

RADICAL: What the Gospel Demands

The Gospel Demands Radical Urgency

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THE GOSPEL DEMANDS RADICAL URGENCY

John 4:27-42

Good morning. My name is not David Platt. Last week Pastor David continued as we walk through this series called *Radical*, as he addressed radical compassion in the context of how he unfolded that from the Scriptures, and we're going to continue taking a look at this *Radical* series, and we're going to specifically walk forward together in the Word in the context of radical urgency, what the gospel demands. So if you would, if you would open your Bible to John, the Gospel of John 4:27, that's where we're going to begin.

While you're turning there, let me pray for us as we look together at His Word.

Father, it is at the place of desperation that you give life to us and God, we are desperate people. We need to hear from you. We need to hear from your Word. We need to hear from your very own Spirit, from your life in us, God. I pray that as we look in the riches of your Word, God, that you would begin to open our eyes up to the urgency that you have, God that the urgency you desire for us to have. And I pray that you would speak to us clearly. Let us walk forward, God, with this truth. I ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

My name is Chris Nichols and I serve alongside the staff as a part of this church, as your Executive Pastor. I want you guys to know that 1 Corinthians 14:26 says basically, it says when you gather together, when you assemble, what's the outcome? The outcome is that each one has some particular aspect to bring to us, and I want you to know that I'm encouraged when I look at your face. That's part of the main purpose of the New Testament church gathering is encouragement. We bring encouragement to each other as we look into each other's faces and we identify with the life of Christ in one another.

So we're in John 4:27. We're going to read forward here.

"Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?' Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' They came out of the town and made their way toward him. Meanwhile his disciples urged him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about.' Then his disciples said to each other, 'Could someone have brought him food?' 'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.' Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I ever did.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And

because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world'" (John 4:27-42).

Urgency, the dictionary defines it as pressing necessity, imperativeness, insistence, but the way that our culture defines urgency, the way we differentiate normal from urgent is we press 1 or 2 on our cell phone. Press 1 for normal delivery, right? Press 2 for urgent delivery. This is not radical urgency.

Listen to what one of our Christian brothers in India, a persecuted area, says about his driving urgency. Listen to this quote. "In this world nothing gives us eternal happiness, except our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Only during the few years of this life are we given the privilege of serving each other and Christ. After death we shall have heaven forever, but only a short time for service here." And listen to this, "Therefore, we must not waste the opportunity."

It seems as though we have lost out somehow on what is urgent in this life and what is not urgent in this life. And if we're going to get the picture of what the gospel demands in radical urgency, we're going to have to look at how God's Word sets this up. So if you would, go back to the beginning of verse 27, and there's a small statement there and it says, "*Just then his disciples returned.*" His disciples walked up.

Now, where had they been? In order to know where they had been when they walked up, you have to kind of know something about the previous part of the passage. You have to kind of slide your eyes back over to 1. I'll just read for you there. "*The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria*" (John 4:1-4).

So the setting is that Jesus and His disciples are moving out of Judea and they're going north. They're headed to Galilee. Now the deal is this. There are probable two reasons. One, the Scripture unpacks for you here. It kind of gives you a little summary, but two reasons. One is to not interfere with the work of John the Baptist that was already going on. But the second reason is that John the Baptist had already stirred the interest of the religious ruling class, and Christ was thinking basically that to continue, and with this start to, this eruption of baptisms and conversions and things that are changing, He did not want to have His growing acclaim to be a political threat.

Jesus is Determined, Not Distracted

So something that you can note right there, that we need to think about is that Jesus doesn't seem to have any interest in an urgent, urgent interest in a contest over converts with John the Baptist. Nor does He seem to be interested in a political fight. Now there's probably a word in there for us, and we're going to walk past it, but these would be distractions from His purpose.

They'd been walking north, Jesus and the disciples. They're on the high road. You can check it out, chapter 4, verse 4. John's account includes a small statement in there, but it's really important and it says, "*He had to go through Samaria,*" not just any region, but through the region of the despised half-breeds. That's what the Jews referred to them as, despised half-breeds.

