

Jesus Is the Savior of the World

John 4:27-42

Key Verse 4:42 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."

Today's passage finishes the Samaritan woman story that we started last week. The passage concludes with a significant declaration about who Jesus is. This confession of faith is made by unlikely people who are despised by "religious" people. We live in a secular world where many people don't seem to care about religion. But Jesus is more than a religion. Jesus is more than a teacher. Jesus is unconventional and surprising to people then and now. Who is Jesus to you?

In today's passage, we learn that Jesus is really the Savior of the world. How is he the Savior of the world? What's so amazing about Jesus? We'll meditate on this in four sections: the surprising Savior, the Savior's food, the Savior's eyes, and the Savior of the world. Through today's passage, may we see the beauty of the Savior!

1. The Surprising Savior

In John 4, we find one surprise after another. In verse 9, the Samaritan woman was surprised that Jesus would talk to her. Now when the disciples came back with lunch, they were surprised to find Jesus talking with a woman (27). Why? Put yourselves in the disciples' shoes. In those days, a respected teacher didn't speak to women in public. The rabbis didn't discuss any serious theological topics with women. They did not teach women the Bible. In the 21st century America, they would be labeled sexists. In general, women were not treated with respect and appreciation. Moreover, the Samaritan woman had a scandalous past, and the pious Jews avoided any contact with her. So, how could a rabbi talk with such an outcast?

Clearly, Jesus was unconventional. He was not bothered by such cultural and social barriers. Religious people shun sinners and judge a person according to their own standards. But God's grace is often surprising and even offensive to "good" people. Jesus gives the gift of God to thirsty souls and seeks true worshippers.

At this point, the disciples had burning questions, but didn't say what they were thinking, maybe out of respect for Jesus. They were too much people of their own culture to understand Jesus' heart. (They were not yet trained in cross-cultural ministry.)

Then, the woman left the water jar, as though it was not important. Why did she do so? Was she in a hurry? Yes. Perhaps she took a deep breath into her lungs and without thinking twice, sprinted back to her town. She was in a hurry to tell her townspeople what she had just experienced. Back in the village, she told the people, **"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"** (29) Can you imagine her uncontrollable enthusiasm? She was thrilled about her encounter with Jesus. She was surprised by the grace of Jesus. She used to hide from people. Now she came out from her hiding place and went to people to talk about Jesus. Suddenly she became an evangelist.

Now think about how people would respond to her. She was a local moral outcast, at the bottom of the social ladder. Now she suddenly started talking about religion. She was the person whom people whispered about and pointed at. So, why should they listen to her? (Last year there was a sensational story, making the news headlines. A former porn star, Brittni De La Mora, made the news headline after she gave her life to Jesus and became an evangelist.) Likewise, the Samaritan woman surprised her townspeople.

Did they listen to her? Yes. They went out to see for themselves. How could this happen? Her genuine testimony opened people's hearts. Her testimony was transparent and humble. Her transparency disarmed people's prejudice. Jesus' grace made her show who she was. No one treated her as Jesus did. She was full of wounds of sin. Her husband issue was one that she pursued and ruined her life. Jesus knew everything about her inside and out. But Jesus didn't say, fix up your mess first. Instead, he reached out to her in his infinite mercy. She was surprised by the grace of God. Now, there was no more hiding, no more self-pity nor bitterness.

As she testified, her attitude was not proud or exclusive, but humble, saying, "Could this be the Messiah?" It is like a gentle invitation: "Can you check it out for me? Please check out Jesus for yourselves." She talked to people in the way she experienced the Savior's grace. She is a good example of sharing the gospel in this post-modern, pluralistic society. A genuine and humble testimony is effective in outreach. Did she know everything about Jesus? No. Her knowledge was limited. Still, she had a changed life, touched by Jesus and his grace. Praise Jesus who surprises us by his grace!

2. The Savior's Food

It was now lunch time. The disciples brought some delicious sandwiches and they urged Jesus, "Eat something. Aren't you going to eat?" But he said to them, **"I have food to eat that you know nothing about"** (32). "What?" they were puzzled, "Could someone have brought him food?" (33)

Then, Jesus clearly said, **"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work"** (34). This sounds strange and profound. What does Jesus mean by this? Was Jesus saying that we should lose our appetite for physical food? No. We must eat to get energy. Food is what sustains and satisfies us. The disciples were hungry or even hangry. We understand them. When we miss a meal, we easily become bad-tempered or irritable, don't we?

