

WOMAN AT THE WELL

One Sunday morning a stranger wandered into a small country church in the middle of the sermon. The man was unkempt and dirty. The usher tried his best to seat him off in a far corner but instead the man walked to the very first pew and sat directly in front of the pastor. Then to the congregation's horror in the middle of the message the man began to shout, "Amen. That's right! Preach it brother." The minister frowned at the man, but that didn't work. The stranger just continued, "Praise Jesus, Hallelujah!" Finally an usher went to the man and whispered in his ear, "Sir, we don't act like that in this church." "But you don't understand, I've just got Jesus," said the stranger. "That may be," said the usher, "but you didn't get him from here."

Often the church worldwide has not done a very good job of sharing Christ with others. We have allowed all kinds of other things to distract us from our primary task which is to reach PEOPLE. Jesus told us to GO and make disciples OF ALL NATIONS. How do we do that?

John 4:31 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?" 34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 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. 36 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." 39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

1. Why do we go – Heart of God - Lost sense of Purpose (vs 31-34)

The priorities of the disciples were off because they had lost a sense of their purpose as followers of Christ. They thought that Jesus talking to this woman was a diversion from their true task of getting home from Jerusalem. They thought that this was just a rest break. Jesus reminds them that their true purpose in life, their mission, was to "do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work".

We are the hands and feet of Jesus. He has given the task of sharing the Good News to the church. Jesus said in verse 34 that in talking to the Samaritan woman he was doing the will of His father and finishing the work. Why did Jesus come to the earth? He came for one primary purpose. Yes he came to teach, but that isn't it. Yes he came to heal that that isn't it either. Jesus came to DIE. He came to give His life as a sacrifice to bring men and women back into a saving relationship with God the Father. The will of God is that as many as possible should be saved.

In University I was fearless in sharing my faith for Christ. A friend and I would stand on bus benches in Toronto witnessing. When I got into seminary my focus changed. I became more informed and more respectable but I lost the passion. I had lost sight of this primary purpose.

In the same way the church exists for different reasons. Part of it is worship and teaching and fellowship but the primary purpose of the church is to bring people to Christ. Our purpose is MISSION – extending the kingdom of God. Often evangelism and missions is seen as a good thing but not a priority in the church. Not A thing we do but THE thing we do. It must be top priority.

2. When do we go? - Lost sense of Time (vs 35-36)

The disciples had lost their sense of urgency. They did not understand that now was the time to act and not later. The word used for RIPE is LEUKOS or 'WHITE'. When wheat is white it is not just ripe, it is overripe! If it were not picked soon it would spoil. I picture a farmer working hard in the fields but realizing that he is not able to bring in the harvest alone. He cries out for workers to help him.

Mat 9:37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

The time for reaching the world for Christ is NOW. Now is the time for the church to act. Today we are seeing around the world the greatest harvest of souls for the kingdom that has ever taken place, and yet there are still so many who need to hear. Billions are dying without knowing about Jesus. Church history is filled with missed opportunities because the church failed to act when it could have.

In 1271 Niccolo and Matteo Polo (the father and uncle of Marco) were visiting the Kubla Khan. At that time he was a world ruler, for he ruled all China, all India, and all of the East. He was attracted to the story of Christianity as Niccolo and Matteo told it to him. And he said to them: "You shall go to your high priest and tell him on my behalf to send me a hundred men skilled in your religion and I shall be baptized, and when I am baptized all my barons and great men will be baptized and their subjects will receive baptism, too, and so there will be more Christians here than there are in your parts." Nothing was done. Nothing was done for about thirty years, and then two or three missionaries were sent. Too few and too late. It baffles the imagination to think what a difference to the world it would have made if hundreds or years before the modern missionary movement that China and India had had been given to Christ.

When should you tell people about Jesus? DO IT NOW! Do not say "when I graduate from Bible College" or "next month if I happen to see them again" or even "tomorrow". There is a saying that many who plan to seek the Lord at 11:00 die at 10:30. We have no guarantee of tomorrow.

Meeting the Kuwaiti man at the gate in Kuwait. If I had waited I would have lost the opportunity.

