the Old Testament, far away from all the blessings of Israel, this God had a plan all along to bring them near as well.

This is made obvious to them as they realized that Jesus was the savior of the world. Let's see how they come to that conclusion starting in verse 39, where it says, "Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony." This harvest of souls for eternal life that Jesus encouraged His disciples to be a part of in the previous chapter... I'm sorry, in the previous paragraph, this harvest had begun not thanks to them though, but thanks to this unlikely evangelist, the woman at the well.

I mean, we don't even know her name. We don't know her age. Was she 30, 40, 50? We don't know. All we do know about her, though, is the last thing that you would want anyone to know about you, right? Your sin. Her failed marriages and her depraved life. To the people that likely shunned her for her sin, she returns from the well to tell them about Jesus. Look at verse 29. After talking to Jesus, she goes back to these people and verse 29, "She says, 'Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?'" Notice it says they went out of the town and were coming to Him.

Think about her words. There's nothing overwhelming about her. There's nothing eloquent. There's nothing credible, logic arguing, "Hey, you got to go see this guy," she just says, "Come and see." She asks a question, so kind of leaves them a little intrigued, "Hey, could she be right?" She's sincere, and God uses that powerfully. Notice how powerful. The first word in verse 39 is what? Just a few, right? No, many from her town believed in Jesus. The reason they did, again, verse 39, is because of her testimony. God used what she said. God used her telling people about the impact Jesus had on her life to notice, save many people. They "believe in Him", which is John's typical way of saying that people put their trust in Him. As a result of that, the sentence of condemnation is removed from their lives. As a result of that, they receive eternal life. As a result of that, they become children of God. Why? Because they believed in Jesus. They put their trust in Him.

All other trusts were gone. All their focus, all their trust was Him. This least likely person to tell anyone about Jesus, let alone get these kinds of results, she should be an encouragement to you and me to point #1) **trust God to use you to save lost people. Trust God to use you to save lost people.** "No, no, no, God does that through pastors." No, no, no, He does that through you. Believe that God can use you in the lives of those eight to 15 lost people you interact with most. Believe that God can use you in their lives to save them.

This no-name woman getting water one day was used, as we just saw, to see many people saved. Think about the man in Mark 5. You remember this guy full of thousands of demons? Jesus saves him, and then it says in Mark 5:20 that he goes into the region where he was from, proclaiming "how much Jesus had done for him." When Christians in Acts 8 were persecuted for leaving Judaism for Jesus, verse four says, "Those who were scattered," scattered because of the persecution, "went about preaching the word," which is shorthand for the word about Jesus, the gospel.

I want you to think about this, what does this no-name depraved woman at the well, this no-named demon-possessed, crazy man, and the Christians in Acts 8 all have in common with each

other and all have in common with you? What could it be? What is it that's common about all of them? Answer: they're not Jesus just like you. They're not apostles just like you. Because here's the thing, we can read the Bible, we can see Jesus, we can see the apostles and go, "This is what they did, so we should do that too." And we can say what? "Well, I'm not Jesus. I'm not an apostle." Well, neither was the woman, the demon-possessed man, or the Christians in Acts 8, and yet God used them to save lost people.

This woman simply told people about what Jesus did in her life. This demon-possessed man in Mark 5 simply told people what Jesus did for him. That was it. They gave their testimonies, and God used them powerfully. Then add to these examples passages like Matthew 28 where all Christians are given the mission to make and then help mature disciples. Add to that 2 Corinthians 5 where Christians, not just pastors, are given the ministry of reconciliation, where God uses us to make peace with rebels through the message about Jesus. You see, it's always been God's will to use you to save lost people. "Yeah, but what about my past? It's pretty awful." Is it worse than being possessed by thousands of demons?

At the second service yesterday, there was a lady in the back over there that went... It's like, "Whoa, Wonder what that was?" Is it worse than a woman with five divorces and a live-in boyfriend? If God used them powerfully, trust them to use you too. Think about it, how many of you owe your salvation to someone, a parent, a sibling, a friend trusting God to use them in your life? They likely had excuses, right? They likely had fears. They likely thought, "They're not going to listen," but they did it anyway, and aren't you so glad that they did. See, God can, and He often does use even the weakest, the least credible, the most unlikely people like a formally depraved woman with a horrible reputation and a formally demon-possessed man with an even worse reputation. He saves lost people through their testimony.

