

OPEN YOUR EYES AND LOOK AT THE FIELDS

John 4:27-42
Key verse 4:35

“Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

Last week we learned the beautiful story of the encounter of the heavenly prince Jesus with a thirsty, injured and isolated woman from Samaria. Jesus met her with initiative love, so that he was able to break through her icy and rejecting shell and open her heart to receive the living water from Jesus. Jesus also helped her with spiritual love, with love leading to repentance, to find her true object of worship, Jesus. Through this encounter with Jesus, the woman was changed, freed from her old nature and wounds and became a joyful witness of Jesus for her city.

Today we learn how the testimony of this woman worked in the Samaritans of her city. We also learn what vision Jesus saw through the transformation of this one woman. Finally, we learn how the profound Bible study among the Samaritans was powerful. Let us open our spiritual eyes to the mighty work of God so that we may see a great spiritual vision in the midst of this time of crisis. As God's harvester, let us diligently lead one-to-one Bible studies and serve one soul that is as precious as the whole world.

1) Jesus' vision through the transformation of a woman (27-38)

Let us look at verse 27: “Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?'" The disciples had just returned from the city, where they had brought some fresh rolls. Now they were greatly amazed to

see Jesus talking with a woman. As we know, it was not acceptable in the society of that time to speak to a woman in public, especially if she was from pagan Samaria and was obviously not a particular model of morality. Nevertheless, the disciples did not rebuke Jesus because they had a fundamental respect for their Master. Moreover, they were already accustomed to the fact that Jesus sometimes did rather unusual things out of his burning shepherd heart which they did not directly understand.

Let's look at verses 28 and 29: “Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"” Jesus' initiative and repentant love did a great thing in that woman's heart and life. Not long ago she came to the well in the midday heat, very thirsty, but now she left her water jar. Suddenly the water jar and the water were no longer important to her. If she had not wanted to meet anybody from the city before, she now went into the city and invited the people to Jesus. She was so full of joy and enthusiasm that she wanted to tell about her encounter with Jesus.

What was her testimony? Let us read verse 29 again: "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" The same testimony is repeated in verse 39. In the past, talking about her past had been something that hurt her very much. She could very quickly explode or scream or

run away. She didn't want to be hurt by other people. But when she received God's forgiveness through the encounter with Jesus, she could speak freely and openly about her old life. She could give a personal testimony of faith about who she had been and who Jesus is now for her: the Christ. It is very important to have a personal testimony like this woman. The mere fact that she could speak about everything she had done in her life was an undeniable testimony of Jesus' forgiveness. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

Those who have received Jesus' grace of forgiveness can give a personal testimony of faith. In this sense, the testimonies of our co-workers show that they believe in God's forgiveness and have begun a new life in Jesus. The fact that a teenager courageously confesses his faith at school shows that God has done something great in his life. Through this, his classmate also came to our service curiously. The fact that a young woman, who in the past only expected God's blessing, now selflessly serves other young women as a mother of faith, is a testimony of the powerful work of change in her life.

What was the reaction to the testimony of the Samaritan woman? Verse 30 says, "They came out of the town and made their way toward him." This verse shows that her simple but authentic testimony had a powerful effect, so that many people came out of the city and wanted to get to know Jesus. Through our testimony, many young people come out of their fixed ideas, their unbelief and their false goal in life, and want to get to know Jesus, who alone satisfies their soul thirst completely.

Let us now look at verses 31 to 34. In the meantime, the disciples had returned from the city and they admonished Jesus that he had to eat something. Shortly before, Jesus had been completely exhausted and powerless when he sat down next to the well. They had run quickly to get something to eat. But now Jesus seemed to be changed, full of

strength and joy. When Jesus spoke of a mysterious food that they did not know, they suspected that someone had brought him food. But Jesus made it clear what his food was. Let us read verse 34 together: "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." Jesus was not fed on hamburgers or Gimhap, but on a spiritual food, namely the doing of the divine will. Jesus' mission, to which God sent him, namely to give his life for the salvation of all people, was the food Jesus ate and which had filled him up. From a human point of view, it had certainly been exhausting to serve the stubbornly reacting Samaritan woman. It had not been easy to address her sin problem in order to lead her to repentance. Much easier Jesus could have ignored her and rested. Nevertheless, just this one-to-one Bible study with a soul was like eating a very tasty meal for Jesus. He was strengthened and filled with joy and new strength, so that he did not want to eat anything at all.

Fulfilling God's mission is often exhausting enough for us, needs overcoming and self-denial. But it is just as true that fulfilling God's mission with all our hearts and then seeing the fruit of it makes us overly happy, joyful and satiated in our souls and bodies. To lead a soul to salvation in Jesus and to see its transformation gives us a joy that is shared by the angels in heaven. Therefore, let us not be satisfied with a perishable physical food, but let us do the will of God and experience the true joy of God's mission, which truly fills and satisfies not only us, but also others.

