

**Title: The need for a Spiritual Revival****Passage: John 4:27-42****Introduction:**

Tonight, I want to approach the text with the theme of Spiritual revivals.

If you remember, John 20:30-31 gives us the purpose of the gospel of John. Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and by believing you may have eternal life. The purpose is to bring people of unbelief to belief and for those who have belief, to encourage them to continue to believe. God wants believers. True believers. In the immediate context what that means is that he wants true worshippers. 4:23 says, *"<sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."* God is interested in true worshippers. People of faith who worship in spirit and truth. Not just church attendants and people who identify as being Christian. If we go down, in verse 42, God wants people who repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ because he is the *saviour of the world*. He wants people who have tasted the living water, Jesus Christ. We have been looking at the gospel of John, and from John 3 in the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, we know that belief is a matter of sovereign grace. The spirit will blow where it wills, but when it blows the effects of the spirit will be obvious. When God works in the hearts of a sinner, he will bring them into faith. He will enable them to see the kingdom of God. They will be born again and be transformed by the spirit. Unbelief to belief. The spiritually dead, now spiritually alive. The spiritually blind will now see.

In 1 Peter 2:9-10 it says this about believers, *"<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*

Jesus has purchased for himself a people for his own possession. When God saves sinners, they are his. He is the shepherd, they are his sheep and he won't let them go. Believers response to that saving grace is in verse 9, *"that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."* The only appropriate and rational response to the saving

grace of God is to tell people how good and great he is. It is impossible to encounter the living God, It is impossible for you to be transformed by the Spirit, and not proclaim how great he is. Salvation is the greatest gift. If someone saves you from dying, you would be thankful. You would tell everyone how thankful you are. You would tell people what an amazing person your saviour is. How much more thankful should you be to Jesus Christ who saves for all eternity. How much more thankful should you be to the one who saves you from your sins? Infinitely more. And that's why, believers, those who have been saved by the grace God, should respond by proclaiming his excellencies. You should proclaim the mercy and grace of God to all. You should tell people how good he is!

John 4:27-42 challenges you and I to think about gospel proclamation. It is about proclaiming the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. It is about spiritual revivals. It is sowing and reaping the harvest.

### **Context & Overview:**

If you remember where we are at in the story, Jesus is in a town of Samaria called Sychar v5. V6 Jesus is wearied so he goes sit next to a well. Verse 8<sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) and Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman. Samaritans were generally considered "half-breeds" and were universally despised by the Jews. Jews would take a detour to not go through Samaria. Verse 9 says, "(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.") But Jesus deliberately went through Samaria because he has mission and he is there to accomplish a task. To make the situation more interesting he talks to a Samaritan woman who has had 5 husbands or partners, and the one she is with right now is not her husband. So, he is talking to a woman who has an immoral reputation. In Jesus' day, men in general, and rabbis in particular, did not publicly talk to women. Culturally it was not the norm. This is confirmed in verse 27 where it says, <sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came back. They marvelled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?". John inserts this deliberately to remind us how weird this situation is.

**Main point- Salvation is available to every people group**

But that's very important. Because through Jesus' short conversation with this immoral sinful Samaritan woman, she does a remarkable thing. Look at the first half of verse 28 with me, "<sup>28</sup> *So the woman left her water jar and went away into town*".

She left her water jar... If you read it too quickly you won't realise how important this is! This Samaritan woman has an encounter with Jesus. After encountering Jesus, she abandons her original purpose for coming to the well. This woman is doing her normal thing. She had an original task on hand. She is trying to draw water. But she drops it all. She drops it all and in at the end of verse 28 to 29 it tells us why. <sup>28</sup> *So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,* <sup>29</sup> *"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"* She drops it all to tell people about Jesus! Leaving her water jar is therefore symbolic. Although, not fully assured, she has enough confidence to drop her water jar, go to the town and proclaim what has happened to her. Jesus encountering this Samaritan woman, leads her to tell everyone about Jesus, which leads to Samaritan people going out of the town to come to Jesus. (v30) "<sup>30</sup> They went out of the town and were coming to him.". And then if you jump down to verse 39 it tells us that "<sup>39</sup> *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."* Her little faith and her short encounter and testimony of Jesus led many to believe. And then in verse 41 it says that, "many more believed because of his word". Verse 42 they say, "we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.""

A great story. A spiritual revival. An unlikely immoral Samaritan woman becomes the means of an unlikely Samaritan people turning to Jesus. God saved a people for his own possession through a humanly impossible situation. A very, very surprising story.

And so, this is the big idea, the big message, Salvation is available for every people group. Salvation is possible regardless of the colour of your skin, whether or not you are half Jew and gentile, regardless of your original religious background, regardless of which socio-economic status you belong to. Salvation is possible for the rich and the poor. Those with good health and those with declining health. Those who are very intelligent, and those who are not that bright. Salvation came to an unlikely group of people and God was deliberate in saving them.