So in those moments when you doubt, in those moments when you're afraid, in those moments when the excuses are strong, trust God to use you, trust God to take you in your weakness and to be strong in you. Trust God to know what to say and how to say it in just the right ways and at just the right times. Trust Him. Express that trust by praying for those eight to 15 lost people regularly. Share their names with others so that others will pray for them. But also pray that God would use you to save them. Don't just pray, "God save them," also pray, "God, use me to save them." And then trust God to use you to save them.

Then, like God did with the people in your life, you'll be the one that your eight to 15 will look back at and say, "Thank you for telling me about Jesus. Thank you for reading the Bible with me. Thank you for answering my questions." What an encouragement that will be in that moment, right? Think about this lady running back to this town of people that had shunned her, running into the village and saying, "Hey, I met a man," and they're like, "Oh, great. Another one. Really?" "No, no, this one's different." "Oh yeah, of course he's the different one." "No, no, could He be the Christ?" And instead of them ignoring her, what do they do? They start to stream out of their houses and leave the fields and stand up from whatever they're doing, and they start walking the quarter of a mile from a Sychar to the well.

In that moment, there's probably excitement like, "Look at what's happening. This is pretty cool." It'll be the same for you. It'll be the same for you when you trust God to use you to save people. May God use you to see many of your friends and family come to Him and be saved.

Now, the people start coming to Jesus in verse 30, this harvest of souls, and they arrive at Jesus to be harvested for eternal life in verse 40, where it says, "So when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed there two days." As far as I can tell, this is the only time in Jesus' ministry when He did this, when He stayed for some days in one place to teach and to preach to the people that are there. Think about it, He didn't start an evangelistic crusade all over Samaria, He didn't go all over the region preaching in all the villages, He just stays in one little village for two days evangelizing this town.

Whatever it was that was lacking in their commitment to Him, whatever it was that was lacking in their knowledge of Him, whatever it was that was lacking in their appreciation for him, he graciously supplies and it just says that he stayed there two days. And I'm like, What did he say? Well, what was it? What did they talk about? I mean, it must have been amazing to have the kind of effect that it did. It's just one of those silences in the Bible that I hope that when I'm walking down the streets of gold I bump into somebody from Sychar. It's like, "No, stop. Come here. What did He say to you? Tell me about these two days."

And remember, He stayed for two days with a group of people that the Jews had little to nothing to do with it all. They hated the Samaritans, and the feeling was mutual for 500 years. Jesus didn't care at all. He was merciful. And because of that, verse 41, "Many more believed because of His Word." Many more refers to a large quantity of people, but notice it says, "Many more believed." Well, many more than what? Many more than believed because of the woman. This is an awakening where a large group of people are saved and they tell us why they're saved in verse 42 where it says, "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.'" They're now convinced after two days. What she had said to them was influential, and Jesus confirms it. The text actually shows a bit of a shift, like the woman made the introduction for them, and then Jesus took it from there and built on it.

That same pattern can be seen when God saved someone. Think about it, God uses us to save people as we transition them from what Jesus has done for us to who Jesus is and what He did. As we learn about the work that pleases God from this text, that's point #2) ***Leave lost people with Jesus. Leave lost people with Jesus.*** In other words, point people to Him and then get out of the way. You and your testimony can make the introduction, that's great, you should, and God can even use that to save people. But once that happens, get them to Jesus and leave them there. Again, your testimony of salvation is great. God uses that testimony to save people just like with this woman. But then it's better that they move on from your testimony to the testimony about Jesus in the pages of the Bible.

So leave them with who He is. Leave them with what He did. Leave them with His death on the cross for their sins. Leave them with the empty tomb. Leave them with the truth about Jesus for

them to chew on and consider and wrestle with. Leave lost people with Jesus. Think about this woman, she says in verse 29, "Come and see," and then she fades into the background of the story. As what happens, all the people start coming to Jesus and they keep coming to Jesus and they keep asking Him, "Hey, stay." So He stays for two days, and after that two days, they're convinced that what she said was true because they say in verse 42, "We've now heard it from Jesus Himself."

She stopped with her testimony because her testimony got them to Jesus. And after that, Jesus takes it from there, and verse 41, "Many more people were saved." And many more people were saved because the one we leave lost people with is, verse 42, "The savior of the world." This is a rich and wonderful title for Jesus. It is really the center of this chapter. And really this whole section, chapters two to four, this is what this section is all about. The word savior refers to a person that rescues another person. They rescue them from danger, that's part one. And then part two, He leaves them in a place of safety. So from danger to safety, that's what a savior does.

