

JESUS IS THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

John 4:32-42, Key Verse: 4:42

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“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.’”

In the last passage Jesus met a woman by a well in Sychar, Samaria. She was a very thirsty woman who had sought satisfaction in romance. So she married five times. But her romantic dreams all turned into tragic nightmares. She had become a broken and lonely woman. Most people despised her. But Jesus did not. Jesus deeply understood her. Jesus spoke to her with humility and love. Jesus helped her to see that her true problem was a worship problem. She was made in the image of God and only the holy God could satisfy her soul. She accepted Jesus’ words. Then Jesus’ love began to circulate in her inner person. She was completely changed. She tasted true satisfaction. Jesus became her spring of water welling up to eternal life.

In today’s passage Jesus continues his work in Samaria. Through one Samaritan woman’s change, a whole village came to him. After just two days, they confessed that Jesus is the Savior of the world. We want to think about the importance of one person in God’s work and how to have vision that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

First, Jesus’ food (31-34).

Look at verse 31. “Meanwhile his disciples urged him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’” The disciples’ attitude toward Jesus was one of respect and love. They knew he needed some care. Even though he had asked the Samaritan woman for a drink, she did not give it to him. She ran away, leaving her water jar. Jesus was still tired, hungry and thirsty. When his disciples looked at him, they felt he needed help. He might have looked like a root out of dry ground. So they urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.” What beautiful affection they had for their Master Jesus. Some people’s relationships are always like a one-way street; they receive well, but never reciprocate. But here we see that an atmosphere of mutual love and respect is very normal in gospel ministry. Upon this foundation, Jesus’ disciples could grow.

Look at verse 32. “But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about.’” Jesus was not thinking about lunch. Jesus had forgotten about his physical condition. Of course, the disciples didn’t understand this. They wondered if someone had brought Jesus food. Jesus must have known they would not understand. But he spoke to them in such a way to turn their minds from the physical to the spiritual. Jesus wanted to bring them into the presence of God.

Look at verse 34. “‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.’” When Jesus used the word, “My food,” he wanted to reveal to them the spiritual world. Jesus’ food was spiritual; it was nourishment for the soul. Jesus’ food was God himself. Jesus’ awareness of God and union with God and love for God gave him complete satisfaction. So Jesus lacked nothing. Jesus maintained this perfect love relationship with God through his obedience to the will of God. In this case, Jesus did the will of God when he shared the word of life with the Samaritan woman. Though she looked like the last person to believe in God, Jesus knew that God loved her and that she longed for God. Jesus counseled her, bearing her sensitive emotional condition. It took a lot of energy and struggle for Jesus. But she became a true worshiper of God. This once hard and darkened middle-aged woman suddenly became like a bright young teenage girl. She ran around telling everyone about Jesus with excitement and great passion. Jesus was overjoyed. Jesus forgot about time and space. Jesus was full of spiritual joy over one person who was saved.

We can learn Jesus’ spiritual secret. When we do the will of God, our souls can find true satisfaction and we can grow spiritually. Jesus is not saying that we don’t need physical food. He was saying that just as there is physical food for the body, there is also spiritual food for the soul. This spiritual food is to do the will of God. To do the will of God we must study the word of God and obey it from our hearts. We must teach the word of God to others

through one-to-one Bible study like Jesus did. Many of us can testify that before having Bible study with our sheep we are hungry and tired, maybe irritable. But after finishing the Bible study we are filled with a mysterious and inexpressible joy. Jesus' spiritual food was also to finish God's work. Here, the cross came to Jesus' mind. At the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished," and he breathed his last. Jesus' practical obedience to God's will in daily life was the process by which he grew spiritually. Finally, Jesus could finish God's work with a life sacrifice. When we participate in the sufferings of Christ on a daily basis, our spiritual muscle grows strong. We can become mature enough to finish our mission to the end. The one who finishes his mission like Jesus is an everlasting victor of life.

Second, "open your eyes and look at the fields" (35).

Look at verse 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." As Jesus thought about God's work in one Samaritan woman, he could see the vision for a fruitful and bountiful harvest. God was working before their very eyes. There was a saying in those days, "Four months more and then the harvest." It meant that after planting the seeds, they needed to wait a certain time to see the harvest of crops, such as barley. But this time, the spiritual harvest came right away; it was going on before their eyes. Jesus wanted to share the vision with his disciples. As Jesus looked out, Samaritan people were making their way toward him. Jesus knew that they were coming to hear the word of God and that the Holy Spirit would work mightily among them. It was time for a harvest. When harvest time comes, one must put everything else aside and work for the harvest, day and night. If he misses the harvest season, his entire crop can be wasted. But if he works hard at the harvest time, he will be most fruitful. Jesus says, "Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." Each campus is like a harvest field. There are young souls waiting for the living word of God to come to them. May God help us open our eyes and see them.