Revelation 7:9-10 puts it this way, <sup>9</sup>*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,* <sup>10</sup>*and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

God has sheep, believers, true worshippers, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. They will bow before his throne and praise him. They will proclaim his excellencies. The challenge for you in this passage is, are you proclaiming his excellencies here on earth. Are you like this Samaritan woman who can't wait to tell people about the encounter with Jesus. Are you actively involved in the harvest? Do you believe that salvation is available for every nation, tribe, people and languages? Or you afraid to tell an unlikely people group about Jesus?

In 1966, Christianity was the main religion in Australia with 88% identifying as being a Christian. In 2016 it was down to 52.1%, with 22.6% saying they were catholic, 13.3% Anglican, 16.3% other. Now we know that 52.1% is a lot higher than reality. I think it is highly unlikely that the statistics are that high. Protestant, evangelical, bible believing, Christ honouring churches and Christians are the minority. Liberalism and Catholicism is a big issue. And so, I wouldn't be surprised if there were less than 10% of Australians who were actually saved. Even if we gave those who identify as being Christians the benefit of the doubt, there would be over 13 million people who reject Jesus Christ in Australia. Or to be more realistic with Australia having 25 million people, there would be more than 20 million people who do not submit to the Lordship of Christ. I know this to be true because if a majority of the population was genuine bible believe, Christ honouring Christians, the moral state of our country would not be declining. The fact that Euthanasia and abortion bills are passed, the fact that the LGBT agendas are going forward, it shows the immoral state of our nation.

People don't know Jesus. If you look around the world, there are millions and billions of people who don't know Jesus.

We have a lot of Koreans in our church. In 2015, only 19.7% identify as being a protestant Christian. And we know that the visible church is not a reflection of how many are actually saved, so it probably is less than that. South Korea approx. 51 million people, more than 40 million of them will be condemned if they do not know Jesus. What Melbourne needs, Australia needs, what South

Korea needs, What Sri Lanka needs, What the world needs, is a spiritual revival. The world needs true worshippers, true believers, Christians, to proclaim the excellencies of the one who called them out of darkness. The world needs believers to faithfully articulate the gospel message and who Jesus is! I hope you have a burden for the lost. I hope right now you see why we need a spiritual revival. I hope you are praying in your seat and in your heart that God would be working in the hearts of unbelievers. Because it is possible. God brought a revival here in the unlikely part of the world of Samaria. The main point again is: Salvation is available to every people group. And the world needs true faithful worshippers to tell them about Jesus. If we want to see a spiritual revival we need to tell the world about Jesus.

### **3 Points on Spiritual revival:**

In the middle of this spiritual revival in verse 31-38, Jesus explains in a fuller and deeper way of what is happening. Jesus helpfully shows us a few things about spiritual revivals, I am going to give 3:

**1. Spiritual revivals are centred on Christ's redeeming work-** verse 31 the disciples say to him, "Rabbi, eat". They had gone to the city to get him food remember? It is not unnatural for them to ask him to eat. But Jesus puts a spiritual twist to what he is about to say. In verse 32 Jesus responds to them saying, *"I have food to eat that you do not know about"*. Now they are puzzled in verse 33. *"Has anyone brought him something to eat?"*

This isn't the first-time humans have been blinded. 4 times it has happened. In 2:19, Jesus says he will will raise this temple in three days. They responded, *It took 46 years to build this temple.*

*In 3:3 in his conversation with Nicodemus, You must be born again. The problem is "How can a man enter into his mother's womb?"*

*In 4:10 earlier to the Samaritan woman, I will give you living water. But Jesus verse 11, The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep.- in essence you don't have a bucket or water jar*

*And now here in 4:31, I have food to eat you do not know about. And the disciples ask themselves, Did someone else bring him food to eat? They don't understand his message.*

At this point we shouldn't be surprised that Jesus is speaking the way he speaks. Jesus explains what he means in verse V34 his food- *"is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. "*

Food for Jesus is to do God's will and accomplish his work. The food he speaks of is therefore not physical, but spiritual. Jesus affirms his commitment to complete the task that God had given him which was his redemptive work on *the cross*.

*(6:39- "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day."*

*John 12:49-50, "49 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."*

*And in John 19:30 as Jesus dies on cross he says, "it is finished".*

Jesus is concerned about his redeeming work on the cross. He is concerned about giving eternal life. That's what he offered to the Samaritan woman.

Therefore, spiritual revivals can only happen if Christ is at the centre of it all. Salvation, conversions, churches and ministries, the Christian life needs to be about the redeeming work of Christ. Christ who offers the living water, eternal life. Sadly, many Christians, many churches, many ministries try to bring a revival by other means. They try to bring a revival centred on fun and games. Revival centred on luxury and wealth. Many so called mega-churches which are not real churches at all are grounded on the prosperity gospel or entertainment. If you want a true revival, you need to preach and teach the true gospel. If you want to see a spiritual revival, you need to tell people that they are sinners and that are under the judgement of God, but God in his great love has given a way out. God has sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to save sinners! Spiritual revivals are about Christ's redeeming work. That was Christ's food.

