

## John 4:27-42 Motivated to Evangelize

What words would come to your mind if I said you'd have leave everything you have and live in poverty, sail across the ocean for 5 months in a wood boat, be criticized by others, befriend cannibals, and expect daily threats to your life? My guess is the words "eager", "excited", and "motivated" did not suddenly appear. "Crazy", "nightmare", and "nuh uh" might have been the options. But motivated is exactly what the Reformed Presbyterian minister, John G. Paton was in 1859 when he left his home in Scotland to sail to the South Seas. John Paton and his wife were on a mission to bring the gospel to the natives of the New Hebrides. Just a few decades prior two missionaries, were murdered and eaten by cannibals in the same area. Yet that did not deter him. 6 months after he arrived, his wife gave birth to their son, Peter Robert Paton. Peter died within a month of his birth, and then sadly so did his wife just a few weeks later. After burying and grieving for his wife and son, Paton worked hard for 4 years to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to hostile cannibals. Eventually, the natives drove him off the island as he fled for his life.

4 years later, with a new wife, Paton was motivated to return to the South Seas and again began to evangelize the natives. During the next 15 years Paton and his wife saw every single native on the island of Aniwa come to know Jesus as savior. Paton had a burning passion for Christ. He was motivated through difficulty because he recognized that Jesus could change anyone, that the fields were ripe for harvesting, and he knew that Jesus Christ was not only the Savior of Scotch men and women, but Savior of the World.

Brothers and sisters, I know we are not all called to the farthest reaches of the earth to evangelize cannibals. But we are all called to preach Christ to others. There is no exemption card to pull. Evangelism is part of the normal Christian life. GCF exists to glorify God through gospel centered...evangelism. Some of you love to tell others regularly about Jesus. But many of us don't or don't that often because we struggle with fear of rejection or persecution. Sometimes we are just more excited about worldly things than we are heavenly things. Well, my hope this morning is that this sermon and passage of scripture in John 4 will motivate us to evangelize.

Our text gives us 4 reasons to be motivated to evangelize. 1) Because Jesus changes lives, 2) because evangelism motivated Jesus, 3) because the harvest is ripe, and 4) Jesus is the Savior of the world.

### **POINT 1**

Our first point is that we should be motivated to evangelize because Jesus changes lives. Who was changed in our story? The Samaritan woman at the well was. A brief recap from last week reminds us that Jesus purposely passed through Samaria. Worn out from the journey he stopped at Jacob's well just in time for his divine appointment. Around noon when his disciples left to get food the woman showed up to draw water. Jesus asked her for a drink and then began to engage her in dialogue. Knowing that this woman was spiritually thirsty having had 5 husbands and now living in sexual sin with another man, Jesus offers her living water that can quench her deep and longing intimacy that she is trying to find in broken relationships. Perceiving that Jesus was a prophet, The woman said to him in v25-26 **"I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."**<sup>26</sup> **Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."** Jesus exposed her sin and emptiness and filled her with living water. It is implied in the story and from her actions that she drank living water and was born again. Jesus, the Messiah, changed her.

What did she do when she was changed? She evangelized her town. Look with me at verse 28-29.”<sup>28</sup> **So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,<sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?”**

What do newly saved people often do? In their excitement they tell everyone they know about Jesus. John, the author, records a very interesting detail. Likely because of her excitement (or possibly symbolically) she leaves her heavy, earthen pot that can only draw unquenchable water, and she races back to her village with her shame gone to boldly evangelize the people.

Most commentators believe that her statement, **“can this be the Christ” (v29)**, is rhetorical in nature, meaning yes, this is the Christ. It’s her stating, “I have found the Messiah”! Her excitement is likely the reason for the hyperbole in her statement **“he told me all that I ever did”**. Since Pastor Dave and I are good friends, (and since he is in sunny Phoenix will we freeze), I can pick on him. If you know Dave personally you know that often when he is excited about something he will say, “it will change your life”. You gotta try it, you gotta buy it, you gotta watch it, you gotta eat it, because it will change your life. It is normal to be excited when Jesus changes your life. The Samaritan woman had found the Christ, and she wants everyone to know.

