

V. Global Ministries Conference 2021
The Gospel to the Nations
“Partnering Together for Joy”
John 4:36
Pastor Bryan Wintersteen
February 28, 2021 • Sunday Evening Sermon

Prayer:

Father, we thank You for Your Word and Your faithfulness to feed us Your children. Lord, we are in need regularly for You to feed us. Daily we feed on the food You provide and Lord I pray we would also daily feed on Your Word that You would fill us and satisfy our soul each and every day with good things from Your Word. Help us Father to abide in Your Word so that we might dwell in You and You might dwell in us because apart from You we can do nothing, we can bear no fruit on our own. So thank You for the life giving Word of God. We pray that You would bring it forth in this study today from this pulpit despite the man who preaches, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

I'm going to share with you a Scripture from a well-known interaction that Jesus had with the woman at the well in the Gospel of John. I want to start by reading selected verses from John 4. Many of you are familiar with this passage and the context of this starts as Jesus who is a Jew is going through the border land of Samaria. Then He engages with a woman which was quite taboo in the culture back then and furthermore is the fact that she is a Samaritan woman. There was much animosity between the Jews and Samaritans during this time. I want to start in the passage where Jesus and woman were well into their conversation as she was trying to skirt some of the issues that Jesus had been bringing up as He was getting down to business in her life, actually pointing out her sin. If you have ever had anyone point out your sin to you it is uncomfortable so let's look at this conversation starting midway into it.

John 4:21–26 says [21] *Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] 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.** [24] God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” [25] The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.” [26] Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”* May God bless the reading of His Word.

This is a powerful interaction where Jesus fully revealed to this woman who He was, both by what He knew about her (including her past lifestyle of being with five men) and telling her. He asked her to bring her husband out knowing full well that the man she was currently associated with was not her husband and therefore she was considered a defiled woman, a woman of the city, a sinful woman. Jesus was a bit confrontational with her as He revealed to her, her past. Usually we think of Jesus with lovingly having children around Him as perhaps was revealed to us in Sunday School growing up but we sometimes forget that Jesus who was in the temple turning over the money tables of money changers, cracking the whip and chasing them out of there because He had fervor for the house of God. In fact, this should be called the house of prayer.

In the same way here, Jesus is full of love, compassion, grace and mercy but there is also another side. He also loves us so much not to leave us dead in our sins and transgressions. Jesus wants to confront and address that and that's really what the Gospel is about, isn't it? The reason I bring this passage up to you is because it's directly related to missions. We see Jesus on mission with this woman – doing missional engagement – taking the Gospel in word and deed into this woman's life.

Our mission conference theme verse is Luke 8:1 which says *[1] Soon afterward He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him.* I think it's important for you to know why the Global mission's team came up with this theme verse and why our theme was to take the Gospel to the nations and be found faithful. This verse shares what we hope all gets done both through our missionaries out in the field but also in our very own lives here in Birmingham. Everything we do should be based on the Word and what Jesus Himself did.

This verse shows us that Christ went throughout the cities and villages proclaiming with His mouth and also bringing with His deeds, the Gospel deeds, the Good News of the Kingdom of God. And the twelve were right there with Him. Everything He did they observed and saw. Jesus is very intentional in His leadership because He did it for a purpose. He took the opportunity to practice and demonstrate what they would be accountable for and asked to do upon His death, burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven when He gave the Great Commission. This would be a task they would fulfill through the power of the Holy Spirit as they took the Word of Christ to all the nations. So Jesus was modeling this behavior that He would one day pass onto them.

I found something really useful in discipling for when I was in high school and came to Christ my discipler really challenged me to be curious when it comes to the Word of God. He challenged me to come to the Word of God with a hunger and a love for the Word of God. He also challenged me to ask questions of the Scripture and of God as I was reading the Word. It has proven to be a great strategy throughout the rest of my Christian walk and especially in ministry that I would always be curious when I'm reading a passage of Scripture.

He also set before me a three-fold model. One is to pray before reading the Scripture. Then read the Scripture and then ask questions of God and then pray again. The fourth step is the prayer that God would illuminate the very Word of God that I just read. So when I pray I come to God believing that God's Word is true and that God has a word for me. Also that God put the Word together in such a way that as I read that there will be something useful in it for my life. So I trust God for that as I pray. I ask the Lord 'What would You share with me in this passage?' Coming to the Scripture with curious questions, engagement and prayer is a great strategy to have in your life.

What kind of questions can you ask God in His Word? You can ask the Lord all kinds of questions like why is that verse there or why is that person engaging in that way and others. Seek the Lord for the answers and cross reference other passages to help you. Ask His Spirit to illuminate the answers for you for He loves to illuminate the Word of God. There are also promises in the Word of God that His Word will not return void. His Word will accomplish the purpose that He intends for it to accomplish in your life and mine, because it's sharper than any two-edged sword.

