

Work That Pleases God

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John 4:27-38

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Every week, millions of Americans spend a third of their lives working. Eight, nine, 10, maybe even more hours. Every weekday is spent doing a job. Or if you're a student, it's spent at school and then doing schoolwork. Now, Christians have inherited a secular-sacred divide from Catholicism that says a pastor, a missionary, a church planner, an evangelist... That's the Lord's work. Have you heard that? That's what you do if you're a super Christian and you can't be a super Christian unless you do something like that. Everything else is just lesser than. Now, I don't think the Bible teaches that divide at all. I think the Bible teaches that all of life is sacred even down to something like eating. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." All of life is sacred.

Now, when it comes to our jobs, we often do those to make money or to feel good about ourselves. We do our jobs to be, to be seen as great. Our jobs become the vehicle through which we live for ourselves and get praise and glory and all of that. But since Jesus is the Lord of all, all of our work should be done unto him. Now, you might have heard that, but what does that mean? Do your work unto the Lord. Trying to think of ways to just boil that down to its essence. What it means is, whether whether it's at your job, at home, at school, wherever you go, all your work should be done as if Jesus was your boss. Seeking to please Him in whatever it is that you're doing. This means that we have a higher goal than merely accomplishing our tasks. Your job and what your job allows you to do, in other words, is not an end in itself. It means that it is a means to an end and the means to the end.

The end can be seen in the first words of Matthew 28:19, which say, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." That word go is interesting. It sounds like a command, but it's not. The word is actually going. So Jesus is saying, as as you are going, make disciples. As you're going, as you're living your life, wherever it is, whatever it is that you're going to do every day, Jesus says, I give you this job as the king of the universe. I give you this mission. Make disciples wherever you go. This is a commission. It's an assignment that every Christian has been given. As we live our lives, as we do what we do, we are to make disciples. This is the work that pleases God.

God is by nature gracious. He's by nature merciful and kind and compassionate and loving. And because that's what He is by nature, the way He interacts with sinners is that He is a savior, a redeemer, a rescuer from sin, death, and hell. And the way that He does that now is he doesn't show up to individual people personally and say, "Believe in me." What does He do? He He saves people through His people. That's what he does. This is what makes our jobs, our parenting, our schooling, our recreation, the neighborhood we live in, the friends and family that

we have... This is what makes all of it sacred. Not only are we to live with Jesus as king in all of those areas, but the great commission that he gave us makes everyone of those areas our mission field.

We've been seeing this in John chapter four. Jesus is in a part of the land that the Jews didn't like going to and went out of their way to avoid. The region called Samaria. The Samaritans were their bitter enemies. So here you have Jesus with a normal everyday need for something to drink on a hot day, which sets the stage for revival in this town. What we see in Jesus in John 4 is a model for evangelism. A model for how to make disciples by sharing the truth with someone who's not yet his follower. That someone being this woman at the well. Jacob's well. His interaction with this woman is very gracious and yet it's strategic. He's kind, but he's firm. He's clear and convicting and compassionate with this woman. A woman that that no one in her village wanted to interact with, which no Jew would want to interact with, which no Jewish man would want to interact with, which no Jewish rabbi would ever interact with. Jesus specifically speaks to her.

Let's watch his example starting in verse 27. "Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you seek from her or why are you talking with her?'" Just as verse 26, He reveals to her that he is the Messiah, the long-awaited prophet that the Samaritans were waiting for. Verse 27. "In that moment, his disciples returned from looking for kosher Jewish food in Samaria." And when they see Jesus talking to a woman, notice what it says there. "They marveled." The word means they were shocked. And it wasn't just an instantaneous, I'm shocked, and then they moved on. No, they they sat in this moment of shocked-ness for for a while. As he's talking, as they're watching him talk to this woman.