In the first century, this phrase was used for Greek deities like Zeus, and it was used for Roman emperors like Augustus Caesar. This phrase was used called Caesar the savior of the world. The text is saying, "In a world of many saviors, Jesus is the savior of the world." Well, what does this title mean? Putting it all together, what does it mean? I'm going to give you five descriptions of what it means for Jesus to be the savior of the world. First, this title identifies Jesus as the only savior, the only savior. He's not a savior, but what? He is the savior of the world. The world separates Him out as the only one. This is Acts 4:12 where it says, "There is salvation in no one else." Why? "Because there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

So there is all of heaven encompassing the whole earth, there is not another name, wherever heaven is, all across the planet that gives salvation. Why? Because Jesus is the savior of the world. There is no other. There isn't a separate way. There isn't a co-equal, but different savior other than Jesus. He is the only savior. Second, Jesus is the great savior. He's the great savior. Why? Because He's the savior of the world. In other words, He's not the savior over a part of the world or for a part of the world, or He is only concerned with some people and not all of them. He's not a savior for a region. He's not just a savior for a few people here and there. This phrase, savior of the world, refers to the scope, the range, the extension of his saving work, which is the entire world.

Third, as the savior of the world, Jesus is also humanity's savior, humanity's savior. That's how John uses the word world to refer to humanity. And the way he uses it is to say that Jesus is not just the Jewish savior. Jesus is a cross cultural, cross language, cross tribal, cross ethnic, cross national, cross continent, cross ocean savior. This outcasted group of Samaritans learn that salvation may be from the Jews. That's what Jesus said to them in John 4:2, but salvation wasn't only for the Jews, because the Jewish God sent them the savior of the world. Which means that He's the savior of the Jewish people and all non-Jewish people, all people, all groups from every tribe, every language, every people, every nation. There are no excluded groups. There are no

barriers between human beings that He will respect. He will save anyone and everyone who comes to Him by faith because He is the savior of the world.

Fourth, if he is the savior of the world, that means humanity is in danger, and that means humanity is in need of safety. When John uses the word world, he most often uses it to refer to humanity, yes, but humanity in rebellion against God, which makes Jesus, fourth, the forgiving savior, the forgiving savior. He saves people from their sins. When the angel showed up and talked to Mary, the angel said to her Matthew 1:21, "You shall call His name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins." So humanity had a sin problem that we can't solve. We are in danger of God's wrath or our sin. No amount of good deeds, good intentions, or positive thoughts about ourselves will rescue us from the crimes that we have committed against God. And God knew this, that we were in eternal danger for our sin. He knew that we were hopeless. So because He loves this world of rebels, He not only sent His Son to be the savior, but He gave His Son up to death on the cross to actually save this world from their sins when this world of rebels turns from their rebellion and trust in Christ.

When the savior saves, He forgives. He declares people innocent, innocent of the entire penalty they deserve for their crimes. He weakens the power of sin in the lives of all who are trusting in Him. And one day, He will rescue us completely from the very presence of sin. The penalty of sin gone. The power of sin weakened. The presence of sin gone. He saved you by forgiving you of all of your sins the moment you believed in Him. He is saving you now as you continue to believe in Him. And one day when you die or He returns, He will save you forever and bring you safely, safely to His heavenly kingdom.

He is the only savior, the great savior, humanity's savior, the forgiving savior, which makes Him, fifth and finally, the true savior, the true savior. Don't miss that one word the Samaritan villager said in verse 42 about Jesus, that He is, notice, indeed the savior of the world. The word means Jesus is actually really truly the savior of the world. It's John 14:6, "He is the truth, and no one comes to the Father except through Him and Him alone." Which means in contrast to all the... and really not just contrast, but combat with all the other saviors, all the false gods, all the politicians, all the emperors, all the false Christs, all the false teachers. And not just them, but even the lesser saviors like doctors and generals and bosses and public servants. In contrast to all of that, He is the true, the certain, the definite savior of the world.

You see, doctors can save you from disease, right? Generals and armies, they can save you from attack. Bosses can save you from poverty. Public servants can save you from crime and danger. But only Jesus can save us from the penalty that we so rightly and so richly deserve for all of our sins. Jesus is the only savior there is. He's the great savior whose scope for His mission is the whole world, making Him humanity's savior. And He is a forgiving savior, saving us from the one problem that unites every human being alive today and every human being that has ever or will ever exist, which is our sin against God.

