

May 11, 2003 Am

by Stephen Fenton

God is always working, and sometimes He works rapidly, revealing Himself powerfully and opening souls to His mercy in a short period of time.

Duration: 30:25

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 4:33, John 4:35

Topics: "Divine Power", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power of God to work in people's lives instantly. He uses the example of a young woman who encountered Jesus and immediately went to her village to share her testimony. The speaker encourages the audience to believe in God's ability to do whatever He wants in people's lives. He quotes Jesus' words from John 4:35, urging them to open their eyes and see that the fields are ripe for harvest.

Transcript

To lift up Jesus, that you will show us Him today. That our hearts may be warmed by Him, drawn. That we may be saved if we need to be saved today.

That we may be encouraged as your people if we're already born again. That we rejoice and tell one another what you have done for us. Thank you for the power of testimony, oh God.

We worship you that testimonies have changed people's lives. Just hearing what Jesus has done for them. We praise you for this.

I ask that you will bless us today. Bless your word to our hearts. Amen.

Last week as we continued in John chapter four and the encounter that Jesus has, first with the woman at the well and then with those in the town, we see that Jesus spoke to His disciples after they came back with food and challenged ourselves and one another last week with the need to go beyond the surface. The disciples did not understand when Jesus said to them, I have food to eat that you know nothing about. They took that on the surface.

Then the disciples said to each other, could someone have brought Him food? This is verse 33 of chapter four. So many people stay on the surface. Don't stay there.

There's so much more. The disciples just weren't getting it. They weren't getting beyond the surface understanding of what Jesus said.

There is more. There's always more. And when you have Jesus in your life, you have everything that God offers to you, but you still don't understand all that that means.

And so there's always more to learn about what God has given you, about the fullness that you have in Christ. So I encourage you to go deeper. We also talked about what Jesus said, that His food was to do the will of Him who sent Him and to finish His work, that there is great joy in yielding our will, in surrendering ourselves to God's agendas.

Not only is there great joy, you know what, there is no freedom anywhere else. No matter what you've sought, what avenues you've taken, what paths you have walked, in order to try and find freedom, there is no freedom except in yielding to the will of God. And you know, don't try to discover God's will.

Yield to Him and He will unfold that will in you. You don't need to discover the will of God in order then to yield to it. You just need to yield to Him.

And even without even knowing what His will is saying, Lord, I yield to what your agenda is and He will reveal that will. It's what it says in Romans 12 in verses one and two. And you'll discover as you yield to it, it's good, it's pleasing, and it's perfect.

Far better than your own plans and agendas. Far better than your own ideas or my own ideas for our lives. Yield to Him.

That's where we were last week. I want to turn you into this passage again this morning and see what Jesus says from verse 35. He says, do you not say four months come, or sorry, four months more and then the harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields.

They are ripe for harvest. Jesus begins by quoting to them an old saying. And it was an agricultural community, remember? And we know from other literature that this was a saying that was used at Jesus' time, that farmers used once they put the seed in the ground, they would say to one another, well, now we've got to wait that four months, four months more and then the harvest.

It was almost like a celebratory statement that farmers would use once they put the seed in the ground. Four months and then the harvest. And farmers here in PEI are beginning to do that.

I noticed a field as we were coming in from Moncton last night that is planted already. And I know down east they've been planting for a while already. And that's in their minds too, four months for the harvest.

And as Jesus spoke about that, He wanted to impart an important message to His disciples. He wanted them to know something. And I want you to know it today too, because it's wonderful.

It's true that sometimes there is a need for time for the harvest. There are two things that we can take from Jesus' statement when He says, look at the fields, they are ripe for harvest. And you say there are four months.

It is true that God will use time. The journey that some of us have been on took time. Every single one of us can look back in our lives and see how God worked and taught us certain things.

And then there was time. And then He taught us something else. And then there was time.

And then He taught us something else right up until the point that you're at now. And each of us can acknowledge that God has had us on a journey. And that journey has led us down some interesting, challenging, frightening, wonderful roads that have brought us to learn the things that we have learned.

And every part of it has been God's wonderful work in preparing and nurturing and then bringing to fruition in our lives the things that He has planted in us through His Spirit, by His Word, through His love and His mercy. All of us, can't we, can rejoice in that. But there's also something else to notice in this passage.