See, Jesus didn't follow the female-hating cultural norms of his day, which it seems his disciples were still having trouble seeing past. But whether it's out of reverence for Jesus or embarrassment for Jesus, the text doesn't say, but they don't ask him about it at all. And I find that interesting. That when the disciples didn't understand what Jesus was doing, they didn't question him. When his disciples were confused, when they didn't have all the information about what was going on, they didn't charge him with wrongdoing. They were quiet. And I think there's a lesson in that for us. And then there's this cool indication that the writer, John, was actually there. You see verse 28? He writes there that the woman left her water jar at the well. Doesn't say why. Maybe Jesus hadn't taken that drink yet, so she left it there so he could get his drink. Maybe it's because it would slow her down. The word jar there means it's huge. It's massive. Maybe it's an indication that she'll be right back. But she leaves it there. She's off to her town to tell her people. Verse 29. "Come and see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

Remember why she's there in the middle of the day. She's there to avoid people. She's an outcast. Her life is in shambles. Her life is embarrassing. Her life is something that that nobody there would want their children's lives to become like. And all the reasons that she would have for avoiding people are no longer enough to keep her from telling the people in her town to come and see Jesus. Obviously, it's hyperbole when she says, "See a man who told me all that I ever

did." He would still be there telling her however many years. But with five husbands and live-in boyfriend, that probably constitutes most of her life. And so by describing that, he is explaining her life and, at the same time, she's convinced after that there is something special about Jesus. Because he was right about her sin without ever knowing her, which means there is a deep impact on her life.

And her question, can this be the Christ, is interesting. It expects a no answer. He couldn't be the Christ, could he? Now, this is a genius question. Remember, she's an outcast. She runs back to her town and she screams, "I've seen the Messiah!" What would they do to that? They'd be like, "Whatever. You're crazy. We can't trust you. We don't even talk to you." Instead, she goes into the town and she asks the question in such a way that they're like, "Huh, I need to come to the... I need to find out who this person is." And so verse 30, the result, is they went out of the town and were coming to him. They decide, the people in this village of Sychar, they decide to walk to Jacob's well and check him out for themselves. I thought this was clever. One author put it this way. He said, "The disciples brought Jesus food, but the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman, brought Jesus people." And from this text, we get another indication of the theme that we've been seeing throughout all of John 4. That when it comes to people in need of Jesus, this work that pleases God starts with, point #1) ***love all people with the truth. Love all people with the truth.***

Matthew 22:39 tells us to love our neighbors. And that means loving the people that we come across. Doing what's best for them. And the most loving thing you and I can do, the best thing we could possibly do for anybody, is to give them the truth about Jesus. As we've seen with Jesus, going into Samaria and talking to this outcasted woman, what we see in that is there's no legitimate barrier between people. Nothing that keeps us from people should ever be considered. All people everywhere, regardless of anything, need the truth. And we love people when we give them the truth. The truth that God is real. The truth that they have sinned against Him. The truth that Jesus died to save sinners from the eternal penalty they deserve for their sins if they will just believe in him. It is love that should drive us to give people the truth about Him.

This is what Jesus is doing by talking to this outcasted woman from Samaria. His mission encompasses everybody. Even someone as lost and shunned and despised as the Samaritan woman with five husbands and a live-in boyfriend. Even she needs the truth. That's what this text is screaming. He is the savior for everyone. No matter who they are, no matter what they've done, he's the savior for us all. Isaiah 60, verse three says, "The nations will come to the light of the Messiah. They will come to the truth about him and be saved." All people... Revelation 7. "People from every tribe and language and people and nation will be around the throne worshiping the risen king." This message of sins forgiven and eternal life. This good news is quote, "for all who believe." All who believe. Romans 1:16.

See, I've heard Christians talk about so and so is just so lost. So and so is just so given over to their sin. Almost conveying the idea that there's just no hope that they're ever going to be saved. Listen, if you lived in Sychar in that day and someone were to ask you, who is the last person to

ever be saved, you would've pointed to this woman without even thinking about it. And yet what we see in Jesus is that, no matter who a person is, what they're like, where they're from, what they've done, what's been done to them, they still need Jesus. That any tendency we have to see people as too lost or too given over to some other religion or too given over to some ideology or too consumed with a lifestyle so that they would never give their lives to Jesus... Listen, that's just an excuse to not give them the truth. And listen, it isn't just for pastors and missionaries either. Ladies, it's not just for the men in the room. Think about this woman for a second. She evangelizes all the lost people in her town. She is the spark that is used to start a believing community in a non-Jewish era. The first one in all of the world. Her efforts lead to a revival in her town. No barriers are ultimate. No excuses are legitimate. Love the people you know by giving them the truth in love.