My question for you today, is are you excited and motivated to evangelize your town like this woman was? Often after we are born again the excitement seems to wane. Sometimes we just don’t know what to say. But you really don’t need a memorized 5-point gospel sermon to tell others about Jesus. Simply tell others how Jesus has changed you! You have a story; you have a testimony. I understand not all of us here in the room have had a woman at the well type of conversion. Some of you here were saved so young you have no clue when it was. But as a Christian there is this thing called sanctification. That means the Holy Spirit is changing you year after year to be more like Christ. Maybe you have found growth and victory over impatience, (everyone seems to be impatient in our world), so if you have a friend struggling with patience, tell them how Jesus has helped you overcome anger and impatience. If you have struggled with anxiety, then you can relate to your anxious friends and tell them how Jesus is giving you peace that passes understanding. You have much to be excited about, you have good news to share with others about how much Jesus has forgiven you and how he is changing you now. We should be motivated to evangelize because Jesus changes lives.

## **POINT 2**

The second reason we should be motivated to evangelize is because evangelism motivated Jesus. Look with me at verse 31-34 <sup>31</sup> **Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”<sup>32</sup> But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”<sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?”<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.**

Evangelizing the Samaritan woman was food for Jesus. Remember Jesus was wearied and resting at the well. Since Jesus is fully human, a long journey would make him tired, hungry, and thirsty just as it would you and me. Now the disciples missed the entire interaction with the woman and returned with food right when she rushed off to witness about Christ. So, they begin to urge him to eat, and Jesus says something astonishing. **“I have food to eat that you do not know about”**. In typical disciple style they have no clue of what Jesus is referring to, so they begin to ask, “did someone bring him something to

eat”? Jesus explains to them that, **“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” v34.**

When I was a young boy growing up in the suburbs of Detroit, our neighbors had a small cottage in northern Michigan that they would graciously take me to each summer. I loved being able to escape city life and spend time in the woods. I specifically loved fishing for brook trout in all the creeks that stretched for miles around their property. Each morning I would head out with my tackle box, fishing pole and some worms. Hours and hours would go by, and I wouldn’t think twice about eating food because I was lost in the moment of fishing. The joy and exhilaration of catching rainbow trout under logs and deep gravel beds was my food.

Jesus was so engaged in the work he was sent to do and so delighted with the woman’s new birth and witness to the town that his physical desire for food was suspended. Evangelism motivated Jesus. As one commentator put it, “Jesus’ passion is our salvation”. **For the joy set before him he endured the cross.** How encouraging!

Brothers and sisters, we should be eager to evangelize because fishing for men and women satisfies in a way that physical food never can. When we witness to others about Christ we are engaged in eternal work. We are on mission with Jesus. But we are so often eager to pursue other pleasures. And when we seek to fill our souls with water drawn from clay pots we thirst again quickly. But when we leave those water jars aside like the woman at the well and we pursue God’s glory through gospel work like evangelism we find pleasure and joy that does not fade. This work brings a joy that is unspeakable. You and I have the best news to share with others.

And it is good news because Jesus did accomplish the work of the one who sent him. When he had finished his earthly ministry his road ended on a hill, where he was betrayed by friends, beaten and nailed to a cross to bear our sins. And as he bore the punishment for our sins his dying breath in John 19:30 was “It is finished”, accomplished. That means salvation is possible, possible for the worst of sinners. It’s possible for the people we think least likely to be saved, like the outcast, like John Patton’s cannibals, and like woman at the well. So, just like Jesus was motivated to evangelize the lost we also should be eager to enter this work of evangelism with him.

### **POINT 3**

The third reason we should be motivated to evangelize is because Jesus said the harvest is ripe. What does a ripe harvest mean? It means imminent results. Look with me at 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.**

Jesus appears to be quoting a common rural proverb in v 35 when he says, **“Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’?** Barley and wheat are both grain crops grown in this region of Samaria. Jesus is using the proverb to say, normally it takes from the end of sowing about 4 more months until the physical harvest, but not so with the spiritual harvest. This harvest is imminent! And when barley and wheat are ripe and ready for harvest, they often can have a whiteish appearance to them. Note that Jesus says the fields are **“white for harvest”**, signifying they are ripe. **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.** Jesus is saying in the immediate context, this field, the Samaritan village, is white for harvest. Though the sowing just happened among the Samaritan woman, it doesn’t require 4

more months before reaping, it's happening now. John tells us in v 30, ***"They (referring to the Samaritans) went out of the town and were coming to him"***.

Years back journalist and travel writer, H.V. Morton was sitting by the same Samaritan well and observed and wrote the following: ***"As I sat by Jacob's Well a crowd of Arabs came along the road from the direction in which Jesus was looking and I saw their white garments shining in the sun. Surely Jesus was speaking not of the earthly but of the heavenly harvest, and as he spoke I think it likely that he pointed along the road where the Samaritans in their white robes were assembling to hear his words"***.

