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## Don't Miss the Treasure!

*John 4:27-54*

### **CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY 201st General Assembly**

- **TUESDAY (SESSION) @ 8:00 AM**  
**IN ROOM 203, RYAN BLDG.**
- **WEDNESDAY (SESSION) @ 1:00 PM**  
**IN LIBRARY, RYAN BLDG.**

Capitol Commission Bible studies are held on Tuesday and Wednesday. The legislator Bible study meets from 8:00-8:45 AM in Room 203, Ryan Bldg. (during session weeks). An open-to-all Bible study meets from 1:00-1:30 PM in the Library, Ryan Bldg. (during session weeks). The Bible studies are nonpartisan and non-denominational, and will focus on the Gospel of John for the 2017 General Assembly.

– Jeff Whitebread, Pennsylvania State Minister, Capitol Commission

### **John 4:27-54: “Don’t Miss the Treasure”**

In these two accounts, the closing scene in Samaria and the healing of the official's son, we are provided with an opportunity of comparing two different responses to Jesus.

As we think back to the treasure hunt and the clues (John 2:1-12), we now come across the second clue in finding the treasure. But there is something rather curious about what takes place in Galilee. There is some confusion that is hanging over this account like a cloud, and it is not quite as straightforward as what we find in our final scene in Samaria.

It is almost as if in the mad dash in considering the clues, we realized that several of the participants have forgotten the goal is following them to discover the treasure. It would be like admiring the road sign so much that it distracts you from arriving at your destination. The Word has become flesh, indeed. But what happens when people admire the flesh so much that they forget about The Word - the personal presence of God who is expressing his mind, his character, and his purposes through Jesus.

That is the danger, it seems, that Jesus is now currently facing, and it will continue through the next seven chapters, as the signs continue to unfold for the reader. The question we must ask is more than, ‘what is going on in Jesus’ ministry’ but whether we personally are learning to make appropriate use of the “signs” that are given to us. We begin with the impact Jesus has upon this Samaritan community.

### **Lost in the Moment**

*(John 4:33)* - Jesus seems utterly swept away by the moment. It reminds us of the kind of exhilaration we might experience when we are caught in something that captivates our attention and takes our focus away from our physical needs - eating and sleeping. This might have been something

like that for Jesus, as he seeks to explain why he seems uninterested in eating - having food to eat that his disciples hadn't come to know, they naturally thought someone else brought him a meal. This substance that nourishes his life, according to Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent him and complete his work.” In this Jesus demonstrates that, “man does not live on bread alone,” but will truly experience life when one is doing the will of our Father in the heavens.

### **Reflection:**

For the disciples, on the other hand, it was business as usual. And as is often the case, they could make no sense of what Jesus was up to in this moment. For starters, he is talking to a woman which was odd in itself (John 4:27), but now as she leaves he has no interest in food (John 4:32). Most likely, it was Jesus who sent the disciples into town to acquire food for the group. One can only imagine the disciples too are starving from the journey, and they begin to urge him to take something to eat. It's possible that Jesus is being urged to eat, in part, so that the disciples themselves can satisfy their own hunger?

Jesus is being pressured to eat because this is how things work. When one is hungry one eats, and the hidden argument here is that our physical needs take priority over other considerations. If I want something, or even need something, that desire overrules all other claims on my life, especially working with God in his kingdom. This is the unwritten rule of the world, I must get mine first, and then and only then might I consider the risky venture of giving myself to God, and what he is up to in his world. And so, what is often the case, we find that following Jesus places us in opposition to the way things have always worked. One's growing intimacy with Jesus leads in a direction that might prompt others to urge us to see the world like everyone else does. But as is often the case in John's gospel, being with Jesus means seeing beyond the earthly level; and having eyes that see the spiritual magnitude of the moments in our lives.

### **Savior of the World**

*(John 4:28)* - One can imagine that Jesus is on his tiptoes with excitement at what had just happened. From the woman's point of view, her interaction with Jesus seems to have thrown her into a happy confusion. She had certainly heard some difficult things, but there was something about Jesus, as she began to consider he was the Messiah. This gave her new-found confidence to go and tell other people about him.

