“THE FIELDS ARE WHITE FOR HARVEST”

Discuss questions from last week – my answers; hope it helps!

Scripture: John 4:27-42.

This morning we are continuing along our journey thru the Gospel of John. We’re in Chapter 4 and will begin where we left off last week at verse 27. In the Gospel of John who is the first person that Jesus reveals Himself to specifically as the Messiah? [hint…it was not to His disciples. It was not to the Jewish leaders. In fact it was not to a Jew at all] The first person to whom Jesus revealed that He was the Messiah was a Gentile. And it was a woman! It was to the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman He met at Jacob's well in the town of Sychar. In last week’s lesson this woman remarks to Jesus, READ John 4:25-26.

Jesus makes an astounding claim. He tells the woman, in essence, "I’m the Messiah." Then the Apostle John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives us five subtle “proofs” if you will that Jesus is no ordinary man, that He is more than a man, that He was and is the incarnate Son of God. We will see these in today’s passage.

The statement Jesus makes in verse 26 makes or breaks the case of who Jesus is. If Jesus was lying or was mistaken or misunderstood and was NOT actually the Messiah, then we all might as well pack up and go on to lunch. But… if Jesus IS who He claims to be, then we need to explore Jesus further. That’s the whole reason the Apostle John wrote this Gospel. Because that was the real issue in his day – Who is Jesus really? As we go through the Gospel of John all we are being asked to do as the jury is to consider the evidence that John lays out before us and, based on that evidence, determine who we think Jesus is. Clearly, based on the words of the Bible (which I take by faith as the inspired, inerrant words of God), Jesus IS the Messiah. In fact, He is GOD.

READ John 4:27.

At the very moment in which Jesus makes His claim to be the Messiah, Jesus’ disciples return from town with the groceries. They’re surprised to see Jesus carrying on a conversation with this Samaritan woman – “they marveled” that Jesus was talking with her. The fact is that Jesus had a divine appointment with this woman. He was reaching out to save this woman. His action broke down all kinds of barriers. It shattered all traditions and prejudices. It sent a message to His disciples and to the world that the Gospel is for everyone. Salvation is not just for one select group.

Jesus is giving us a preview of the coming Gentile evangelistic effort that will define the early church. And although God's original revelation of Himself was to the nation of Israel, His truth was never intended solely for Israel. Even in the Old Testament God's truth was not to be isolated to Israel. Israel was never intended to be God's little pet people and to keep God all for themself. Israel was to bless the nations, to be God's missionary arm to the world. Thru them the world would see God. Unfortunately the people of Israel pretty much had the same attitude toward the pagan nations that Jonah had. Remember Jonah? When God told Jonah to go preach His message to the people of Nineveh, to pagan Gentiles, what did he do? He high-tailed it in the opposite direction. Then, after his whole ordeal in the open sea with the great fish swallowing him and spitting him out on dry land, Jonah finally did go and preach to Nineveh. And when he did, there was a mass revival. But rather than rejoice at God's grace, Jonah became upset with God and requested that God kill him. He didn’t have much of a heart for the lost Gentiles, did he? Well, Israel was to be the instrument of God's salvation, even in the Old Testament. Here in John Chapter 4 we see a wonderful illustration of that. God's love and His gracious gift of the Messiah were for all people. And Jesus' disciples needed to learn this lesson.

One “proof” that Jesus is God is His perfect timing. With God nothing happens by accident or outside of His timetable. Jesus Christ, yielded to His Father and led by the Spirit, goes to meet a woman by Jacob’s well at just the right time. He engages in a one-on-one dialog with her just as He had with Nicodemus. I believe that the disciples returned just in time to overhear Him make His messianic claim. But at the time their focus is on the fact that Jesus has the audacity to talk in public with this Samaritan woman! Yet no one said anything. They were at a loss for words. I believe the woman at this point is under conviction by the Holy Spirit. She leaves the well and heads into town.

READ John 4:28-30.