And it's really the point that Jesus wants to make. And it's marvelous. He says, you say, four months more to the harvest.

I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. Now remember, the woman at the well had heard Jesus speak. She had been touched in the depths of her heart.

He had reached that place of deep need in her and the desire for acceptance and revealed Himself as the one she was waiting for. And she left her water pot and ran back into the village and was telling everybody, come see a man who told me everything I ever did. And as she said it, somehow it made an impression.

And we're going to talk about why in a moment. And we already have, in fact, really, because God was in it. Because she'd encountered the Lord.

This is what we said two weeks ago. Because that encounter was real, then her testimony was powerful. It wasn't just words.

It wasn't just a well-organized little speech. In fact, it wasn't that well-organized and it wasn't that deep even. She just said, come see a man who's told me everything I ever did.

Come see a man who's opened up my whole life. He knows everything. You've got to come listen.

And people responded. And they were coming, and they were coming in large numbers. And then as Jesus spoke to His disciples, He said, look at the fields.

And He wasn't talking about the fields that were alongside of them. Literally, the fields of grass and the fields of hay and the fields of corn. He was looking at the people.

And as they were coming, He said, look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest. Now, let me ask you something.

Did it take long for this harvest to be nurtured and brought to fruition? How long did it take? Part of one day. Think about the implications of that. Part of one day.

Yes, God is always working. All of us can say that He has worked forever in our lives. From the moment we were born until the moment we reached the place of faith and even beyond that.

But you know what? Sometimes when God works, He works rapidly. He reveals Himself powerfully. And He doesn't need time to open souls to His mercy.

Isn't that awesome? That means that someone can come, and they can hear a message for the first time, and God will stir their hearts. That means they can come for a second time, and God will stir them further. They can come to a third meeting and be saved.

That means that God can reach someone's life instantly. Jesus is saying, you say there are four months. Look at this.

Look at this harvest. And it took a matter of hours. It took a matter of minutes.

As a young woman went around the village saying, come, He's told me everything that ever happened in my life. You need to come and see it. You need to come and hear what He has to say.

Do not doubt for one moment that God is able to work in your life today. Do not doubt for one moment that the first time someone hears the Gospel, God can have them ready to respond, and He does the work that's necessary, and their hearts are opened, and they believe. Believe in the ability of God, not of man, to do with whatever He wants with people's lives, and particularly to draw the harvest quickly to fruition.

That's good news. That's so exciting. That means as you and I go to work, as we are involved in our families, as we're involved in our everyday life, we need not assume that people need lots of time in order to become Christians.

This is something I used to believe. I used to get discouraged about it. As a pastor, I'd meet someone, and it was so obvious to me that they knew nothing.

They had no church background. They had no understanding. They never went to Sunday school.

I have thought, and I tell you the truth, and if you've thought this way, you'll probably go bright red too. I have thought this. I've met these people.

Oh, man, I don't know anything. It's hardly worth telling them. I mean, it's just going to be so difficult.

It's going to take so long. I have to explain everything I say. How many people have been there and done that? Be honest now this morning.

Yes, of course we have. You look at people, and you think, holy cow, they're so far to go. They know so little.

It's just hardly worth it. Or you say something, and someone says, what? I don't get that. And you're thinking, oh, here we go again.

I know you've been there and done it. But listen, don't underestimate what God can do in the heart. That's what Jesus wants to point out to these people.

What He's saying, I've been here just an hour or two, and I have done what's necessary. This is what He goes on to say next. He says, and this is verse 36, even now, not a great phrase, even now.

Even now, He says, 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. There's a lot of interesting questions in this passage with those who commentate upon who the reaper and the sower are.

Well, it doesn't take a brain surgeon to work out in this passage who the sower and who the reaper are. Who are they? Well, Jesus, clearly the sower of the seed. Who was the reaper here? They hadn't done anything yet, but they did become that very thing.

But who was already reaping? Huh? The woman. The woman. Isn't this amazing? The woman was already reaping the harvest.

Jesus is saying to His disciples, already the reaper is drawing the wages. Already she's being paid. Already she's gratified.