But Jesus had a different kind of food to eat. Here, Jesus revealed the source of his satisfaction and strength. Jesus' great satisfaction was not in physical food, or in doing work itself. His satisfaction was in doing the will of the Father who sent him. Jesus lived in an intimate love relationship with the Father who gave him everything. Jesus' entire life was radically driven by doing God's will for him: to give us eternal life (Jn 6:39; 12:50). The Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus was a divine appointment, by which Jesus revealed God's love for one person. He was fully consumed by his mission. Ultimately, this means for Jesus to die as the Lamb of God to give us eternal life. Just before the cross, Jesus prayed to God the Father, **"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do"** (Jn 17:4). On the cross, Jesus said, **"It is finished"** (Jn 19:30). Jesus radically obeyed the Father's will to the point of death on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for sinners. Jesus revealed God's infinite love for sinners. More than that: He is risen and has defeated death forever. In this way, Jesus gave his life as "the bread of life" for sinners (Jn 6:35). Jesus was filled with joy, seeking and saving one lost soul in the sight of God.

Where do you find the most satisfaction and the most joy? After his intensive mission journey last winter, I asked Pastor Moses Yoon whether he was exhausted. "Not at all," he said, "I'm very thankful for the heavenly festivals that I enjoyed with God's people." (I was surprised since I sometimes feel tired after serving one mission field.) Our church is blessed to learn Jesus' heart and love for sinners. How blessed are we when we taste Jesus' food! What are you craving? Our culture says we need to fulfill to the maximum whatever we desire (hunger for fun, success, etc). Not that all physical things are bad, or that we should live an ascetic lifestyle (like monks or nuns), but when physical things become our consuming passion,

then they are idols. What is your diet? Are you eating from the same plate Jesus eats? Or are you malnourished? Our souls get truly satisfied when we feed on Jesus and his passion. I pray that we may eat from the same plate that Jesus eats from!

3. The Savior's Eyes

When Jesus was talking with a Samaritan woman, the disciples had no idea about what Jesus was doing. They were focused on physical food. So, Jesus helped them to open their eyes. Look at verse 35. **"Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."** For the disciples, the Samaritans were hopeless and lost. But for Jesus, they were a harvest ready for eternal life. Jesus saw such people coming to the Savior. He encourages us to see the world with the eyes of the Messiah. Usually, it takes at least four months between the latest sowing and the earliest reaping. But now the sowing and harvesting are taking place together. It's because the Messiah is already here. We live in the presence of the Messiah. Jesus' coming means that the time of true worship has arrived (v. 23). Jesus' presence means that the end time harvest has started here and now. Where the gospel of Jesus is preached, there is a harvest for eternal life.

We love to focus the spotlight on reaping, don't we? We love to hear about successful ministry. But some sow, some reap, and Jesus unites the sower and the reaper that they may rejoice together (v. 36). It is not a competition among those who work in God's field, but we are working together. We cannot control the harvest, but what we can do is sow all the time.

Can we see the world with the eyes of the Savior? Jesus wants us to have a shepherd heart for unlikely people who are waiting for God's love. John Wesley, a leader of a spiritual revival in England, was moved by the grace of Jesus and said, "I look on all the world as my parish." In our generation, we are invited to participate in the work of the Messiah! Our life on earth is not for physical food or the American dream; we are made for more: to open our eyes and to share Jesus' heart for the world; to share God's love, starting with our campuses, our city, and our nation. Amen!

4. The Savior of the World

As a result of the woman's testimony, many of her town's people believed in Jesus. Now they wanted more of Jesus, so they pleaded with him to stay with them. Jesus honored their request, staying two days. Then, Jesus' words led to the spread of more believers. A surprising spiritual awakening

came to a town in Samaria. Then 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”** (42).

This is a monumental declaration in the New Testament. This confession was made by the unlikely people in Samaria, who were rejected outcasts. What kind of Savior is this Jesus whom they confessed?