Don't be surprised when Jesus is making a name for himself in the most unlikely and undesirable places. On Thursday, I spent almost an hour talking with a man named Paul, who God is using to save people in the fishing villages all around the Bay of Bengal in India. God is using him to tell people in the cast system, where from the moment you're born, you are locked into who you are and you can't do anything about it. And if you're in a lower cast, well that stinks for you. Be a good person and maybe in your next life you'll get to climb the ladder into a better one. And here's this man going into all these villages around them and telling them about Jesus, their true friend. That Jesus is a true friend to everybody. Doing this in places that most of us would not want to spend five minutes. Aside from the living conditions that would make all of us look filthy rich, there's Hinduism and Islam that both persecute people for becoming Christians. And here's just one man looking out at the world and going, "I'm going to love people by giving them the truth. By telling them about Jesus, the one true friend."

Now, I know most of us aren't going to do anything like that. I pray that there's someone who says, "I want to go to a people group where there's isn't a witness to Jesus and tell them about Him." I pray that God sends people like that all over the world from this church. But let's just start here. Who are the people in your life who need to know about Jesus from you? Who are the people that still need to hear about sins forgiven and acceptance with God and life forever in the presence of God? Who are the people that you've prayed for and prayed for and done good works for to show them that you're a follower of Jesus, but who still need to actually hear the gospel from you? Love them by giving them the truth. It's easy to love ourselves. It's easy to love our own comfort and peace and the relationship. It's easy to actually love the relationship more than the person when the reason you have the relationship in the first place is so that you will share Christ with them. Love them by giving them the one thing they need most, which is Christ. This is the work that pleases God who is by nature a savior.

Now, these people from this town of Sychar, they don't arrive until verse 40. And we're in verse 30. So before they do, what John does is he tells you about the conversation that took place before they arrived between Jesus and his disciples. Starting in verse 31. It says, "Meanwhile the disciples were urging him saying, 'Rabbi, eat.'" Once the woman leaves, they start trying to get

Jesus to eat the food that they brought back for him. But he uses this opportunity, genius, to explain what he's been doing in this conversation with this woman that they're embarrassed to talk to him about and He is going to do it to get them ready for their ministry. You got to realize this. There was no accident that they arrived when they did. Those words at 27, just then, point to the fact that Jesus wanted them to see him talking to her. He wanted them to be shocked. He wanted them to have this scene burned into their mind that he would talk to a Samaritan woman to help them understand that he is a savior for everybody.

They had left him weary and tired and thirsty and hungry, so they probably want him to eat. They're concerned about him. But verse 32. He has a greater concern. "He said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.'" Here's another instance of Jesus using something physical as a metaphor for something spiritual. He's spiritually full from his conversation with this woman at the well, but they don't know that, so they have this funny response. "So the disciples said to one another, 'Has anyone brought him something to eat?'" Did you slip him a sandwich? Did somebody bring him a quesadilla when we weren't looking? But what he does is he moves from the physical to the spiritual, but like the woman who didn't understand living water and like Nicodemus who didn't understand being born again, these guys don't get what he's talking about either.

So he gives them a truth in verse 34. I thought about doing a whole sermon on. Maybe I will one day. "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.'" This is a statement where Jesus summarizes his entire life. This is this is what drives me. I don't just exist. I live. I have a passion. A mission. The Father sent me to do his will. When I accomplish His work in the world, I do his will and that work is seeking and saving lost people. And notice he says that was his food. This ministry sustained him. This work satisfied him. It wasn't something that was an option that he'll get to one day if he has the time. This is what he hungered for. This is what he thirsted for. Doing God's will and accomplishing God's work of salvation with his life.

