

Completing the Work

John 4:27-41

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The first thing you're taught in any sport with a ball is to keep your eye on the ball. This is important in all such sports, from golf to baseball to football and basketball. It's also true for us as Christians—we need to keep our eyes on the spiritual ball. But what is the ball? Jesus shows us in Jn. 4

You know the setting well. Jesus was traveling from Judea up north to Galilee, and He had walked with His disciples about 30 miles until they came to a town called Sychar. It was noon by now and they were famished. So the disciples ran into town to buy some lunch and Jesus sat down by the well at the edge of town. A woman came up to draw water and He engaged her in conversation. What they talked about is a whole sermon or two in itself; but I want to focus on what happened next.

The disciples came back from town carrying lunch and they could only think about one thing—digging in! Now Jesus says something very curious to them. He said, in effect, "I don't really need your food because I have some of my own", v. 32. And then He says our key verse for this morning, v. 34, "My food. . .is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

I. DOING THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME

Here's how we've summarized doing the will of God at CPC, our vision statement, "igniting a passion to follow Jesus." An essential part of following is embracing our calling. We are in a series in Mt about following Him and we're just picking up that theme again today, but from John. To follow Him, we must follow Him, must see what He is doing.

The Christian life is not just about knowing. . .or being. . . but also doing [Show spiritual development clock] There are things God wants us to do, and if we are serious about following Him, we will learn what those things are. This implies He has a will, He is a person, not just a power, and we need to figure out what it is. Eph. 5:17, "Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

For some of you here, first thing you need to do is believe! That's His will for you, to drink of the living water! His promise is that you will never thirst again.

For those of you who have already drunk from this water, have crossed the line of faith into being a believer in Jesus Christ, what is His will? In a sense it involves the whole Bible,

choosing to obey everything He has revealed, striving for holiness. But here it involves something different than that, it involves ministry, reaching out to others, sharing the Good News of salvation in Jesus with thirsty people.

Maybe you're saying, wait a minute, I didn't sign up for that. I came to Jesus for salvation and I love Him but I'm just not ready to start sharing my faith, especially in hostile environments like Samaria. Actually, that's not an option. Remember the whole spiritual development clock? Doing the will of God cannot not involve reaching out to needy people with the Water of life.

And that's the challenge of doing the will of someone else—it might conflict with your own! But if we are serious about following Jesus, then we must subordinate our will to His. As Kenneth Boa says, "We cannot follow Jesus when we are asking Him to follow us."

So whose will are you doing?

II. MY FOOD

What a great analogy Jesus used here, one that carries across the miles and the centuries. For whom is eating a burden? Maybe for a 3-yr old, but we catch on pretty quickly and once we do there's no turning back. WE LOVE FOOD! Food gives us nourishment, refreshment, energy, sustenance. It is delightful, something we get great joy from. And it occupies a fair amount of our time and energy. In fact, I bet that a good % of you have already during this sermon thought about what you're going to have for lunch! If we don't get food on time, we get grumpy. If it became scarce, you'd find out that we are actually deadly serious about food. We cannot live without it!

So what Jesus is saying here is that my food, what sustains me, what I delight in, what I can't live without, is doing the will of my Father. And here the doing, as we've seen, involves sharing the Gospel with someone who had never before heard. Jesus took this opportunity to teach His disciples an important lesson: doing the will of the Father must be out top priority, the head of our agenda. And if we focus on the harvest and not on our stomachs, we will find ourselves refreshed.

"My food", is emphatic in the Greek, in contrast to the "your" food, what the disciples were holding in their hands. This is food, in fact, He told them, that they know nothing about. He was right, for they ask in v. 33, "Could someone have brought Him food?" Had someone passed them on the path from town and already brought Jesus lunch? They only knew one kind of food; Jesus knew two. What an indictment of the disciples. They had left everything to follow Jesus, seen His miracles, heard His teaching, and yet that still not learned to follow the ball.