First of all, Jesus is the Savior who knows us. The Samaritan woman’s testimony was, “He told me everything I ever did.” Jesus knew her shame and bitterness. But he didn’t try to fix her humanly. Jesus understood her lostness and inner brokenness. In John’s Gospel, the word Samaritan stands for despised, hopeless people. Jesus went to them to stay with them. He didn’t avoid them nor condemn them, but gently healed their broken souls. Everyone has a story of problems, failures and struggles. Yet, they are afraid of exposing them because people are afraid of being labeled as a “sinner.” Like in Hawthorne’s novel, *“Scarlet letter,”* people see the label of the person’s sin and shun them. But Jesus doesn’t see the label of our sins. In the Gospels, Jesus was always surrounded by social outcasts like tax-collectors or prostitutes. Jesus understood them. Do you know that there was even a prostitute in the lineage of the Messiah? This is to reveal that none of us are hopeless.

This is the scandal of grace. The “decent” religious people blamed Jesus for being “a friend of sinners.” Even Jesus’ disciples were surprised. It’s all about Jesus who lived a righteous obedient life for us. He dwelt with sinners, bearing with us. The eternal Son of God lived as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is truly God incarnate, who transmits his holiness to sinners, making us holy. Some of you may ask, “Who can understand my problem?” Jesus can!

How do we present this Savior to the world? In his book *“What’s So Amazing About Grace?”* Philip Yancey characterizes the world as “a world without grace.” Our world is stained with vengeance, hatred, racism, and unending competition. Grace is Christianity’s best gift to the world. As early as preschool, we learn about the “ungrace of the world.” We are constantly tested and evaluated, receiving grades according to our performance (A, B, C, D, F). We naturally live performance- and rule-based lifestyles. (At home, if I don’t remember Jesus’ grace, I misrepresent God by treating my kids according to their mistakes in the name of “training.”) Even in the church, often a person’s spiritual maturity is judged according to their church performance or the size of their ministry. In a secular culture, the church

tends to be judgmental toward pro-choice and same-sex marriage advocates. How is your Jesus? Is he compassionate, gracious and long-suffering? Or is he judgmental and demanding? As St. Augustine said, the church is "the hospital for the sick," not a club for the healthy. May we present the beauty and grace of Jesus to the world!

We live in a pluralistic world, where many different ideas compete. Religions and morals of the world teach a kind of help by self-improvement and achievement. All religious leaders try to show the way, but Jesus is the way. When we say that Jesus is the Savior of the world publicly, sometimes people are offended. But what is so amazing about the gospel of the Savior? What word can best summarize Christianity? It is "grace" (C.S. Lewis). I agree. What do people desperately need? It is grace, the grace of the Savior. Jesus is the one answer to our ten thousand questions. Jesus understands our deepest desire and our failures. He gives us his life that shatters the power of death. The light of Jesus overcomes the darkness of our sin. This grace is so powerful that the first Christians testified about Jesus even through martyrdom. His grace can save anyone who comes to him; anyone who believes in him. This grace is for you and for me too.

When I was a child, a harsh rebuke was my father's love language for me, which actually wounded my soul. Growing up, I got involved in promiscuous thoughts and actions and hid my shame and guilt which I wanted to take to my grave. As a philosophy student, I was rebellious and imagined that God would be like a dictator who controls and harshly rebukes me. But the revelation came to me when Jesus prayed for me at the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). His unconditional forgiveness set me free from shame and guilt. His grace made me transparent to show who I am. I'm still surprised by Jesus' grace. I'm sometimes disappointed about my harsh words at home. Yet, my Savior gently works on me. What a wonderful and merciful Savior we have!

Who is Jesus to you? Are you surprised by his grace? We have the Savior who knows us intimately. His food is to give his life for the world. Jesus saves us by the cross, the gentle, sacrificial love of God. What kind of community are we? We are a community of witnesses that testifies: Jesus really is the Savior of the world. May we present to people the wonderful, merciful Savior! Can we see many people from all parts of the world including our campuses, with the eyes of the Savior? May God bless us in this Easter season to boldly testify that Jesus is truly the Savior who really knows us and saves us! May God bless our upcoming Easter conferences to reveal Jesus as the Savior to all the attendants!