

Last week we left Jesus speaking with His disciples at Jacob's well as He exhorted them to consider how the fields were white for harvest. And of course He meant the fields of humanity, as others who had gone before had done much of the hard work of breaking up the ground, planting the seed and tending to the fields until the crops were ready to harvest.

And one of the things we saw last week was how the harvest really has more to do with the One who is able to bring life to the crops, if you will. Our job, as believers in Christ, is to sow the word, and water the fields with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but it must be God the Holy Spirit who brings life to that word in the hearts of people.

If it were a simple matter of just giving people information about Jesus Christ, which became the determining factor as to whether or not someone believes, then we could just be an information outlet where it would be incumbent upon us to get this information out and make it as clear as possible.

And in fact, this has happened with the proliferation of the gospel through radio, television, the Internet and other means to disseminate this glorious good news. And yet, with the greatest ability in the modern world to give people this information, much of the world at best only pays lip service to receiving this gospel, or at worst outright rejects Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And so, in one sense we can say that despite all of the planting of the word and tending the ground, as we water the fields of men's hearts with the truth of the gospel, the harvest is not taking place in many cases because particular fields are not white for harvest.

You'll notice in our text that Jesus Christ doesn't make this statement about the fields white for harvest until after the Samaritan woman accepts His claim as the Messiah. And the reason for this is because at this point it is quite apparent that the Holy Spirit has now opened her eyes to the truth.

This is the determining factor for the harvest. It must be God who brings life to a person before that soul can be harvested, or brought into the Kingdom of God as they accept Jesus Christ by faith alone as their Lord and Savior.

Simply sharing the gospel with someone is not the harvest, it's part of the process which leads to the harvest. And so, when Jesus says in our text, "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," He is saying that these particular Samaritans are ready to accept him as their Messiah because the Holy Spirit has given them eyes to see and ears to hear as the soil of their hearts have been prepared by God Himself.

And our job as believers is to lead them to the Savior. That is the harvest. Much of the work we've seen in this ministry here in Port Charlotte has really had more to do with the breaking up of the ground with the truth of God's word and planting the seed of the gospel. This work is essential, which is why we cannot give up.

That would be like a farmer turning over the ground with his tractor, putting the seed into the ground, and then walking away from that field because he didn't reap any crops the day after he planted.

I've seen more people over the years walk away from this work for that very reason. They equate the harvest with the planting and they're not willing to stick around until God brings about the fullness of those crops which I believe He is about to do. They assume that simply because someone plants, that the crop must be ready to reap within their time frame.

But remember, this is God's crop. It is His harvest. And the fields will only be ready to reap once He has given life to them as He has done, and is doing, in the lives of these Samaritans at this point in their lives as we read in our text.

JOH 4:39-42 "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers. 42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

What changed here in this little town of Samaria? Was it the eloquent delivery of the gospel by the disciples? Well, we know this isn't the case because they had not shared the gospel with these people. In fact, they weren't even willing to do so.

Like Jonah, who did everything he could to avoid giving the hope of a gracious and forgiving God to the people of Nineveh, these disciples at this point in their lives would never have considered giving the good news of the Messiah to the Samaritans.

Well, if it wasn't the eloquent delivery of the gospel from the disciples, what was it that turned these Samaritans around? Well, it must have been the convincing and articulate pronouncement of this woman at the well as to how she met the Messiah.

After all, we're told that, "many of the Samaritans from that town believed because of the woman's testimony..."

Really. What part of this woman's life had any credibility to it to convince the town's people that she met the Messiah? Absolutely none. She was an adulteress and just this side of being a prostitute. And yet, this very woman was doing what every believer is called to do and that is to bear witness to the Messiah whether others accept Him or not.

She didn't know if there would be a harvest of their hearts, but that wasn't going to stop her from planting the seed. And so, as we said earlier, the harvest is not ultimately up to you and me. It is up to God who causes the growth. That doesn't mean that we are unimportant in the process. In fact, this is the amazing thing about the harvest. Without you and me planting the seed and watering it with love and truth there would be no harvest. That's the way God designed it.

That does not mean that God needs us in this process. He is God and He has the ability to bring people to Himself through the rocks on the ground if that's what He chooses to do.

Do we not read of the joy of the people who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah as they cried out in the gospel of Luke?

LUK 19:38-40 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" 40 "I tell you," he replied, ***"if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."***

Nothing will keep God from announcing and proclaiming His Son's mission to save men. And yet, He has made it clear that He has placed in the hands of men the heavenly message from God. What a privilege. But again, we must realize that it is not the mere

announcement of the message that saves men, but God who causes the growth.

This is why we should never become discouraged when we don't see the results we expect. We just need to be doing more planting and more tending of the ground of men's hearts, knowing that when God causes the harvest it will be something we won't be able to take credit for.

That's the point Jesus was making with His disciples when He said to them in 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."

