

Title: “True Conversion Produces Radical Change”**Scripture: John 4:27-42**

Facilitator: Louise P. McQueen

I. Biblical Context and Historical Background

This passage highlights the contempt that the Jews and Samaritans held for one another. Because there was hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans, the Jews avoided the Samaritans because of their bitter history. When Israel split into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom was called Israel and its capital was Samaria with Jeroboam as her first king (1 Kings 11:26-39; 1 Kings 12:1-24; 1 Kings 16:24). Israel was composed of ten tribes to the north, and Judah was made up of Judah and Benjamin. The animosity between the Jews and Israelites began immediately after the division. Rehoboam assembled an army to make war against Israel to reunite the kingdom, but God intervened through His prophet Shemiah (1 Kings 12:21-24). 1 Kings 15:6 says “there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life”.

Most Jews regarded the Samaritans as ignorant and outside of God’s favor and mercy. The Samaritans were still very much part of God’s plan as shown in the fourth chapter of John’s Gospel where Jesus brought good news to Sychar, a Samaritan village. Jesus exhibited the importance of acceptance and called us to remove the prejudice and narrow-mindedness and intolerance we have, just as the Jews and Samaritans held for each other. To be a true follower of Christ, we must be disciples, learners, who can look at what hinders us, reach out to Christ and grow beyond the obstacles that block our spiritual path to Him.

The woman at the well story is relevant today because it became a forebearer of Christian practices—that one may seek God’s forgiveness for wrongdoing. The story also shows that a well of godly grace is ready to refresh the soul overcome by sin and suffering and that Jesus has come to save the sick and to serve those who need both physical and spiritual healing.

II. The Lesson: True Conversion Produces Radical Change

1. vv. 27-29

Jesus interacted with a race extremely hated and rejected by the Jews. His conversation with the Samaritan woman ended just as His disciples return from purchasing food in the town. They were surprised to find that Jesus had talked with her, not because she was a Samaritan or a sinner, but because she was a woman. Not one of the disciples asked the LORD why He was talking to the Samaritan woman. They had learned enough to know that, while Jesus did not always respect the conventions, He had good reasons for what He did. Jesus did not share their condescending attitude toward women.

The woman was so impressed with her conversation with Jesus that she left the waterpot behind and rushed back to town. She was compelled to tell those in her city that they should come to the well and meet Jesus who confronted her with her sins, “All the things she ever did; is not this the Christ”? (John 4:29). Jesus displayed so much love and security that she felt safe with Him, even when her sins were exposed. It is important today for followers of Christ to provide a safe place for people to confess their sin, repent and put their trust in Christ.

2. vv. 30-34

The woman’s invitation to the men of the city to go see Jesus was effective. The men of the city went to the well to see Jesus for themselves when she told them who Jesus was and how her life had been impacted by His conversation with her. Meanwhile the disciples had brought the food for Christ, and they were encouraging Him to eat. Jesus explained to His disciples that life was more than food and drink and that man can not live by bread alone. Christ was not saying that food and drink and rest were not important. Jesus had a greater source of strength and satisfaction than the food He ate. He explained to His disciples that His true satisfaction was to do the will of God Jesus saith unto them, “My meat (food) is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work”, (John 4:34). It is easy to see that Jesus was intent on finishing the work God had sent Him to do

3. v. 35

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35). The main

point this statement makes was that in farming, there is a period of waiting between the time the seed is sown and the time the crop is harvested. In other words, there is a delay. The disciples needed to realize that with the coming of Jesus, sowing (preaching) and reaping of souls would result in the birth, growth and spread of the church, the body of Christ. Jesus was calling the disciples to see with spiritual eyes a different kind of harvest, a harvest of souls, a harvest that was ripe. Many people were ready to be received into the Kingdom of God, and the disciples should see themselves as workers, reapers, in that harvest.

4. vv. 36-38

Jesus, as both sower and reaper, planted the seed in the woman at the well and reaped a harvest from many in a Samaritan town. The reward Jesus offered was the joy of working for Him and seeing the harvest of believers. Whenever persons are gathered into God's Kingdom, all are filled with joy. The disciples could now reap a harvest immediately, and they reaped it from seeds they did not sow. The other people that Jesus referred to were probably the prophets in the Old Testament (John 4:38). They had prepared the people to believe in the Messiah. The prophets and Jesus sowed the seeds the disciples had the opportunity to reap. This is how the work of God happens—one sows and another reaps.

5. vv. 39-42

The woman at the well did two things. She told others about her personal experience with Jesus. Then she invited them to meet Jesus themselves. The Samaritans asked Jesus to stay in the town so that they could know Him better. He accepted their invitation and stayed in the town for two days. They believed in Him because of the woman's testimony and also because they met and spoke with Jesus. "And more believed because of his own word" (John 4:41). After hearing Jesus speak over two days, the people in the city said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42). Jesus' teachings were effective on the Samaritans. After only a few days with Him, Jesus was declared to be the "Savior of the world".

III. Conclusion

Anybody, anywhere can come to Him, the "Saviour, the Redeemer of the world"!