Let us now look at verses 35 to 38. In these verses Jesus teaches his disciples to look at the world through God's eyes. Let us read verse 35 together: "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." It was obviously four months before the harvest. Four months before the harvest, you can't really see anything in the fields. At the moment I drive across the field almost every day towards the Brüser Berg. Some fields have just been tilled and all you can see is the bare earth. But in about four months you will see

wonderfully ripe turnips or wheat or cabbage. In the same way the fields in Samaria must have been completely empty. But Jesus saw the ripe harvest already standing by faith.

Spiritually, people are the harvest of God. God wants to harvest all people for his kingdom. But all too often we have the idea that people are not yet ripe for it. We think that something special still needs to happen. Actually, no one could see a ripe fruit in the thirsty Samaritan woman. But Jesus saw that she was ripe for harvest and he was determined to give her the living water that would really quench her soul thirst.

By changing this one woman, Jesus saw the vision that the fields were ripe for harvest. He told his disciples to lift up their eyes. Instead of looking at themselves and the various difficulties, or waiting for a better time, they should look up and see the mighty work of God. God had worked in this one Samaritan woman and this was the clear indication that the fields were ripe. Jesus saw through this one woman that now many Samaritan women and men, who were very thirsty, hurt and lonely, are drinking the living water and being changed. Jesus saw that through the example of this one woman so many others find their true object of worship, have their soul thirst quenched and are reaped for the Kingdom of God.

Then what is our vision? What do we see when we lift up our eyes? At the moment we see people everywhere who are either very anxious or very limited because of Corona. Most of them try to follow the rules somehow and just hope that this time will pass quickly. But we are able to see that God is at work in the middle of this time. We see that God is at work in a young man who does not live overwhelmed by fear, but is leading diligent one-to-one Bible studies especially in this time. We see that a young woman, especially in this time, was able to decide not to remain in her old self-centered life, but to begin common life with the people of God and to work together. Humanly seen it is not much. But we can see that God is working and that the young people are ripe for harvest. Just

now we are able to experience that nothing that we thought was safe is really safe. A small virus is challenging our lifestyle, our democracy, our work, our humanity. It shows us how helpless even science is. Young people are mature to return to God, to give Him dominion in their lives, and thus to be established as a holy people of God for this generation.

Up to now I have often thought that God works sometime. But I learn here that I should not wait for sometime, e.g. in 4 months, but that I should see God's vision now and be used as a harvest worker. At the moment the campus is almost empty. But all the people I met said that they don't like that the churches were closed. God has hope for the students of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. God wants to make 12 disciples of Jesus spiritually alive there and raise them as a vast army for world mission. Lift up your eyes and look at the fields at the University of Bonn, at the fields at the Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, at the fields at the University of Koblenz: They are ripe for harvest. The fields in Europe are ripe for a spiritual revival.

A young man was very thirsty inside and full of the spirit of pleasure. Often he had only shown himself in front of the others to get recognition and love from the people. But through Deuteronomy 6:5 and Luke 23:34a God worked mightily in his heart. He personally accepted Jesus' grace, who had prayed for his forgiveness on the cross, and was able to give his whole heart, soul and strength to love God and give his new life for God. Since then he was able to know God's heart for others and prays with a shepherd's heart and sense of responsibility for the transformation of our next generation by serving them with insight and patience.

I know one person who was unable to participate in the work of God for a long time. But since last year I have learned that through regular Bible study he always comes to God with a repentant heart. When he found a repentant heart at every Bible study, he was able to gain spiritual insight and grow

into a man of prayer for the work of God in the midst of all temptations.

Last year we learned through the Global Leadership Empowerment Forum that the fields of the next generation are ripe for harvest. We were able to learn that many came to God with repentance and that they have the spiritual desire to be used by God as Bible teachers and messengers. God himself has established responsible global leaders among them and they continue to grow through Bible study. The fields are ripe for harvest. God wants to use our one-to-one Bible study so that the young people will repent to God as a kingdom of priests, even as a shepherd nation for world mission.

In this Easter time, let us renew our living hope of resurrection and look to the ripe harvest fields, that God uses our one-to-one Bible study for the work of spiritual revival in Europe, that Europe may once again be used as a shepherd nation for world mission.