Our field, Spokane, is white for harvest. It is ripe! There are many thirsty people all around us you just need to lift up your eyes and see it. Because the harvest is ripe it means results are imminent. So, we can be encouraged "some" people that hear the gospel WILL be born again.

What else does a ripe harvest mean? It means some will reap where others have sown. Look with me at v36-38 ***<sup>36</sup> Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, One sows and another reaps. <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."*** Once again, Jesus uses a proverb. ***"For here the saying holds true, one sows and another reaps"***. Before modern machinery, it was common for one to sow seed and for another person to reap the harvest.

The sower here is a collective metaphor for Moses and the Prophets ending with John the Baptist. And the reaper is Christ. For centuries the prophets in the OT had been sowing the message, that a Messiah is coming, and he would bring salvation and deliverance to the world. Even the Samaritan woman said, John 4:25 ***"I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ)***. Jesus responded to her ***John 4:26 "I who speak to you am he."*** Jesus is the reaper, he is the Messiah, the one who brought living water to her. Jesus is the now the one who is ***"receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life"***.

As participants of the New Covenant, we will reap in the spiritual harvest where others have sown. In the immediate context Jesus sowed seed of spiritual life into the woman and then the Samaritan woman went and sowed the seed of her witness to Christ among the town. Now the disciples are about to receiving the blessing of reaping that for which they have not labored. The end of our passage tells us that Jesus and the disciples stayed for a few days in Samaria and continued to reap the harvest among the village.

When I was in college at ASU, my computer science major required me to get through Calculus 3. During Calc 1 I had befriended a Mormon student in the same program. She was open to the Biblical gospel, so I regularly witnessed to her about Jesus and his power to save sinners. I was sowing seeds of the gospel with her. This went on for some time and though she would listen she never believed. Then one day about a year later, I saw her again, and she told me that she had met a guy in our Computer Science program. This guy was also a Christian and they started dating and he began to witness to her. She then told me that she believed the gospel and was now born again. I had the great privilege of being able to attend her baptism where, I the one who sowed, could rejoice together with the one who reaped, her boyfriend, who eventually became her husband.

Brothers and sisters reaping where we have not sown should give us great motivation to evangelize. We are not a one-person team. Be thankful Christianity is not like tennis. Christianity is a team sport, one

sows, and another reaps. You may reap where others have sown. You may sow gospel seeds into your unbelieving family and others may reap. The point is that because the harvest is ripe, whether you are sowing or reaping, others will respond, people will believe! It doesn't always happen in the timing we hope for, but the word of God tells us the harvest is imminent. But this means action is required. It requires you to evangelize, to speak words of life. It requires you to befriend those that are lost and don't yet know the Messiah. It requires you to engage in dialogue with others who thirst and to tell them about the good news of living.

Though you have no idea who will believe, you can be motivated to evangelize knowing the power for salvation is not in your delivery, in your methods, or in your own construction of words. Instead, the power of salvation is from God and is found in the good news of the gospel. Your part is to not be ashamed as Paul says. ***Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***

Let me encourage you to keep evangelizing even when you don't see fruit. Jesus tells us the harvest is ripe. Believe it by faith. Don't give in after you have shared Christ with someone for years and there is no response. We will all be shut down by others, and it is easy to be discouraged. Most people I have shared the good news of Jesus with have not believed immediately, or at all. I've invited many people over the years to church and few have come or stayed. But keep sowing! John G Patton never reaped on the first island of Tanna. He gave his wife and son to that island and almost his own life and he never saw souls saved there. It was on Aniwa when he returned that he saw all the fruit. However, years later other missionaries went back to Tanna and entered into Patton's labor and many of the natives there also believed and went on themselves to evangelize the New Hebrides islands. Be motivated to evangelize because a ripe harvest means you will reap where you have not sown.

So far, we have looked at 3 reasons why we should be motivated to evangelize. Because Jesus changes lives, because evangelism motivated Jesus, and because the harvest is ripe.

