

## **John: Revival in Small Town Samaria**

**John 4:27-42**

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Turn in your Bibles to the gospel of John, the fourth chapter verse 27-42. This is our Missions Conference week, and this morning we were focusing in the worship service on Psalm 67, the theme for the entire conference. We were reminded of the theme of that Psalm summarized by the title of John Piper's book *Let the Nations Be Glad*, and here in John 4, we have a story of the conversion of a woman of Samaria--a woman from a different ethnic background to the Jews. A story that involves not just her conversion, but the conversion of many other Samaritans as a consequence of what she did.

Now, it's very interesting as all of these things work out in God's providence; and not perhaps by design on my part, but in verse 24 in this chapter, there is a marvelous verse that in some way brings together what we hope to do during this entire missions conference, because in verse 24 of this narrative of Jesus' discourse with the Samaritan woman, He interjects a conversation with her that, at first, looks like a digression on her part. I've never been persuaded that it was a digression on Jesus' part; Jesus knew exactly where this conversation was going, but it is interesting that in the midst of trying to evangelize this woman, she introduces the theme of worship.

This morning Ligon quoted that very famous statement by John Piper, who said that "the goal of the church is not missions but worship. Missions exist because worship doesn't; and that the ultimate goal of God in the plan of redemption is to have a people who will worship Him." And it's interesting here that Jesus says to the woman in verse 24, "God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." God is seeking worshippers. He's not just seeking those who will call themselves converts; He's not just seeking numbers; He's seeking worshippers--men and women who will fall down and acknowledge Him to be the one true and living God, men and women who will come in and through Jesus Christ to acknowledge Him as king of kings and Lord of Lords. Missions exist because worship doesn't. Now let's read together from chapter John 4:27.

At this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why do

You speak with her?” So the woman left her water pot and went into the city and said to the men, “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I *have* done; this is not the Christ, is it?” They went out of the city, and were coming to Him. In the meanwhile, the disciples were requesting Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” The disciples therefore were saying to one another, “No one brought Him *anything* to eat did he?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, “Lift up your eyes and look on the fields that are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered in to their labor.” And from the city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I *have* done.” So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days and many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is indeed the Savior of the world.

Amen. May God bless to us the reading of His holy and inerrant Word. May we pray together.

*Father, we thank you for the Scriptures. We thank you that holy men of old wrote as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Now bless this word to our hearts for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Several hymns come to mind as I read this story. One is “O Christ, in Thee My Soul Hath Found” and you remember the lines: *I tried the broken cisterns, Lord; but ah, the waters failed. Even as I stooped to drink, they fled and mocked me as I wailed. Now, none but Christ can satisfy. None other name for me. There's love and life and lasting joy, Lord Jesus, found in Thee.* This woman had come to the well with her water pots, and we won't go into the whole of that story. She had been coming for many, many years to fill her water pots, but the point that John wants you to understand is that however often she may have filled those water pots with water, the cisterns of her *soul* were empty. She was a woman who had been married, at least she had been with five men and the man she was now with was not her husband. She had had a very *colorful* life shall we say. She had been trying the broken cisterns of this world and she had found them to be empty. She had found them to be unsatisfying—to be such that they had never filled her deepest requirements.

And now she meets another man. She meets Jesus of Nazareth, our Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ, and it is as though He says to her, “Will you have this man to be your Savior? And will you love Him and serve Him and follow Him all the days of your life?” That which you have found to be wanting in the world will be more than made up with your relationship with Me. “From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride, and with His own blood He bought her and for her life He died.”

And what happened as a consequence of the conversion of this adulterous woman, this prostitute, this low-life woman of Samaria? As a result of her conversion, wonderful and astonishing and marvelous as it is, she goes back to her town and tells the men of her town—it would be interesting to know which men she actually told—perhaps some that she had been intimate with. Who knows? But the marvel of sovereign, seeking grace is that many of these men believed. It's a wonderful account of a spiritual awakening in the New Testament. It's actually the first account of a spiritual awakening in the New Testament.