If He is all of those things, which He is, that makes Him the true and certain savior. So the question is, is He your savior? He may be all of those things, and He is all of those things, and

He proved that He is all of those things when He rose from the dead. So since He is all of these things, the only question that matters is what is He to you? John Newton was a pastor, he's a prolific songwriter in the 1700s, he wrote Amazing Grace, he wrote a ton of songs. In a different song, he put it this way, and he says, "What think ye of Christ is the test to try both your state and your scheme." Your state is your state before God, whether or not you are right with God or not. Your scheme are your ideas, your thoughts about life. He says, "What think ye of Christ is the test to try both your state and your scheme? You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of Him. As Jesus appears in your view," and that's what's been happening over the past few minutes, the true Jesus has been appearing in your view as the savior of the world, he says, "As Jesus appears in your view, as He is beloved or not, so God is disposed to you, and mercy or wrath is your lot."

Translation: when you hear about the true Christ, you are meant in that moment to wrestle with Him. Your response to Him will determine where you spend eternity, either in heaven, bliss, joy for all of eternity or in hell suffering for eternity. It's one or the other. God knew that. God knew that this was our lot. And instead of saying, "To hell with them," He sent Jesus to be the savior of the world. He will be your savior when you turn from your rebellion, when you turn from your resistance, and you give your life to Him.

If that's you, I would love to talk to you. If that's you, I would love to pray with you. But listen, there's nothing special here. You can talk to Him right now in the quiet of your own mind and give your life to Him now. Turn from all that keeps you from Him and trust in Him. Now, what I just tried to do is model for you what I'm saying in this point, where you move away from what Jesus has done in your life and you bring people face to face with who Jesus is and what He did. That's what this woman did. She got them to Jesus and then left them there. And that's what we should do too. We don't want to leave them with us, don't want to leave them with our testimony, definitely don't want to leave them with our bad attitudes or our good works or even our good times with them. We want to leave lost people with Jesus, that like this woman, we point to Christ, we say, "Come and see," and then we get out of the way so that people can deal with Him and Him alone.

Well, after 42 verses in Samaria, Jesus leaves, verse 43, "After two days, He departed for Galilee, for Jesus Himself and testified that a prophet has 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 where they too had gone to the feast." Now, this passage is both easy to understand and very hard to understand. It's easy because Jesus continues from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north, which John 4:3 says was His plan all along, but God the Father had Him take a detour into Samaria to talk to this woman and spark this revival. So verse 45, when He arrives in Galilee in the north, notice it says that He is welcomed by people there. He's welcomed there because some of the people there were in Jerusalem. In chapter two we learned that when Jesus was in Jerusalem, He cleaned out the temple and performed many miracles. So

they were there, they saw that, they're like, "Hey, that guy that was in Jerusalem, He's here now, this is awesome."

So verse 45, notice He is welcomed. But verse 44 has Him quoting a proverb about not being honored in His hometown, which is a reference most likely to Galilee, this county that He grew up in. That is His homeland because He grew up in a city of Nazareth with the county being Galilee. So when people ask where I'm from, I'll often say Orange County, California, because people heard about that, there was a TV show called OC, all of that. So people go, "Oh, Orange County, I know that. Instead of saying, "Costa Mesa, Newport Beach is where I actually grew up." So hometown in this verse here, verse 44, is Galilee.

Now think about it, verse 43, Jesus departs for Galilee, verse 44, He asserts that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown, but in verse 45, He shows up in Galilee, and what happens? They welcome Him. So He is not going to be honored, but He is welcomed. Skeptics actually point to this verse and say, "Obvious contradiction in the text." I'm not sure how obvious that is. It actually seems kind of ridiculous that someone like John who was actually there that day would contradict himself in the space of a few words.

No, that's not what's happening. What's happening is two things. Number one, we learned in John 2:23 that there were people that believe in Jesus but do not honor Him as the Godman, as the savior of the world. They're interested in Him because, verse 45, they saw the stuff that He did earlier in Jerusalem that year. In fact, we're going to see next week that the belief in Galilee is not really true faith. They're not trusting Him as savior and Lord. That would be what truly honors Him. They welcome him, but they don't honor Him.

Second, I think Jesus is saying this, when you put all these three verses together, He's saying, "Boys, we're going to Galilee precisely because I'm not going to be honored there. My mission includes being despised and rejected and even killed because my death is what's going to save people from their sin." Notice it says, "After the two days, He departed for Galilee because Jesus Himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in His own hometown. So the reason He's going to Galilee is because He's not going to be honored there. He's intentionally going where He's not going to be honored like He was in Samaria.