Here we see further proof of Jesus’ deity. He makes a profound impact on the Samaritan woman’s life. She has known a lot of men in her life but no man had changed her life like Jesus did. Jesus’ words really had an impact on her. I believe that when this woman finishes talking to Jesus she believes that He really is the Messiah. I believe that she got saved after her encounter with Jesus at Jacob’s well. The evidence for this is that she heads out right away and shares what she has discovered with others. She’s completely different from what she was when she first went out to the well to draw water. We see that her priorities have changed. When she first went out to the well her priority was on her physical need, getting water from the well. Now we see that her priority is spiritual, telling others about Jesus. She is so excited and eager to share her good news about Jesus that she leaves her water jar at the well. She goes right to the men of Sychar and says to them, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did." With that the people of the city rush out of Sychar to see Jesus stirred by the testimony of this woman. “Could this really be the Messiah? Let’s go see for ourselves!”

READ John 4:31-34.

Meanwhile, back at the well...Jesus has some time quality alone time with His disciples. They’ve just brought the food and Jesus is hungry and tired from the day's journey. They say, "Rabbi, Master, eat." They are looking out for Jesus' physical needs. In verse 32 Jesus replies that He has food to eat that His disciples do not know about. Of course we know Jesus is talking about spiritual food (just like He had been talking about spiritual water with the woman). And just like the woman His disciples think Jesus is talking in physical terms, about physical food. They look around at each other and ask, "Did somebody bring Him something while we were gone? Maybe that Samaritan woman gave Him some food." So Jesus clarifies His statement for them. He says that His food, that which energizes and sustains Him, is to do God's will, to finish “His work.” What is God’s work? Why did Jesus come to earth in the first place? What is His mission? To redeem sinful mankind; to save people's souls. Jesus has just finished bringing the Samaritan woman to saving faith. This brings Him much joy and He no longer feels weary, thirsty or hungry. He feels revived and satisfied. Of course the disciples, not having been around for His conversation with the woman, didn’t understand this.

Jesus is our perfect example in doing God's will. In this little exchange with His disciples Jesus offers us further proof of His deity, which is His intimacy with His Father. He always did His Father’s will. He says that "My food is to do the will of him who sent me." Jesus has such an intimate relationship with His Father that He is driven to do His will. When you really love someone you want more than anything to please them!

Then all of a sudden the conversation changes...READ John 4:35.

Jesus moves away from a conversation about food. He shifts gears totally. I want you to picture the scene. It’s likely around December in Samaria. Crops are planted in November. So, at this time the grain is not fully grown yet; it’s still green and it’s waving in the wind. It won’t be ready to be harvested for another four months, not until about mid-April. Jesus says, "Well, there's four months till harvest, men." Jesus looks out over the fields and says, "But don't say there's four months to harvest." As Jesus looks at those green waving fields, He says, "Lift up your eyes!”

They looked up and what did they see? A group of white robed Samaritans heading their way (white is the distinctive color of the Samaritans' clothes – see photo). This would have been just visible coming across the tops of the green grain. And Jesus says, "Sure, the harvest of grain is yet four months away, but the harvest of men’s souls, of those Samaritans coming our way, is right now." Lift up your eyes, the harvest is now. How did Jesus know that? Go back to John 2:25. Nobody needed to tell Jesus what was in the heart of a man, “for he himself knew what was in man.” Jesus knows the hearts of these Samaritans. He knew God had already prepared their hearts so He says, in essence “Look! Here comes a prepared crop of Samaritans ripe for the harvest!” Jesus compares the green grain with the white clothed Samaritans moving across the field. Their souls are ready to be harvested. Jesus knows the hearts of these men, yet another proof of His deity.

READ John 4:36-37.

At harvest time the one who reaps gets the reward…payday, cashing in the crop. This is always a cause for rejoicing. In the business of saving souls both the harvester and the sower rejoice. The person who actually has the privilege of leading someone to Christ rejoices. But also so do all the people who had a part in planting seeds in that person’s life. Both share in the celebration that includes the host of heaven whenever a lost sinner comes to Christ.