In our text this morning we see that the disciples continue not to have to work to receive the harvest. In fact, it is a Samaritan woman who is going to do some planting here as the town's people now respond to her message.

JOH 4:39 "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

Her testimony is the thing which gets their attention as the Holy Spirit uses that testimony to bring some of these Samaritans into the Kingdom of God. We've mentioned this earlier in this study of John when we touched on John the Baptist's testimony of Jesus Christ, but it's worth repeating.

The word testimony, in the case of this Samaritan woman, is not just a recounting of wonderful things Jesus has told her, though it would certainly include that. The word testimony is the Greek word *martureo*, which is where we get our English word martyr.

And it essentially means to be a witness, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something. And so, when we give our testimony to people it will certainly include what God has done in our lives, but a true testimony must bear witness to who Jesus Christ is and what He has done in dying for the penalty of our sin.

If we don't bear witness to this truth of Christ's redemptive work we are not giving a full testimony. That doesn't mean we are giving a false testimony if for some reason we don't share the gospel with someone we're talking to about what Christ has done in our lives.

I know that in some cases it's difficult to share the gospel. In many of those cases we can only tell of the joy we have in a personal relationship with Christ. But in explaining our joy or our hope or our delight in knowing God through Christ, there needs to be some point where we instruct people as to how they can know the one true God.

Simply saying that God has changed my life. Or simply saying that I now have direction in my life because of Jesus Christ is not the gospel. It may be a result of the gospel, but it's not the heart of the gospel.

The message of the gospel, or good news, is that despite the fact that you are a sinner condemned to hell, Christ came to die in your place and gives you eternal life as the One who took our penalty for sin and rose from the dead defeating sin and death.

Now, we may not use that precise language in every case, but we are not loving people by keeping from them the truth of their sin. Only sinners need a Savior. But we are also not loving people if we do not exhort them to make a decision for Christ.

I heard a commercial on the radio about volunteer programs, be it the United Way, Red Cross, or other programs like that. And one of the lines in the commercial is, the reason many people don't volunteer is that no one has ever asked them to volunteer.

In a similar way, we can say that people don't come to Christ because other believers don't ask them to embrace Christ for the forgiveness of their sin. We kind of skirt around the edges and hint at what they might need to do. But we don't come right out and say, would you like to have your sins forgiven? Would you like Jesus Christ to be your Savior?

I know that sounds scary and may be a bit intimidating, but what is the alternative? Eternal separation from God? Is that really an alternative?

For this Samaritan woman it wasn't. She knew how the town's people felt about her. She knew that they might scoff at her. But in her joy she couldn't contain herself as she wanted others to know this hope found in the Messiah.

And as a result of this brand new baby believer being faithful to be a witness for Christ we're told that many in the town believed in Him. And keep in mind that none of these people had seen Jesus. None of these people had witnessed Him healing the sick or raising

the dead. There were no signs and wonders accompanying His ministry among them.

They heard the word of truth. The Holy Spirit took that truth and opened their eyes, and they believed. What a testimony to God's saving grace and mercy. And what a testimony to this woman's faith and faithfulness.

JOH 4:40-41 "So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers."

This is such a stark contrast to what Jesus experienced in Jerusalem when He went up there after the wedding feast at Cana. There the Jews were skeptical of Him and were actually indignant because of His zeal for the house of His Father when He drove the merchants and money changers out of there.

It was there where the Jews demanded to know what authority He had to waltz into the temple and drive everyone out. And it was there when He spoke of His resurrection from the dead as He used the temple to illustrate this.

JOH 2:18-19 "Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

The Jews demanded a miracle from Jesus. They wanted some sort of sign to demonstrate that He was sent from God. The Samaritans demanded nothing. They weren't looking for a sign, nor were they looking for anything other than the assurance that Jesus was who He said He was.

But the assurance they sought would be met, not through a miracle, but through the testimony of the word of God. We're told that they wanted Jesus, together with His disciples, to stay there in Samaria, and so our Lord agreed to stay an additional two days.

He must have made it clear to them that He was on His way to Galilee and that He needed to get back there soon. The Samaritans beg Him to stay with them as long as possible before our Lord gets back on the road. But what I find fascinating is what is not recorded for us in the text.

JOH 4:40-41 "So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers."

These Samaritans were so intrigued with what this woman had told them that they needed to see for themselves this Prophet/Messiah. And so, they leave their fields, their businesses, their flocks and come out to Jesus.

But what is not recorded are the words Jesus shared with them over that two day period which would have caused many more to believe. What do you think those words were?

Do you think they were words of wisdom about how to lead one's life? Do you think they were words of how one must follow the law if they were to be right with God? I don't think so.

I believe that what Jesus shared with these Samaritans were words they would have already heard. Words which came from the Scriptures. I believe Jesus took them to the Old Testament and showed them how the Messiah had to fulfill these words.