Can you imagine what this was like for this dear lady? I mean, listen, she was a reject from her village. They didn't speak to her in the time. They would not listen to a word she said.

They held her in no respect. They would not listen to anything. If she had something important to say, it wouldn't be considered worth hearing.

And here was a whole village coming out to hear Jesus. Can you imagine what was going on in her heart? For the first time, perhaps in many years, a woman who was already on the outer edge of her society was being heard. People were responding.

Can you imagine how encouraging that must have been for her? I mean, that's amazing. Some of you look at your own lives as I do. And you think, why would people want to listen to me? I am such a mess-up.

Believe me, when I say that, I'm not exaggerating. I know I'm such a mess-up. I know it every day.

I could give you examples from this weekend to tell you how much of a mess-up I am. And sometimes I look at it and I think, why do people listen? Why would they bother? It's so obvious that I am so flawed. It's so, I mean, I just have to speak and the people know I'm flawed.

But the wonderful, wonderful, wonderful thing that this passage tells us is that God loves to use the weak people in the world. He uses people like me. The people who have messed up, the people who have failed, the people who have problems, the people who have difficulties, the people who have not yet shorted their life.

I should not go into the village and say, today, I am holy. I should say, today, I am perfect. All my problems are gone.

Everything is fixed. She was still the same person she had been when she went to the well in the morning. She was still morally in a mess.

She was still uncertain as to how her life would unfold. This was the same day, remember. But Jesus in His encounter with her had brought her hope of acceptance and that hope bore fruit in her heart instantly and that caused the Holy Spirit to begin to move, perhaps even to go already and dwell in her and she went to her village and said, Come on! And lo and behold, I came.

The harvest is ripe because God is at work and He uses us in our weakness. Don't underestimate what God can do to create a heart, readiness in people. Do not underestimate.

God can do it today. He can do it in this room this morning with someone who has not heard that Jesus loves them. But today, the Holy Spirit can say, Jesus loves you.

Who does not understand that God will accept them as they are, not as they should be. But today, just as He accepted this woman and in case you are new, and in case you are wondering, and in case you are struggling with the whole problem of your life and the issues of your mistakes and the sin that is so obvious to you, God loves you. God will accept you as you are.

He will come in and bring forgiveness. He will come in and bring His Spirit. And He will come in and bring change.

And He will come in and bring hope. And today we want you to know this. Today you can have a new beginning.

Today you can have a new start. Today all your sins can be put onto the blood of Christ. Today you can know what it is to be absolutely acceptable, absolutely certain of your eternal destiny, absolutely sure that you are loved.

Hallelujah! And if you didn't hear that before, today that can be a message for your soul. And today God can already be kicking those fizzes woof, woof, woof into your soul. Suddenly they are starting to bear fruit.

That's awesome. It's nothing to do with me at all. I read this story just this week of a woman who sat in the Flatfish concert.

And as that marvelous, two marvelous bands ministered, God ministered to her. And as that young lady Louise Salliam sang the song for the cross, this lady's heart just opened. She believed.

She was born again. Hallelujah! That quick. God is that able.

God is that powerful. God is that interested to reach into the hearts of broken-hearted people. He is that able.

He is that willing. Don't underestimate what God can do in a short period of time. You Christians, don't underestimate what God can do in your life today.

Some of us are struggling with things that we think we cannot get through. We cannot get past. It's going to take so much time and effort.

My friends, do you not know who is within you? And when He speaks the creative word, and He does, because that's what He is into in your life. He is into a new creation. He is into creating new worlds within your soul.

New places where He can work, where He can build, where He can create. And when He says, let there be freedom from whatever it is that you struggle with, there is freedom! Not because you do it. Not because you're committed to it.

Not because you've tried and failed, and tried and failed, and are trying again. But because God is able! Because God speaks the creative word when He says, let there be light, there is light! When He says, let there be freedom, there is freedom. When He says, let there be salvation, there is salvation! Hallelujah! Don't underestimate what God can do.

Don't underestimate who God is. He can make the seed go into the ground and split apart and die and then spread and grow and produce and then produce its full fruit in a matter of minutes! That's the point that Jesus wanted to make to these men. What an awesome point! That means, you know, there were people last night sitting for the first time thinking, I thought these guys were a rock band! And I do hear rock and roll and it's good.