Third, sowers and reapers (36-38).

Look at verse 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." The reaper may well refer to the Holy Spirit. Jesus sowed the word through his preaching and teaching. Then the Holy Spirit worked in people's hearts until they gained eternal life. Sowers must teach the word as the very word of God. Then the Holy Spirit works to bring about a harvest. We can also understand that sowing and reaping are done in the context of God's history. Sowing may be like preaching the word of God where hearts are hard and not much seems to happen. Reaping is done when souls receive eternal life with great joy. Both are necessary. Both share equally in the joy of the harvest. Jesus said, "the sower and the reaper may be glad together." Jesus might have had in mind the Old Testament prophets who had labored in Samaria, sometimes called Northern Israel. For example, 1 Kings 13 tells of a nameless prophet who delivered God's message of the coming king Josiah, who would carry out God's judgment on their idolatry. However, that prophet was deceived by an older prophet and died. His ministry seemed to be in vain. Yet the word of the Lord through him was true. Like him, many nameless prophets had labored in Israel without seeing any fruits. John the Baptist and his disciples had also preached the message of repentance. Now there was a tremendous spiritual harvest. Jesus remembered the sowers who had gone before him. He credited their ministries as essential to the fruitful harvest. Perhaps Jesus saw Elijah and Elisha dancing around in the kingdom of God.

Look at verses 37-38. "Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 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 bringing in the spiritual harvest, the one who seems to be the most fruitful does not necessarily get the most credit from God. There is a history to God's work. First the sowers come and do their job. Then the reapers come and do their job. And the harvest is brought in. When a harvest is good, it is not because of the reaper alone. Without the sower, there would be no harvest. When there seems to be no visible fruit, it does not mean that a sower's labor is in vain. The harvest will come. Then the sower and reaper rejoice together.

This weekend we have celebrated Founders Day in UBF ministry. We have remembered especially the pioneering of Seoul from 1966-1977. Dr. Samuel Lee devoted himself to intensive personal Bible study. He also developed many creative ways of teaching the word of God to students. Mother Barry taught the Bible in English every day without fail. A handful of students accepted the word of God as the word of God. They became spiritual leaders for their nation and for world mission, like Dr. James Kim, who has devoted the last 40 years of his life fully for God's work. In the course of time, over 1,200 missionaries were raised and went to over 70 nations with the gospel of Jesus

Christ. This great spiritual harvest was possible when the word of God was sowed with much labor. Historically, many American medical missionaries gave their lives, as well as their children's lives, to plant gospel seeds in Korea. Though we do not see them now, they are rejoicing in heaven over the great work of God through UBF ministry.

We must see our nation America from Jesus' point of view. The pioneers of this land were Puritans and Pilgrims who came from Europe to worship God freely. They prayed to establish a city on a hill. After them, so many sowers of God's word worked hard in America. There is a deep Christian root in our nation. Sometimes American young people look proud and rebellious. They seem to listen to no one. But that is not true. Somehow, in their hearts, they recognize the Bible as the word of God. That is why politicians often quote from the Bible, even if they do not believe it personally. Many who look wild and carefree have seeds of a Christian heritage in their hearts. We have been given a wonderful mission field that is ripe for harvest. Let's work hard to sow and reap.

Fourth, Jesus is the Savior of the world (39-42).

Look at verses 39-41. "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I ever did.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers." The Samaritan woman's testimony was heart moving. She had been a loner. But suddenly she was talking publicly about her inner life problem and how Jesus helped her. People were startled and amazed. They came out of the routine of life. They turned off their televisions and computers. Entire companies shut down for two days. Schools were closed. Workers and students and housewives put aside everything and went visit Jesus. Jesus taught the word of God to them. Jesus revealed himself to them as the Messiah. They were moved as Jesus revealed the love of God to them through the Scriptures. They marveled that Jesus knew each one of them so well. One by one, they came to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Look at verse 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.'" The Samaritan woman's testimony had led them to Jesus. Then they heard Jesus' words for themselves. They confessed that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Hearing others' testimonies is important. But it is not enough. Each person must hear Jesus' words for themselves through deep and personal Bible study. Then we can know for sure that Jesus really is the Savior of the world, and my personal Savior too.

One thirsty Samaritan woman's change revealed Jesus to the people of her community. When they saw Jesus, they each wanted Jesus for themselves. When they heard his word and met him personally, they confessed that Jesus is the Savior of the world. This is true. Everybody needs Jesus. It is because sin is our universal problem. And Jesus is the universal answer. John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29) Jesus said, "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."

When one person changes in Christ, a community can change; a nation can change; the world can change. Let's believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world and teach the Bible to one person at a time.