Here are the questions I asked from our theme verse – who, what, when, where and why. These certainly are five great questions but you can ask all kinds of questions of God's Word, but be curious when you come to God's Word. So let's get to the first question, who is

mentioned in this passage in Luke 8? Jesus is certainly mentioned when it says ‘He went to the cities and villages.’ We know the twelve were with Him also. I want to read a little more of this passage.

Luke 8:1–3 says [1] *Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, [2] and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, [3] and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them^{all} out of their means.*

These women were like Jesus faithful sacrificial women who funded His public ministry and were with Him. People who were funding them had come from people who were converted by Christ and His powerful Word, His testimony. These people had their lives powerfully touched by Christ and His ministry. Some had demons removed, some had been healed. Because of His powerful ministry of preaching and bringing Gospel deeds together in their lives now they were following along observing what He did, watching what He did as He modeled the Father in this world. They were generously, sacrificially giving their faith promise investment for the ministry of Jesus. Can you imagine getting the opportunity to invest in the ministry of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords? That’s exactly what you get the opportunity to do with our faith promise. Those women who were healed were investing their faith promise offering into the very ministry of Jesus Christ. What an incredible blessing! So we looked at the who, now what.

The next question is what did He do? The previous couple of chapters before Luke 8 show us a lot of what Jesus was doing. Jesus was intentional and actively engaged in ministry. He wasn’t sitting by the wayside for He had a purpose, a plan and He was doing the ministry powerfully and prayerfully. Many times it says in the Bible He would retreat to a desolate place to pray all night long. He was super intentional with how He spent His time and who He invested in. It’s really challenging when you think about your life and how you invest your time. May God continue to use Jesus as an example in our lives so we can evaluate the way we spend our time, how we spend our time and who we spend our time with.

Let’s look at what Jesus did in the chapters leading up to Luke 8. What did He do? He taught in their synagogues, on the hillsides (taught the beatitudes), from a boat, proclaimed the Good News to the poor, healed the infirmities of people, healed the blind, set at liberty those who were oppressed, healed a man fully covered in leprosy, healed a paralyzed man, healed a man with a withered hand, healed a servant of a Centurion, raised a dead child back to life and returned the son to his mother. Also He dined in a Pharisees house. He allowed a sinful woman not only to be in the same home with Him but to actually touch Him as she broke that alabaster flask and spread the perfume in His hair and body. This woman covered His feet with kisses and tears as she loved much because she had been forgiven much. What a joy Jesus had. There was a lot that He did and there was much more that was not recorded in Scripture of things He taught and did because it was so much, but we see very specifically what God wanted in His Word for us to see. These are the deeds of Jesus and notice that it’s both word and deed. He did ministry in people’s lives and set them free, forgave their sins and provided healing spiritually.

The next question is where did He go? It’s clear in Luke 8:1 that he went through the cities and villages. Several of the cities listed are Galilee, Capernaum, Nazareth, Nain, Simon’s house, walked in grain fields and to a desolate place (the Sea of Galilee). These places are all listed in the preceding chapters of Luke 8. I want to point out a couple of things about where He went.

Jesus wasn't exclusive about where He went because He went to both sides of town, across the tracks so to speak. Jesus didn't just stay in the nicer areas. He also went into the remote rural areas. He traveled on the roads out on the wayside into the villages but He certainly spent a lot of time in the cities and synagogues as well. Realize He didn't exclude anyone in the places that He went. Whether they were country folk, a city slicker or urban dweller, Christ's message is for all of us. Nobody is too high for it and no one is too low for it no matter what background you come from. There is a great level of field at the foot of the cross and Christ goes to all places. Through our missionaries our endeavor is to go to all places, not exclusively one over the other to show some kind of preference or favoritism because that's not the way of the Gospel and the way of Jesus. It is to take the Gospel to all the world, all ethnic tribes, tongues and nations. We should not be exclusive toward one or the other. We see this modeled from Jesus when He ministered to the woman at the well as He crossed certain boundaries there that many dared not to do.

In Luke 7 there was a group of men dispatched from John the Baptist's ministry and John sent them to Jesus with a very specific question. Luke 7:20–23 says [20] *And when the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another?'"* [21] *In that hour He healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind He bestowed sight.* [22] *And He answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.* [23] *And blessed is the one who is not offended by Me."*

This was a clear cut way that Jesus was answering their question, 'yes I am He.' He wanted them to go back and tell John what the Scripture says about Him. John will recognize Him by His deeds – by He does and by what He says – by the Good News preached and proclaimed and the Gospel deeds of love and mercy as He touches people's lives, bringing them home and healing them through prayer, ministry, casting out demons and bringing back the dead to life. These are the Gospel deeds Jesus did. I have mentioned already that the twelve were with Him and He was modeling this ministry to them. This is an important point I don't want you to miss.