It's what we would call a *revival*. Not the kind of revival that is announced in churches all over the South here, that revival takes place next Wednesday at 7:00, and we'll meet for two weeks—that's not a revival. Whatever that is, it's *not* a revival. A revival is a sovereign work of God where He quickens not just one, but many all at once and brings them into a living and vital relationship with Himself and at the same time, stirs the hearts of His people that they might be aflame with love and zeal for Him.

### **I. What kind of people does God need as evangelists for revival to happen.**

I want us to think through this narrative this evening with our missions conference in mind, and first of all, I want us to ask the question: What is the instrument that God uses in this awakening, in this revival? And the answer is: A single woman. A solitary woman whose life has been dramatically turned around; she has abandoned her water jar. Didn't you see that in the reading in verse 28? The woman left her water pot. Imagine if this were Stephen Spielberg or Francis Ford Coppola making a movie. Imagine what they would do with something like this. This water jar had been a symbol of her life, and now that she has found Jesus, she no longer needs that broken, empty water jar that could never satisfy. I think that if this were a movie, the last few scenes would be this water jar and the camera coming out with this wide-angle shot of this water jar—the symbol of all that she has left behind. She has found Jesus Christ. She has found a living, vital Savior and what does she *do*? She does what she cannot prevent herself from doing: she tells others of what Jesus has done for her.

Now, I'm fascinated by asking the question: What technique did she use? And the answer is that she had no technique. She did three simple things. She pointed them to who Jesus *is*. Verse 29 says, “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I had done.” And she had done some things. Oh, perhaps some of

you have a similar testimony when Jesus found you. In your sin-twisted condition, He found you in the mess that your life was in. In the inadequacy of your life; in the fact that your life was not integrated, not coming together—everything under the sun was vanity and Jesus found you. And this woman points them to who Jesus is. In verse 29, “Come see a man who told me all the things that I had done. Surely this is the Christ, the Messiah, the long-expected Savior.” She points to Him. He is the one who found me. He is the one who knows more about me than I know about myself. He knows more about me than I want anyone to know about me. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that she tells what Jesus has done *for* her. This is the man who told me everything that I ever did. She tells them of what Jesus had done for her, to the whole community she tells this. It was extraordinary, a woman who by nature would be defensive and would have reacted defensively if anyone came to near to her personal life. She's telling everyone, that here is someone who has uncovered the deepest recesses of her heart, and exposed her wretchedness, and exposed her need, and exposed her sin. And she invites them to come to Jesus, and to find the same thing. “And if you come to Him,” she says to them, “you'll find Him to be the same as I have found Him.” That's all she did.

Is that all that it takes? That's a fair enough question to ask. Is that all that it takes? And the answer is, “Yes” and “No.” Yes, in the sense that it doesn't take great eloquence. It doesn't take a Ph.D. It doesn't take seminary training. It doesn't take 20 years of Bible study to be able to tell some else of what Jesus has done for you. It doesn't take great social standing. It doesn't take great amounts of education. This simple woman told others what Jesus had done for her.

But, no, that's not all it takes, for when she said what she said, she said it out of a full heart. She said it out of a heart that's fallen in love, and, I'm going to say, for the very first time in her life, with someone who has, can I say it, ravished her soul. She says it out of the fullness of her heart, she says it out of a transformed life, and not a transparent life. They could see, but there was something now about this woman that was different. Her life has been transformed. She had a sense of her need, and she had been lifted by the power and grace of Jesus, and that's what it takes. That's all that it takes. Transformed lives.

You know, as we come to a missions conference, we think automatically of all countries, way, way across the oceans somewhere, one of the great continents of the world. But missions involves at its most basic level, speaking for Jesus here and now in the communities in which we live. And here's this woman, she's going back to her own community and to her own people and to her own kind, and those who knew her well, and she tells them what Jesus has done, out of a transformed life. And those are the instruments that God uses.

