

May 18th 2014: A World Ready For God's Workers : John 4:34-38

The story in John 4 about Jesus and the woman at the well is one that gives a fascinating insight into the ministry of our Saviour and His constant desire to fulfill His Father's will.

He is pictured at the beginning of John 4 as a man who is very weary and tired. So much so that when He and His disciples come to the outskirts of a Samaritan town Jesus finds Himself compelled to rest by the well, while the disciples go into the town to find some food.

It is a lonely place. No one else is around. And being the middle of the day it is hot, and Jesus, even though He is sitting beside a well is thirsty, because He has no way of drawing the water from the well for a drink.

Then along comes this Samaritan woman with her water pitcher in her hand, ready to draw water for her household. She recognizes straight away that Jesus is a traveler and a Jew, and, as was the way then, she avoids looking at him, greeting Him, or even acknowledging His presence. But Jesus, going against all the rules of social etiquette calls out to her and says, "Will you give me a drink".

What follows is a wonderful 'one to one' conversation between Jesus and this woman. Quite honestly I don't think Jesus ever got His drink of water!

But far better than that was the opportunity He took while He could, to do the will of the Father. To harvest a soul into His kingdom. To declare Himself as the Messiah who is for all people.

Then, as He is still talking to her, the disciples return. And they are stunned by what they see. Jesus is not just talking to this woman, but is doing so in a deep and animated fashion. The weary man they had left beside the well has been transformed. He is eagerly speaking to this woman with passion and intensity.

Indeed, they dare not intervene with their many questions, but just stand there watching, when suddenly the woman turns and rushes back towards the town leaving her water jar behind.

Confused by what is going on the disciples choose to ignore what they have witnessed and simply prepare and then give Jesus the food they have got for Him.

But He doesn't touch it! His eyes are fixed on the road that the woman has disappeared down. And as the disciples turn to see what He is looking at, they see them coming. People surging out of the town to find this man that the woman had just told them about.

The Greek tense used here means that the people came out of the town and kept on coming. More and more and more of them. What an amazing thing it must have been to see.

But for His disciples it was not so much amazing as alarming. How would Jesus, weary and tired as He was, find the energy to cope with these people unless He ate? "**So they urge Him, Rabbi, eat something**". (John 4:31)

Then He taught His disciples a lesson that we who follow Him so badly need to understand today. Look at His words recorded in John 4:34-35

"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.

Jesus' one priority in life was to do the will of His father. To fulfill the purpose that God had placed Him upon this earth for. All the other necessities of life such as food were only important because they enabled Him to do what he desired most to do, and that was the work of God's kingdom. Jesus knew that He had so much to do and so little time to do it in and consequently He was never willing to allow any other concerns to interrupt opportunities that were given Him to fulfill the Father's will.

And then the Master, ever conscious of being the Teacher—being the Rabbi that they called Him, presented to them His own priority in life as one that they should seek to emulate.

& He did so by referring to a certain saying they used in those days: "**It's still four months until harvest**"? Then He asked them, "Isn't this a proverb that every one of you knows. In fact, I have heard several of you use it on certain occasions."

You see in those days they had sayings that they used in their conversations, just like we have today. One saying I sometimes use when I'm asked to explain why I am taking so long to finish a particular task is,

"Well Rome wasn't built in a day you know". And of course I'm simply using that saying to explain that the task is a lot bigger than it seems and they should expect it to take a long time to complete, or maybe I am using it as an excuse for my tardiness. I'm not really talking about Rome at all.

And the saying Jesus mentioned was a little similar in meaning to our Rome one. It arose out of the way the agricultural year was divided into 6 two month long periods. Seed-time. Winter. Spring. Harvest. Summer. Time of extreme heat(The great heat)

So at the end of the seeding there were two periods—winter & spring; 4 months before the harvest could take place. 4 months when the crop was left to grow and there was not much the farmer could do to make it grow any quicker.

And so when a person was told to hurry and get moving on some project, they might just turn around and say, 'it's still four months before harvest'. It will all happen in good time. You can't hurry the process. Just be patient.

Now that may apply to man's work says Jesus, but it does not apply to the work of the kingdom. To God's work. Sowing and reaping happen together. There is no period when we are to hang around and do nothing.

No excuse for saying to God, I know you want me to do this for the kingdom and I will do it, but in a year's time. Or after this has happened or that has taken place.

No justification in thinking that it was OK to pass that opportunity by to speak about Jesus because there will be plenty of times in the future.

Look at the people around you as I look, says Jesus. Open your eyes to the need for the Gospel of love in your world.

See the fields that are white unto harvest, and as He spoke He may have pointed to the crowds of Samaritans in their white clothing streaming towards Him.

And make the work of the Kingdom...The doing of the will of God.....The most important thing in your life.

In my reading about this passage I came across this rather challenging quote by S D Gordon "**The disciples had just been down to the town—**

they who knew the Master much longer and better. They brought back some *loaves*. That was all. The woman went down; she brought back some *men*."

As I read that it struck me that sometimes we bring good things to Jesus but hold back the things He really wants.

We bring Him our prayers for the needs of those around us without specifically crying out to Him for their souls.

We pray for the Mission fields, Mission Trips, the Street Chaplains without specifically praying for the workers to go there, because we know that sometimes He answers such prayers by calling us to go.

We come to this place and we bring Jesus our gifts, our money, our fellowship, our worship, and rightly so because He needs all those things. But surely the greatest thing He desires from us is that we bring people. People like those Samaritans who have sensed our commitment to Jesus and want to know more. People whose names God lays upon our hearts, because they are the ones He wants us love, to speak to, to invite along.

And to each person who truly loves Him He says again this morning:

Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.