



Parkway Fellowship

What Would Jesus Undo? • Lack of Urgency • John 4:1-42 • 03/03/2019

Main Point

Jesus lived with a sense of urgency, and wants us to do the same.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Which phrase fits your personality best: Que sera sera, you only live once, fly by the seat of your pants, just do it, I've got nothing but time, or something else? Explain.

When are you most likely to be in a hurry? When are you most likely to NOT be in a hurry?

Name one thing you feel a sense of urgency about in life.

As we continue our series, "What Would Jesus Undo?" we have to consider Jesus' view of time and purpose in life. We tend to live as if we have nothing but time, but Jesus taught that time is short and we must make the most of every opportunity. The scriptures we'll examine today are tucked in Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman and will teach us that we ought to seize every opportunity to tell others about the all-satisfying life found in Jesus.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Summarize John 4:1-30.

What excuses might have kept Jesus from engaging in spiritual conversation with the woman?

What excuses might have kept her from engaging with Jesus in spiritual conversation?

What excuses tend to keep you from engaging with other people in spiritual conversations?

Ask a volunteer to read John 4:31-38.

Why did the disciples urge Jesus to eat? What does Jesus' statement about food in verses 32 and 34 reveal about what truly satisfies, particularly in light of the previous discussion on living water?

What were the disciples focused on in this passage? How might their focus have been different if they felt a sense of urgency about sharing the gospel?

What would you say is your "food" in life—the thing that most fills you up and sustains you? What is the relationship between a person's answer to that question and the way he or she approaches each day?

Because Jesus' disciples were focused exclusively on the earthly task of satisfying their hunger and thirst, they were oblivious to the spiritual realities taking place around them in the lives of the Samaritans. Ultimately, even more than food and water, the people needed Jesus—as do we. Because of that, all believers are equipped to share with others the way to meet their needs through Christ by telling of His grace, love, and salvation. Jesus taught them to prioritize God's mission of expanding the kingdom above all earthly purposes.

Ask a volunteer to read John 4:39-43.

Jesus was only "passing through" Samaria (v. 4). So why, then, did He stick around for two days?

It seems like being flexible or changing your plans is at odds with the idea of living with urgency. Spiritually speaking, why must the two go together? How have you experienced this in your own life?

The primary point Jesus made to His disciples was that they must be spiritually minded in order to be of true earthly good. The potential for kingdom advancement is immediate and vast. The world's need for the gospel and the high potential for saving faith compel Jesus' followers to be joyfully, willingly on mission to all people at all times, even when earthly needs seem more compelling.

When it comes to living with urgency for the sake of sharing the Gospel, what is your role? What is God's role?

Ultimately, the Samaritans came to faith, not by any human efforts, but by the grace of God as He called them into relationship with Himself. But in His good purposes, God worked through the woman's bold

witness to do so. The Samaritans became closer in relationship to Jesus by becoming closer in relationship to her, as she showed them firsthand how good Jesus' mercy, grace, and life really are—just as we can do in our relationships.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In this week's message the point was made that God trusts us with people for a reason. Do you live with a sense of awareness and urgency about that?

What excuses do you typically make when confronted with the opportunity to guide someone to discover life in Jesus? How does Jesus' teaching in this passage speak to those excuses?

Name one step of application you will take this week as a result of what God is teaching you in John 4.

Pray

Thank God for the urgency others sensed in sharing the Gospel with you. Invite Him to remind you daily that He is your "food" for living, and that other people around you need that food, too. Ask Him to fill you with a sense of urgency for sharing the Gospel with others.

Commentary

| John 4:1-42

4:1-26. The Pharisees had investigated John the Baptist's credentials; now they were looking into those of Jesus. As Jesus left Jerusalem he chose to go through Samaria. This was atypical for a Jew, the usual route was down to Jericho and then followed the Jordan River back to Galilee. As Jesus and the disciples journeyed they came to a stopping point around noon. Jesus stayed at a well while the disciples went into town to get food. At the well Jesus encountered a woman. Typically women gathered their water in the morning when it was cool, this woman was at the well in the middle of the day. She was avoiding the other women for some reason.

Jesus engaged the woman in a conversation. First asking for water, then offering her living water. Living water meant that she would never thirst again. She asked Him how he could give living water, asking if He was greater than Jacob who dug the well. Jesus was referring to eternal life, however the woman wanted a water that kept her from going back to the well.

Jesus changed the conversation asking to speak to the woman's husband. She did not have a husband, in actuality she had been married five times and was now living with a man who was not her husband. Her motive for coming to the well at noon was made clear. She sensed Jesus was powerful and wise, so she asked Him about the correct place of worship. Jesus changed her way of thinking by telling her that soon God would dwell in people, not temples or mountains. Everywhere would be a place of true worship. After hearing this the woman knew He was the Messiah, Jesus confirmed it.