Now we're not going to expand this, but let us suffice to say that this disregard for one another goes back way into Old Testament times, even before Nehemiah. I want you to know that further in the Book of John; actually the Pharisees refer to Jesus as, "having a demon" and calling Him a Samaritan. So it was not a compliment from the Jewish culture to the Samaritan culture for one to call one another that. It was a despised ethnic group by the Jews.

But I want you to do this. Let this text travel. Let it travel from the Middle East to us, to Birmingham. Do we not have despised ethnic groups with us, despised socioeconomic groups, despised racial groups subject to our stereotypes, our prejudice? But Jesus shows something different. He shows a radical disregard for the opinions and prejudices of men.

He goes through there. He stops there. Most probably He stops there on purpose. So what about us? What about you and what about me? I want to ask you this. Would I or would you have held your nose, basically, and just gone on through? Let's just get through this. Let's face it. We go through areas we're not comfortable, settings we're not comfortable, situations we're not comfortable. Would we have just held our nose and gone right on through when we're faced with a setting that challenges our comfort levels, challenges our social paradigms, our Southern culture?

What about you? What if you're external appearance or your speech? What about your great social background, your incredible social standing or the lack thereof, even your fresh breath that probably is not the case? What if all that had stood in the way to Christ's urgent obedience to the Father on our behalf? We'd be lost.

You're in the seats that you're into day, and I'm in the place that I'm in today, because of His grace. We would be lost without it. It's like C.S. Lewis says when he talks about the three surprises in heaven: Who's there? Who's not there? You're there. It just wouldn't be a pretty sight.

Let's look back, verse 6, "[He], *tired as he was from the journey.*" That's where Christ is in this passage. He sat down by the deep well of Jacob. It was near mealtime. It was probably near midday, and verse 8 gives it away, "*His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.*" Now what we're seeing there is a natural hunger and a natural response.

And what's wrong with that? Many would tell us to fill our own desires first. Even our fellow church attenders, people in our small group would say, "You need to take care of yourself first," well meaning when they say this. But the thing is Christ shows us that He must act now, where He's positioned in that moment in time.

See, this is the thing. Our life cannot always be about filling our own needs. Our life cannot always be about our own natural inclinations if we're going to be obedient to His will. This is spoken of in some other places in the Scripture, Philippians 2:1-11. Right down there in the middle it says basically, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3). More important than yourselves.

What about us? Let's talk about radical urgency for a minute. Let's just try asking people to skip a meal so that they can position themselves where they interact with a lost culture. Just skip one meal. Or let's lower the bar a little bit more. Let's say, "Why don't we just delay a meal for a few hours, so that we can interact with a lost culture?"

Now here's our picture of urgency. This is what we do. We're constantly worried about our own need, constantly. So you're asking, "Chris, is it a bad thing to want to get something to

eat?" No, it's not necessarily a bad thing. But you know what? The Scripture seems to be clear in several places that filling our own need is not necessarily the only thing.

Here you have Jesus. He's got His ministry team. The ministry team has departed to go to the local Zaxby's or whatever was available in Sychar that day. And meanwhile, Jesus has positioned Himself in the place where ministry occurs and, by the way, this is wherever Jesus Christ is positioned. That's a word for us. Wherever you're positioned today, wherever you're positioned tomorrow, it does not need a sign out front nor a steeple on the roof. It is where you are positioned. That is where ministry occurs.

So let's fast forward down to verse 27. Now you know where they've been. They've been to get food. So back into the story, and I want you to know if there's ever been a setting in the Gospels for a situation comedy, this is probably at least in the top three.

Check it out. The disciples stumble back into the clearing there at the well of Jacob, and it's probably noisy. They're walking in the path. There's a whole group of them. I can visualize for whatever reason Peter in the front of them. And probably as they come around past the last tree, he probably put his arms out and stopped the forward motion as they ran into Him. Can you visualize that?