But I hear something else that I didn't really recognize in their words. And I hear their testimonies and you know what that means? You know, we can be certain of this, absolutely sure of this, that last night, because this is what Jesus is saying, my friends, you saved four months of the harvest. Listen, open your eyes.

Look out over the fields. This is what Jesus did last night. It must have been an awesome sight.

Look out over the fields. The fields are ripe. This is a promise of God.

I am always working. I am sometimes working faster than you know and that means there were people for the first time last night heard the Gospel and for the first time began to believe it was true and for the first time came to know Christ in a new way and today they don't even know what's happened to them. They'll learn that God has already done His work.

Hallelujah! Laura will experience that in India. The big lad, Cliff, will experience that in Tanzania. The Ukrainian team will experience it as they go to soldiers in the Ukrainian army and have been given an opportunity to take Bibles and to share the Gospel and they'll think, man, these kids, these are soldiers.

They've grown up in a communistic society. They've grown up in a secular world where God has been denied to them. It'll take so long to explain the truth.

Open your eyes when you're there to the harvest, my friends. It's ripe. God will have people waiting, thirsting, hungry who will then go and tell their friends, come in here, these people, they told me everything I ever did.

Don't underestimate what God can do. Don't underestimate what God can do with you in a visit to a friend. A word to the needy.

Don't for one moment think that you've got to get all the stuff right. You've got to have all the verses. You've got to have the programs.

I bought into this when I was a kid and I went to so many meetings and seminars about witnessing that I got so confused I didn't know which road I was supposed to be talking about. The Roman road or the road that the youth organization had put together or the path that the church had put together or the path that the new evangelist had put together. I didn't know which sort of structure.

I didn't know which spiel. We've got people on our doors all the time with spiels. You see it when the J.W.'s come to the door.

You see it when anybody else if you happen to be in a place where the Mormons come, you'll hear it from them as well. The neat thing about Christianity is it's not about a spiel. It's not about convincing men with words.

It's whether you've encountered the living Christ and He has set you free from your sin. He has showed you that you are acceptable to Him because He has come and died and risen again on your behalf. That's what it's about.

You don't have to get all the words right. You just have to have reality there. Right there.

People will be drawn to it instantly. There's something real here. Something I didn't see before.

Something that I need. I need to hear more. For some of them who hear the simplicity of what Jesus has done for you it will change their lives.

Don't underestimate what God can do in someone's heart and do not underestimate the power of a simple testimony. Come! He has told me everything I ever did. And He didn't tell her everything.

He just opened her heart. As far as she was concerned that was everything. She just laid her bare before the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it also brought acceptance. Don't underestimate what God can do. Don't underestimate the power of your testimony.

My friends, testimony. What is a testimony? It's just you telling other people what Jesus has done for you. It's that simple.

The monarch of the Gadarenes after he had been healed and restored and in his right mind said to the Lord Jesus I want to follow you wherever you go. Jesus said, no this is not what my plan is for you. I want you to go home and tell your people what God has done for you.

If God has done nothing for you then you have nothing to say. But he can do it for you this morning and then you can go out and share it. That's what it's about.

God has told me everything I ever did. Don't underestimate what God is able to do in a moment and don't underestimate the power of your own testimony. Just telling people, you know this is where I was, this is what happened, I'm not even sure what it means yet, I'm not even sure how to put it into words properly but I know that God has done something real to me.

That will draw others. Don't ever underestimate the reality of that. Don't.

I want to give you an opportunity as we close this morning to do just that. To turn around and sit for a few moments and then we're going to close and so on. So I'm going to give you about 10 minutes to share with somebody next to you or perhaps somebody the Lord leads you to what God has done for you.

Some of you are panicking right now. Don't panic. You don't have to speak to anybody if you don't feel that you're immoral.

You don't have to speak. But maybe you're someone who needs to hear a testimony. You need to hear what God has done in someone else's life.

Christian, do you need to hear testimonies this morning? Of course you do. It thrills the soul. It thrills the soul to hear what God is doing.

When we went in and visited this week with someone who will be baptized next Sunday morning, it was so awesome just to hear the testimony. Kevin and I went away walking on air. Looked at each other on the way out as we were driving away.

