



In the fourth chapter of John's gospel, Jesus' disciples come upon a curious scene. They approach Jesus at Jacob's well just as a young Samaritan woman, to whom He has been speaking, drops her water jar and runs back to town yelling. Perplexed by the story being played out in front of them they do what any good religious person does – they prepare to eat (when in doubt...potluck). Jesus seizes the opportunity to challenge their views of reconciliation and the ministry thereof. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." Now that He has their attention, He motions for them to look down and around at the physical realm to notice that it is still four months until harvest. Then He says, "Look, I tell you [I see Him here pulling His hands to His own chest], lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest."

Often, this quote is taken from its context and preached as though these white fields are analogous to the lost world, as if, out there somewhere is a field of lost souls innocently waving in the wind waiting for a missionary to come pluck them up and cast them into some heavenly combine where the chaff of worldliness will be miraculously – if not instantaneously – separated from the fruit of righteousness. Not only do I struggle to reconcile such a misinterpretation with either the whole of scripture or the historical experience of evangelism, but John himself encases this initial teaching in a context that vehemently resists such proof-texting.

The woman, to whom Christ offered living water, did not fill her jar and run into town to peddle her wares (*2 Corinthians 2:17*). Rather, she dropped her jar and ran into town to see if there was anyone who might come with her to draw from this well of living water. And those who came, came to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They didn't believe because of her testimony, rather because she brought them to Jesus to taste of the harvest themselves.

The harvest is the Kingdom of God.

More specifically, the fields that are white unto harvest is the work originally given to humanity to see that God's name be made famous through and throughout all of his creation. And though the harvest of this physical world is relegated to seasons and temporality, Christ offers the way to this spiritual harvest now and forever.

Through the unmerited grace of God, Christ offers us access to the work we were always supposed to do in partnership with the Holy Spirit. (*Genesis 1:28, Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 2:10, Romans 5:2, & Matthew 11:30*)

Later when Jesus sent out his disciples "into every town and place where he himself was about to go," he instructed them to spread the word that, "The Kingdom of God was at hand," and reminded them that "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (*Luke 10*). His disciples were not to harvest fields of lost souls and pray for missionaries to go with them. They were to go out, in preparation of Christ's arrival, proclaiming that the fields are white for harvest and seek anyone who might leave the wallow of narcissistic and apathetic rebellion to come work this harvest with them.

To believe and operate as if our primary kingdom objective is to harvest lost souls is a grievous error. Our primary task is to harvest the bounty of the Kingdom – to see that God is glorified in all of his creation. We must first "love the Lord your God with all your heart...mind...soul...and strength", then, and only then, are we able to "love your neighbor as yourself" by inviting them to join us in the glorious work that all humans were created to enjoy through the fellowship of labor (*1 John 1:3-4*).

In evangelism, we do not take salvation to a lost world; rather we go to bring a lost world to the Savior who through grace grants them access to the white harvest fields of God's Kingdom.



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