He probably turned his head like this and said, "He speaks with a woman," but he said it in Aramaic and I can't do that. But he probably did say that. Just so you know, it was borderline scandal, because if you were a rabbi you did not speak to a woman that you did not know, especially if her husband was not present with her. "He speaks with a woman."

Jesus is Determined, Not Deterred

So what we see in this...We see this: we see Christ; His radical urgency for the lost person trumps all our cultural, all our religious traditions. His radical urgency for the lost person trumps all our cultural and religious tradition.

The thought is also echoed in another place, several places in the apostle's writings, Colossians 2:8, "*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*" Traditions of men, principles of the world, or according to Christ.

So the disciples are still there. They're watching silently. We're about verse 28, the Samaritan woman at the well, at the absolute wrong time of day. If you've ever studied this passage you understand that. She leaves her clay water pot sitting and she walks quickly away, back toward town. She's headed out with an urgent purpose.

Now this is pretty straightforward isn't it? Meet Christ, leave water jar, begin public ministry now. That's what she does. How simple is that? What, no course, no seminary, no doctrine? What was she thinking? There's something there for us.

There's a guy named Watchman Nee that was born in 1903, died in 1972. He's a Chinese brother, spent the last 15 years of his life in a Chinese prison for his faith. He makes this statement. It pretty well sums this up. Let me give it to you. It sounds like this. "The Holy Spirit shows us Christ and we believe on Him. Then at once, with no further action on our part, there begins a life in union with Him." A life in union with Him. It's ridiculous in its simplicity.

His urgency becomes our urgency. His radical disregard for the traditions of men, for the prejudice, His radical disregard for the prejudices of men becomes our radical disregard for

the same, a life in union with Him. I'm not knocking seminary. Don't let that word get back. But you know, Watchman Nee says something else a little further down the page in the same text. He says, "For to understand doctrine and to know God are two entirely different things." What about us?

John 17:3, *"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."* That's what we want. We want to know God. This is what we want. Radical urgency does not come from what we know. It comes only from who we know.

So in the meantime, you've got the ministry team, and now they are closing their open mouths as He has completed talking to this lady. And what do they do? They begin to urge Jesus to eat something, "Rabbi, eat." You can probably see them. They're wiping their brow, "Glad we got the awkward social setting with the woman over with. We can focus on the food now."

And it's time. Jesus Christ drops the bomb on them. He says, *"I have food to eat that you know nothing about"* (John 4:31). Now here's some more sitcom action. "My food, you know nothing of this food." And they're looking at Him. They're looking at each other. They're looking at the ground. He probably goes on to finish the statement. He probably says, in their minds, "Satisfaction." That's what He's saying, "Satisfaction, nourishment, filling. I have it already." That's what Christ says.

Where does it come from? It comes from doing the will of God. It's right there in 4:34. It comes in the conforming of our life to His life. Where's the will found? Well for starters, it's found in the Word of God. *"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."* That's Matthew 4:4. It's also a quote from Deuteronomy 8:3.

So if in Deuteronomy 8:3 and in Matthew 4:4, both things say that it is His will that we live on, that it is His Word that we live on, then it is the word for us today here. It is His will then, His will in the text, His will now, His Word now.

An Old Testament Psalm, Psalm 40:8, *"I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."* Jesus, the fulfillment of the law, the Prophets' words. He himself says He feeds on doing the will of God. So the question is: if His life is in us, then why don't we find satisfaction from doing the same thing, doing His will? That's where we get our satisfaction.

Here's what we find satisfaction in. Let's apply it. We find it as we radically filter out the things that waste our life, and we get on with the task that He's already laid out for us to do in His Word. And while Jesus was teaching the disciples in the foreground, in the background this Samaritan woman is in town telling everyone she sees about this Christ.

