

JOH 4:31-38 "Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." 33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" 34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35 Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

This section is in the context of the woman at the well who has gone back into town to tell everyone that she has found the Messiah. She had been speaking with the Lord Jesus when His disciples came back with food and found Him talking with her.

As soon as they come up to Jesus she decides to leave and now our Lord is left with His disciples whose intention is to sit down at the well and enjoy a meal with their master, thus the statement, "Rabbi, eat something."

Keep in mind that the disciples and Jesus are on their way back to Galilee. Jacob's well is only a way station on their trek out of Samaria. And before they get back on the road they want to get a good meal in them to strengthen them for the journey, since they've probably got a good five hours left of daylight to get down the road.

JOH 4:31-33 ... "Rabbi, eat something." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." 33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

What is fascinating about this exchange is that it is quite similar to what our Lord said to the Samaritan woman at the well. In her case it was about water and our Lord was speaking to her about spiritual water, which she simply didn't understand because she was not thinking in spiritual terms.

In the case here with the disciples it's about food. Our Lord is speaking about spiritual food while the disciples are so hungry that the only thing that concerns them is, 'when are we going to fill our stomachs?'

And evidently out of courtesy for their master they were not going to eat until He started. It's like being at a church dinner where everyone is starving as the smells of all of the food are making everyone's mouths water. But no one wants to start until someone prays. And so, you've got a few in the crowd who are trying to get the ball rolling by asking where the pastor is so we can get this show on the road.

But when the disciples are just about to start tearing the bread apart and maybe dipping into some tasty olive oil and spices Jesus makes the statement that He's already eaten, or at least that's what they thought He said. "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

And so, they look at each other and start wondering where did He get the food? Well, Jesus sees their confusion and He doesn't waste any time in explaining what He means, which by the way He never did in any detail with the woman at the well.

He alluded to spiritual water, but never did He just come out and explain what He meant by that. Instead He demonstrates that He has the authority and power from God to show her that He is the Messiah.

But with His disciples He takes the time to explain these statements, which may seem strange, and He clears them up for the benefit of them to learn spiritual truths. And, by the way, we see our Lord doing this on other occasions for the benefit of His disciples.

When their friend Lazarus died only Jesus knew, the disciples did not, and when it was time to go back to raise him from the dead so as to glorify the Father Jesus made this statement.

JOH 11:11-13 ... "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep."

Again, they didn't understand that our Lord was using natural language to speak of spiritual truths. And so, if someone says that a

friend has fallen asleep you would probably not think that he's died. And neither did the disciples.

And so, our Lord then makes it abundantly clear what He meant by that statement.

JOH 11:14-15 "So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Toward the end of His earthly ministry Jesus was telling His disciples that He was going back to the Father and that they would no longer see Him.

JOH 16:17-18 "Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father?'" 18 They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying."

And so Jesus told them plainly that He came into this world to do the Father's will and that it was now time to accomplish that will and go back to the Father.

JOH 16:29-31 "Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. 30 Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God." 31 "You believe at last!" Jesus answered."

For the sake of His disciples Jesus would often explain the parables to them that He didn't explain to the crowds. And so, when they asked each other at the well, "where did He get food," Jesus hears them and explains in plain language what He just said to them in parable type language.

JOH 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

Here Jesus defines what food He is talking about. But the bigger question is why He uses this language at all. Why does He compare food with doing the will of His Father?

Well, there are some good reasons. And the primary one has to do with what is most important in the lives of human beings as it relates to sustaining and satisfying life. Food is one of those things people cannot do without for very long. It is one of those things we are all always thinking about, at least three times a day.

In the days of our Lord it was something you thought about often because even after a meal you would have to immediately start making preparations for the next. It's not like they could go to McDonald's and just grab dinner. A lot of preparation would go into each meal and it would take the better part of a day to get it ready and then cook it.

If you've ever worked in a restaurant this same principle is at work. At the place where I work they've got a good sized kitchen which feeds about 50 people a day. They start breakfast for them around 6:00 AM and then start serving around 7:15. Breakfast is over around 8:30. But they don't wait until noon to start preparing lunch. They start preparing lunch right after breakfast has been served.

And so, for the disciples food was of primary concern in their lives. Knowing this, Jesus can say that My food is to do the will of My Father who sent Me. Now, when Jesus said this, it would have put into perspective for them where Jesus placed His priorities when it came to serving His Father.

And by the way, service is at the forefront of what Jesus is conveying to His disciples. As A.W. Pink points out in his commentary on John, he says, "note how he refers to God. He does not say here, "My food is to do the will of My Father," but "the will of Him who sent Me."

The point is that Jesus was sent by the Father which teaches us that the only thing Jesus had in mind was to serve the One who sent Him, and to accomplish the will of the One who sent Him.