**2. Spiritual revivals are supernatural.** Jesus develops the metaphor in 4:35 with reference to the fruit of his mission in the form of the approaching Samaritans. He starts talking about sowing seeds and reaping the harvest. He says in verse 35, *"35 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."* Jesus takes a real-life example and turns it upside down. It takes time to produce a harvest. - In ordinary harvesting there is sowing time and there is reaping time and the interval between the two is fixed. I have shared about the tomatoes and chillies I tried to grow. If you look at the back of the chilli seed packet it will give you instructions on how to sow and

look after the chilli seeds. It will even tell you how long it takes before you can harvest it. Depending on the particular seed it might take, 10 or 12 weeks to be ready for harvest. After sowing your seeds there is no need to check every day whether or not they are ready to be harvested. If you want to be a wise sower and harvester, plant seeds, water them occasionally and then reap the harvest when it is ready. I obviously wasn't a wise sower and harvester since I checked every day whether I had chillies and tomatoes, and it probably didn't help that I didn't water them every day.

Jesus tells the disciples too look, to lift up their eyes and to see that the fields are white for harvest. He is not talking about the actual fruit and vegetables that farmers might have. He is talking about the spiritual harvest. We know it is about spiritual harvest because in v 36 it tells us that it is about the fruit for eternal life. Jesus has been reaping eternal life. That's what he has been doing with this woman and, by God's grace through her, among the people of Samaria, more specifically at Sychar.

What Jesus teaches us here about sowing and harvesting the gospel is that it does not run in human timing. Spiritual revivals are not mechanical. You can't manipulate a revival. It is a supernatural thing. Jesus puts the time of sowing and reaping together. He is sovereign over salvation. He offers eternal life whenever he likes. Only God can do that. Only God can bring the sowing and reaping immediately together. Jesus is both sowing and reaping at the same time. He is speaking the word and reaping its fruit. What that means is that you can expect God to do the supernatural. Spiritual revivals is a supernatural thing not something which requires you to pay 50 dollars to be part of.

### **3. Spiritual revivals require sowers and reapers for the harvest-**

One of the critiques of the reformed theology, is the fact that we believe that God is sovereign over salvation. Many take that to be the most idiotic thing because they say there is no point in evangelism then. But to make it so clear, God uses men and women to advance his kingdom. To use the terminology of John 4, God uses men and women to sow seeds of faith and to reap those who come to Jesus for eternal life. Verse 37-38 says, *"<sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."* The point here is that the disciples have the blessing to reap the harvest where they did not labour in sowing seeds. The OT prophets sowed seeds. John the Baptist sowed seeds. Jesus has sowed seeds. And they will reap. That's the reality in

gospel ministry. You might not be the last person to bring a person of unbelief to belief. If you are then you can be assured that there were many before you who sowed seeds of faith. But the great thing is both the sower and reaper may rejoice in the salvation of the loss.

The great thing in this particular story is that Jesus sowed into the life of that one Samaritan woman and in turn God used her to bring a town to faith. I say that she sowed seeds because of verse 39, *“<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” “and in verse 42, “<sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe”*. God used her to bring a spiritual revival. She was instrumental in a spiritual revival. A sinful, immoral, Samaritan woman. God used the ordinary or even the unordinary to do the extraordinary.

God used fisherman to bring people to faith in Acts. God used Philip to bring the Gospel to the Ethiopian Eunuch who I'm sure brought the gospel to his people. God used a persecutor of Christians like Paul to write many letters and to build up the church. God used people like Martin Luther to bring a reformation in Germany and across Europe. God used men like Calvin, Zwingli and Bullinger in Switzerland. God used a minister like Richard Hobson of Liverpool who ministered to the working class of Windsor and transformed the city. The place which was known as “little hell” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became spiritually alive city.

I know of a Cambodian Christian who lives in one of the poorest parts of Cambodia. He used to get his fruits stolen. He forgave the thief over and over again. One day the thief got really angry and cut down the fruit tree instead of stealing the fruits. But he forgave him. The thief questioned him and asked why he forgives. He shared the gospel and the thief became a Christian. The ex-thief shared the gospel to his wife and his children and his parents and the whole household became committed to Jesus in small random part of Cambodia. And many more have come to faith through their testimony.

The point is, Spiritual revivals require sowers and reapers. The harvest is plenty, but the workers are few. Will you sow and reap the harvest? God can even use you. The woman's testimony was short, but her transformed life impacted a town. If you want to see a revival, centre it on Jesus' redeeming work, believe in the supernatural and go out to sow and reap the harvest. It is your duty to proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness. Amen.