

INTRO:

The 19th century Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer said this, *“Man is never happy, BUT spends his whole life striving after something he thinks will make him so.”* The 4TH century Bishop, Gregory of Nyssa said this, *“As soon as (we) satisfy (our) desire by obtaining what (we) want, (we) start to desire something else and find (ourselves) empty again; and if (we) satisfy (our) desire with THIS, (we) become empty once again and ready for still another.”* ... Think about that! 2 great thinkers, from 2 totally different cultures, living almost 1500 years apart, BOTH concluding that you and I, possess an unquenchable thirst!

If ya joined us last week, you know that in studying an encounter between Jesus and a woman at a well, we found out why. Jesus brought this unlikely woman to faith, by not only revealing her spiritual thirst, BUT inviting her/as He invites you and me, to receive what He called *“living water”*/this soul-quenching satisfaction of being known and loved by God! Something you see in our text today, SO excited this woman that she literally started bringing OTHER people to faith by inviting them to meet the Jesus SHE met... To the point that, you see, when Jesus’ disciples return from getting food in town, they’re shocked to find Jesus not only interacting with this woman, but completely uninterested in eating because, as He says, *“He’s (got) a food to eat that (they don’t) know about,”* which is *“to do the will of (the Father) who sent (Him) to accomplish his work.”* Literally to see others, like this woman, come to faith; what He calls *“harvesting”*/ what we might call *“mission.”* Jesus saying to His disciples today, that the reason He’s satisfied and they’re not/that He has a food they know nothing about - is cuz He lives on mission.

See both Schopenhauer and Gregory understood that we are an unsatisfied people EITHER because as we saw last week, ya haven’t received the *“living water”* that is relationship with Jesus OR as we’ll see today; you HAVE/you’re a Christ-follower, BUT you’re life isn’t oriented around helping OTHERS become Christ-followers. And so, in a sense, you’re under-nourished/ you don’t enjoy the food Jesus had! That’s what this passage is about. ***The Glory of Mission.***

So let’s pray and then take a look at 4 things Jesus shows us ABOUT mission, so that we’ll know something about this food of which He speaks. ***Let’s Pray:*** *“Father, you’ve made us to worship. Praise is the most natural thing in the world for us/we do it all the time. Brag about our favorite sports team. Rave about our favorite restaurants. Shamelessly tell about deals we’ve found online and TV shows we’ve enjoyed. We possess this incredible ability to proclaim the glories of essentially trivial things; ALL WHILE stammering when given opportunity to speak about the hope and satisfaction we have in you. We just don’t live on mission, and consequently are spiritually malnourished. We pray Father that you’d open our hearts this morning to receive the “food” that is living on mission. And we pray this in Jesus’s name...Amen!¹*

¹ Prayer adapted from quote in: Evangelism as Exiles: Life on Mission as Strangers in Our Own Land - Elliot Clark - p.103

TEXT:²

4 Things Jesus shows you here about mission: **First, The Centrality of It:** Years ago Tim Keller said and I'm paraphrasing that, you really can't understand Christianity apart from the concept of mission and conversion. You obviously can't ENTER Christianity apart from it. AND a Christianity that doesn't have mission, he said, might be something, but it's not Christianity. It's like ice cream without the frozen part. That might be something - pudding, dessert, something - but it's not ice cream. And that's BECAUSE mission has always been **central** to the Gospel. And you see that in Jesus' words there in **vv.34** and **38** where He speaks about mission or again what He calls "*harvesting*" being His "*food*" AND needing to be ours. Food of course being what sustains us. We live by it right? **Central** to Jesus' very existence on earth was the food of seeing people be brought back into right relationship with God! Mission!