How is it with you this morning? If you look closely, what's in your hands, what is your food, what drives you, what delights you, what takes up your time and energy? Are you so preoccupied with the things of the world that you have no taste for the things of God? *"Let us learn a holy indifference even to the needful supports of life in comparison with the spiritual things."* Matthew Henry

Notice, for those of you who are Christian hedonists, i.e. believing that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him, that it is not just in worship, in intimacy with Christ, in drinking of Him that we find our satisfaction, as joy-inspiring as those activities are. It is also in the doing of His will that we find our refreshment and our strengthening. I would like to coin a new word to go along with John Piper's, and that is, "Are you a Christian epicurean?", a person who cultivates a refined taste in food. Or have you let your palate be sated with the coarse fare of the world?

How does this work? How can it be that the capitulation of our wills in order to do the will of another can be our meat and drink? This at first appears counter-intuitive. But here's the key—it is based on a relationship. There is no deep satisfaction that comes from, for instance, obeying the rules of the state, doing the will of the government. You might feel good about doing it, but a normal person would scarcely call that my food, what I live for. But when you're in relationship with someone, when you love them, when you become one with them in heart and mind, then you want to do their will. Your wills become intertwined and when their will is yours, then you get great pleasure from doing it. Jesus loved His Father so much, knew Him so well, was so One with Him that their wills were as one. It's the oneness with the other brings joy. It was for Him perfectly what it was for the Psalmist in part, "I delight to do your will, O my God, for your law is within my heart.", Ps. 40:8, and what should be the goal of all who want to follow Him. To know His will and to make ours one with His, and in that find great delight. Matthew Henry, *"Never did a hungry man or an epicure expect a plentiful feast with so much desire, nor feed upon its dainties with so much delight as our Lord Jesus did from an opportunity of doing good to souls."*

So if when you hear Pastor Mark say "Missions is not an option" you inwardly groan, then you have failed to understand and to love your Master properly. If you say, OK I'll fill out a Role Call card if I have to, but I'm sure not going to do anything that might keep me from watching Monday Night Football, for instance, you have a very limited relationship with your Savior. You don't know Him well enough to value what He wants, because what He wants is for everyone on earth to have one chance to hear about His love.

Do you know something about this food? What kind of food are you eating?

III. TO FINISH HIS WORK

It is not just the doing of His work that is important; it is the finishing. The original Greek word, *teleiosō*, means to complete, accomplish, simply "to finish." It is used for achieving a goal (Lu. 13:34), for finishing a race (2 Tim. 4:7). If a mile runner stopped after two laps, she would have run but she would not have finished the race. It means that something is completely wrapped up, nothing left to do. Example of chores.

So there is a job to be done and it must be finished. What was Jesus thinking of here? In part, He was looking all the way down His own road to the cross. Until He went through that horror, and had been raised again from the dead, His work would not be finished. And this is a reminder to us that we don't get to pick and choose what parts of God's will we will do, we have to do it all, and it may involve suffering.

But I believe He was thinking of something even beyond that. It says in Jn. 4:4 that Jesus "had" to go through Samaria. Actually, He didn't. In fact, Jews making the journey from Jerusalem to Galilee would normally cross over the Jordan River and head up the east bank of it before crossing back over into Galilee, all to avoid having to go through Samaria, the land of the despised half-breeds. Could Jesus not have just continued in Jerusalem teaching and healing? There were many needs there. But there was someone Jesus had to reach in Samaria, someone who had never heard of Him, someone who would never hear unless He went and told her. This is what an unreached person is: not just someone who has heard the Gospel and rejected it, but someone who has never heard and likely **never will** unless someone crosses a cultural barrier to tell them.

You see, this was actually Jesus' mission. He had come to seek and save the lost; not just some, but all. Isa. 49:6, "Too light a thing. . .bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Mk. 1:38, "Let us go somewhere else. . .so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." Jn. 10:16, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also." Jesus didn't finish that in His earthly body, so He asked His spiritual body the church to do it.