READ John 4:38.

In this case the disciples had nothing to do with the prepared hearts of the Samaritan people. They are just being sent out to reap the harvest. Jesus says “I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Other people labored…” Who is it that had spiritually labored on behalf of the Samaritans? What other people? Moses, the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus (thru the woman), and of course, the woman herself. Their hearts had been prepared, some from a while back and some from the testimony they had just heard. Some of them, no doubt had knowledge of the Old Testament passed down orally or written on scrolls. The seed had been planted in their hearts. The disciples didn't have to do anything but reap the harvest.

It is exciting to realize that the divine power of God is at work in the hearts of the people to whom we will witness. The hearts of the Samaritan people of Sychar had been prepared by God. These Samaritans were ready to receive Christ. Compare them with the Jewish leadership that we have been studying about in John and in Matthew. Here the Samaritans have some understanding of scripture, hear the testimony of one woman in one sentence and many of them believe. On the other hand, the Jewish people around whom Jesus spent most of His ministry had all the prophets, all the law, all everything. They had Jesus, saw many of His miracles, signs and wonders. They had all of that and yet, for the most part they did they not believe. What a contrast!

So what makes the difference? I believe the difference is in divinely prepared hearts. Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44). God had prepared the hearts o these Samaritans. They were ready to receive Christ. The harvest was ripe. And the harvest is ripe even today. There are prepared hearts all around us.

I believe that that passage tells me that there are prepared hearts waiting in this world for somebody to communicate Jesus Christ to them. Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38).

READ John 4:39.

One testimony by one woman and their faith began to germinate. They were ready to receive Jesus by faith.

READ John 4:40.

It doesn't say they wanted Him to stay two days. They probably wanted Him to stay a lot longer. Compare the Samaritans feelings toward Jesus with those in Jesus’ own home town of Nazareth, where He had grown up and lived for 30 years. The Bible tells us that the people in Nazareth “took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.’ And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief” (Matthew 13:57-58). Here you have these simple, prepared Samaritans, who accepted Jesus and said, “Please stay with us, Jesus.” So He did. He remained with them for two days. I can just imagine those were two very precious days as He ministers to them.

READ John 4:41.

Many of the people in Sychar believed because of the woman's testimony. But many more believed because of the words of Jesus. Sadly missing from this verse is the word "all." Not all will respond to Jesus. Yes, He is available for all. He died for all, but not all will believe.

READ John 4:42.

Another proof that Jesus is God is contained in this verse - the dramatic impact that He made on the men of Sychar. By the way, the men dismissed the impact of the woman's testimony. She got no credit at all. The truth is that without her testimony they would not have responded as they did. Her testimony made a profound difference even if she received no recognition for it. You know there is a lesson here for us. People who plant seeds may not get any credit, but God knows and He will reward them. You may never know this side of heaven what words you say, little things you do, will have an impact for the kingdom of God. Because the woman pointed them to Jesus they were able to see for themselves and they believed.

We have heard some wonderful testimonies about who Jesus is so far in our study of John. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Later he said Jesus was the Son “whom God has sent.” Andrew told his brother, “We have found the Messiah.” Philip said “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote.” Nathanael declared, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Nicodemus addressed Jesus as "a teacher come from God.” The woman at the well said, “Can this be the Christ?” In verse 42 is another powerful declaration about Jesus, this one from the men of Sychar: “This is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Out there in our world you will find many different opinions about who Jesus is. A lot of debate. Some doubters. Some scoffers. Some skeptics. Some believers. Many different voices, often convincing, offer differing views about Jesus. The question before us this morning is "Who do YOU say that Jesus is?" The answer to that question has eternal consequences. The Samaritans of the village of Sychar said that Jesus was the Savior of the world. He’s not just the Savior of the Jews, but the Samaritans and the whole world. The fields are white to harvest. Let’s get out there together while we still have time and reap!