His conversation with that woman, in other words, did more to strengthen and fulfill him than any food the disciples could have given him. Giving a sinner the truth satisfied him more than any food. And by saying this, he's not just talking about himself. It's brilliant. What what he's also saying in these words in verse 36 is, don't you want that too? Don't you want to know what that's like? To have food that's better than food? If that's you, if you're thinking, yeah, I want that too, then point #2) ***Pray for a passion for lost people. Pray for a passion for lost people.*** Ask the Lord to give you a taste of what Jesus was talking about with his disciples here. Ask him to give you a similar kind of satisfaction in doing his will and accomplishing his work like Jesus is talking about in this text.

See, it may be that you haven't loved to lost people in your life by giving them the truth because a passion for lost people needs to be inflamed in your heart. You need to be reminded of that and inflamed with a passion for them. Let Romans 10:1 be your prayer. Paul says this. "My heart's desire and prayer to God is that they may be saved." He's talking about the Jewish people,

but take that prayer and apply it to whoever it is in your life that that needs Christ. No barrier stood in Paul's way. All people being saved was his passion? We get a glimpse of this, 1 Corinthians 9:22 says, "I have become all things to all people. Nothing is going to separate me from these people. No barrier is going to stand in my way. I'm going to blaze through all the barriers that, by all means, any possible way I can to get them the truth, I'm going to do it that I might save some."

Then he says, "I do it all for the sake of the gospel that I may share with them in its blessings." What does that mean? That last phrase. That I might share with them in its blessings. Well, the people he's talking about are not saved. He gives them the gospel. God saves them and in that moment, what blessings do they experience? They experience eternal life. They've experienced forgiveness of sins. They experience adoption into God's family. That's the blessing they experience, but he says, I get to share with them in its blessings. What blessings does he share in being the one that God used to do that through? Jesus says, "That's my food. That's what fills me up. That's what satisfies me." You can hear Paul's passion in 2 Corinthians 5:20, where he says, "We're ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us. We implore you. We beg you. We beseech you. We urge you. On behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." It's Jesus in Matthew 9:38 telling his followers to, quote, "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers out into his harvest." And to pray that honestly would not be to pray, God, send somebody else. To pray that honestly would be what? God, send me.

So if you've been a Christian for a while, it may be that passion for lost people can fade over time as your passion for the Bible and fellowship and other churchy things increases. All that stuff is fine. There's nothing wrong with that at all, but but lost people have to be our passion too. See, we can't be so turned off by what they say and what they do that we forget that they're our mission field. Actually, the things that push us away from lost people are the very reasons why we need to give them Christ, right? In the context of John 4, Jesus had every reason to be repulsed by this woman. And He's holy! He is the holy one of God. He had every reason to be like, "I'm finding somebody else." Too sinful. Too wicked. But no. God's God's will and work in the world is taking the truth to the people that need it. And that's everybody who needs Christ. And Jesus says this is his food and it will become your food and my food too. It will satisfy us like food does. It will drive us like food does. We will be dissatisfied and bothered and feel weak if we haven't talked to someone about Jesus in a while just like we would feel if what? If we didn't have food for a while.

Listen, if you have a passion for lost people, if you love them by giving them the truth in love, here's the thing. You will experience what Jesus is talking about here. And you know it if you've done it. If you've shared Christ to somebody, if you've given them the gospel, what does it do to you? It fires you up, right? That was awesome! I want to do that again! That's what happens. It becomes just like Jesus is talking about here. You will experience the strength and the satisfaction and excitement and even joy that Jesus is talking about here in verses 32 and 34.

When you do this work, it'll excite you. It'll strengthen you. You want to get out and talk to more people about Jesus because of it.

And I want you to think about this too. "Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Hebrew 6. So that, if it excited Jesus to tell people about him, don't you think it still excites him now? You bet it does. When his people have the same passion for lost people that he had here, that excites him. Regardless of what telling people about him is thought of here. Regardless of what will happen to you if you share Christ with somebody. The rejection, the mockery, whatever. Whatever it's thought of here, just remember. In heaven, with the master, with the king, with the savior, He is well pleased when we do this work.

