

John 4:27 -42

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[0 : 0 0] With me, you can find today's reading on page 1067, John 4, 27-42. Jesus has just met the Samaritan woman by the well, and the disciples rejoined Jesus.

! 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? Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah?

They came out of the town and made their way towards Him. Meanwhile, His disciples urged Him, Rabbi, eat something. But He said to them, I have food to eat that you know nothing about.

Then His disciples said to each other, could someone have brought Him food? My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work.

Don't you have a saying, it's still four months until harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest.

[1 : 2 4] Even now, the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

Thus the saying, one sows and another reaps, is true. 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.

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony. He told me everything I've ever done. So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days.

And because of His words, many more became believers. They said to the woman, we no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we've heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you for reading for us.

[2 : 3 4] And afternoon, everybody. It would be great if you could keep that passage of the Bible open in front of you as we try and work through it together. Father, and whether you were there yesterday for the big day out or not, it's great to see you, and it's been a privilege to be with you this weekend.

Let me pray as we come to God's Word. Father, we want to pray very simply that you would open our eyes so that we can see Jesus for who He really is this morning, and that we would see ourselves in His big story of the world.

And we pray it in His name. Amen. Let's start with a question. Anyone heard the name Martin Tate before? Not Andrew Tate. I don't think any relation different fella.

Martin Tate is the biggest, if Google's right, the biggest producer of Brussels sprouts in the UK. Some of you may have a revulsion to him already at the mere mention of the word, or you might be dreaming of your Christmas lunch already.

He has 550 acres, I think in Lincolnshire or somewhere, that are devoted to the production of Brussels sprouts. But if you're the kind of person that likes a nice level workload through your year, then you don't want to be Martin Tate.

[3 : 46] He has a problem. In an average week, he just has to produce 25 tons of Brussels sprouts. That's all that we ever manage to eat as a nation.

In the run-up to Christmas Day, a thousand, it doesn't really bear thinking about, does it? A thousand tons of the vegetable he has to produce.

So I reckon for him, that means about 50 weeks of the year. He's pretty chilled. I don't imagine he's got a huge amount going on, or you want a game of golf with Martin, is free for most of the year, I suspect.

You might find him heading out for dinner with his wife. He's got plenty of time to complain about inheritance tax. He is as free as air. But then for two weeks of the year, everything else has to go, and it's all about the harvest.

And I start pretty randomly like that, because our passage today is all about food, and about harvest time. It centers on verses 34 and 35 that were just read to us, where Jesus says to his disciples, My food, speaking of God, is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work.

[5 : 05] Don't you have a saying? It's four months until harvest. I tell you, open your eyes, and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest.

And the lesson we're going to learn is that, with the coming of Jesus, that the big work that God is doing in the world, has been reshaped forever.

He's God's Messiah. As verse 42 says, he's the savior of the world, as we're thinking about all morning. And the big work that God is doing at this moment, in salvation history, is to harvest the souls of men and women, so that we can enjoy eternal life with him.

That's the work that God gave his son Jesus, to do when he came to earth. And as those of us who have been given eternal life by Jesus, part of what it means to worship him in spirit and truth, as we were thinking about yesterday, some of us, is to join him in that urgent harvest work.

Got two points this morning. You'll see them on the sheets, I think. There are two truths about Jesus, and each comes with a question. The first, Jesus is the savior of the world, will you believe?

[6 : 22] And it's really the main point of the whole of chapter four. Lots of the Jews of Jesus' day were pretty sectarian. If God was gonna come to earth, they wanted him to bless them and curse everybody else.

But God's plan has always been much bigger than any one nation. As far back as Genesis 12, he promised that one day he would bless all of the nations of the world through the seed or the son of Abraham.

King David was promised that his son, the son of David, would one day come and receive all of the nations of the world as his inheritance. Isaiah prophesied a day when people from every land would flock to hear the word of the Lord.

He was told it would be too small a thing for God's servant to be the savior of just one nation. He would be a light for the Gentiles. And God's salvation would extend all the way to the ends of the earth.

And what happens here in John four is like the first fruits of that global harvest. It stands out because most of the times in the gospel, Jesus is focusing his earthly ministry on the lost sheep of Israel.

[7 : 39] But here's a preview that God has something much, much bigger in mind. Those of us that were there yesterday, spent our weekend listening in on this conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria.

The backdrop, as we just heard, the disciples have gone into town to buy some food. As we pick up the story, they get back. And she takes her cue to leave.

