Open Your Eyes and Look at the Fields

John 4:27-42

Key Verse:4:35 “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.”

John 4:1-26 is the story about Jesus who conversed with a Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman seemed to be the last person to accept Jesus because she was a sinful woman who had five husbands and lived a boy friend. But Jesus did not think so. Jesus saw her one of God’s lost sheep. Patiently and prayerfully Jesus explained about the living water and true worship. While listening to Jesus, the Holy Spirit worked in her heart to see Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus didn’t mind who she was, where she came from, and what kind of life she used to live if he could save one lost soul. Jesus said in Luke 19:10, “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*”

Today’s passage is the continuation of Jesus’ ministry in Samaria. Jesus saw hope and vision to evangelize the whole Samaritan people through the change of this woman. Then Jesus helped his disciples to share this gospel work together by opening their spiritual eyes to see the lost in the world.

First, Jesus’ food (27-34) While Jesus was still talking with her, his disciples returned from the town. They were hungry and went to buy food. They were surprised to find Jesus talking with a woman. It was a violation of custom for a Jewish man to talk with a Samaritan woman because they didn’t associate for each other. But no one asked, “***What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her***?” This was because of their holy reverence for the Lord. They remembered Jesus who had taught all people of all area in Judea. Where Jesus visited, it was his mission field, and whomever he met, they were his sheep.

Look at verses 28-30. “***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 ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him.”*** We don’t know why she left her water jar and went back to the town. She must have forgotten the water jar after she talked with Jesus. Leaving her water jar symbolizes her full satisfaction through the living water welling up to eternal life. She was not thirsty any more since she tasted the Holy Spirit. She found the Messiah who was her true object of worship and love. We also leave our water jar when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes on us, our desires are changed. Those who drink alcohol and smoke marihuana quit these habits because they experience the Holy Spirit which quenches their thirst. Those who watch porno movie stop watching it and begin reading the Bible because the word of God gives them more spiritual joy and satisfaction. Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit seek God more and deeper because they want to grow spiritually through the knowledge of God. I believe that among us no one comes to draw water after tasting the love of God and experiencing the Holy Spirit. Leaving her water jar indicates her changed life through the Holy Spirit.

Her testimony to her townspeople was simple and powerful. “*Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?*” In the past, this woman avoided her townspeople because she had had five husbands. She did not talk about a man because the people condemned her. But now something happened to her. She boldly testified about Jesus and invited them to him. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.”* When the Holy Spirit came on her through Jesus, she was not afraid of the townspeople anymore. Rather she was eager to invite them to Jesus so that they might alsomeet the Messiah. In the past the townspeople did not pay attention to her testimony. Whenever she talked about a man, the townswomen got nerved thinking that she might tempt their husbands. But when the Holy Spirit filled her, they all came out to see Jesus. The wives of the townsmen also followed them in order to protect their husbands. In this way most of adults in the town of Sychar were heading toward Jesus. (30)

Look at verses 31-34. “***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***.” Jesus must have been hungry and tired from the long journey, walking from Jerusalem to Samaria. He also gave his heart, mind, and strength to teach the spiritual secret to this rebellious woman. He needed at least a loaf of bread and a cup of water to refresh his exhausted body. But he said that he had food to eat which his disciples knew nothing about. Jesus’ food was to do the will of God and to finish it. Here we learn that there are two kinds of foods for men. They are not hot food or cold food, but physical food and spiritual food. Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 (Lk 4:4) “*Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God*.” In this verse Jesus taught us that a man is both body and spirit. As a body needs physical food in order to nourish and sustain it, so spirit also needs spiritual food to nourish and uphold it. We must not ignore either one. As we are eager to eat crabs at Hokkaido, a Japanese buffet restaurant, so we are also eager to read the word of God. But most people are interested in physical food more than spiritual food. Jesus said in John 6:27, “*Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.*”

Jesus’ food was to help this woman to drink the living water welling up to eternal life. Jesus’ food was to finish the work of the Holy Spirit in her life. For this spiritual food Jesus forgot physical hunger. We also experience the same thing when we concentrate on something. Students forget their hunger when they focus on study. I believe our students experienced this. Missionaries and Bible teachers often skip their lunch in order to make convenient schedule for their students. I remember that I was joyful and satisfied after teaching the word of God even though I missed breakfast and lunch. I believe that what Jesus mentioned about his food was the same one when we focus on teaching the Bible and do something for the will of God.