Maybe you have heard the story of the 3 demons. Satan had asked his legions to devise a way to deceive more people into hell. A first demon said, "I will tell them that there is no hell. Then they will continue in their evil and not worry about the consequence for their sin. That will surely work!" "No" said the devil "the bible is very clear that hell is real." A second demon said, "Then I will tell them that there is no heaven. Then there will be no reason for them to lead a good life. That will work even better!" Again the devil said "that also will not work for the bible is also clear on the existence of heaven." A third demon listened to them and then said, "We aren't going to tell them that there is no hell or that there is no heaven. To get more people into hell, we will simply convince them that there is NO HURRY!" The devil smiled.

3. Where do we go? - Lost sense of Place (vs 4) - "Now he had to go through Samaria."

Earlier in the chapter it says that they "had to go through Samaria". Why did they have to go there? The disciples had lost their sense of location. They were on their way home and probably had their minds set on the destination. They just wanted to get their trip over with.

E.g. Flying for me. I am just focusing on the destination and enduring the trip.

Perhaps the words "had to" meant it was just a place between point A and point B. It was necessary to pass through Samaria in order to get home to Galilee (see map). There is truth in that. We are called to witness wherever we are. On the bus, walking along the road or talking to your neighbor.

I remember a time we were in Africa. I had a team that was headed to the fish market to do some evangelism. On the way we were stopped by some young people on the street and started talking to them. I was sharing my faith with them when one of the team said "We have to get going. We need to go over THERE and do evangelism." Sometimes we can have that same problem. We send people to different places to tell others about Jesus yet have never even spoken with the person across the street from us. The place for evangelism is HERE.

Bible commentators say that most Jews did not travel through Samaria but along the Jordan when they travelled between Jerusalem and Galilee. Perhaps the words "had to" means something different. Maybe there were people THERE that needed to hear. A divine appointment had been set. In this sense it was essential that they go. This is also very true. There are places today that are being overlooked by the Church. Take a look at this diagram of the 10/40 Window (see map).

There are many areas in this world where there is virtually NO witness for Christ. Did you know that more than 95% of all missionary giving goes to places that already have an established church. That means that only a little is going to the most unreached countries. I lived for 10 years in Kuwait – a country of almost 3 million people with only 1 protestant church. Can you imagine a country with the size and population of the GTA with only 1 church! If no one goes how will they ever hear?

E.g. living in Kuwait (most unreached) and taking a missions trip to Kenya (most reached).

Why should anyone be able to hear the gospel twice until everyone has had the opportunity to hear it once -- Oswald Smith

The place for missions is HERE but it is also THERE. It is not enough to just reach out to the people who are near us. We need people who are willing to go to the ends of the earth.

4. Who do we go to? - Lost sense of Person (27) –

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?"

The disciples were surprised that Jesus was talking to a WOMAN (which is not done in the Middle East). Add to this is the fact that she was a SAMARITAN woman (mortal enemies of Jews). Add to this the KIND of woman she was (she was shunned by her own people so she had to get water during the day). The disciples had lost their sense of who the gospel is for. Jesus said that it is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick. The disciples had not understood that the gospel is for EVERYONE.

The gospel is not reserved to a certain sex or age or people group or class. It is for all people. God so loved the WORLD that he gave his Son. That means the person across the street from you and it also means the person across the nation and across the world.

God desires that all peoples be saved. Often this means we must go to someone very different from us. It is easy to talk with people who are just like us. People who share the same language and culture. That is why Jesus told us to start with them:

Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

If you are going to tell people about Jesus, start with the people you already know and have a relationship with. This is your Jerusalem and Judea, people who are probably culturally similar to you. This was what Paul did. When he travelled he would first go to the synagogue. Why did he start there? Because it was the easiest. He already knew the way that Jewish people thought and reasoned.

After Jerusalem and Judea comes Samaria. These were people who were geographically close but culturally different. There are lots of people like that right here in Brampton. They live near us but they are culturally different. It is always more difficult to share with people from different backgrounds because it required a cross cultural understanding.

When Paul started to see resistance he would change his tactics and then go to the Gentiles. It is always much harder to talk with people who are different because we need to think outside the comfort of our own culture. We need to see the gospel and ourselves through the eyes of others.

After Samaria we move out into all the world. That means not only talking to someone of a different culture but also living in a different culture. That is even more difficult. It requires that you not only understand the culture but that adapt to it and make it your own. E.g. landing in Kuwait the first time.

