

John 4:31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” ³² But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” ³³ So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” ³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

This morning we come to an end with this mini-series of **How Are Christians Different**. We started out with the notion that Christians are in fact called to be **Holy**. This does not mean that we act superior or self-righteous, but that people should be able to tell that we are Christians by our love, and by many other things. We learned of those virtues and values 2 weeks ago. Last Sunday we remembered that we are called to be **Humble**, recalling that everything about our adoption as people of God should permanently chill us out, and keep us from being full of ourselves. We should remember, as St. Paul taught, that even if we have faith to believe, this is a gift of God, so that no one can boast. So that no one can boast...

Before we look at our Scripture lesson from the Gospel of John, let's think about this: Have you ever recommended anything to a friend or family member before? How many have ever said “such and such is a great place to get your car fixed” ? How many have ever said so and so is a great doctor ? A friend asked me once about where to take your car to be fixed. I actually drive almost all the way to Salem, because there is a guy there, originally from Burton, who is the best. I am in the 12th

year of driving my silver car, and will soon hit 280,000 miles. Much of the credit goes to the man from Burton. We tell people about good things, we tell people about things that work for us. If we never mention our church to anyone, is it because it really doesn't work for us, it doesn't do us any good? If that's the case, why go at all? But if there is something beneficial about being involved with this congregation, what is holding us back from telling someone else about it? To quote a happy song about Spring, *I wish for you my friend, this happiness that I've found; you can depend on him, it matters not where you're bound. I'll shout it from the mountain top; I want my world to know; the Lord of love has come to me, I want to pass it on.*

In our story for today, Jesus is crossing through some territory where most of his disciples probably felt pretty uncomfortable. They were in northern Israel in the area known as Shamron, or as the Greeks called it, Samaria. Samaria had lots of Samaritans. These people were seen by Jewish folks from the South as less than, they were impure, they were unclean and unholy. They were profane. So Jesus decides to be Jesus, and he says "Hey, I'm going to talk to this woman out in the middle of nowhere!" He speaks to a woman by a well. There are two surprises: 1) He is a man, and she is a woman, and you just didn't say hello in that culture. And 2) he is Jewish and she is Samaritan. And they normally don't have much to say. But Jesus has a lot to say to her, while his disciples have gone off scouting for some food. The Samaritan woman at the well is impressed with Jesus, and startled. But she is excited and heads

back to get some others to come and visit Jesus. It is at this point that our story starts.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

The disciples have come back to Jesus and are surprised that he has been talking to a Samaritan woman. Like I said, this is just not kosher. So they have this little discussion, and in the meantime, the woman is on her way back to Jesus and we’re told that she has quite a group of others with her. Right then you could imagine the Disciples going “Well, uhhh, Master, we really need to be movin’ on. The highway’s a callin’. Time to be movin’ on.” Jesus says *No...look at the harvest. Look at the people who need to be connected to God. The field is full. We don’t need to wait 4 months, in fact we only need to wait about 4 minutes, and they’ll be here!*

If someone were to ask me, Rich, how are Christians different than anyone else, I'd say thanks for asking, Christians are harvesters and lovers. After looking at me in a funny way the person would then say Please explain. And I would say this: Christians believe that they have found something wonderful, even if in reality it found them. Christians, as people who choose to care, which makes them lovers, since they love other people, even people they've never met, Christians will reach out in love to suggest something to other people. Christians will say I know about something that has helped me deal with my grief, with my regrets, with the shame of mistakes I've made in my life. I believe that I am loved forever, that there is really Someone out there, who even knows my name and my life and still loves me anyway! I have learned to live in a way where I am glad to wake up each day, and in spite of the world's troubles, I'd like to help make things better. I feel like I've found a better way to live.

We'll tell someone where to get their car fixed. Can't we suggest to someone where they can get their soul fixed, and their heart mended, and their life strengthened? Almost 40% of our (under 45) population in Portage County has no connection to God in any way, not a smidgin. 40%. 50% of those people say that they'd be glad to come to church if only someone would ask. They don't know what to do. If you had never been to a worship service before, how might you know how to act, where to sit, all those things that we take for granted? 80% of all people these days who start coming to church do so because someone invited them to come. Out of that left-over 20%, most

of them come because something has blown up in their lives. They have lost a loved one, a job, a marriage. They come looking for answers about life. They don't care about the color of the new carpeting. They are looking for something that will help them hold life together. I am fully confident that we can offer people that.

We are called to be harvesters, and we are called to do this because we say that we love. The two things should be connected. I know that we have Covid-19 worries right now, as we should continue to have. The numbers for our country are the highest they have ever been. The last few days have set all records. Hospitals in many states are full, and that is terrible news. We do not know how much longer these things will be in our way. But we need to remember this great story in the Gospel of John. Jesus sees the people coming with the Woman at the Well. Jesus says that they didn't need to wait 4 months for harvest. The fields were full, right then! If you believe something good is happening in your life, tell others about it. If you believe that something good is happening, and it has something to do with your church, or your overall Christian faith, tell somebody.

We are called to be Holy, to be Humble, and to be Harvesters. This is the way. This is part of our journey. Let's walk it, and make something happen. AMEN.