

Bringing in the Sheaves

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the urgency and joy of bringing people into the Kingdom of God through compassionate outreach and faith-filled words.

Topics: "Evangelism", "Radical Faith"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the powerful encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, highlighting the unexpected harvest in despised Samaria. Despite cultural barriers, Jesus reveals the readiness of Samaritans for the kingdom of God, teaching his disciples to reap souls with radical faith. Through a three-fold approach of offering hope, sharing searching truth, and calling to faith in Jesus, believers are encouraged to see the harvest field around them and trust in God's preparation for fruitful labor.

Transcript

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,

shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Psalm 126: 5-6

The scene is Samaria, that half-breed country between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south, where no self-respecting Jew would ever travel. Jews despised Samaritans. And Samaritans hated Jews.

If you want to get from Galilee to Judea you go down to the Jordan River and follow it to Jericho, then head up into the mountains into Judea. And if you want to go from Jerusalem to Galilee, you take the same route in reverse.

Jesus and his disciples, however, take the direct route. They do not avoid Samaria -- they pass right through it.

Jesus has just finished a long conversation with a Samaritan woman as he sits by a well, waiting for his disciples to come back with food from the village of Sychar. The disciples return and wonder, "What's he talking to her for?"

The woman can sense their distaste, but ignores it, because she knows that she has just met the Messiah. She hurries back to the village to announce, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did! Is not this the Messiah?"

The people of the village are so struck by the change they see in this woman that her words convince them. They follow her back to Jesus.

Meanwhile Jesus and the disciples are conversing at the well, when they look up and see this crowd of Samaritans led by the woman...

The disciples besought him saying, "Rabbi, eat," But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?" 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, then comes the harvest?' I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." John 4: 31-38

"Look at the harvest fields! They are ripe for the harvest!"

"What harvest field?" the disciples wonder.

"Why, this multitude of Samaritans coming toward us. They're ripe for the kingdom of God. They're ready to be reaped. Help me to bring them in."

Of course, the disciples had never considered that Samaritans could be prospects for the kingdom of God. Samaritans?

But today and for the next two days the disciples are going to witness their first revival. It is significant that this first revival does not take place in Jerusalem or Galilee, but in despised Samaria.

They see men and women of Samaria coming into the kingdom, being filled with the life of God, transformed! They see more joy in that village than they have witnessed anywhere in their lives.

What the disciples are able to accomplish, as they assist their Master -- witnessing to that village of Sychar in those three blessed days -- is a foreshadowing of what they are going to be doing the rest of their lives.

They are going to spend their lives reaping - bringing people into the kingdom - not just getting them to join a church or become respectable -- but inspiring people with radical faith in God. The disciples are learning from Jesus to set souls on fire, to make disciples that are committed to the Messiah.

"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?' I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest."

People are ripe! They are ready to crowd into the kingdom. Let's go out and get them! Moreover, says Jesus, the heavy work has already been done. Somebody did the hard stuff before you ever came along!

"I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Somebody else sowed the seed. Somebody watered. Somebody cultivated. All I'm telling you to do is go out there and reap!

A reader might say, "That may have been true two thousand years ago in Samaria. Maybe they had a harvest field out there. But a North American city in the Twenty-first Century is no harvest field! It's a wasteland of jaded cynics. People are hard! Very hard!"

Our problem is that we don't even see the harvest field. We stumble over it and scour the world to find people who will receive us. The harvest field is right under our nose.

It looks hard, bitter, cynical, and angry out there, so we don't even try to reap. We pussyfoot. We tiptoe. We are careful not to arouse anger.

In church, of course, we feel bold. "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"

But when we go outside the door, our kingdom talk ends.

Jesus wants to give us eyes to see what's out there. He invites us to look at the harvest field as he reveals it.

"It may look like a pack of mad dogs, but it's not -- it's the harvest field. It begins outside the door of your own home. People who have been prepared by the Spirit in a thousand ways before you ever came along. Now I'm sending you out to reap."

"I myself sowed with tears, when I went to the cross. I wept before the Father's throne for years and years for all of them. Now they are ripe. Your job is to reap."

"When they hear a living word from you, they will be drawn."

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Psalm 126:5-6

Jesus sowed in tears. Jesus went forth weeping bearing Precious Seed. Now his Body reaps in joy. Jesus, in his saints, comes with joy bringing his sheaves with him.