Generally speaking, scholars note that Jesus' words in **Mark 1:14-15** were not only some of his first in public ministry, but really summarized His WHOLE ministry when He said, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*" - "*gospel*" literally meaning "good news" **right?** So Jesus calling us to repent or TURN from a certain understanding of life and God TO a new one; namely, that in Him, God isn't far off and His kingdom isn't unattainable. Rather, through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, we sinners who could never otherwise get near God are NOW able to be brought into relationship WITH God - literally made His Children with all the rights and privileges therein...AND apart from any religious or moral endeavor of our own. That's always been the **central** message of the Gospel - this combination, you could say, of bad news and good news, such that with every teaching, every miracle, just every interaction Jesus had with people leading up to His death and resurrection, He was, in some way, revealing this bad news/good news dynamic. Cuz of course, that's exactly what He did with the woman at the well **right?** He confronted her with her spiritual thirst, BUT THEN presented her with living water. Exposed her sin, but then accepted her. In other words, helped her come to understand the BAD news of her life, so that she could receive the good news of HIS life!...Friend, that's what mission is: It's lovingly confronting someone with their need FOR Jesus and then presenting to them the provision OF Jesus, all in order to bring them into eternal life...Or if I could put it this way: It's helping people see that they are more evil, sinful, and wicked than they ever dared believe. BUT at the very same time, more valued, accepted, and loved than they ever dared hope...Bad news/Good news.

Christianity, you understand, has ALWAYS revolved around that! That's what the entire OT law was all about - showing us how far short we fall of God's holy standards - Bad news - BUT how God nevertheless provides forgiveness and atonement - Good news. It's what all the OT prophets were constantly telling Israel - turn from the "bad news" of your sin and self-sufficiency and TO God, who - good news - will gladly care for and bless you as you depend on Him...Bad news/Good news. As Tommy Nelson says, "*The message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is*

² Works consulted:

- "Harvest: Gospel of John, Part 1 - Feb 3, 1991 - John 4:27-42 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).
 - "The Goat Comes From Above" - Larkcast - 7/19/22 - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/larkcast/id1339351918?i=1000570453101>
 - "MYSTERIOUS MEAT" - A Sermon - Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, May 23rd, 1886, - C. H. SPURGEON - at the metropolitan tabernacle, newington - C. H. Spurgeon, "*Mysterious Meat.*" in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 277.

(not rules, regulations, or even religious advice), *but rather man's incontrovertible sinfulness and God's sovereign grace.*"³ Bad News/Good News!

Which is WHY you can't then say, as many do, that missions, evangelism, seeking to share this bad news/good news...is bigoted or even narrow-minded. It can't be. For example, if you say, *"look it's fine to be religious, just don't try to convert people/don't do missions,"* you understand, you're not criticizing missions, you're saying it's impossible for any religion to be true. You're basically saying that everything is subjective. Cuz follow the logic here: You're saying that everything can claim partial truth, but nothing can claim absolute truth **right?** And of course, you're free to say that. But just understand that when you do, not only is THAT an absolute truth claim in itself, BUT it's a truth claim that ALSO has to then apply to you. So when you post on Twitter for example, that *"racism is wrong no matter what"* and *"you don't care what people's feelings are about it, cuz it's just wrong and people should know and believe that"*; understand, what you're trying to do is convert people. You're taking a moral truth/a real truth and trying to convert people to it. And I commend you for that! BUT if you're gonna DO that, do get mad when Christians, who believe that there's a bad news and a good news even more ultimate than that of racism and reconciliation/don't get mad when they share that with people. If you say missions is wrong, you've undercut your ability to ever call anyone to repent of wrong. Missions, as essentially the sharing of the bad news of our sin and the good news of provision in Christ FOR that sin, has always been **central** to the Gospel, and by extension the Christian life. Which is WHY Charles Spurgeon poignantly said/**listen**, *"Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor. You either try to spread the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love him at all. It cannot be, he said, that there's a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue ABOUT Jesus."*⁴ **Mission is Central! Is it central in your life?**