4:27-30. The disciples had been in town buying groceries during Jesus' conversation with the woman, but now they returned. Since it was midday, they urged Jesus to have some lunch. The conversion of the woman described in verses 27–30 and the personal concern for Jesus' nourishment expressed by the disciples was followed by personal control that Jesus asserted over the disciples' confusion regarding their mission that day. We've already noted why the disciples would naturally be surprised to find him talking with a woman. But spiritual sensitivity and a sense of courtesy overcome their natural Jewish revulsion at this predicament. We can only imagine what Judas thought on this occasion.

A change in the woman is noted by several important elements of verses 28–29. First, she had come to draw water, but she was so excited that she abandoned her water jar. Second, she rushed back into town and exclaimed the revelations of her personal life when, just a short time ago, she had come to the well alone, quite likely as a social outcast. Third, on the basis of Jesus' omniscience, she raised the question of whether the Messiah had come.

Some question has been raised about the translation of people in verse 28 and the corollary pronoun they in verse 30. *Anthropos* is the common word for man. Perhaps that pushes the woman's past just a bit too far in this story. If it means men only, she may have contacted the elders of the city on what surely was for Samaritans the most touchy theological point of all. More than likely however, *anthropos* means people in this context, since Greek contains a more specific term for adult males.

4:31-34. John introduced the story of Jesus' disciples' perception in v. 27, and returns to it in v. 31. In the present story, the task of the Gospel writer was to help the reader understand how Jesus brought His disciples to accept the universal nature of His mission sufficiently so that the impact of both the confession and the sense of community as evident in the concluding verses of this pericope (4:39- 42) might be perceived by later readers. The means used to achieve that goal is the discussion over food followed by Jesus' sermonette on the harvest (4:31-38).

The major concern of the disciples in the story was their search for food—undoubtedly kosher food. So their invitation for Jesus to eat is a reflection of their concern. By contrast, the primary focus of Jesus was hardly on food; it was the search for people. Accordingly, Jesus responded to their request that He should eat by indicating that He had a source of food that was unknown to them.

The disciples' questioning among themselves (4:33) introduces another case of Jesus' double-level language resulting in a misunderstanding (cf. the woman at 4:11). Moreover, it confirmed Jesus' statement to them that they did not know (a familiar theme) what He was saying. The follow-up statement that Jesus' food was doing the will of the One who sent Him reasserts the theme that Jesus was on a mission as an agent of God doing the Father's will. Moreover, Jesus' comparison here of food to the will of God is quite consistent with the message from the first temptation in the Gospel of Matthew (4:3-4). Bread is there contrasted with the word that issues from the mouth of God when Jesus obviously was hungry, having fasted for the long period of forty days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:4).

4:35-38. The sermonette here is built around two pithy statements that are almost proverbial in nature. The first concerns the timing of harvest. Some interpreters have thought that the iambic-like meter suggests a Greek proverb behind v. 35. Others have thought that the four months is a chronological reference indicating the season when Jesus was speaking. Perhaps the most defensible view is that the text represents a general Palestinian proverbial statement concerning the time between sowing and the earliest point of harvest. The value of the last view is that it opens the way to Jesus' subsequent exegetical commentary, which takes issue with the statement by pointing out that it was already harvest time, and the disciples should have been ready for it (4:35). As such, any time can be understood as harvest time.

The second proverbial statement is one sows and another reaps (4:37). It was normally applied in the ancient world to distinguish between the fortunate and unfortunate (e.g., Mic 6:15). The perspective thus was normally depressing in that planters were not reapers (cf. Lev 26:16; Deut 28:30; Job 31:8). The same perspective is present in Jesus' parable when the master condemns the man who was given only one talent (Matt 25:24-26). Jesus, however, turned on its head the negative perspective that might be understood in the background of the maxim. Instead of dividing the planter and the reaper, He united them. His perspective was that both participate in the results of their work.

Accordingly, both here experience joy. But Jesus did not end His statement there because His primary concern was not merely sowing. His basic concern was reaping. The evangelist understood this concern of Jesus, and therefore he highlighted reaping in the mission directive of Jesus to the disciples (4:38).

4:39-41. We already know the woman had a change of heart and mind that indicated new birth. She had gone back to town to announce her meeting with Jesus. John reported that many Samaritans believed that day because of the woman's testimony. But since this is one of John's key words, he wanted to emphasize what actually happened in that town. Preliminary faith that rested on the woman's testimony became solid faith after the Savior had stayed there two days and proclaimed his message.

How did Jesus witness? He was friendly; He asked questions; He showed concern for human need; He faithfully explained the Scriptures; and He emphasized good news for thirsty people. Witnesses aren't responsible for converting people; their task is to tell the truth about what they know.

4:42. The corporate announcement at the end of the passage is nothing less than dramatic: we know that this man really is the Savior of the world. Remember that world (kosmos) is one of John's key words, appearing 185 times in the New Testament, 105 of those in John's writings. Earlier the discussion centered on two sites of worship, Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim. Then the talk turned to the coming Messiah, surely still a localized expectation related to Samaritan theology. Now, after two days with Jesus, these new converts understood the gospel very well.