Jesus modeled this to the disciples so that they would take this and continue on which has been passed on all the way to us. If you examine the High Priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17, Jesus even prays for those who would believe in Him through the ministry of disciples and that includes us who are Christians now. If you have had someone share the Gospel with you and you have turned your heart to Him through conversion then Jesus has prayed for you and it also says in the Bible that He ever lives to intercede for His children. This is an amazing part of the mission of Christ that He modeled is and even before that.

John 20:21 says [21] *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you."* Jesus was obeying His Father so He wasn't just doing this ministry to model it. Today that is our very mission that as Jesus obeyed the Father in ministering to them, He also modeled it to send them. This is why we have a mission's conference. We focus intentionally on all the ministries that God has called us to and this is what Christ wants us to do in mission – to bring the Word and the deed, to go to the cities and the villages and not neglect anyone – to go to all nations. After all, this is the very purpose for which He came.

In Jesus' engagement with Nicodemus He says to him in John 3:7, [7] *Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'* Jesus constantly confronted sinners with their sin and

pointed out their desperate need of Christ. This is the Good News, the hope of the Gospel that we would be set free from our sin. One of the challenges that we see in modern ministry is that sometimes churches and mission agencies get off track. We have to stay on mission, on message and in ministry. We have to stay focused on Jesus and be anchored in the Word of God, because we have a tendency to drift. Some ministries will drift toward liberalism and will begin to do only the good deeds of feeding the poor and caring for the homeless which is wonderful but if we neglect the proclamation of the Word of God we're not helping anyone spiritually at all. Jesus always did both together – proclaiming the Gospel and doing deeds of love and mercy. My prayer is the Briarwood and all our ministries constantly stay focused on this and we encourage our missionaries regularly with this challenge.

I'd like to share a story with you about my son when he was quite young. I had been working on a project at my home that was building a major carport area using my chainsaw with those big railroad cross ties as I was cutting them up to have an area to park my car. The area behind this retaining wall where I was building I had planned to back fill with dirt so I could put a swing set up for my children and a big sandbox so they could have a new place to play. At the time I was doing all this my children had no idea what the master plan was and my son at two years of age strapped on my goggles and grabbed a hammer to hold in each hand. As he saw me out there working with the chainsaw, cross ties and the shovel my son just wanted to come along side and enter into my work with me. He had no idea what the plan was or how it was going to come out or that there was a swing set at the end of this project for him, because I didn't share it with him. I was the father just doing my work and he wanted to enter into that work.

I share this story with you in hopes that you will have this childlike heart as Briarwood that would simply want to join the Father in His work with joy and sweetness and gladness. Pastor Reeder recently shared that conversion was a specific event and evangelism is a multiple stage process where God uses many people in that process. God has certainly done that in my life where He has used many people in my life to share His Word and minister to me along the way. This is a powerful way God works in our lives. Some water, some plant, some cultivate, some feed and some have the joy of actually seeing the harvest come, they see the fruit of where that life comes to Christ and there is a conversion through God's mighty power – a life is changed and a new heart is placed in that soul.

Conversion is a powerful moment but no matter if you are the one who waters, plants, cultivates or harvest, they all rejoice together when that one comes to Christ. I've been so thankful to be able to hear the stories that some of our missionaries have shared this past week at our Global Mission's conference of lives coming to Christ for all of heaven rejoice when one sinner comes to repentance (Luke 15:7). We praise the Lord for that.

In closing, I want to encourage you to be like our missionaries who are entering into the joy of their loving heavenly Father doing their own little part, just like my son with the goggles and the hammer. We don't always know what the plan is or how God is working in someone's life but be faithful to do your part – to share this Message. We have a glorious Message through Christ. He has touched our lives and redeemed us. Don't keep it a secret. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel basket because it doesn't make sense. You light a lamp and hold it up high. Just as the song goes; This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine and I'm going to let it shine till Jesus comes. Let it shine so that all people see Christ in your life – through your verbal proclamation, your testimony and in ministry to God.

We have heard testimonies all week long at our mission's conference from those in Honduras to Norway and those who are taking a faith risk to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It

was a powerful week. May each one of us be swept up in this grand mission of Christ's in such a way that everything else is counted as rubbish that we would see the name of Christ magnified and glorified and that we would see one day heaven populated by those we ministered to and served in the name of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father in heaven, we thank You for the ministry of Jesus. Thank You for allowing us to enter in. O Lord we are so grateful for the work You are doing in our lives. Continue to bless our missionaries all across the world and Father, thank You for this past week, in Jesus' Name, Amen.