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Sermon Notes

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Fields White for Harvest

John 4:27-42

Introduction: Cyrus McCormick's harvesting machine, modern combines, no machine for the harvest of John 4

Last time: Jesus works on a single lost Samaritan woman... all His focus on her needs

This time: Jesus works on His group of blind disciples who cannot see a white harvest right in front of them

Both are equally vital for the advance of the Kingdom

A single soul saved is worth more than all the riches in the world

An army of trained gospel evangelists faithfully reaping countless souls is worth more

I. Jesus' Strategy to Change the World: Multiplication

A. "Be Fruitful and Multiply": A Physical AND Spiritual Principle

1. God gave original command to our first ancestors
2. Over 6.6 billion people on the face of the earth
3. Every single one of them directly descended from that first couple by biological reproduction
4. God has also built the church in the same way
5. From 120 believers in the Upper Room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost to:

Revelation 7:7 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

6. Jesus intends His disciples to be fruitful and multiply spiritually

B. Review: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

1. Magnificent Fishing Technique
2. "Lure with Four Hooks" John 4:10

John 4:10 "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

3. Dealing Directly and Miraculously with Sin
4. The Central Goal: Seeking and Finding a True Spiritual Worshiper
5. Self-revelation: "I Am"

C. As Much Work to do on Us as on the Lost

1. She is not the only one who needs His attention
2. His disciples will return as great food shoppers, but woeful evangelists
3. Last section: Jesus' supernatural technique for turning a lost sinner into a true spiritual worshiper
4. This section of the account: Jesus' supernatural technique for turning self-centered, immature disciples into world-changing spiritual harvesters... thus multiplying Himself

II. The Disciples' Feeble Start

A. They Go Buy Lunch, and That's All They Did

1. Subtle, homely mission statement

John 4:8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

2. True mission later revealed

John 4:38 I sent you to reap

3. So often we go through life with blinders on
 - a. A trip to the grocery store is nothing more than a trip to the grocery story
 - i) The other people there are just in your way, blocking our access to the shelves
 - ii) We don't see them spiritually, like Jesus did Zacchaeus
 - b. A trip to work is just a trip to work... we have a job to do, a salary to earn for the family, a project to complete by the deadline

- i) The other people there are merely co-workers
- ii) We don't see them spiritually, like Jesus did the woman at the well
- c. We have GOT to get rid of the blinders!! John 4 is the passage for us

B. Wasted Trips, Wasted Time

1. Disciples come back all excited about one thing: physical food

vs. 31-33 *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?"*

2. How are they different at this moment than the Samaritan woman, who at first thought Jesus was talking about physical water

3. Later the disciples would make this same mistake again

Matthew 16:5-12 *When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. ⁶ "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ⁷ They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread." ⁸ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? ⁹ Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹⁰ Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹¹ How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ¹² Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

4. It's so hard for us to get our minds off the needs of our bodies... providing for their constant demands
5. Now, there is nothing wrong with holding down a job, nothing wrong with providing and cooking food, nothing wrong with mowing your lawn, getting your car repaired, putting up new wallpaper in your living room, taking your kids to a ballgame, studying for the big test... NOTHING WRONG WITH ANY OF THAT
6. The disciples were providing for their needs, buying food; AND they cared about Jesus' needs too
7. But they had a hard time seeing the eternally significant things from the temporarily significant
8. The tyranny of the urgent!!

9. How many wasted trips have I made? Trips to work, to the store or mall, trips on vacation or business in which I kept my blinders on and failed to see the person right in front of me who desperately needed to hear the gospel?

C. Lift Up Your Eyes and Your Mind

1. The disciples are a bit of a failure here
2. But under the patient tutelage of the Master, and with the awesome power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they will turn the world upsidedown
3. Streams of new disciples will flood into the Kingdom through their singleminded and powerful witness
4. God is calling on us to learn from the Master
5. In order to do this, we have to lift up our eyes and our minds off the physical and pressing daily needs
6. Look what God did with these self-centered disciples of His!! What will He do with us?