And in verse 28, we find that she's so overcome with excitement that she'd gone there to collect water, but she abandons her water jug, runs back into town to tell everyone about the man that she's just started to worship in spirit and in truth.

So she says in verse 29, come see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah? And we need to picture the scene in the village.

Because I guess up until that moment, that day was just a day like any other. Someone's washing his car, someone's dropping their kids off at nursery, students lying in bed watching bargain hunt.

[8 : 48] But then suddenly, there's this infamous woman running through the streets. And she is calling out. And her past is such that much of the time, she's shunned and ignored by everybody.

Nobody cares what she has to say. But today, something must have happened. Because she's talking about God's forever king, the Messiah, the Christ.

She's saying he's finally come. And maybe some of them are cynical about it and others are excited, but they all want a closer look. And so verse 30 is a scene like from a movie.

As the buildings empty and the crowd swells and the whole town starts walking out across the fields to meet the one that she's talking about.

And you think, well, this is great. The disciples are going to be really excited. God's been talking about a global harvest for centuries. It's finally happening. This is a day to break into song.

[9 : 57] But actually, all they can think about is their lunch. So verse 31, meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, Rabbi, eat. He says to them, I'm not going to eat.

I have food to eat that you know nothing about. In other words, I've got bigger things on my mind. I've got deeper priorities. Just forget about the meal deal for a second. But the penny still doesn't drop.

So they say to each other, maybe someone else has brought him some food. It's not about food. Not about lunch. My food, says Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

And we're meant to spot just how single-minded and determined Jesus is to complete the work of salvation that has been entrusted to him by his father.

He's tired. He's thirsty. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to put up a sign that says, back in an hour, gone for lunch, and to leave the crowds to it.

[11 : 03] But this is the king that came not to be served, but to serve. And his food, the thing that really energizes him, the thing that keeps him going, is the knowledge that he's doing God's will.

And it's just a tiny incident, but it's a picture of a much bigger thing. Here, he just skips a meal to talk to some Samaritans about his kingdom.

But you'll see that same single-minded focus and determination all the way through the life of Jesus. He says in John's Gospel, I seek not to please myself, but him who sent me.

He said, I haven't come down from heaven to do my will, but the will of him who sent me. And in Gethsemane, he prays, not my will, but yours be done.

And I love that he calls it his food. Because he's saying, this is my bread and butter. This is my staple diet.

[12 : 09] It's to do the will of my Father in heaven and to finish the work that I've been given. It was hard work. It was costly and painful, not just skipping a meal, but accomplishing the work of salvation would cost him his life.

But he didn't want to flinch from it, even for a second. And I suspect there is a lesson for us there already, for me at least, just as we look at the dedication, the example of Jesus.

I'm not suggesting we should start skipping lunch every day or running ourselves into the ground, but there is a challenge to Jesus' example here. It makes me want to ask, what is the bread and butter of my life?

What's my food? What's the bottom line priority that trumps everything else? What's the thing that I look to for nourishment and for energy?

And specifically, am I willing to sacrifice my own interests, my own desires, in order to do the will of the God who saved me and has commissioned me in his service?

[13 : 24] That's the example of Jesus. And here it bears fruit as this mini revival starts to break out in Samaria. We'll pick it up at verse 39. Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony.

He told me everything I've ever done. So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them and he stayed two days. And because of his words, many more became believers.

They said to the woman, we no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we've heard for ourselves. And we know that this man really is the savior. of the world.

And it's this lovely picture of a whole community being reached with the saving news of Jesus Christ. Her testimony got the ball rolling.

And then as they listened to the words of Jesus over that 48 hours, their belief was sharpened and deepened and lots more were added to their number. And we know they said that Jesus is the savior of the world.

[14 : 29] And John wants us to be confident that it's not flash in the pan stuff, that this is true belief. You might know if you read through John's gospel that there are two different kinds of belief that John talks about.

There's a kind that's full of enthusiasm at the start, but fails to last the course. A bit like the shallow soil in Jesus' parable.

And then there's real belief that abides and bears fruit for a lifetime. And the key difference between the two is the grounds of the belief.

What's it based on? Because some people love the signs or the miracles of Jesus, being a part of a crowd that's interested in him. But that's it.

And so when he starts teaching things that they don't like, they drift away from him and reveal that their belief was only ever superficial and artificial.

[15 : 32] It was kind of a fake thing. True belief, though, throughout John, is based on the words of Jesus. It's believing the scriptures.

It's believing Jesus' own teaching. That's what the disciples do. And it's what the Samaritans do here. They believe because of Jesus' words.