Let us read verse 36 together: "Even now 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." To sow is to sow the seed of the Word of God. It is a very laborious work, connected with digging up the earth, sowing the seeds and watering them. However, no fruit can be seen at this time. Harvesting means the bringing in of the fruit. Harvesting is a very labour-intensive activity, as we can see from the current hand-wringing search of the farmers for harvest helpers, a work which is carried out in Germany by many hard-working harvest helpers from Eastern Europe. In a spiritual sense it means to lead people to conversion to Jesus and to a clear step in following Jesus.

In God's work there are both sowers and harvesters. They both work very hard. The one sees the fruit, the other does not see it. Nevertheless, both are very happy because they are not competitors, but co-workers. According to verse 38, the disciples of Jesus are primarily harvesters. Jesus has sent us to bring in the harvest, namely to reap people

for the Kingdom of God, to help them through Bible study, to get to know Jesus and to live as disciples of Jesus. Even if the work as a harvest worker is often tiring and exhausting, it is still the most blessed work. He who reaps is not sad, but he is very joyful and indeed he already receives his reward and gathers fruit for eternal life.

In the past 40 years, our missionaries have very devotedly sown the seed and laid the foundation for the work of God through raising disciples. How blessed it is that God has called and raised each one of us as a reaper for his salvation work. Let us serve as harvesters the work of one-to-one Bible study, that we harvest young people for God, raise them as disciples of Jesus, so that Europe may be awakened once again and be used as a shepherd nation for world mission.

2) Jesus, the Savior of the world (39-42)

Let us now look at verse 39: "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." The personal testimony of the Samaritan woman had made a great impression on the people of her city. Many believed from her testimony but they didn't stop there, marvelling at the woman. Rather they had the desire to learn more about Jesus.

Verse 40 says, "So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days." This shows that the Samaritans had a heart willing to learn and also an inquiring mind. They were very open to the testimony of the Samaritan woman, but they wanted to know Jesus themselves and asked him to stay with them. Jesus stayed there for two days. It was like a very intense weekend Bible conference. Probably Jesus taught them a lot. Above all, they had personal fellowship with him, through which they could get to know him better. These Samaritans remind us of the people in Berea who believed through Paul's

sermon, but then always searched the Scriptures to see if it was the same.

What was the outcome of their Bible conference? Verse 41 says, "And because of his words many more became believers." In the beginning they came to Jesus because they were impressed by the woman's testimony. But now they had a firm and deeper faith based on the Word of God. Faith does not grow through special experiences and miracles that we see, but primarily through deep Bible study. Two days, i.e. 48 hours of intensive fellowship with Jesus brought about something great in the hearts and lives of the Samaritans.

Let us read verse 42: "They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.'" Through a profound study of the Bible with Jesus, they themselves came to a firm faith and realization: "He is the Savior of the world." Until now, the Samaritans had always felt excluded from the grace of God. The Jews excluded them and said they were Gentiles. They probably felt excluded because of their sin, that God could only condemn them. But Jesus, the Son of God, came to them in Samaria to give them living water and to have deep Bible study with them. At the end of the Bible conference, they all testified that Jesus is the Savior of the world. They believed that Jesus is their personal Savior, the Savior of the Samaritans and also the Savior for all people. It was similar to the testimony of the disciples, which they gave after 3 years of living together with Jesus: "You are the Christ of God!"

The Bible study of these Samaritans may also be a good example for our next generation. They heard the testimony of their parents and their shepherds and saw how God worked in them. They may accept this testimony. But it is not their own testimony as long as they do not deeply explore the Word of God. Through the deep Bible study and the personal encounter with Jesus, they may also receive the personal testimony: "He is

really the Savior of the world." May God abundantly bless the one-to-one Bible study of our next generation and also their Bible study for the preparation of baptism and give each of them a personal testimony of Jesus based on the Word of God, which they themselves have heard and recognized.

Jesus came to Samaria and saw that the fields were ripe for harvest. He could see this vision through a thirsty Samaritan woman who drank the living water and found her true object of worship, Jesus. It is very important to help a person spiritually and see the work of God in him. Jesus first served one person who seemed totally unsuitable until she could taste the living water and be raised as a mother of faith for Samaria. In this sense, helping one person means to change the whole world. In the midst of the current Corona wave, all major events have been cancelled. But God works through one-to-one Bible study. Through one-to-one Bible study we can challenge the spiritual revival in Europe.

In today's passage we have come to know Jesus' wonderful and great vision. Let us read verse 35 again together: "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." Through the changed life of a thirsty woman from Samaria, Jesus saw the great vision that the fields are ripe for harvest. We were also able to learn the importance of deep Bible study to hear and recognize who Jesus really is. Let us see the ripe harvest fields with the vision of God, not wait for better times, but serve as harvesters for one-to-one Bible study now. Starting with the transformation of one soul, let us bring about spiritual revival in our faculty, in our university and in all of Europe.