III. Jesus' Powerful Lessons

A. Lesson by Example

1. The disciples were about to get a shock as they carried their lunch food back to Jesus

John 4:27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

2. There He was, sitting and talking with a Samaritan woman
3. Somewhat scandalous!! Definitely shocking!! Especially if they had known what Jesus knew about this woman and her sexual sins and marital struggles
4. But Jesus was leading by example

Luke 19:10 the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

Here Jesus was doing His highest calling... the seeking and saving of a single lost sinner

The greatest generals have led from in front... courageously leading the charge; not flinching when the battle raged close around them

Alexander the Great was probably the greatest military commander in history; he never lost a single battle; he proved his personal courage in battle again and again; never more than

one time in India, when he was fighting the most warlike of all the tribes in that region; his soldiers were faced with a walled fortress and, weary from long campaigning, they hesitated to climb the siege ladders... leading by example and hoping to shame them, he climbed up alone and jumped into the fortress alone; he was immediately surrounded by his enemies and he fought them with only three companions... soon the whole army, realizing Alexander was in grave jeopardy, scaled the ladders and joined him in battle; he was grievously wounded but survived

Men will follow a leader like that... one who courageously leads by example

No one in history has led by example better than Jesus Christ

His constant passion was to seek and to save the lost

5. This is a challenge for me as well... I learned evangelism by example from Tim Schuman, the man who discipled me with Campus Crusade for Christ
 - a. As soon as I became a Christian, they began to train me in evangelism
 - b. They took us to Daytona Beach for beach outreach; going from blanket to blanket on the beach and talking to people about Christ
 - c. Doing evening outreaches as well
 - d. Going back to the campus, we went out regularly on evangelistic contacts... following up contact cards of people who'd expressed interest in spiritual things
 - e. Evangelism was the constant topic of our Friday evening meetings; our special retreat speakers talked about it
 - f. AND they all led by example; they were constantly active in evangelism, taking along with them young believers so they could learn the same
 - g. So much of the Christian life is CAUGHT as well as TAUGHT
 - h. One of my most important jobs as a pastor is to lead by example in evangelism; to follow Jesus' example, and permit others to follow mine as I follow Christ
6. While they were buying food, Jesus was doing the will of His Father and leading this woman to eternal life
7. In a moment He will set the example again when the whole Samaritan village comes out to see Him
8. They will observe the way He leads that whole village to Christ

John 4:40-42 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."

9. Jesus TAUGHT BY EXAMPLE

B. Lesson by Rebuke

1. The rebuke is hard to see unless you know
2. There is nothing wrong with buying food, nothing wrong at all with meeting your basic needs
3. But they missed the true food, the true work of the gospel

John 4:31-32 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

4. "You know nothing about" is the rebuke
 - a. They "apparently" knew nothing about Jesus' food
 - b. This is proven by the fact that they went into an entire village of Samaritans who (as it will be proved in a moment) are extremely eager and ready for the gospel and they did NOTHING about it spiritually
 - c. Jesus identifies His food

John 4:33-34 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."

- d. The disciples did not yet know how to feed on that spiritual food, the will of God
 - e. They did not feel His urgency for the lost, His desire to see the Samaritans converted
5. Jesus had called them to a higher mission

John 4:38 I sent you to reap

6. They hadn't reaped a thing; They had failed to do anything with that higher mission
7. Sometimes we need to be rebuked, need to be dealt with strongly by the Lord if we have had nothing to do with the great spiritual harvest of souls

C. Lesson by Analogies: Food and Harvest

1. Food

- a. Jesus was a master at using everyday life situations to teach spiritual lessons
- b. They had gone to buy food; they came back obviously with food on their minds
- c. Jesus turned it around to discuss His mission in life; His single-minded focus on the will of the Father, on the soul-saving work the Father had sent Him to do

John 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."

Clearest display in His life was in Gethsemane:

Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Jesus lived every moment for the will of the Father and for the work of the Father

d. How is the work of God like food?

- i) Food enables us to keep living; it gives us energy and strength

Jesus is saying: Doing my Father's will in evangelism gives me energy and strength

- ii) Food brings delight and pleasure

Few things as delightful as your favorite meal... a steak cooked to perfection; a baked potato with all the toppings; steamed vegetables or a tossed salad; fresh fruit juice; ice cream sundae... each flavor designed by God to bring joy, delight, pleasure

Jesus is saying: Doing my Father's will in evangelism brings me delight and pleasure

- iii) Food is a focal point of friendship and fellowship

Many a friendship in every culture is strengthened by having a meal together; in Middle Eastern culture to have a meal together makes a form of covenant of friendship such that they can never be enemies; that is why it was so shocking when Judas took the piece of bread dipped in the bowl from Jesus' hand, then went and betrayed him

John 13:18 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'

It also explains why Jesus was so desirous to sit at table with His disciples

Luke 22:14-16 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

And why the Lord's Supper is so vital to our faith: "God and man at table are sat down"

When Jesus said

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

He was saying: Doing my Father's will in evangelism is the center of our friendship and fellowship

iv) Food for many people is the focus of their lives

Ecclesiastes 6:7 All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of stew

Paul said there are many who lives as though their God is their stomach

Some people can't stop thinking about their next meal

Jesus is saying: Doing my Father's will in evangelism is the absolute focus and center of His life

NOTE: It wasn't enough for Jesus to DO His Father's will... He desired to FINISH the work His Father gave Him to do

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

John 5:36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."