I believe that Jesus shared with them how He was that seed born of the woman who would come to crush the head of Satan as we read in Genesis 3:15. He may have told them of His birth into this world and how we was born of a virgin.

ISA 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

These are things I'm sure Jesus had already shared with His disciples and so this would have been a reinforcement for them as well; things like the town in which the Messiah must be born.

MIC 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from [eternity]."

Jesus may have shared how the Scriptures tell us that the Messiah must be of the tribe of Judah.

GEN 49:10 "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his."

And of course Jesus was of the tribe of Judah as the writer of Hebrews points out.

HEB 7:14 "For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah...."

Along with being of the tribe of Judah the Messiah must also be of the line of David, narrowing the parameters of who this Messiah must be.

ISA 11:1-2 "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD..."

Jesse is the father of David, and of course the Messiah Jesus fulfilled this as we see that He is the son of David as the lineage of the Messiah is given in the gospel of Matthew.

MAT 1:1 "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:..."

Jesus would probably have spoken of many of the prophecies which He would fulfill in the future, not the least of which was spoken of to the Jews in Jerusalem only days before when He spoke of His resurrection from the dead as He told them that He would raise the temple of His body in three days.

And this would preclude that He must die as the Savior of the world which the Old Testament Scriptures also foretold.

ISA 53:4-5,10 "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 10 Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand."

These Samaritans probably didn't eat or sleep much in those two days as they sat at our Lord's feet as Jesus encouraged them and showed them that He was their Messiah, their Savior. They heard it firsthand and they believed.

JOH 4:41-42 "And because of his words many more became believers. 42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just

because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Many became believers because of what Jesus told them. And yet there is no indication that He performed any signs or wonders for them. It was the word of God which brought them to an understanding of the truth as the Spirit of God opened their eyes.

This is why we don't need to be consumed with any attempt other than the word of God when it comes to bringing people into the Kingdom of Christ. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

HEB 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

There are those today who suggest that unless we share the gospel as it is accompanied by signs and wonders then we're not utilizing all of the tools we need to bring people to Christ. Or, unless we create the right environment for people receiving Christ, they won't believe.

And so, we may hear how we need a church building. "People just don't take to a school, they don't view it as God's house."

My answer is, that's probably right. But instead of a church building I think we ought to conduct services by a well. If it was good enough for Jesus, it should be good enough for us.

Or maybe we should conduct services across from the court house. After all it was Peter who preached Christ near the temple in Jerusalem and three thousand were added in one day. Maybe just a central location in an open market, like that of the temple, is all we need.

Do you understand what I'm saying? It's not the location, it's not signs and wonders we that need. It's simply being faithful to the word of God and being faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ. If our Lord can find an Ethiopian eunuch in the middle of the desert our Lord can direct us to people in this city or direct the people in this city to us here at Port Charlotte Middle School.

Are we opposed to signs and wonders and miracles? Not at all. We welcome the Lord's power and gifts.

But does this mean we shouldn't seek a building of our own? Not at all. In fact, we are still looking for a piece of property we can build on. But our work is not ultimately about building a building. It's about building the Kingdom of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If Jesus loved the despised Samaritans enough to go to them personally, then we can trust that He loves the people of Charlotte County for whom we must continue to pray that He opens their eyes and gives us the opportunity to share with.

The very people for whom Christ came, the Jews, rejected their Messiah. And yet these Gentile Samaritans can make the outrageous claim that this Jesus is the Savior of the world. But they didn't make this claim because they were so spiritually superior to the Jews. They could make this claim because God opened their eyes to the truth just as He opened Peter's eyes to this truth.

You'll remember what our Lord said to Peter after asking what the crowds thought of Jesus.

MAT 16:14-17 "They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, *for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.*"

What I find interesting too is that these Samaritans understand that Jesus is not just the Messiah of the Jews, or just of the Samaritans, but of the whole world. And yet, I'm sure the Lord assured them of this over that two day period as He explained that the Gentiles were also part of His eternal plan; that plan He spoke of to Isaiah.

ISA 11:9-10 "They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious."

ISA 42:6-7 "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, 7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."

These Gentile Samaritans were in the dark, but Jesus is the light of the world and the Spirit of God has given them eyes to see the light. And He's doing the same today. We just need to be willing to show the light in both word and deed, and the Lord will do the rest. He will bring the harvest as only He can.

But when He brings the harvest we need to be willing to put our hand to the blade and reap that harvest as we go forth in the truth of the gospel and encourage people to repent of their sin and embrace the only one who can forgive and give eternal life.

The sowing is part of the equation. And so we need to be willing to do both with the understanding that both the one who sows and the one who reaps can rejoice together.

May we rejoice when we experience the harvest, but may we also rejoice in the hard task of sowing and tending the ground. Both are important in God's eyes. And may Jesus Christ be our focus and the one in whom we delight as the Savior of the world.