Second, they are ripe for harvest. (35-42) When Jesus saw the townspeople coming toward him, what did he say to his disciples? Look at verse 35. ***“Don’t you have a saying, ‘It is still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”*** “*It is still four months until harvest*” was the quotation of a current proverb. Having once sowed the grain, all the farmer needed to do was to wait for it to be ripen. But Jesus urged his disciples to open their eyes and look at the townspeople as ripe for harvest. Jesus pointed out that the spiritual harvest is always ready and must be reaped before it spoils. Jesus realized that the townspeople were ready to listen to him and to accept his words.

Jesus’ disciples were not ready to accept the Samaritans. The disciples had still Judaic pride and discrimination against the Samaritans. In Luke 9:51-58 Jesus was heading for Jerusalem. He had to pass Samaria and sent messengers to prepare his way. But the Samaritan opposed. Then James and John asked Jesus, *“Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them*.” But Jesus rebuked them and went to another village. How often do we make the same mistake like the disciples today? Some dogmatic Christians condemn people who need to listen to the gospel. They do not see the people as God’s lost sheep, but the object of God’s wrath and punishment. They are condemning, judgmental, and self-righteous. Some of them deny the work of the Holy Spirit in signs and wonders. They are not ready to accept those who need to listen to the gospel. The Samaritans were ready, but the disciples were not ready.

Jesus helped his disciples to be ready as reapers. Look at verses 36-38. ***“Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper 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 benefit of their labor.***” My grandfather was a farmer. I remember that when I was young, I joined the harvesting a rice field. Even though my job was just errand for my grandfather, I was happy because my grandfather was happy. He was a happy farmer. As we are happy to reap food that spoils, how much happier when we harvest for eternal life? This is why we are happy when we reach out students for Bible study and teach the word of God. This is why Jesus forgot his physical hunger while he was teaching the Samaritan woman.

Jesus sent his disciples as reapers who enjoyed the benefit of the sower. Here the sower should be Jesus himself, or John the Baptist, or many prophets in the Old Testament who delivered the message of God. For example, John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. John’s message touched the peoples’ heart to repent of their sins and to be baptized. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord as a forerunner of the Messiah. Jesus’ disciples could follow up and help them to accept Jesus as the Savior and Lord. The Samaritan woman was also the fruit of Jesus’ labor. Jesus’ disciples didn’t do anything for the townspeople. Through the woman’s testimony, the disciples could reap without hard labor.

The words ‘*One sows and another reaps*’ and ‘*the sower and the reaper may be glad together*,’ teaches us that our labor for the Lord is not in vain. In this world people want to reap as they sowed. If they cannot reap as they sowed, they become angry and blame others. But in God’s world this is not the case. Some sow and others reap and they are glad together. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6, “*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.*” In God’s world we shared labor and blessing together. There is no losing business in God. God always works for the good of those who love him and work for him. Campus ministry is a sowing ministry rather than a reaping ministry. For four years during their college life, we support students to read the Bible and to encourage them to live according to God’s word. We are diligent with sowing the seeds of God’s word. After four years, the students move to other city or country to find job or to join their family. Some may think that we are doing a losing business. But this is not true. We believe that God will provide reapers for them. More than this God will grow them as reapers for eternal life. When we plant the seed and water it, God will make them grow.

Look at verses 39-42***. “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.***” ***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 have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.***” Her testimony led her townspeople to Jesus. After the townspeople heard Jesus’ words and they believed and confessed that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Here we learn the importance of testimony and Bible study in reaping harvest. Testimony is an oral or written statement about what we see, hear, and experience as witnesses. The Samaritan woman’s words and her changed life became a good testimony for her townspeople. Our young adults share their testimonies after the church service under Michael’s leadership. They share for each other what they learned from the word of God and the service. I pray that the conclusion of their conversation and fellowship may be like this, “We know that Jesus really is the Savior of the world.” Amen!

In today’s passage Jesus urged his disciples to open their spiritual eyes to see people as ripe for harvest. We must be ready for those who are needy. There are many who are waiting for us to share the gospel of salvation. Let’s us sow the seed of words diligently until we see the work of the Holy Spirit in many thirsty, needy and lost souls as Jesus did for the Samaritan woman. Amen!