She's met Him and she's been stunned by His truth and His compassion. She's thinking that He is the one. He's the one that Samaritans have been looking for. He's the one that Jews have been looking for. And for her it summarized something like this, "I found who I've been looking for all my life." See, nothing communicates urgency like personal knowledge, and the truth is that we cannot impart what we do not know. We can't do it.

One more thing verse 34 seems to point out is that Jesus seems to be saying to us that in the same way our body craves food our spirit craves doing the will of God. We get filled as we follow the one who's the source of all food, physical and otherwise. So in the foreground Jesus is using the food mystery to make a point. In the background, this one female, listen to this, with a not-so-great reputation is right now stirring an entire village to respond by

telling them about Christ. She's getting filled now and it is bringing a satisfaction to her that no series of men will ever bring to her heart. We get filled when we do His will. That's what this says.

Here's where we get the understanding a little bit more. Check it out in verse 35. "*Do you not say,*" Jesus goes on, "*Four months more and then the harvest?*" What does that mean? There are many contexts in the Word that the harvest is clearly a picture of judgment, settling up of the accounts.

Take a look, Old Testament, flip back to Joel 3:13, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel. See if you can find it. Joel 3:13 says this. "*Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!*" This is a prophecy. It goes on to talk about the valley of decision right there. It's a prophecy of coming judgment.

All right, so some of you are still looking for Joel. Let's go over to Revelation. Let's see if we can find that. Revelation 14:15, it's to the far right of the text, Revelation 14:15. Listen to this, "*Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, 'Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested*" (Rev. 14:15-16).

Harvest, judgment, settling of the accounts. But in this context, in the John 4 context, Jesus' words about harvest also signify something else. They signify the gathering of good fruit, the fulfillment of the blessings that have been awaited.

Isaiah 9:3 says it like this. Don't turn there; I'll just read it for you. "*You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.*"

Matthew 9:38 that Pastor David referenced last week, where Jesus is referenced as the Lord of the harvest, Jesus is saying this. Listen to what He is saying in John 4. He's saying, "Don't you have this old Jewish proverb, this pat answer for everything when work is involved with it, when spiritual stirring is involved with it? You can kick back. You can enjoy your time, because it's at least four months and then the harvest. So just relax."

Jesus is Devoted, Not Divided

And we say this, too, don't we? We don't say it with our words. We just silently say it with what we do. Here's how it goes. I need to get to some arbitrary stage of spiritual maturity and then I'll share my faith. It'll work better when my kids get older. I can fully devote myself to His work.

Or here's one for where we live. I want to wait until my 401K tops out and I get an incentive package to leave. Then I can fully devote myself to His will. That's what we do. That's how we say its four months and then the harvest. That's not Jesus Christ's radical urgency. Jesus' radical urgency flies in the face of our devotion to our career plans and our personal life schedules.

"*Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look*" (John 4:35). See, the inherent, unspoken message between 35 and 36 is pick now. Pick now. The harvest is now.

And you see that the disciples are probably confused at this point, "He switched. He switched. He was talking about food and now He's talking about eyesight." "Lift up your eyes. Look on the fields. They are ripe for harvest," that's what He says. Jesus is basically saying, "And if you see with my perspective, you see with something new."

A little insight for you at this point... this well is located near the foot of Mount Gerizim. They would have probably been able to look down the plain, and they would have probably been able to see an entire village, light colored clothing of the day in that region walking toward them. So when the text here says that "the field is ripe for harvest," and the other versions of the text translate it as "white for harvest," what they were seeing was probably literal—white for harvest.

And why are these people coming to Christ and to the disciples? Why are they walking toward the well where they sat? The reason is that they have been urged by the testimony of the woman who just started her public ministry. It's not just vision; it's application. Seeing with the urgency of the gospel results in action.

There's a guy named Brother Andrew. He's the founder of *Open Doors*. *Open Doors* is a group of Christian brothers and sisters that for years have been pushing to get the Word of God into places that are hostile to the gospel of Christ, places that are closed. He had this to say on a conference call. Listen to what he says. Seventy years old, he's telling this, "Vision is seeing what everyone sees, but thinking what no one else thinks, and doing what no one else does." Seeing with the urgency of the gospel results in action.