The gospel is for everyone so start with who you already know and move out from there. The principal is that you should be telling people about Jesus **HERE** before you are thinking of going **THERE**.

5. How do we go? - Lost sense of Power (vs 37-38)

We just saw in Act 1:8 that it said "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..."

We make a difference in the world when we understand that it is God's power that does the work. The disciples had lost their sense of the power that lay behind the work that was before them. Jesus refers here to the sower and the reaper working together:

John 4:37 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."

Often evangelism is a process with many steps to it. Whenever we seek to share Christ we must remember that it is God who saves, not us. God uses us to take the message, but the power to save is God's alone. Yes we can do all we can in evangelism training. We can improve our ability and equip ourselves in evangelistic methods, but when it comes right down to it if anything good happens it is Christ. Our job is to **GO** and **SOW**. God's job is to **MAKE IT GROW**. The most important thing is a willing heart and an open mouth.

I already mentioned a time when Naomi and I lived on the Doulos we had an evangelistic meeting in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania. A local pastor asked me if I would help him to reach out to the people living in a poor area outside the city. As a person with two degrees in Theology, a gift of preaching and years of pastoral experience I knew I could help. When we got to the area, the pastor and I began to walk down a street. Children stared at us as we walked by and started to follow us.

At first there was a dozen or so but then soon there were over 100. Adults came out of their homes and began to follow us as we walked up and down the streets. Finally we arrived at an open spot and the pastor began to preach. Many people came forward to receive Christ, but I did not have the chance to say anything. After the meeting was over I asked the pastor why he had brought me since I had been of no help at all. The pastor said “Don’t you understand that all those people were there and heard the Gospel because of you.” I did not understand. The pastor continued, “No white person has ever gone into that area before. As we walked up and down the streets the people followed us because they were wondering why the crazy tall white man was there. You are why they followed us. That is why I brought you.” It was not my education or gifts or experience that had made the difference. It was my colour! God used me simply because I was white. I am OK with that...

That was a humbling lesson for me and one I have never forgotten. God can use our training and gifts but they are not what ultimately make the difference. Our job as Christians is to simply be faithful. To engage the people around us and around the world with the Gospel just like Jesus did with the woman at the well. If we do our part then God will do his. We will reap a mighty harvest that the Holy Spirit is even now preparing all around us.

E.g. Youth for Christ – YOU FOR CHRIST!

It is not just about programs and methods though those things are important. It is about passion and faithfulness. When people have the desire to share Christ they will find no shortage of ways in which to do it! So how do we get involved? The video we played at the beginning gave 6 ways that you can respond to this message today.

Learn - Attend a class like perspectives. Read a missionary biography. Go to Urbana.

Pray - Get a copy of Operation World (on sale soon). Hang up a map. Have your small group adopt a nation or pray through a region. Tell God to send you.

Go - Go out one Saturday with Richard to hand out tracts. Join a short term team like the one going to Belize this summer – talk to John Attrell, Dion Smith or Paul Davidson – planning meeting Mon night at the Attrells. Join Brampton Challenge this June.

Send - Get behind on of the missionaries we support as a church. Read their newsletters. Pray for them. Have them to your home when they are back on furlough. Give generously.

Welcome - Get involved cross culturally here in Bramton. Attend one of the different churches that meet in this building or around the city. Make friends with someone from a different nationality. Open your home.

Mobilize - Give generously to support others who are going. Inspire others. Cast vision.

If there is time...

I will never forget a story Tony Campolo once told. He was a counsellor at a camp for Junior High boys. At that camp there was a boy named Billy who had Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Because of that he had slurred speech and walked with great difficulty in a jerking motion. The other kids (being Junior High boys) soon began to make fun of Billy. They teased him day and night. When Billy walked by they would follow behind him imitating and overexaggerating his movements. They would imitate his voice "How you doin B-B-B-B-B-Billy". But the worst part was that one morning they all volunteered him to speak at chapel. It took Billy several minutes to get down to the front. The sound of children laughing was heard all around. Finally Billy was able to get out the words, "Jesus l-l-l-l-l-loves me, and I love Jesus." The room grew completely silent and then the sound of boys crying could be heard as one by one hearts were convicted. Revival broke out at that camp. Tony Campolo says that to this day whenever he travels he comes across pastors and church leaders who say "remember that Junior High camp. I was there the morning that Billy spoke." God can use anyone who is faithful.