In other words, Jesus had humbled Himself to do the will of the Father so as to bring glory to the Father.

But what this shows us is that despite how the will of the Father and Son are identical, their accomplishing of that will is not. This goes back to the unity of their being, since there is only one God, but it also shows their distinction in persons since it was not the Father or the Holy Spirit who took on flesh and died on that cross for our sins.

That was the person of the Son of God. The Father is the One who commissioned the Son's work. And yet, both the Son and the Father, as well as the Holy Spirit, all played a major role in determining the salvation of men before the foundations of the world, and what the role of each person in the Godhead would be.

1PE 1:18-21 "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."

The Father chose His people in the Son to die for their sins before man was ever created and given the opportunity to choose to sin. God knew that Adam would rebel against His will and yet, knowing this, He still wanted to have fellowship with man and lavish man with His love and mercy.

**John 6:39** <sup>39</sup> "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

And so, our Lord Jesus was chosen before the creation of the world to make sure that we could be brought back into a peace relationship with the Father. It's as though the Father said, 'Son You are their only hope. Go get them for Me.'

And out of love and obedience to the Father, the Son said, 'Yes, Father this is My will and My desire as well. I willingly go.'

This is the food Jesus speaks of to His disciples. The thing that sustains human life is food, and the analogy Jesus uses here is that the thing that sustains and motivates and compels Jesus to come into this world is one thing and one thing only; to do the will of Him who sent Me, because both He and the Father love us too much to see us die in our sins.

JOH 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

And so, what Jesus is teaching His disciples here, and really all of us, is that service to our heavenly Father needs to be our primary concern so as to accomplish His will in this earth.

Remember, just as Jesus was chosen before the foundations of the earth to secure our salvation, we have been chosen before the foundations of the earth to be a part of His forever family and do what we have been chosen to do; love and obey our Lord.

EPH 1:4 "For he chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

EPH 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

You and I in Christ have been given tasks to do by our God. And those tasks revolve around the gifts we've been given by the Holy Spirit. This is why it's so important that we begin seeking the Lord as we ask Him for guidance and direction as to what gifts we've got if we don't know and then how to use those gifts to accomplish His will.

Now, for some things we don't need such revelation outside of the Scriptures. We've already got plenty of revelation concerning God's will. For example, we don't need some special revelation outside of the word of God to know that all of God's people have been given the task to share the gospel of Jesus Christ when given the opportunity.

We don't need some additional special revelation to know that we are called by God to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ so as to be conformed into His image. And we know that His word applied to our lives accomplishes this sanctification according to Jesus' own words.

JOH 17:17 "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

As we are sanctified in Christ we become more like Him, which is to say that we put on the mind of Christ. We begin thinking more in spiritual terms. We begin seeking the things above. We begin seeing how important the things of God's Kingdom are and how the things of this world are not quite as important.

In other words, we begin saying along with Jesus, my food is to do the will of Him who chose me and sent me to accomplish His will in this world as I play a role in extending His kingdom.

No longer are my own desires the only thing that moves me. It doesn't mean we neglect our needs and those of others, but we have a higher calling to which we must place a great priority. And when we begin doing this the things of this world grow more and more faint.

And what we find is that our attitude is more like Christ's where we actually begin seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in our lives.

In our Lord's case He knew precisely what it was that He was to do in accomplishing the will of Father who sent Him. In fact, Jesus points this out later in this gospel.

JOH 6:38-40 "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

When you and I consider the salvation we have in Christ we need to understand that we are the direct result of Christ accomplishing the Father's will. He knew you and me before the foundations of the world and when He came into this world He knew you and I were going to be a part of His kingdom, and He knew that He would lose not one of us the Father gave Him.

And this should encourage all of our hearts, to know that what Jesus came into the world to accomplish He did and will in fact accomplish, and that is that He will raise us up to glory and eternal life. To suggest that we can't know that we have eternal life or that we could possibly lose it is to lose sight of the Father's will and power.

His will; I will lose none. His power; I will raise them up at the last day. You can take that to the bank, and so could that Samaritan woman. But knowing His will ought to cause us to appreciate that we are on the receiving end of His will which is to bring us home to Himself one day and that out of gratitude to do His will as given to us.

And here's the amazing thing about doing God's will. You'll notice that Jesus says, that His food is to do the will of Father who sent Him into this world. In other words, Jesus' concern was to accomplish the Father's will by doing all that the Father required of Him.

You and I, as well as all believers, have a tendency to concentrate more on the results of the doing than the actual doing. But it is not the results that we are ultimately able to bring about. We are to be concerned with trusting that God will take our "doing" and He will do something with it that will bring honor and glory to His own name.