John 17:4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

John 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus fed on the Father's will... Jesus' feeding on the Father's will was the food to eat they knew nothing about: It brought Him spiritual nourishment, it was delicious and full of

pleasure for Him, it was the center of His relationship and fellowship with the Father and it was therefore the focus of His entire life

2. Harvest

John 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.

- a. Jesus also likened the work of evangelism to the reaping of a harvest
- b. A harvest is a wonderful thing in a farm community
- c. It means life for another year... Joy and delight accompanies the harvest time
- d. Jesus is tapping into one of the richest analogies in the ancient world
- e. The problem: the Jews were waiting for four more months (later) when NOW was the harvest time
- f. When the wheat is ripe, it must be harvested TODAY or the window of opportunity will be lost forever

D. Lesson by Command: Lift Up Your Eyes and Look

- 1. So easy to miss what God is doing around you, and what the moment calls for
- 2. The disciples seem to have been blind to the Samaritan's in that village, and how ready they were to hear the gospel
- 3. A Samaritan woman rejected by her own people was able to get the entire village out to see Jesus

John 4:28-30 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" ³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

- 4. But this woman had far LESS evidence of the Messiahship of Christ than the disciples
 - a. By then they'd seen a veritable RIVER of miracles
 - b. Huge crowds of people healed with simply a word
- 5. Furthermore, a group of kindly, excited, open-hearted Jews warmly inviting them to see a man they were convinced was the Messiah would be even more shocking than this Samaritan woman... they could have made the whole village sit up and take notice

6. Imagine if the disciples, instead of merely going to buy food for themselves and for Jesus had invited the Samaritans to a feast put on by Jesus, and had said that they would see and hear things the like of which they'd never heard before
7. The fields WERE white for harvest... but the disciples missed it
 - a. Evidence was everywhere
 - b. A single Samaritan woman, a lover of sin, had been soundly converted
 - c. Secondly, she had left her water jar to run and tell her whole village
 - d. Thirdly, contrary to all expectations they were coming out in huge numbers to talk to a Jew about eternal life

John 4:9 (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

- e. All they had to do was LOOK at the crowd and they could see what God had done
8. Actually their racial superiority and hatred for the Samaritans probably made it impossible to see them as fit recipients of gospel grace
9. One story from Luke 9 confirms this

Luke 9:51-56 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them, ⁵⁶ and they went to another village.

This is why they missed how white the fields were for harvest

They probably didn't want to touch anything in the Samaritan village... barely spoke a single kind word to any of them, did what they had to do, bought what they had to buy and got out of there

But Jesus wanted them to open their eyes and look

He went on from there to teach them abiding lessons on evangelistic strategy

IV. Partnership in Ministry: Hard and Easy Labor

John 4:36-38 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."

A. Sowing and Reaping: Both Equally Essential

B. Vital to Discern What the Situation Calls For

1. Spurgeon sermon: vigorous AGAINST waiting when now is the time to harvest
2. Tim Downs argues differently, saying America is in a post-modern, post-Christian age in which SOWING is what the needs are
 - a. Americans are in love with tolerance
 - i) The concept that there can be many equally valid approaches to truth
 - ii) That it is a sin to claim that your view is right and others are wrong
 - b. Christians are frequently in a hostile debate mode... "calling down fire on the enemies of God" like the disciples wanted to do to Samaria
 - i) We're fighting culture wars on issues like abortion and gay rights and morality in movies
 - ii) Very few of the people we're dealing with have any knowledge of the Bible or the beginnings of a Christian worldview
 - iii) Our country is becoming increasingly pluralistic and open to large numbers of immigrants who bring their religions and cultures here without blending it... we used to be a melting pot, but now there are more barriers
 - iv) Young professionals beginning their post-college careers are more openly materialistic, pleasure-oriented, skeptical of truth claims
 - c. Tim Downs openly challenges the concept that the fields are white for harvest now in America
 - d. He says now is the time to begin sowing... the HARD LABOR Jesus mentions here

C. Sowing Harder Than Reaping

D. "Four Months and Then the Harvest"

E. Reaping What Others Have Sown

V. Applications

A.

B.