

Real Food

In our previous studies we have seen that Jesus crosses every cultural and religious barrier in order to reach people for eternal life. We have also seen the essential ingredients of the Gospel message: our sin, the unique salvation offered in the Gospel, and the unique glory of Jesus Christ. In our text today we can see why the Gospel is so powerful and why the Church has grown as rapidly as it has over the past 2,000 years.

John 4:27-45

27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” **28** So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, **29** “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” **30** They went out of the town and were coming to him.

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” **32** But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” **33** So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” **34** Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. **35** Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. **36** Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. **37** For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ **38** I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” **40** So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. **41** And many more believed because of his word. **42** They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

43 After the two days he departed for Galilee. **44** (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) **45** So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.

Let us observe three ways in which Gospel power is demonstrated in this text.

I. **The Gospel is powerful because it is communicated by broken people who have been radically transformed (27-30).**

This woman appeared to the disciples simply to be a poor, marginalized Samaritan woman; but to Jesus, she was a human being, made in the image of God, for whom He had great compassion and in whom He saw great potential. You'll notice in verse 28 that the woman leaves her water jar behind, no doubt because she was so taken up with the living water Jesus was offering her that the physical water she came to draw made little difference to her now. She was, as Jesus promised in verse 14, a fountain of water spilling over that others may have life. You notice in verse 28-30 that she went to share what she knew about Jesus with her fellow townsmen. Her sermon in verse 29 has a number of deficiencies, but one can clearly see here that she is excited about Jesus Christ and what He means to her. It was enough that many responded and came to meet Jesus.

II. **The Gospel is powerful because it is divinely enabled (31-38).**

The divine enablement behind the Gospel is Jesus Himself. First of all, it is the heart of Jesus that empowers this Gospel. In the verse that Charles Spurgeon calls “the golden sentence,” Jesus says, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” Nothing gave Jesus more joy than finishing the work the Father gave him to do, namely, that we would all be saved. It is this heart of Jesus that empowers the Christian mission here and around the world. But notice also that Jesus not only gives His heart, but His help. In verses 36-38, it seems obvious that Jesus is suggesting that we disciples will harvest many converts in the years to come because Jesus Himself has sown the seeds and prepared the way for the harvest.

III. **The Gospel is powerful because it provides a personal, saving experience with Jesus Christ for all who believe (39-45).**

Notice first of all that the woman herself had a testimony of a personal experience with Jesus: "He told me all that I ever did." She knew Him for only a few moments, but she already knew Him well and He her. Up until now all of Jesus' evangelism has been with individuals, but now is His first "citywide crusade" — and His "Billy Graham" is a Samaritan woman! Because of her testimony, the others believed enough to pursue a knowledge of Christ for themselves, which is exactly what they did. And now they could say that they believe, not just because the woman said so, but because they experienced Jesus themselves.

Notice the unusual ending to this text. In verse 44 Jesus states that a prophet has no honor in his hometown, which would make us think that He would, therefore, avoid going to Galilee, but He does just the opposite. The reason is that for all of the great harvest that Jesus will experience from Gentiles around the world for centuries, He never forgets His own people, His own family, His own friends; so He goes to Galilee even though the harvest there may be smaller than the harvest He experienced in Samaria. So it must be with ourselves: we want to reach the world, but we should never forget our own friends, but rather take the Gospel to them day after day, year after year, with prayerful hope that they too will come to know Jesus for themselves.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the Gospel most powerfully communicated when it is done by a radically transformed disciple of Jesus? What does this teach us about how we can best communicate the Gospel?
2. The Samaritan woman's Gospel message in verse 29 has some obvious deficiencies in it, but what are the positive aspects you can see in her message?
3. How does Jesus' view of this woman differ from that of His disciples?
4. What should we learn from verse 38?

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5. Why is it important in verses 40-42 that the Samaritans have their own personal time with Jesus?

 6. How are you challenged by what Jesus did in verse 45?

Going Deeper

1. Based on our study of John 4, how do you need to alter your own evangelistic practice?

2. Prepare a 1-page testimony of your personal experience with Jesus Christ.