Now in verse 35, Jesus moves from his work to their work and he commissions them into this work with another illustration to make his point. Verse 35 says, "Do 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." In other words, his point is... A farmer, he's got to plant the seeds and then he's got to wait until the seeds have grown and matured and now they're ready to reap. He said, no, no, no, not here. The seeds were planted just now in this woman's life and the harvest is coming towards us. It takes months for a physical harvest, he said, but the spiritual harvest is ready now, guys. That's what he's saying. They don't have time to relax. They don't have time to rest. The time to work is now.

Notice verse 35. He uses these words. Look up. Look. Lift up your eyes and see. What does he want them to look at? I think it refers to the Samaritans who are coming towards them right now, wearing their traditional clothing, which was white... which is white. Samaritans still exist today. This is obviously a spiritual harvest of souls. Look at verse 36. "Already, right now, the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life..." Gathering fruit for eternal life. It's a harvest of souls... "so that sower and reaper may rejoice together." In other words, they have no time to wait. The reapers are already receiving wages. People are coming to Christ. Rewards are to be had. Souls are to be won. Give people the truth. Call them to believe. And you will... verse 36... you will experience the joy of being used to save people, guys. And so get out there and talk to them. That's what he's saying.

Then he concludes. Verse 37. "For here the saying holds true. One sows and another reaps." What does that mean? He explains it in verse 38. "I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored and you've entered into their labor." In other words, he's saying, I'm commissioning you into a task, a job, above all your other jobs. I'm sending you on a mission to reap souls for eternal life. The work the disciples will do in harvesting Samaritan souls and, beyond that, any other souls, it's because others... verse 38... the sowers went before them. They plowed the fields. They planted the seeds of truth in people's lives. And so that when these disciples, they go tell people about Jesus and they receive eternal life, partially that's because of the work that other people did before them.

Now, the question is, who are these others? Right? Did you think that? Others? Who are you talking about, Jesus? Well, he doesn't say. But it's likely anybody who preached the word to the

people that are being harvested. So so it would be Moses. It would be John the Baptist maybe. 3:23 suggests he had a ministry in Samaria. All the way down to their Sabbath school teachers. The people that taught them the Bible. Maybe their parents at an early age teaching them truth about God. Even Jesus in this moment who planted the seed in this woman. And even this woman who went to her town and planted seeds in all those people's hearts. All of that. He says, "You get to be a part of that work." They planted the seeds. We planted the seeds. You get to reap the harvest and, together, you get to be a part of this work. Well What's he trying to do in their lives?

Well From love to passion, you and I, we will be doers of God's will and accomplishers of this work that pleases him among lost people in the world when, point #3) ***we have an urgency for evangelism. Have an urgency for evangelism.*** All the talk of harvest is not just meant to encourage them and enlist them in the work Jesus started with this woman at the well, but it was meant to give them an urgency, a determination, to get in the work as soon as possible. See, we may love lost people and we may have a passion for them. You may hear that and go, point number one, God's doing that in my heart. Point number two, God's doing that in my heart. But we can become lazy and comfortable and distracted and wasteful with all that stuff that makes up modern American life. So while praying for a passion for lost people, let's pray for God to give us an urgency for evangelism. An urgency to give people the truth.

Let's see it like Jude did. Jude verse 23 describes this as, quote, "snatching people out of the fire of hell." Let's see it like that. Let's see it like James does in James 5:20 when he says, quote, "Let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wanderings will save his soul from death." Doesn't that give you an urgency? I'm going to save somebody from death. Snatch them out of the fire. It's the heart that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 9:16 where he says, "Necessity is laid upon me." That word necessity means pressure, force, constraint. Even distress and tribulation in my soul. He says, "Necessity is laid upon me." And then he says, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel."