Second, The Discomfort with Mission: It's central but we all know, if you've been a Christian for any more than a minute, it's not always easy right? And can OFTEN be uncomfortable. The same was true with Jesus' Disciples. What they're experiencing with respect to Jesus sharing this bad news/good news with this Samaritan woman is just incredibly **uncomfortable**. For example, you got the fact that they're in Samaria in the first place, which as I told you last week, was a place Jews tried to avoid at all costs...THEN, to make matters worse, Jesus is literally speaking in public to a Samaritan woman of "ill repute," we'll call her. Which is WHY John records there in **v.27** that *"the disciples marveled that he was talking with a woman,"* Cuz as I shared with you last week, in this patriarchal culture, this was unheard of on multiple levels. *"But, it says, no one said, 'What do you seek?' or, 'Why are you talking with her?'"* Cuz they're so shocked and **uncomfortable** that they don't wanna address the awkwardness!...Not to mention, in **v.31**, you see, they urge Jesus to eat, which admittedly you could read as them caring about Jesus, BUT given the context, I think includes at least a little bit of feeling so **uncomfortable** with what Jesus is doing that they're just trying to change the subject. *"Come on Jesus lets eat."* Ya know like when you're out to dinner with friends and one friend says something really inappropriate

³ *Big Picture* - Ch. 1: "God's Eternal Purpose" - Tommy Nelson

⁴ Charles Spurgeon, in a 1873 sermon entitled "[A Sermon and a Reminiscence](#)"

and it kinda throws the whole group into an awkward silence UNTIL someone breaks the silence by saying something like, “So a, how’s everyone’s burger?” ... “So a, Rabbi, let’s eat.” ... They’re **uncomfortable!** ... Plus, when they invite Jesus TO eat, **what does He do?** He gives em an earful about “*having a food that they don’t know about,*” and that they should stop saying, “*There’s yet four months, then comes the harvest,*” cuz He’s about to “*send em to reap where they didn’t labor.*” It’s like, “*Bro, we just asked you if you wanted a slice, and you’re layin’ into us.*” **But what’s Jesus saying?** He’s saying, “*Guys, I know you wanna eat and then get out of here as fast as possible, cuz this is uncomfortable for you. But we need to talk about what’s going on here!*” And what’s going on, as He says in **vv.35-36**, is that there’s a spiritual harvest occurring right before their eyes - MISSION going forth, and as you see down in **vv.40-41**, people literally getting restored to right relationship with God!

So Here’s The Point: If you’re gonna follow Jesus - and not just His words and ways as a list of things to know and do - but really follow Him by allowing mission with and for Him to be central to your life - then get comfortable...being **uncomfortable** - Get used to, for example, having awkward conversations. One of my professors in seminary used to say, “*evangelism is simply a conversation between two people, both of whom are nervous.*”⁵ Get used to that! ... Get used to having your shortcomings be put on full display, when ya don’t know what to say in response to someone or ya find yourself sadly backing away from a conversation ya know ya shoulda had, but you were just afraid, or didn’t care enough about the state of somebody’s soul to sacrifice some of your time... Get used to having to depend on God in ways you never thought you would. OR just crossing barriers you never thought you’d have to. You introverts, get used having to enter crowds and connect to new communities, since that’s where PEOPLE who need to hear this bad news/good news ARE! AND you extroverts, get used to NOT having to be the first person who always speaks, but INSTEAD being the first person to listen. Since USUALLY before people are willing to care about any news you might have; they need to know YOU care! ... I mean just get used to giving more time than a comfortable “work-life-balance” would allow; more money than a secure savings account would entail. And generally more of yourself than you’d like! If you’re gonna follow Jesus by allowing mission with and for Him to be central to your life, ya gotta get comfortable...being uncomfortable!

A Pastor friend of mine challenged me with this just this week. We were meeting and he said, “*ya know I’ve noticed something. A lot of conversation in the church today revolves around how best to reach people with the Gospel BY basically being sensitive to people’s needs and desires.*” And in part that’s a good conversation that we need to CONTINUALLY have, given that the message of the Gospel is offensive enough. We don’t need to make it MORE offensive by being jerks. But then he said this, “*Ya know I don’t think I’ve ever met a person who came to enjoy relationship with Jesus because those around em did a really good job of just making everything comfortable.*” No! It’s almost ALWAYS, right, because someone was willing to allow things to BE **uncomfortable**. Willing to keep inviting that friend to church even when they repeatedly got shot down. Were willing to keep loving them even when they were told they were an idiot for