That was awesome. That was awesome. It makes it all worth it.

It makes it all worth it. We were just like kids. Went and bought a Bible, brought it back.

Wonderful. God is so good. What has God done for you? I'm not just talking about the day you were saved.

What has He done for you this week that will touch someone's life? What has He done for you today just to encourage you and set you free from a burden and lift your mind in some other place to show you that Jesus is all. Don't underestimate what God can do and don't underestimate your testimony. Say, but I love this passage.

I love the New Testament. I love the Acts of the Apostles. Someday we'll go through that book together because it's so raw, because it's so real, because it should be what we are still.

God is not interested in making sure that you've got all of the doctrine in place. That comes in time. That comes as you're nurtured in the church.

That comes as teachers are put into your life and encourage you. That comes as the Holy Spirit teaches you Himself quite apart from anybody else through His words. Be patient with that but tell people what Jesus has done for you and their lives will change because of it.

Just one more thing to point out to you before I give you that time. He says even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life so that the reaper may be glad together. The saying one sows and another reaps is true.

I send you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work. You have reaped the benefits of their labor.

God is so good. It is so true. This principle works out in the next few verses.

Many of the Samaritans believed in him because of the woman's testament. Not because of the disciples. What were they doing at this point? They were buying lunch.

They were trying to make Jesus eat. They were just not there. In the meantime, the Lord had rescued a soul and sent her out as a reaper.

She was drawing her wages of gratification and joy as people were coming. The disciples had done nothing. Do you know what Jesus said to them? I send you out.

You are going to benefit from the work that other people have done. I do not need to work to save souls. Just as Jesus did that day, he is still today out there drawing and sewing and nurturing and building the crop and I and you and all of us together have the privilege of going and being reapers.

We do not have to do what God does. We just have to tell people what to do next. We just have to encourage them with what Jesus has done in us.

We just have to teach them the truth. We just have to lift up Christ among them. And he will do it.

We will benefit. What a mistake we make if we try to do the Lord's work for him. What a mistake we make if we try to do what the Lord has done for us.

Lord's for Lord's work for Christ a mistake we make try to He has done for He is doing it for to them and said, reap, giving you care over these people. The work's been done, this woman and I, through the power of the Holy Spirit. We've done the sowing now, as they come, as she reaps, I'm also sending you out to reap more among them, to nurture them, to encourage them, to teach them.

That's all we do. Such an awesome thing. And today, if it's the first time you hear something that's real to your mind, I urge you to open your heart to Jesus, for he'll accept you as you are.

Today as a Christian, I want to encourage you, do not underestimate the power of God to make a soul ready, and I want to tell you, do not underestimate what your word to someone else this morning, which you're going to take a few minutes now to share, as the Lord leads you. Don't underestimate what God can do with your testimony. Say, what will I say? Just let the Lord put the words in your life.

Maybe you'll tell the people next to you, or behind you, or in front of you, how you became a Christian. Maybe you'll tell them what God has done for you this week, or last month, or through a sickness, or through a time of trial and difficulty, just simply what God has done for you. And maybe you'll just sit there, and somebody else will share with you.

Don't feel threatened. I don't want that to happen. In other words, it's just a sharing time, okay? So, there'll be hubbub of noise.

You don't have to panic. I'm not looking at you thinking, oh, he's not speaking. It's not what we do here.

It's also an opportunity for you to meet some new people, particularly if you've been coming for a while and you don't know them yet. As you share, as you say hi, as you talk together, tell someone what Jesus has done for you, all right? We're going to stand, and we're going to pray. And this is not church over.

You can't leave yet. I mean, if you really have to, you can. We're going to finish the quarter after 12, and I want my kids to notice this morning the time, because we've got a meal from Mother coming, and they said, finish early or you're dead.

So, kids, quarter after 12, we'll be done. I should at least get some of the gift that you're giving your mother, okay? A little bit of it, okay? Take 10 minutes. At a quarter after 12, I'm going to stop you, and we'll sing a song in closing.

Take a few minutes now to share with somebody nearby. Don't be afraid. Take a few minutes, all right? Let's stand, and I'm going to give you an opportunity to move around so you can do that.

But after I pray, I'm going to stop.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2639.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stephen-fenton/may-11-2003-am/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net