

## **SPECIAL SERMON:** ***"The Fields are White Unto Harvest"***

### **INTRODUCTION**

"It is a thing infinitely good in itself, that God's glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings. And that there should be in them an increasing knowledge of God to all eternity, is worthy to be regarded by him, to whom it belongs to order what is fittest and best." (Jonathan Edwards)

- Missionaries have a **front-line role** in making the glory of God known.

### **THREE INSIGHTS FROM THE TEACHING OF JESUS (JOHN 4:31-38):**

#### **A. Insight #1: Jesus teaches us that we need to lift up our eyes to consider the importance of missions.**

- Jesus' disciples are considering physical matters (v.31) but Jesus' concern was for a spiritual harvest.
  - **Verse 36:** Jesus is locked into eternal life: God's answer to the problem of evil and the problem of hell.
  - **Verse 32:** Jesus' focus on eternal matters was so intense that He described this mission as His "food". He is so consumed with the task of seeing sinners freed from hell that He can feed off it.
- Jesus is saying: Chill about the food. There is something more to consider than bread.
  - **Verse 35: Lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.**

"Jesus' disciples are concerned with earth and Jesus is concerned with eternity in a way that convicts every last one of us in this room. We have to be less concerned about earth and more concerned about eternity." (Dr. Owen Strachan)

#### **B. Insight #2: Jesus wants us to see that the fields are white.**

- It doesn't always feel that the fields are white because when we look around us we see a lot of depravity and raw evil.
  - Christianity has a moral realism about evil: we look at evil and call it evil.
  - Where most see lostness, missionaries see opportunities for the gospel. **White** (leukos) – is used in Revelation 1:14 to speak of the apocalyptic vision of Christ.
  - Jesus rebukes us: never think that any person is beyond the reach of an infinitely powerful God.
- Jesus loves **audacious Christians**: Missionaries are those who believe that the nations can be saved.

"He was a seed that fell on the ground and died." (John Piper, speaking of missionary Adoniram Judson, "Suffering and Success in the Life of Adoniram Judson: The Cost of Bringing Christ to Burma")

#### **C. Insight #3: Jesus drives us to see that the fields must be harvested.**

- Error of Hyper-Calvinism: If anyone is going to be saved, then God is going to just save them.
- William Carey: Saw that Romans 10 teaches that there has to be a preacher who issues a call to salvation.

# Sermon Application Questions

September 1, 2019

## PERSONAL RESPONSES

1 Dr. Strachan told the story of watching a video where people were looking down on their smartphones. They were so intent on looking down that they walked into things. One guy walked into a pond and got completely drenched. Two people on their phones actually walked into each other.

1 What are some of the ways that we as Christians can be tempted to “look down” at temporal concerns rather than “look up” at eternal realities? What are some of the temporal concerns that tend to consume too much of our time and attention?

2 One of the key points of the sermon was that “the fields are white for harvest.” Christians are those who see opportunities for the gospel where others might see only depravity and evil. How does this perspective re-orient how we view our neighborhood, our cities, our country, and the world?

## DIGGING DEEPER

1 Take some time and reflect on some of the key passages related to this week’s sermon. Ask the Lord for help in making application of these truths to your life.

### **Psalm 67:1-7**

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

### **Matthew 9:36-38**

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

### **Romans 10:9-10**

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

### **Revelation 5:9-10**

And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

2

**Read John 4:31-38 carefully and slowly.** In your own words, explain the contrast between the perspective of the disciples (v.31, 33) and the perspective of Jesus (v.32, 34-38).

Observe the joy that Jesus talks about in verse 36. What kind of joy is this? How does a person enter into this joy?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1

In 1792 the Baptist Missionary Society was formed in the home of Andrew Fuller. For over twenty years, Fuller served as the leader of this organization, raising funds, writing periodicals, recruiting missionaries, and sending personal letters to those on the frontlines.

Fuller fulfilled his promise to the great missionary William Carey, who upon his trip to the unknown world of India, looked at the small band of brothers around him and said, as it were, "Well, I will go down, if you will hold the rope." Andrew Fuller held the rope. Suffering the loss of his first wife, and eight of their eleven children, Fuller persevered in the midst of severe affliction and overwhelming responsibilities<sup>1</sup>.

The following are some ways that you can "hold the rope"<sup>2</sup> for those who are serving overseas on the mission field. Which of these ministries is the Lord leading you towards? What are the opportunities that you have to serve in this way?

- Pray for your missionaries regularly. Then tell the missionary that you're praying for specific prayer requests.
- Commit to regular financial support.
- Help combat homesickness by sending a simple care package with books, foods, spices, games, etc.
- Help missionaries during their seasons of home assignment. Volunteer to help them with housing or simply ask them intelligent questions about their ministry.
- If you want to visit the missionary overseas, be mindful of their point of view. Ask for the missionary's honest opinion about what would be best for them.
- Send a "medium-term" missionary (1-2 years) to help be a part of a long-term vision.
- Other Ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

**Remember, even small acts of support and commitment can go a long way.**

2

Pastor Philip is spent time with Kindred missionaries Fred and Rachel Whitman who have ministered in Italy for 45 years. Spend some time this week praying for the Whitman family and the fields which are "white for harvest" in Italy.

Pray for the country of Italy where less than 1% of the population is Protestant and for the Lord to raise up laborers for the harvest. Specifically, pray for a non-missionary Italian pastor to join the ministry.

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Desiring God, <https://www.desiringgod.org/books/andrew-fuller>

<sup>2</sup>Adapted from The Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/ways-you-can-support-missionaries/>