God can use you. You don't have to go to the uttermost parts of the world. You don't have to go even beyond your neighbor across the fence. Just speak, just tell them what Jesus has done for you, and do it out of a heart that is full of love for Him. And that's all God used. Isn't that extraordinary? That's all He used. The testimony of this woman. Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. Isn't this the Christ?

You know, it's not a great testimony, is it? There are better testimonies than that. I was thinking, what great testimony could I use to illustrate this, and every single one that I was thinking of, and I was thinking of John Bunyan, and John Newton, and John Calvin, and John Knox, but all of them were getting too complicated. Because the point of this narrative is that this is a lisping, stammering, tongue, giving testimony to Jesus. You know, you don't have to have courses in evangelism to witness for Jesus. Instruction in evangelism is useful and we need it, but you don't have to have that to be able to testify for Jesus. If you are waiting to be instructed about how to give testimony for Jesus, there's something wrong. Just speak, just tell people how much you love Him, and how much He has done for you, and that you couldn't live for one second without Him. That's all she did. Doesn't God use broken jars of clay in order to promote the sovereignty of what He's doing?

## **II. But the second thing I want us to see is the explanation that Jesus gives of this revival.**

There's a sort of split screen thing taking place in this narrative. First of all, we're with Jesus and the disciples. Then, we are with the woman in this little town in Samaria. Then, we are back with Jesus and the disciples. And then, we are with these Samaritan people coming to Jesus. It's flip flopping between these two scenes, and the focus now of the conversation is between Jesus and the disciples who are blind about spiritual matters. They're speaking to Him, they're all in a tizzy because Jesus has missed his dinner. Now let's not be too hard on them. That was good, it was honorable of them to be concerned that He had missed His lunch. "Do you want anything to eat, Jesus, You must eat?" And He says this extraordinary thing, "I have food to eat that you don't know anything about." He had been so energized, He had been so caught up in witnessing to this woman. It takes so much energy to speak about something that's intensely personal and intensely profound, and something that is intensely close to you. If angels rejoice when a sinner is converted, Jesus must have been bursting at the thought that this woman was coming to faith. As He could see before His very eyes the work of the Holy Spirit transforming her heart and bringing her out of darkness and her sinful past and into a wonderful relationship with Jesus. And He must have been bursting. You know, when you're on that spiritual, emotional high, and your adrenalin is flowing, and Jesus had adrenalin. He was a real man. He wasn't concerned about food, He wasn't even thinking about food, and even now He's still not ready to eat.

And we can imagine Jesus with the disciples at the well and these Samaritans are coming toward them. The Samaritans wore these white clothes, and many still do in areas of Samaria today. Perhaps there were hundreds, I don't know how many, but they were coming towards them at the well, and it's like a field that's white unto harvest. "Look," He says, "the fields are white unto harvest, the time of reaping has come. The sower has been sowing and now it's reaping time." I'm not sure what Jesus is saying here. He may have been referring to the conversation He's just had with the woman. He has sown and reaped all at once. Now, that's not always the case. Sometimes people will sow for years and years and years, and another person will come and reap. But in this instance, He had sown and reaped all at once, and the one who was sowing and the one who was reaping are rejoicing together. He may have been talking about the fact that John the Baptist had been baptizing in this area, that was referred to back in chapter 3, and He may have been saying, "John has been sowing and now we are reaping, and the two of them have come together." Maybe He's making a more general point and He's saying, "The Old Testament has been a period of sowing and now is the period of reaping. Now the Spirit is being poured out. Now the end of the ages has dawned and is already breaking forth into this world so that even now we're seeing just a little glimpse of this woman and perhaps the conversion of the Samaritans in all their whiteness coming towards Him as though the fulfillment of Psalm 67 is there. Let the nations be glad. And we're seeing just a little glimpse of that.