⁵ Alvin Reid’s, *Introduction to Evangelism*, p.183

believing what they believed. Were willing to keep being generous even when it cost em financially. Were willing to risk their reputation at work in order to to take a principled stand on something they knew honored God...I mean ya never hear the Scriptures say things like, “*be on mission/share your faith...when it’s convenient for you.*” No! It says things like: “*hold fast to what is good,*”⁶ which implies that we might not, because things are tough. Or “*let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*”⁷ Those aren’t words encouraging comfort. They’re words reminding you that if you’re gonna be on mission with Jesus, ya gotta get comfortable being uncomfortable! ***Are you willing to be uncomfortable?***

Third, The Simplicity of Mission: Mission is central, and to be sure, CAN be uncomfortable. But it shouldn’t be uncomfortable because we’ve made it unnecessarily complex. It’s actually very **simple** and simply ABOUT...friendship! Cuz if you think about what Jesus is doing here, you realize, He’s really doing two things: **One**, He’s **befriended** the woman at well in order to lead her to eternal life, but then **Two**, He’s using His new “**friendship**” you could call it, as an object lesson for His disciples. That’s what He means when He says in **vv.37-38** “*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.*” In other words, mission isn’t about making something happen - ya know, strategy, spreadsheets, and vision statements. It’s about being invited into what God has already done in Christ, and then simply inviting others! It’s about being invited to God’s table of grace, as it were, and then turning around to the next person and saying, “*you gotta taste this!*” Cuz again, that’s exactly what both Jesus AND the woman do right? In the literal sense, those who’ve labored before Jesus are people like John the Baptist, and the OT writers and prophets. For the Disciples, it was Jesus Himself. For you and me, it’s Jesus, His Disciples and every Christ-follower before us from whom we benefit. Because mission isn’t about generating momentum, as if God needs us to get something to go viral before He can work. It’s about simply **befriending** people for the purpose of pointing them to the work God’s already DONE in Christ. **Friendship!** And you see that further teased out there in **vv.40** and **43** where it says that Jesus and the Disciples stayed with the Samaritans for 2 DAYS! Stayed for two days in a place most people wouldn’t wanna stay for 2 minutes. **Why?** Because in Jesus befriending this woman, she then befriends those back in town, who subsequently becomes friends of Jesus - stay with Him for 2 days and as such end up saying, “*It’s no longer cuz of what (the woman) said that we believe; for we’ve heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.*”

Cuz isn’t that how it usually goes with experiencing Jesus? Like rarely is there some BIG experience **right?** Not to say that CAN’T happen; just to say, it doesn’t happen OFTEN. USUALLY, what happens is: A friend invites you to church, for example, where you hear the Gospel OR that friend shares the Gospel with you. And then maybe shares it again, until there’s some inquisitive moment on your part that gets you engage with what you’ve heard. A lot of times it’s a crisis or hardship that does it. But THEN IN that moment, Jesus graciously reveals

⁶ 1 Thess 5:21

⁷ Gal. 6:9

Himself to you in a personal way. So you go from simply considering because of what you've heard to knowing YOURSELF that "*Jesus is indeed your Savior.*"

See, mission is as **simple** as **friendship** BECAUSE **friendship** approximates the movement of our lives! **So listen:** You'll be as good at "*harvesting*"/being on mission as you are at friendship! You'll be as good at "*harvesting*"/being on mission as you are at friendship! Or let me put it this way: A friend is someone who gives another what they need!...Now, does that mean friendship is always gonna be easy. No! Jesus calls it a "*labor.*" Cuz of course friendship takes work. But isn't the work of friendship far better than simply mastering some missional how to's or perfecting an evangelistic presentation? Again, not that those things are bad; it's just that, a lot of times, they only lead to obligation and burnout on the part of the one doing them, and frustration and rejection on the part of the one receiving them. **Friendship** though, creates an environment that, as Spurgeon said, "*isn't noisy, but DOES allow work to be done in the center of people's soul, just as Jesus did at the well!*" **Do you see your life as sent to make friends for the purpose of giving em Jesus? Friendship!** It's that **simple!**