If you want a key verse on the nature of belief in John's gospel and how it abides, you find it in a couple of pages' time in chapter 8 and verse 31. You might want to flick there if you've got a Bible in front of you.

I'm on page 1074. Page 1074. John chapter 8 and verse 31. Where to the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

That's true belief. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. So true belief, not just do I like going to church and feeling the benefits of a loving community.

[16 : 42] But am I abiding in Jesus and his word? And back in chapter 4, John's point is that this is a work of genuine harvest.

That these Samaritans, because they're believing in the right way, they are every bit as authentic in their belief as the disciples have been in their own. And that doesn't just tell us something about them.

it tells us something about Jesus. That he really is the savior, not just of a few disciples, but of the whole world, as many as will believe in him.

The question for us is very simple then. Do I believe in Jesus? There will be some here, you're just coming along to church out of interest, a friend's invited you along maybe, or you've just decided to pop in for a couple of Sundays and see how you get on.

I want to encourage you to think about believing in Jesus. We've heard mention of the Hope Explored course that's starting in a couple of Thursdays' time. We run the same course over in St. Andrews where I serve.

[17 : 50] Lots of people here and around the world have found it hugely helpful to go along and think for themselves, what do I believe in? What do I make of Jesus?

You can go and just listen to what other people have to say or go along and ask all your questions. I know the folks in the church here love helping people to work out whether or not they believe in Jesus.

So chat to Martin at the end, chat to anybody. I know that they would love to help you. even if you can't make the days of that course. But even for those of us who have been following Jesus and coming to church for a long time, there's a question here.

Because if true belief, if lasting belief is about holding on to and abiding in the words of our Savior, then I need to ask, well, how am I doing at that right now?

And a weekend like the one that many of us have been having is a great time is a great time to take stock, a time to reestablish some habits that have slipped. Maybe it's a while since I've been reading God's Word and praying on a daily basis.

[19 : 00] Maybe it's a new habit that I need to start. It's so easy, isn't it? Though even when we do read God's Word for it to be in one ear and out the other, not take it to heart. That's why that phrase abiding is so helpful.

It's about building my home in God's Word. It's about sitting under its authority. It's about surrendering my life to Jesus.

It's about doing what he says. When the crowds are deserting Jesus in chapter 6, he turns to Peter and says, are you going to leave me as well?

And Peter replies, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We've come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.

So of course I'm not going to leave you. I'm going to abide in your Word. Jesus, the Savior of the world, do we believe? And then second, Jesus is the Lord of the harvest.

[20 : 06] Will we testify? And it's sentence 34. Again, my food, says Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Don't you have a saying? It's still four months until harvest. I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They're ripe for harvest. There's a story told about the American evangelist D.L. Moody from a previous century.

He was being, he'd come over from America to do a preaching tour. Lots of people were coming and listening and apparently becoming Christians and some Church of England vicars couldn't work out quite what was happening.

So they visited him in his hotel room to ask him why he was so effective and one of them said to him, Mr. Moody, you've come to London. You've got virtually no education.

You speak horrible English. I don't think that was just because he was American. I think there was his accent and he was very slightly uncouth in some of his language, not swearing but just not very sophisticated.

[21 : 07] They said, your sermons are very simple and yet thousands of people seem to be being converted and we want to know how you do it. And apparently, Moody took them over to his hotel room window and asked them to look outside of the window and to tell him what they could see.

And the first bloke goes, well, I can see a park and I can see some children playing in it. Next bloke goes, well, I can see the same thing but there's a couple holding hands as well. The third one thinks we're missing something.

So he says, Mr. Moody, tell me, what do you see when you look out of the window? And his biography says that as he stood there at the window, tears started to roll down his cheeks and onto his grey beard.

And he said, when I look out of that window, I see countless thousands of souls that will one day spend eternity in hell if they do not find the saviour.

And when Jesus saw a great crowd of foreigners walking across the field towards him, he thought, it's harvest time.

[22 : 19] It's harvest time. And that's how he wants us to look at the world as well. So in verse 35, he gives us a lesson from the world of farming. Farming?

Farming. A lesson from the world of farming. And I realize that many of us are city dwellers. Some have never been kind of outside of the big smoke, but I'm hoping that we'll be able to keep track with what he's saying.

We'll know enough about plants to know that if you're out near a farmer's field and you see some little green plants popping up, that in a couple of months' time, there's going to be the need for a harvest.

And so Jesus says, apply the same principle. Open your eyes and look. Not this time at the fields, but at the people who are flooding across the fields to meet me.