Think of the world in which you will serve God during the next seven days. Think of it, not as an arena, a rat race, a battlefield: think of it as the harvest field.

Believe that the Lord Jesus has prepared the way. Go out and harvest.

We will harvest with a three-fold word from God:

a word of hope,

a word of searching truth, and

a word of call--to faith in Jesus.

First we harvest with a word of hope.

Remembering that the all the heavy work has already been done through others, by the Lord himself, so we go out and reap.

It didn't look like a harvest field that day in Samaria, as Jesus sat by the well and a Samaritan woman came to get water. But he brought her into the Kingdom by giving her a word of hope.

There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink", for his disciples had gone into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and whom it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

John 4:7-10

"I am going to give you living water. I am going to fill you with the life of God."

A word of hope!

The other day, one of the brothers from our fellowship walked into his bank to cash a check. An acquaintance came up to him and said, "Pray for me. I'm battling with alcohol." This brother answered, "I wrestled with alcohol for forty years and I couldn't beat it. But God delivered me; and he'll deliver you too! I'm going to pray for you and God will help you." Then this man went home, got on the phone and called some people to pray with him for his struggling friend.

He gave his friend a word of hope, and backed it with intercession. That's what you and I are called to do.

Believe that God will give you a word of hope for the needy people you are going to encounter this week. You will speak to them. You will pray for them. And God will open a door. Jesus is going to hear your cry as you intercede for them.

"A new door will open to you because of that cross. You'll see."

A word of hope is the first word we give them. Not, "Why do you keep doing that? If you keep doing that you are going to go to hell!"

First you give them a word of hope. And as they respond to that, you "reap" them in. You bring them under the power of God.

Then and only then, we give them a word of searching truth.

Remembering that the heavy work has already been done by the Lord himself, we are going to reap them a word of searching truth.

Reading on in the story:

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw. "Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly."

Jesus is not putting her down. He's not belittling this woman. Jesus is simply showing her that God knows exactly where she is. God sees her and all her needs.

God will give such a word to each of us -- a word that will fit the heart of the one we're addressing; a word for that fear...for that obsession...for that discouragement...whatever it is that may be troubling this person that we are talking to.

Most of the time we won't even realize how the word we speak is searching and penetrating. It's better that we shouldn't know. But in each circumstance, the Spirit will give us a word that will fit that person's situation like a glove.

Most of the people who are ripe for the Kingdom of God have no idea how the Lord has been watching over them, how much he cares about them, how concerned he is about the things they are going through. He sees it all.

Then you come along and speak a simple word, which reveals to them that God cares and sees. It's as if they've stumbled into their burning bush and heard God speak.

Suddenly Psalm 139 comes alive:

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,

thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou compassest my path and my lying down,

and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo,

O Lord, thou knowest it all together.

Thou hast beset me behind and before,

and laid thine hand upon me.

As we commit ourselves to reap, God will give us a word of searching truth.

Finally, we call them to faith in Jesus.

The heavy work has been done ahead of us. All we have to do is go and reap with a call to faith.

Reading further on in the story:

The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship in spirit and truth"...

(i.e. If my worship of God is not in truth, if it's shallow, if it's pretended...it's not worship.)

..."for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth". The woman said to him, "I know the Messiah is coming; when he comes, he will show us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

And in saying that, Jesus is calling her to faith: "I'm the One. Trust me. Follow me." Jesus is pulling up the net.

There comes a moment when it's time for us to pull up the net. Fish are in it. Bring it up. Call them to faith.

"The light that is entering your life at this moment is coming straight from Jesus. Now it's time for you to commit. Surrender to him. Turn yourself over to him. He will create in you a spring of living water that will never run dry."

We don't want to manipulate people. We have no right to play with their emotions. We refuse to violate their will. We simply address the will. We call them to faith. And when we do, heaven moves with us. Redemptive power works through our spoken word.

Time and again, people will surprise you by responding. They will come to faith. They will enter the Kingdom.

And sower and reaper, the Lord and his Church, will rejoice together.

"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?' I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest."

Let's not go by our distorted perception of the harvest field, but by our Lord's revelation of the harvest field -- the field that surrounds us wherever we happen to be. Believe that we are going to go reap by the Spirit's power.

We are going to reap with...

A word of hope, which the Lord Jesus will give us.

A word of searching truth, from the Lord himself.

And a call to faith in Jesus -- coming straight from heaven.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,

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