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Get Outside...and Invite to Church!

John 4:27-38

Next week and it will be five years that Larry and I have been pastors here. Can you believe that? On the one hand, time flies. And on the other, when I think of the people I've met it feels like I've been here much longer. Our Harbor Baptisms is one of those touchstone points for me that really marks time. That first baptism was right at the end of our first year here, and I remember so clearly the sunset that night of the first baptism and those I had the opportunity to baptize like Nate Maxwell who runs sound now but seemed so young then! For this year's baptism, Nate and Jonathan Derr also back in the booth with him made a video.

Isn't that such a wonderful way to celebrate new life? Our story today comes from John 4 and the visuals of this story are so similar to baptism. It's about the water that represents eternal life and there's a powerful moment with a large crowd, like that baptism crowd, pressing in to get to know Jesus.

This story is so familiar to so many. It's the story of the woman at the well. It's a story that is so like how many of us met Jesus. He came to us; he noticed us; he entered into our lives. We had spiritual questions and we had things we had to have answered before we could follow him. Jesus had to address the gross stuff in our lives. In this woman's case, some sexual issues and surely the hurt and pain that comes with having five husbands. She is so delighted to have met this man who sees her and who knows her, who wants to talk to her, and who has offered her eternal life. She begins to question if this man might really be God! And that's the question she takes back to her community—"Come and see the man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

Many of us who met Jesus for the first time did the same thing, we went back to those in our lives, especially if we came to faith if there was a stretch of our lives without Jesus, and we start with our family and friends and we say, "I'm having a new encounter with God! I've *got* to tell you about it! Could this be true?" So we love the story of the woman at the well because we have lived this story. We know what it's like to have questions about God we need answered. We know what it's like to have things that we're embarrassed about in our life- sin, brokenness, hurts, habits- and God comes and meets us there. We know that story.

The challenging story to me in this reading is in the middle of the story of the woman at the well; it's the lesson that Jesus has for his disciples. It's the conversation he has with the people who have walked with Jesus awhile, for whom the newness of Jesus has worn off, and who have stopped sharing Jesus with those they meet. That's where I want us to focus today.

Jesus and his disciples are traveling through Samaria, and he sends his disciples into town to get food. And what it looks like as the story unfolds is that the disciples think that's all they're doing- they're going to get food. But Jesus has a mission corrective for them.

I wonder if Jesus might have the same lesson for us today as he did for his disciples. I hope today Jesus might transform our lives as he forever changed the life of this woman and the mission of his disciples. I truly pray we won't see what we're doing on a day-to-day basis the same way ever again. So let's read this conversation—what happens when the disciples come back to Jesus having accomplished what they think they're supposed to be doing. Beginning with John 4:27:

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" 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'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.

Let's pray.

Here's what the disciples have just experienced: Jesus sent them into town to get food. When you go grocery shopping, how many people do you see? I'll tell you who I see: Mike the neighbor as I get in the car, working on his latest metal project; there's usually a couple cars I recognize that I awkwardly crazy wave to; I go to Fred Meyer, so I saw the young guy who graciously gave me his cart, I saw Rena Hutchison in the bread aisle, and I haven't seen Carrie Tatum in a while, but usually I see her in produce. And there's those other people I can't name but I know who they are. The same woman in the deli, the guy stocking produce, and the checker who likes to pull Reed out of the cart. It's a lot of people just on my way to get groceries.

Surely the disciples saw a crowd, too. It might have been the couple they passed on the road, the crowd of women cleaning laundry, the kid tending the sheep, the baker who made their bread, the crowd that helped them get water. It's a new town. So it's reasonable to assume they would have been observant and noticed new people.

How many of you started a new routine this week? New classrooms, new teachers, new parent lines, new people crowding out your gym class, new baristas... And you were on task all of those places. To do your schoolwork, to get healthy, to get coffee. So you can understand what this story of the disciples is like, disciples doing the daily grocery run and seeing new people.

The disciples completed that mission to get food. They saw some people, maybe, but mostly, they just got food. So when they get back, they start with, Jesus, have some food. And he's like, I don't need your food. You totally missed what that little errand was about. You missed it.

Jesus says, "Look, I've got food you know nothing about. What's really satisfying, what the mission is really about, is accomplishing the Father's will." Sharing eternal life with the

community of Samaria, that was what the mission was really about, and Jesus is fully satisfied in it. One person had their spiritual questions answered; one person had their life of sin forgiven. And now the whole town will believe. Jesus says the food mission is really about finding what truly satisfies our hunger. And *that* is accomplishing the Father's work.

That word accomplish is *telos*, destiny, fulfillment. We use that word in our mission statement, "Working together to present everyone mature in Christ." Mature in this passage from Colossians is *telos*, destiny. We're pointing to the mission of our work as a community of disciples at Chapel Hill, is to work together that everyone that touches our lives might reach their destiny, their maturity, their *telos* in Christ. The fulfillment of who you really are, your identity, your true self in Christ.