What do you see? Because when I look, I see a harvest of potential disciples. The fields are ripe for harvest.

[23 : 19] harvest. So we're to picture the crowd of the people in your office or your lecture theater or the people who hang out in your favorite coffee shop or where you buy your groceries or in the stands at Parkhead or Murrayfield or wherever.

Do we just see as the world sees? Or do we see fields that are ripe for harvest? Verse 36, Jesus says, even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

Thus the saying, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap what you've not worked for. Others have done the hard work and you have reaped the benefits of their labor. In other words, the harvest has already started because Jesus has come.

even now, one by one, people are being given the amazing gift of eternal life and I've commissioned all of you to play a part in that great work.

The sower here is probably a reference to John the Baptist but Jesus' point is it doesn't actually matter who sows, it doesn't matter who reaps. We can all rejoice that more and more people are entering into God's kingdom.

[24 : 41] So what Jesus is talking about is the enormous privilege that he gives to all of his followers as he appoints each of us to witness to him and to join in his work of harvest.

And I love this Samaritan woman because she's the least likely Christian in the whole of John's gospel and yet within five minutes she's become the most effective evangelist.

Was her life completely sorted by this point? Far, far from it. Had she learned some gospel outline and been to a course at church to tell her how to talk to people about Jesus?

No, she hadn't. But she was so thrilled with Jesus that she couldn't stop herself from even going to people who sometimes shunned her and saying come and see the most amazing man I've ever met.

And she's not alone. This is a theme all through John. Whenever in John someone has a true encounter with Jesus they start to witness about him to testify to people about him.

[26 : 02] A couple of examples the very first thing Andrew did in chapter 1 when he started to follow Jesus was to bring his brother Simon to Jesus with the words we found the Messiah.

Philip was the same his first move was to go and find Nathaniel and say we found the one Moses wrote about in the law. Nathaniel asked Philip a question his reply wonderful come and see come and see for yourself.

And I think we can relate to that kind of overflowing enthusiasm a little bit more than we sometimes think. When I think of the way that I talk to my friends or the way that they talk to me the zeal that we have when we find a new box set that we've really got into or a book or some bargain deal that's going on in a restaurant nearby or a new coffee shop or something we find something good and of course we want to share it because we love people and we want them to benefit from it it's like we can't help ourselves and if that's how it works with a TV show how much more when you meet the Messiah and he gives you the soul quenching living water of an eternal relationship with God that alone can satisfy we said yesterday it's worship time all the time that God wants all of us to worship him in spirit and truth all day every day now we're seeing that one big part not the only part but one big part of what it means to worship him is to join in his great work of harvesting the souls of men and women because it's harvest time that's true in the short term whatever you're doing in your week this week when you're sitting in a class at school when you're in a meeting at work it is harvest time when you're practicing with your team when you're singing with your choir it is harvest time when you're having dinner with your friends open your eyes it is harvest time all the time it's not the only thing you do in those settings of course you go to work to do a job you go to your choir to sing in tune it's important you do those things well for the Lord but it's still harvest time and the people who live on our streets the people that you see in your gym the people who are in the waiting room at the doctor's surgery at the same time as you it is harvest time and can you imagine the joy that it would be in heaven to have someone from your street walk up to you and say

I didn't grow up going to church and I had no idea about the love of God in Jesus Christ but you said to me come and see and I want to say thank you for introducing me to the saviour of the world what a joy that would be what a joy to be a part of that work today some might even think if the big work that God's doing in the world is harvest if I've got the gifts if I've got the godliness that are necessary if I've got the desire why wouldn't I make it the biggest work of my life to teach the life-giving words of Jesus to the nations so that more and more people from right around the world might be able to say we've heard for ourselves and we know that this man is the saviour of the world so two questions

Jesus is the saviour of the world will you believe maybe that Hope Explore course would be exactly the right thing for you and then Jesus is the lord of the harvest will you get on board with telling the world about him let's pray together our father we want to thank you again for just how amazing Jesus is thank you for the the scope the breadth of his desire to save thank you that he is the saviour of the world thank you that even today people from every tribe and tongue and nation are flocking to him to receive his great gift of eternal life we praise you for him and we ask that you would help us and open our eyes that we might believe in him some for the first time we pray that you would help us all to abide in his word to know the truth that the truth would set us free and we pray for us personally and for this church family that you would help us to be thrilled and excited about the great privilege of telling others about the only one who can save and we pray it in Jesus name

[31 : 20] Amen Amen Amen Thank you.