Think about the farmer. Looks out at the field and his wife tells him it's ready to be harvested. Imagine the farmer that looks out at the field ready to be harvested and goes, "Honey, let's go on vacation." What would that do to the harvest? The rotten die. The harvest is going to die. It's done. Jesus is using that as an illustration to say the 100% death rate for every one of us still stands. All people alive today will die soon and most will go into an eternity away from the presence of God where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Teeth gnashing in rage. Gnashing in disappointment. Gnashing in the hope that they could just get one more chance. Death is reaping the nations as we speak. So like the farmer who looks at the field and doesn't say, "Time to go on vacation," but says, "Time to get into the work," there's no room for apathy. There's no room for procrastination, there's no room for a lack of urgency. Our work to reach lost people with the truth never takes a vacation. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord in faith will be saved, so let's be a people with an urgency to take Jesus to everyone we know.

Jesus put it this way in Matthew 9:37. The harvest is plentiful. It's great. It's massive. It's extensive. There are lots of souls to be saved, but the workers are few. See, it's not because there are just a few Christians. It's because only a few of his followers have an urgency, a passion, a burden for the lost. So you and me, let's let's not accept excuses. Let's not accept justifications. Let's let's see people as ready to be harvested and go out and harvest them with love. Harvest them with truth and harvest them with the gospel. Harvest them with a passion for their souls.

It's interesting. In verse 38, you can see that word labor repeated three times. That word labor speaks of exertion. Exhaustion. It's not easy work. And we see this in Jesus who did this work of seeking and saving the lost. This work that pleases God. He did that and it was full of discouragement for Him, right? When he arrives on the hills overlooking Jerusalem on this last week of his life and he looks out at Jerusalem, do you remember what he does? He weeps, right? He weeps over it because he looks at these people and he says, "How I long to gather you to myself, but you didn't want to. You rejected." All the way up to the cross. He screams, "It is finished." What's finished? This work that he's talking about here in John 4. This work of the Messiah and doing everything that needed to be done so that all who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life. This work that he did, even though it infinitely pleased God, got him disappointment and even death, which means it's going to be full of discouragement for you and for me also.

But because of that, I don't want you to forget what I said in verse 36. Really what he said in verse 36. If you take this work seriously, if you love all people with the truth, if you have a passion for them, if you have an urgency that drives you to share the gospel with them, on the day when you look at your life and say, it is finished, and go into eternity, there will be... verse 36... wages ready for you. Your reward in heaven will be there for the work that you did faithfully. Your reward in heaven will not be for how many people believed through you, but for how many people you faithfully gave the opportunity to believe through you by sharing the truth with them. And, verse 36, there will be fruit. Fruit which refers to actual people who will be in heaven because you were faithful and God used you in your faithfulness to give them the truth and forgive their sins and save their souls and give them eternal life all through you.

So in moments of fear, in times of discouragement, when everything inside of you wants to stay silent, remember. God sees it all and he will reward you for the good works that he created you to faithfully do. And on that day, verse 36, the ones who planted the seeds of truth in people's hearts, the faithful moms around the dinner table, the faithful Sunday school teachers, the faithful teachers at school, the faithful coworkers, the faithful students on the basketball teams, the one who looked out at the people and said, "That's my mission field. I'm going to give them Christ," the people that planted the seeds and the ones who reaped the harvest... When those seeds grew and those people believed... What does it say at the end of verse 36? They will rejoice together. As they're in heaven together and like, "Look at that guy! I shared the gospel with him. Yeah, he believed through me. Oh my gosh. God used you and me to save that guy. This is amazing!" That's ready for you. That's ready for me. If wherever we are going in our lives, we seek to make

disciples. May God make it harder to go to hell in the East Valley of Arizona because we take texts like this one seriously. Let's pray.

Jesus, if we do, it will 100% be because of your grace in our lives. So please use this truth, use this text, to motivate each of us to live in light of your statement in verse 34. That it is your food to do the will of him who sent you and accomplish the work of saving sinners from their sins. Enlist us, use us, motivate us. Give us a passion, an urgency, for this in our lives. And Jesus, it's obvious that, whenever I preach, whether it's people in the room or watching... It's obvious that there are people that need to believe in you. Need to trust in. Need to give their lives to you. And so I pray that your compassion, your kindness, your love in this text will melt their hard hearts. Will weaken their knees so that they bow to you and trust in you as Savior and Lord. Use this text to impact each and every one of our lives, I pray. For the glory of your name, amen.