The interesting thing is once we get to chapter five continuing all the way through the rest of the book, the opposition to Jesus begins. He's not going to be honored. He's going to be opposed, despised, and rejected all the way to the cross. So the point I think Jesus is saying to His disciples in verse 44, "Though I will not be honored when we get to Galilee, which is where I'm from, my homeland, boys, we're going anyway." And if that's our savior, the mission meaning more than being accepted, then when doing the work that pleases God of bringing people in contact with Jesus, point #3) ***don't let opposition stop you, don't let opposition stop you.*** Don't let it get in your way even though you will be tempted to let it. Don't let it slow you down even though you may be threatened. Don't let it stop you even though you may be persecuted for doing it. Don't let the opposition stop you from pointing people to Jesus.

A few days ago, I was putting my son Colin to bed, he's nine years old. At that time, I laid down with him and I go through his day, what happened today, and how's it going? And so, he did that quickly and then he said, "Dad," doesn't ever do this, he goes, "Dad, do you remember when I talked to," and he started describing some of the kids in the neighborhood. "Do you remember when I talked to them about Jesus?" How could I forget it? It was back in February, he was eight and a half at the time. I'm in the house doing stuff, whatever, and I hear the door open and he runs in crying and he runs upstairs and goes under his bed crying. I'm like, "What in the world just happened?"

So I get into his room, I pull him out under his bed, put him on top, hug him like, "What's going on, buddy?" He started to tell me about it. "I was talking with," and he named some of the kids on the block, he said, "I was talking with them about Jesus and the truth versus air, and they started going after me, told me that I was," I'm trying to think of the right word, "that's disrespectful to say those kinds of things about people." Well, he brings this up now in November. What is that? 10 months later, eight months later, and he says, "Dad, that's why I don't want to talk to people about Jesus anymore." And here's what I know, it's not just nine-year-olds, it's all of us. We let opposition stop us if we're honest. And so, to encourage us, remember Jesus' words to His disciples in Matthew 5:11. These words are meant to do for them the same thing these words are meant to do for us.

Let these words encourage you to not let opposition stop you. Matthew 5:11, "Blessed are you, when others revile you," that means hate you and make fun of you, "and persecutes you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." And then Jesus adds, "Rejoice and be glad." Why? "For your reward is great in heaven." "Rejoice and be glad," why? "for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Familiar words, but let's not explain them away quickly. Let these words instead motivate you and move you when opposition comes. Let them calm your heart. Let them get you back in the game after facing opposition. Why? Because your reward in heaven is tiny, that's what it says, right? Your reward in heaven is great. Your reward in heaven is great for pushing through the threats, pushing through the hatred, pushing through the mockery, pushing through the opposition, and being faithful to the Lord and exposing lost people to Jesus the savior of the world anyway.

And push through the opposition. Why? Because you are in good company when you do. See, the greatest hero is not in the world's eyes, but where? The greatest hero is in God's eyes. The great heroes were treated the exact same way, with intense opposition when they did the same exact work. So you will be counted in one of their numbers, Old Testament prophets, counted like the great heroes of Christianity through all of church history, going all the way to the book of Acts, many of whom died being faithful. That's probably not what's going to happen to any of us here, so let's not let opposition stop us. Let's not let it stop us from being used by God in people's lives. Let's not let it stop us from leaving people with Jesus who is the true and only savior of the world.

Let's pray. Jesus, it is easy to say all of that here, and it is easy to get fired up and go, "Yes, that's true, and that's what I need to do." And then in the heat of the moment, it's also easy to fold. So Father, I pray that You would use these truths in every one of our lives to help us with those eight to 15 people that we know and love most that need You. Maybe it's more truth, maybe it's more love, maybe it's both, maybe it's the word that would be incredibly convicting, maybe it's conversations on a regular basis with our children, maybe it's having courage at our workplace or at Thanksgiving dinner. Whatever it is, help us to remember that it is an eternal privilege to get to tell people about Your Son, and that no matter what happens here, You will reward faithfulness when we don't let the opposition we are sure to face, the opposition that is growing darker and darker every day, when we don't let it stop us from giving people the one thing they need most, which is Your Son the Lord Jesus Christ, the savior of the world, and in whose name I pray. Amen.