For example, we all want to see people come to Christ for the forgiveness of their sin. But we think that if they don't make a profession of faith at that moment then our doing was ineffectual or without any kind of fruit.

But the fruit of our works is not up to us, but the Holy Spirit. Even in Jesus's case, it was the doing of the Father's will who sent Him that gave Him the kind of pleasure and satisfaction that He could equate it with eating the kind of meal that satisfies and puts a smile on one's face.

It was the doing of the Father's will by bringing that Samaritan woman into the Kingdom which brought delight to Jesus. And this is what the Lord wants from us. He wants us doing His will, not worrying about the results of our doing.

This is the primary reason I continue to labor in this field called Port Charlotte. People will often ask me why I continue to go forward when they don't see the results they expect. The problem is it is not my place, nor anyone's, to question the results as long as we are faithfully "doing" the will of God which He has called us to do. The results are up to Him.

And if we take this attitude then we can delight in the actual doing of God's will for this church as much as we can delight in the results which I trust God will do. It's just understanding our role in the Kingdom of God.

Just as we can't save anyone, but are called to be witnesses to the truth of the gospel, we cannot turn the hearts of people to understand the importance of this kind of ministry where a great deal of emphasis is placed on teaching the word of God verse by verse, and discipling the flock of Christ to do what God has called them to do.

We can't create those kinds of results, but we can "do" the kinds of works which will be used by God to accomplish the results He wants at the time in which He wants to accomplish them.

And so, we need to take heart in the laboring part of advancing the kingdom of God just as much as in the harvesting part which is exactly where Jesus is going in the next few verses.

JOH 4:35-38 "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the

reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

Let's take a look at these verses.

JOH 4:35 "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

Jesus is saying that they have an understanding about natural things like harvesting. They expect the process to be a part of that harvesting which includes preparing the ground and planting and then waiting.

And so, Jesus makes the analogy that just as you can expect a harvest of natural crops you can also expect a spiritual harvest when God begins to ripen the fruit. And in this case in Samaria Jesus has picked the first grain of wheat, if you will, as He has opened the eyes of this woman. And as the townspeople are now coming out to meet Jesus our Lord points them out to His disciples and says, the harvest is now here.

'I've given life to the crops and you need to get ready to do the doing part of the reaping of the harvest.' And here's the beauty of being part of the kingdom of God. All the players have an equal share.

JOH 4:36 "Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together."

We have a tendency to give more honor to the reaper. After all, that's where it appears all the action is. The sowing part seems so mundane. You dig a hole you plant the seed and then wait. What's so exciting about that? But the harvest, that's where it's at. Everyone is excited about the fruit of the labor. Everyone is excited to gather the crop because that's where the wages are earned.

But Jesus puts it into perspective by saying that both the sower and the reaper need to be glad together, which is to say that being a harvester is not more important than being a sower. Both are needed. And so, simply because we may not be experiencing the kind of harvest we would like to see that doesn't make our work of sowing unimportant.

In fact, it only makes the harvesting that much more sure, because we know that we have not labored in vain and that it's only a matter of time before the harvest is brought about by our Lord when we least expect it.

Did these disciples expect a harvest? In fact, were they even looking for a harvest? No. In fact, they were surprised that Jesus was talking to what would be the fruit of that harvest, the Samaritan woman. And then the only other concern they had was, "let's eat lunch."

Jesus is allowing them to be part of a harvest they had nothing to do with. They neither worked the soil, or planted the seed, but they were going to be harvesters in the work. Not necessarily harvesters just in Samaria, though they would experience a small part of that, but harvesters in the greater sense that they would soon be sent out into all the world to bear witness to the risen Christ and see the results of the labors of many.

JOH 4:38 "I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

The laborers in this case would have included the prophets and saints of old as well as John the Baptist. As Peter says in Acts...

ACT 10:42-43 "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Those are the people who have laid the ground work for the entrance of the Messiah into the world. How else would this Samaritan woman have known of the Messiah unless someone told her?

And we know that it wasn't these disciples, and for that matter it wasn't even Jesus. Others had plowed the fields in Samaria and Jesus is honoring them.

If you've ever been a reaper of the harvest as you've led someone to Christ there is no greater feeling and delight than to bring someone into the presence of Jesus and have them say, 'yes I want the Lord and His salvation.'

But, if you've only been a sower and a laborer in the field you need to know that God sees your work and honors you for being the one who tends to the ground with a faithful hand. As far as God is concerned both sower and reaper are just as important as the other.

But whether we sow or reap or do both, the point our Lord is making is that whatever the Father has called us to do we need to be doing the will of Him who sent us. And as long as we will honor our God in the work He has given us to do He will accomplish His will in our lives and in this community and in this church.

1CO 15:58 "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."