Paul got this, in Acts 13:47 in Pisidian Antioch, "This is what the k has commanded us. . ." 2 Cor 10:16, ". . .so that we can preach the G in the regions beyond you." Rom. 15:20, "It has always been my ambition to preach the Gospel where Christ was not known" so that those who were not told will see and those who have not heard will understand."

What does finishing mean for us? Clear: Make disciples of all nations

You can't fill in this blank yourself and say for me it means _____.

It is critical to be clear on our assignment, eg. have you ever written an essay on the wrong topic? There are lots of good causes in the world., .Amanda Lollar, Bat World Sanctuary founder, a refuge for wounded & abandoned bats, 1/ 29 finalists for Indpls Prize, \$100k,

world's leading animal conservationists. This gives her great satisfaction and is better than doing nothing at all. But we must choose our causes carefully because we cannot do very many of them very well. What are you living for, what is your cause, what are you, in Pastor Mark's words, "All in about?"

Jesus said in 6:27, "Do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life." But as Christians, our cause has already been defined for us. Jesus has left us in no doubt. It is the single cause that was on His mind in the 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension, one that is repeated in various forms in each of the 4 Gospels and in Acts. It is important to see what the cause is not, it is not saving wounded bats, it is not improving the environment, it is not making everyone healthy, it is not improving peoples' standard of living, it is not even, get this, making people live according to the moral standards of the Bible. It may involve some of those activities, but the task at its core is making disciples of all nations! And we must be clear on this point. That is what Jesus was doing with the Samaritan woman; and that is what He has sent us out to the ends of the earth to do.

Relative to that task, I'm afraid that some of us are idle. Our lives, in the words of Gary Haugen, are a mostly harmless routine leading to a gathering discontent. A restless voice asks, *Now what?* This morning I want to stir you to love and good deeds, which He prepared beforehand for you to do. If you're just on the treadmill of making money→kids college→make money→kids college, then you're like the disciples who knew nothing of the food that Jesus had to eat. There's more that God wants out of you than that!

Others of you are working, some very hard, but the question that confronts us in this verse is are we just busy for the Father or are we actually finishing His work? To answer this, we need some information, a field report. Unless, of course, we opt for apathy.

But if you care, you've actually already seen a report. You remember the log? You remember the lawn? The good news is, we're over ½ way there, the Gospel is spreading fast, in fact so much so that now for the first time in history there are more Christians in the southern hemisphere than the northern.

The bad news is that the Gospel is spreading only in certain circles. There are tremendous ripples, even waves, happening in certain ponds, certain people groups, but there are other ponds, with actually lots of people in them, where a pebble hasn't even been dropped. Here are the statistics: 2.7 billion people in 6641 people groups do not have any enough Christians among them to make it likely that they will ever hear the Gospel. And the real bad news is that those are the toughest ones left, the ones who live in difficult places and who don't want us there and have their own religions, the ones who will take serious work and sacrifice before they are reached. The unreached are unreached for a reason.

Why this state of affairs? We have not been serious enough about finishing the work the Father gave us to do. We have not seen it as our food. We have not understood that this is how we will honor our Master, by finishing the work He gave us to do. Jn. 17:4, "I brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."

There's some unfinished business. Why? Maybe we haven't lifted up eyes, as Jesus says to His disciples to do in v. 35, but instead our eyes are down, focused on what's around us. Maybe it's information overload. Is today just more noise in your ears, "blah, blah, blah" for you? It should not be, if you are following Jesus, if you have His heart. Maybe we're too busy with other things—need to do triage on your activities, where your time is invested. As Richard Stearns of Compassion says it, many of us need to fill our plate with richer fare, to become "Christian Epicureans."

What kind of work are you finishing? What are you doing to make a difference in the unreached 40% of the world?

CONCLUSION

Here's what I believe our text is getting at this morning: It is possible to live holy life, love God and our neighbor, even witness to everyone around us, and still not finish the work. Each of us must enter the 11th hour, that of global involvement. As Al Moeller said, *"Our vision for world evangelization is an important barometer of spiritual and theological health. A vibrant commitment to Christ leads to a passion for the Gospel. A grand embrace of God's truth produces an enthusiasm to see God glorified as His name is proclaimed to the nations."*

We haven't finished the work yet, as the 2.7 billion tell us. So who's responsible? W2. We all are, if we are followers of Jesus. We must embrace our call to go and find our place; vision without action is a dream.