Jesus says, Look, you thought you were going off to get food, but the real mission here is people... it's to help people find their *telos*, their destiny, who they really are in Christ. And this woman here, she found out who she really is in Jesus.

Then Jesus goes on to tell this metaphor of a harvest. Jesus says, you say 4 more months and then it'll be ripe. I say, lift up your eyes! The harvest is ready now! Jesus is saying that the disciples didn't think it was time for Samaria to come to know who God is. They didn't notice all those people they passed. They didn't consider that today might be the day all those people are ready to receive the gift of eternal life. They missed what God was doing in Samaria. They missed the harvest. I wonder how many of us are walking around in our lives, and we are missing *the* mission that Jesus is on—a mission to love God and love people, helping them reach *telos*. This reminds me of what Larry was saying a couple weeks ago. How many of us are so wrapped up in the *chronos* of time that we are missing the meaning, the *Kairos*, of these simplest moments of life! And because we are just on task for food, we are hungry. We are not satisfied.

But this woman gets it! She gets that this particular day she has been given an incredible gift in forgiveness, in understanding, in relationship with the person of Jesus, and she can't WAIT to get back into her village. She leaves her water jar and runs off to tell them all about Jesus. And they come hurrying back in an instant as a large crowd. When Jesus says, "Lift up your eyes and see the harvest," the disciples lift up their eyes and they see the people they passed coming out to see Jesus. The guy who baked their bread, the boy with the sheep, they're all there, eager to meet Jesus. And each of those people came in response to the invitation of the woman to "Come and see the man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

I was both incredibly inspired and convicted by a conversation I had with Rachel White this week. She talked about the two LifeGroups God used her to launch. They're called Gig Harbor Momma's. They've been meeting for 2 years. And these women are on Jesus' mission to introduce moms in Gig Harbor to eternal life through Jesus. Rachel shared about how they do life as moms—playgrounds, preschools, barre class, Costco—on mission. And how they *see* those God has put in their everyday lives and invite them in to meet Jesus. I want you to hear about that firsthand from one of those LifeGroup leaders: Tiffany Grohoski.

I'm so inspired that these women see that they have something unique in their LifeGroup that they can't possibly withhold from every momma in Gig Harbor. They have Jesus in community, and they're eager to invite moms into their group. They are living out the mission of Jesus just as the woman at the well did, saying "Come and see Jesus" to everyone they meet.

This might be unusual for a pastor to say – I don't think I've ever said this – but let's *not* be like the disciples this week. The disciples went about this day of their lives only getting what they needed, grocery shopping and rest without noticing everyone God had put into their path. Instead, let's be like the woman at the well.

Let's extend the invitation to come and meet Jesus. That isn't as formal or as religious as it may sound. For the disciples the conversation could have been as simple as – yes, we're just passing through Samaria today. But we're with our Teacher and he has some awesome things to say. They've changed my life for sure! Do you want to come out and meet him? The disciples could have walked out of Samaria with this same crowd to meet Jesus. God was ready to meet this whole town! But the disciples missed the opportunity to be a part of what God is doing. I don't want to, and I don't want our church to miss out on sharing Jesus with those ready to hear.

If you know Jesus—or if you are getting to know Jesus—you have an invitation to extend, too. And it's simple. Just invite the people who are in your life to join you in meeting Jesus. Hey—I have a LifeGroup that's working through some of those same issues about family. Do you want to come to my group? Or you know, I had some of those same questions about the Bible. Our church is going to be tackling one of the books of the Bible that addresses some of the hardest questions we ask. Do you want to come to church with me?

I have a friend who calls the start of school, “Mom's New Year.” Fall is a great time for new commitments. Maybe you could invite people into a New Year resolution with you. We're going to be handing out a daily devotional for our Romans study. You could pick up a second copy next week and invite a friend to spend daily time with Jesus. You can text your reflections back and forth to one another.

You wouldn't withhold a great piece of news. I've been showing everyone pictures of Reed with his “big boy hair cut.” I can't help but show them! And it's not hard to introduce the conversation about Reed's hair. I'm not waiting for an opening where people are talking about hair. I just say—you're never going to believe how grown up Reed is! Look! Don't withhold the Good News of Jesus from people who are near you. It's as simple as, I've got to share with you an amazing new thing in my life. I've been spending more time with God or at church or with Jesus, and I'm not the same person. Can I share with you about that?

Pastor Ellis' class, God Space, is going to help you take those conversations deeper. So maybe you want to do that. But for today I want to close by asking you to open up your eyes to those that God has in your path. Who are you passing without seeing? I want to ask you to open your hearts and your minds, to be aware that with Jesus you have eternal life to extend to people. You have eternal life! You have your own story to share. You have the forgiveness and acceptance and love of a God who pursues you! Who loves you! How can we withhold that message from anyone any longer?

So let's close in prayer. I want to walk you through your day, and I ask the Holy Spirit to show you those in your lives that need an invitation to come and see Jesus. Let's pray.