*(John 4:35)* - For Jesus, the conversation had moved in a new direction, as seen by the woman's reaction. Even here, outside the boundaries of the

# Don't Miss the Treasure! (cont'd) - John 4:27-54

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chosen people, there is a spiritual hunger which, in however confused a fashion, they are ready to hear what he had to say. And it is this that causes him to see, in his mind's eye, the fields are turning white, and are ready for harvest. "Another four months, and then the harvest"; not so, says Jesus: in this case there is no lag time. No sooner sown than reaped! You may have not done the hard work, but you're still going to reap the reward nonetheless. This unlikely midday conversation with a puzzled and outcast woman has made Jesus realize in a new way that a brand-new field is opening up for the harvest of the gospel. And when the same happens today it remains no less exhilarating for those who see it.

**(John 4:39)** - The way this account closes is important to consider. Here is a woman who, a couple hours or so before, had been completely trapped in a life of immorality, and was a social outcast. She was stuck, and all she could do was to eke out a daily existence as best she could, and make sure she went to the well at the time when there would be nobody there to sneer and mock her. Now she is the first one to tell the Samaritan people about Jesus, and this before any of his followers could do it. This led the whole town coming to see Jesus for themselves.

**(John 4:42)** - And so, because of his words to them, they placed their confidence in them. And they gave Jesus a title which, they probably knew, the emperor in far-away Rome had bestowed upon himself: savior of the world. John often shows us how people misunderstand what Jesus is saying, but he shows us here, that sometimes people can break through with a statement of truth so profound that it summarizes all that John himself is trying to tell us.

Jesus is indeed the world's savior. That is part of the task and role of Israel's Messiah. Salvation may indeed be 'from the Jews' (John 4:22), but part of the point is that salvation is designed to reach outside Judaism to embrace the world. Now, in this incident in Samaria, the process has begun.

## Taking Jesus at His Word

**(John 4:44-45)** - The problem for Jesus begins as he arrives back home in the area of Galilee. Most of the action in John's Gospel takes place in Jerusalem, but this is one of the few recorded events in his local community. When we consider how the account begins with Jesus pointing out that a prophet is not welcomed in his own country, this might seem a bit confusing since the Galileans welcomed him, remembering all the things he had done in Jerusalem. So, the question that comes to mind, "Did they honor Jesus after all?"

**(John 4:48)** - Yes and no. The clue is found in Jesus' concern, because the welcome in Galilee was superficial. The people seem more interested in reading the clues rather than allowing them to lead to the treasure. It is as if they are taking pictures of the signs rather than driving where the signs tell them to go. They are looking for a Messiah to perform signs to

order, rather than moving onto the real faith which will grasp Jesus' hidden identity, The Word dwelling in flesh.

**(John 4:50)** - The royal official's interaction with Jesus shows the progression from one who was looking for a sign, to one who believed, and in so doing discovered the treasure to which each of the signposts point. This man had traveled from his home in Capernaum to find Jesus with only one thing on his mind, "I must bring Jesus to heal my son." He comes to Jesus begging and pleading with him to leave and make the journey to his home. The situation was desperate, his son was about to die and there was not a minute to lose. The only problem is that Jesus had something additional in mind. While he was willing to heal this man's son, he also intends something greater for this man's life and family.

**(John 4:54)** - John identifies this as the second sign that Jesus did, and from now on he leaves the counting to us. But what then is the proper response? Why do signs if people often got the wrong impressions?

## Reflection:

We find Jesus doing what he often does in our lives, he puts us in a place where it is necessary to take him at his word. The man heads back to his son without Jesus' tangible presence, but simply the promise, "your son will live." He leaves for home expecting Jesus to do what he said. At this moment he is vulnerable, for he steps into the unknown with only his belief that Jesus would meet him in this situation. I can only imagine the waves of thoughts that crashed upon the shores of his mind during his journey. Some of this internal struggle might have included, "What will those at home say when I arrive without Jesus?" "Will my son simply gradually get better over time?" "Why wouldn't Jesus come with me?" "Should I have done more to force him to make the journey?"

And now on his way home he is met by a person bringing news. Possibly, from a distance he saw a person running toward him, unsure of what the report this individual may bring he hears, "Your son is alive! He is well!" When he learns the time this happened, his heart leaps with joy and hope, the many thoughts that cluttered his mind come into focus. "Jesus is the Messiah." "He has authority to heal by the power of his command, this was no parlor trick, but Jesus bringing God's life to bear upon my life, and the life of my son." With his heart filled with confidence and eyes full of tears he runs to embrace his son and proclaim to his family his new-found confidence/belief in Jesus – so much like the Samaritan community's response after hearing the words of Jesus.

## Book referenced:

Wright, NT. John for Everyone. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2002

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Room 203 - Ryan Office Building  
**Open-To-All Bible Study:** Wednesday (Session), at 1  
PM, Library - Ryan Office Building