Now you just understand that God is going to get the job done. We know that from reading the end of the book! Rev. 7:9,10. But if we're not willing to get involved, He might bypass us and use others. He's already doing that. There is now a huge force of missionary workers from the Global South. But God has given the North American church a disproportionate amount of resources, more than He has ever entrusted to any group of His people throughout history. And He will ask an accounting of us who are stewards of the great Gospel.

So what does "finishing" mean for CPC, for you as a family or an individual? One thing: something's got to change. If we just keep on keeping on, even if we witness to everything that moves around us, we would be doing a good thing, we would be increasing the ripples in our pond—but we would not be finishing His work. We've got to take the rudder and turn the ship towards the unreached peoples of the world. As one example, evangelicals give 2% of their income to God, and 2% of that goes to overseas missions. That's 0.04% of our money

that we're investing in missions. And only a fraction of that goes to the unreached peoples of the world. Most of us, and most of our money, is on one side of the log. Most of our energy is being spent on just part of the lawn.

So what do we do? Some need to go, as Henneys, Doddridges. The Holy Spirit may be speaking to some of you this morning about following in their footsteps. If He is speaking to you, you need to listen, then respond by connecting with the church to see how to move forward. But the reality is, most of you will stay. And that's good, because we need senders, people who will believe they can make a difference through someone else and who will throw themselves into that task. And you can make a difference! Last month, there was a celebration of the first Caspian Bible—in part because of our involvement. Through World Relief's work in Cambodia, the needle is actually moving, from ½ % Christian to now over 1%, in the last 10 years—in part because we helped them. We want to see the same thing happen with the Yadav in India.

And so here's what I suggest. Rather than feel guilty that you can't do it all, visit the partnership rooms today and the missionaries' tables and pick one partnership or missionary and get yourself connected to them like a tick on a dog. Get to know them, read their letters, pray for them, encourage them, support them. Make a difference with one. Like the "Adopt a Highway" program, you can make a difference for a mile.

We've made it easy for you to adopt a student, like in Nicaragua, Ukraine, or Kenya. You can learn more about Kenya at a banquet Nov.1. And many other opportunities. On-line missionaries have a table, Finishers.org, JIM Night, First Fridays, go to Urbana after Christmas, adopt an international student at IUPUI and have him over for dinner, put your interests on the Role Call card. It's hard work; but many hands make light work. Get on board!

Here's the question: **what are you doing to make a difference among the unreached?** Can you draw the line between you and them somehow? Remember, missions is not an option for those who would follow Jesus, because it's at the center of the heart of God.

So how do you do that? How do you fit that into an already overbooked schedule? Well, if you're too busy to be involved in what most concerns your Savior, then you're too busy, you need to re-order priorities. You see, *"Time is the treasure of life. Time IS life. Time is the willing sacrifice that you offer up to the worship of what you love. Don't tell me what you love. Tell me where you spend your TIME and I'll tell YOU what you love."* Martha Kilpatrick. Do you need me to help jar some time loose in your schedule?! Fantasy football, (now with insurance!) Wii, video games, the gym, TV, Facebook

Here's what we have to do, the same thing that Jesus did, in Jn. 17:10, "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified." We have to set ourselves apart for this task, so that the nations may be truly sanctified through faith in Christ Jesus. We might need to grab

ourselves by the collar, as Joanne Shetler did in And the Word Came with Power, "*Self, you are going to do what God wants you to do and not what you want to do.*"

So fill out a Role Call card today and put it into the offering in a moment. This is a tool to help you sanctify yourself, to commit to making a difference, to doing the will of the Father and to finishing His work.

Who will do it? Those who know this is their food! And those who love the Father so much they want to glorify Him by finishing His work.

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