So the explanation for the revival is twofold: a plowing and sowing has been taking place. And don't ever despise, if God calls you to be the sower and not the reaper. I was thinking of William Carey, that wonderful, godly astonishing man who goes to India in 1793 after writing this tract, this small booklet, *Inquiry into the Obligations of the Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. They gave books titles like that then. There was a godly elder on the missions board who stood up and spoke to Carey, "Sit down, young man, if God intends the heathen to be converted, He will do it without your aid or mine." Which sounded very Calvinistic, but it wasn't. It was very unbiblical. Carey was in India for seven long, hard years before he saw a single convert. When he died he had seen the Scriptures translated and printed into many, many, some say thirty or forty different languages. He had founded a college, he had become a professor, he had seen many, many converts to Jesus Christ. Don't ever despise if God calls you to be a sower, giving the word for Jesus, testifying for His greatness, His beauty, and maybe someone else will come along and reap what you have sown.

The second explanation is the timing of God. These disciples couldn't see it, but the day of reaping had dawned. A new age had dawned, and Christ had already beginning to march through the world and call the nations to Himself. It's a beautiful little cameo sketch that we have here, of what Christ is still doing, marching through the world and claiming the nations and people groups to

Himself.

### **III. There's a third thing that I want us to see, and that's the effects of this revival.**

They are, of course, glorious. They are basically simple. What happened in this woman happened in the community. What happened in this woman in the transformation of her life happened now in the community in many, many people, all at once. And that's what a revival is. Notice, they want to have Jesus stay with them. That's a good sign. When they want to have Jesus stay with them. I wonder if I can stretch this text just a little. Seminary students be quiet a moment. Let me stretch this text just a little, because sometimes it's all too clear in our lives that we've had enough of Jesus for today, and the sign that a work of the spirit of god had descended upon this community was that they hadn't had enough of Jesus, and they wanted Him to stay. I was going to make a poor illustration about Super Bowl Sunday at this point, but I'll refrain, because the people to whom I want to apply it aren't here. You understand.

Notice that they want to be taught by Jesus. It isn't a great method that God uses. That's something that Robert Murray McCheyne, in his very brief life once said, "It's not great methods God uses; it's great men." And he meant men and women, filled with the Spirit. Men and women who are in love with Jesus Christ.

In his book, *The Second Evangelical Awakening* in 1859, Edwin Orr describes something that took place in Northern Ireland, where I was a minister for 18 years. The townfolk of Colerain in the part of County Derry, close to the County Antrim revival centers, witnessed some of the most amazing scenes in the whole revival. A school boy, under deep conviction of sin, seemed so unable to continue his studies that the kindly teacher sent him home in the company of another boy already converted. On the way home, they found an empty house and entered it to pray. At last, the unhappy boy found peace and returned immediately to the class to tell his teacher, 'I am so happy, I have the Lord Jesus in my heart.' His innocent testimony had its effect upon the class, and boy after boy after slipped outside. The master, standing on something to look out the window, observed the boys, each one on his knees in prayer, a little apart from each other. The master, so overcome, asked the boys to comfort them. Soon, the whole school was in strange disorder, and the ministers were sent for to deal with seekers after peace. School boys, school girls, parents, and neighbors, the premises being occupied until eleven o'clock that night."

You know, that was a hundred and fifty years ago or so, and are you saying, friend, "That could never happen today." Are you saying that couldn't happen at First Pres Day School? Are you saying that couldn't happen at JA or Prep or somewhere else in town? Because in saying that, you're denying the sovereignty of God. Do you believe that's the challenge? Do you believe that what happened

in 1859, do you believe that what happened in this town of Samaria, could happen here in Mississippi, in Jackson? May God fill our hearts until they overflow, so that we might believe that what God has done in the past He can do today and tomorrow. Let's pray together.

*Father, as we begin this Missions Conference and this Missions Week especially, fill us with faith in Your greatness, in Your glory, in Your sovereignty, for Jesus' sake, Amen.*

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