Fourth and Finally, The Joy of Mission: Cuz ya know, there's several places in the Bible - here being one of em - where the joy and satisfaction are intrinsically linked to mission. And that's because when you really get outside of yourself/really give yourself to someone or something BESIDES yourself, there's a kind of happiness that comes that could never be generated by simply pursuing happiness as an end to itself. As Jesus said in **Mark 8**, "*whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life on account of me and of the gospel will save it.*"⁸ - "*life*" being Jesus' umbrella word in the Scriptures for everything from salvation in heaven to happiness this SIDE of heaven. Happiness isn't the result of you thinking about or searching for happiness. It's the by-product of being engaged in something else.⁹ This is also why scientific research will tell you that creating something - say creating a piece of furniture - actually brings a deeper sense of satisfaction and happiness than if you were to BUY that SAME piece of furniture. And it makes sense! You've invested yourself...beyond yourself!

The same is even MORE true with mission. Cuz when Jesus says, "*I have a food you know not of,*" which He defines AS the mission of inviting people into the good news of His life by turning from the bad news of theirs; He's saying, "*this is what satisfies me. This is what I live for!* - *To see people and institutions and families, neighborhoods, entire cultures transformed by awakening to the gospel.*" This is what gave Him the utmost joy! As **Hebrews 12:2** says, "*for the JOY that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame.*" Ya know what it means to "*despise shame?*" It means to laugh in the face of it. Jesus had such joy knowing that His death and resurrection was gonna bring about the transformation the world needed/YOU need, that He was able to, in a sense, laugh off the pain of the Cross! **Think about that!** That's a joy FAR beyond something entertainment, shopping, nights out with the guys/gals could EVER provide! And it's a joy a lot of you are desperate for this morning. Because, quite frankly, you're

⁸ Mark 8:35

⁹ Adapted quote from Breuel, René. *The Paradox of Happiness: Discovering Jesus' Call to Fullness of Life*. Kirkdale Press. Kindle Edition.

kinda dying. And I don't mean physically. I mean emotionally/spiritually. Your soul sorta shriveling up, because for many of you, your biggest mission in life is: to make enough money so you can pay next month's rent or just keep your lifestyle where you want it to be. Or to make sure you got the house and kids under control and comfortable so you can sorta preserve the peace. Or enjoy as many fun experiences as you can per week. But your soul is shriveling! **Why?** Because you're built for something so much than that. Built to "reap" as Jesus says, from what God and others have already "sown." ...Don't die because of a lack of mission, when the **joy** of mission is to, as Spurgeon said, "have your will fall into God's, as a brook falls into a river." THAT'S when you find peace, because THAT'S when you're taking up your proper place and therefore able to know that your God and Father/your Lord and Master...is pleased! **Do ya know the nourishment that comes from giving yourself to "feeding others" with the Gospel?**

CONCLUSION:

Let me close with this: A letter from Jim Elliot, who you might know, died at the age of 29, while seeking to share the Gospel among an unreached people group in Ecuador. He was actually murdered by those he went to serve. It's a bit long, but he wrote THIS to his parents when telling them he'd decided to go: *"I do not wonder that you were saddened at the word of my going to South America. This is nothing else than what the Lord Jesus warned us of when He told the disciples that they must become so infatuated with the kingdom and following Him that all other allegiances become as though they were not. And he never excluded the family tie. In fact, those loves which we regard as closest, He told us must become as hate in comparison with our desires to uphold His cause. - mission - Grieve not, he said, if your son seems to desert you, but rejoice, rather, seeing the will of God done GLADLY. Remember how the Psalmist described children? He said that they were as a heritage from the Lord, and that every man should be happy who had his quiver full of them. And what is a quiver full of, but arrows? And what are arrows for, but to shoot? So, with the strong arms of prayer, draw the bowstring back and let the arrows fly—all of them, straight at the Enemy's hosts. 'Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious, Give of thy wealth to speed them on their way, Pour out thy soul for them in prayer victorious, And all that thou spends, Jesus will repay.'"* **Do ya hear the joy, the centrality, the simplicity of mission in that?** Don't be under-nourished. Commit yourself today to helping people see the bad news of sin and self-sufficiency, so that they might enjoy the good news of grace in Christ! **The Glory of Mission...Let's Pray:**