## **POINT 4**

Our last point is that we should be motivated to evangelize because Jesus is the Savior of the world. Look with me at v 39-42 ***Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> 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."***

Jesus is the savior of the world. The title savior of the world doesn't mean Jesus is the savior of all people, but rather Jesus is the savior of all types of people. Remember the context of our story, Jesus is in Samaria, and the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. The Jews looked down upon the Samaritans as a lesser people. They were a mixed group of Jews and Assyrians. Even more scandalous of the day was the fact that Jesus was a rabbi and speaking with a woman. We know from ancient rabbinic literature that a rabbi was not to speak to a woman in public even his own wife. This was a culture shock for the disciples. It's why they were astonished when they returned with food and found Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman. John 4:27 says they ***"marveled that he was talking with a woman" though no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"***

Because Jesus is Savior of the world, he has come to save all sorts of people, from all walks of life, not just the kind that you and I are comfortable with. The apostle John wrote of his heavenly vision in **Revelation 5:9** *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."* The fact that Jesus is the savior of the world should motivate us to evangelize all people. It's what motivated John Patton to risk his lives among violent cannibals. The question for us all is do we think Jesus is capable of saving all types of people. Intellectually, we will say yes. But practically, our actions (or inactions) often say no we don't think he is capable of saving certain types of people.

Are there people you think are too lost to evangelize, too broken, too sinful, too unlike you? Do you find yourself wishing you could go back to the good ole days (Leave it to Beaver) when we didn't have to deal with all the moral craziness and sexual/gender confusion? We need to reject those thoughts because God has sovereignly allowed us to live at this time in history. We have a Bible that is for today, that is for now, that is for our time and our culture. We have a gospel that has power to save anyone, on any day, struggling with any sin. Do you believe that? Do I really believe that?

This larger narrative about the Samaritan woman has been broken into 2 sermons given by different pastors, with different points. But in one sense the main idea of the larger passage in John 4, is that Jesus is the Savior of the World. He is the savior of the unlikely, the broken, the despised, and the outcast. The gospel is as powerful today to quench the thirst of Spokane as it was 2000 years ago at Jacob's well for the Samaritan woman and her town Sychar.

Too often we don't say anything because we don't know what to say or that it's on us to close the deal on salvation. But you and I aren't the Savior of the World. We didn't die for the sins of others. Jesus did, therefore we can let Jesus do the saving and you and I do the evangelizing. A simple way to introduce others to Jesus is to invite them to church. The Samaritan woman went and told her town, and many believed because of her testimony, but more believed (or their belief was confirmed) when she brought them to hear Jesus for themselves. They said v42, **"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."**

We can all invite others to church. We can all bring others to see and hear Jesus. Though Jesus isn't physically here, the Spirit of Christ is present. When we invite people to church, we are inviting them to a personal interaction with Christ. When unbelievers witness the body of Christ worshiping, they can see, hear, and feel Christ. As an elder at GCF I promise that if you invite friends they are going to hear gospel rich songs, they are going to hear gospel centered prayers, and they surely are going to hear gospel centered sermons whether the passage is John 3:16, or Leviticus 3:16. When non-Christians come to church, they will hear Christ in the signing and preaching, and they will feel Christ when they are loved and welcomed by you.

What a good opportunity to invite your unbelieving friends and family as we start meeting in a new building next week. We all have friends and coworkers to invite. Kids, teens, and college students, you have friends at school, or friends on your sports teams. This is the culture we want at GCF. A church for people from all backgrounds and walks of life to come and here about the Savior of the World and to be saved. It also means that we need to be comfortable with people that don't look, sound, and speak like you. Remember Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, engaged an immoral thirsty Samaritan woman.

If you are here and are not a Christian, or are unsure if you are... if you feel broken, hopeless, unworthy, unable to change, spiritually thirsty, or if you have been labeled by others as an outcast .... you are in the right place. That describes everyone here at one point. No one is born righteous, no one is worthy of salvation. There is only one man born worthy. Jesus the Savior of the World. Jesus is passionate about your salvation. He loves broken, unworthy sinful humans and he loves changing people to be like him. All you need to do is to humble yourself, repent of your sin and confess you need the Savior of the World. If you believe this, Jesus will give you living water and you will no longer thirst. I invite you today to talk to someone about this after church. Feel free to talk to me, one of the other elders, or the person that brought you.

Today I challenged us all to be motivated to evangelize. There were 4 points from our text to encourage us to be motivated to evangelize. We should be motivated to evangelize because 1) Jesus changes lives, 2) evangelism motivated Jesus, 3) the harvest is ripe, and 4) Jesus is the Savior of the World.

Let me leave you with a final quote from missionary John G Patton to help motivate you to serve and honor the Lord Jesus Christ, by evangelize others.

When Patton announced, he was going to evangelize the natives of the New Hebrides, one respected elder exclaimed,

**“You will be eaten by cannibals!”**

To which Paton responded,

**“Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my Resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer.”**

Amen!