Look at the text. The words are specific, "*Even now the reaper draws his wages,*" boy, that's loaded with meaning there, "*...he harvests the crop for eternal life*" (John 4:36). Jesus repeatedly talked about our lives, about fruit, and about the harvest. Harvest, what we said a moment ago, is when the real results get sorted out. It's when it doesn't really matter what the vine looks like. It matters what the produce is.

Paul talks about this, Romans 1, somewhere down about 11,

"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles" (Rom. 1:11-13).

Listen to the wording, "*I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'*" (Rom. 1:14-17). That's how it happens, harvest. Your faith, my faith – that's the way it happens.

Jesus' Determination Leads to Our Delight

In verse 36, John's account, here it says that we get paid wages now. He is really speaking of himself here. That's what Jesus is saying. In other words—want to see the results? They're walking this way right now. But He's also talking about us. After all, it's His garden. We get rewarded now. We get rewarded in the life to come. It's His garden. He performs. We participate in His harvest.

I don't want you to miss this. In addition to the judgment there's celebration. Not just judgment, not just gathering, there's a joy that comes from each other. As we work in the harvest, it is readiness for a celebration with those in the ages before us, who have given their very lives so this harvest goes on.

See, even Jesus says it. He says, "Through these people you don't even know." We're not told in the text specifically who they are that a seed that has been sown. Now you get to reap the blessings of someone else's hard work. The group longed to see that day. Christ says that you need to understand that this is a celebration. This harvest is a celebration with God Himself.

See, if there's been any sowing and if there is any reaping, it's God who's doing it through us. Tozer says this, "God is always previous." If there's been sowing through the saints of the past, and if there's reaping through our work, it's all because He owns the farm. Even now He harvests the crop.

Look at these words in there: "even now," "already," "this moment." "Don't wait, pick now," is what He is saying. Pick now.

So the question right now that I need to pose to you, the thing that we need to think of is: what is the pattern of our urgent sowing, our urgent reaping? Or is it so urgent after all? The fact is that we frequent the farm, but we rarely pray for God to put us to work in it. Rarely do we ask that. And it's not persecution that stopped the urgent heartbeat in us. Maybe our affluence, maybe our ease, affluence, ease, whatever, dulled our senses to the reality of the harvest.

Listen to what one seminary teacher notes. It's a great quote. It's an indicting quote. "Our world has almost no belief in a divine end to history. Even Christians today have lost most of their moral nerve about the end of history, climaxing in a judgment that will decide the fate of all people." Where is the urgency to share His life in us and why don't we sense it? Let's just face it. When we want to talk about sharing His life, it's always the wrong time and the wrong place.

John Stott, an Anglican, a single man, says this, "Perhaps the greatest single hindrance to evangelism today is the secret poverty of our own spiritual experience." See, we're urgent all right. We're urgent for everyone to know how much money we have, or at least how much money it looks like we have. We're urgent for them to know how good our taste is. We're urgent for them to know our kids and how skilled they are at baseball and basketball and football. We're urgent.

So what we do is we hurry up and we load up and we spend up on everything. We stand in line. We camp out overnight to get an iPhone first. We wait at the mall with the doors locked, so that we can be the first ones in to spend our money at the counter. That's what we're urgent about.

Just drive out here. You'll see what I'm talking about. We have lives that are appearing full. We have lives that may appear full, but they are desperately and urgently empty. God, would you fill us with real satisfaction? Would you redirect us with your life?

There's one more word here. Don't miss this. It's a word for our mindset today. We've fallen victim to it in the postmodern Church, which you and I are a part of. We've created this minister, spectator mentality. We don't have to be urgent for doing His will. We hire

ministers to do this work. We don't have to be urgent for sharing His life. We hire ministers to share His life. They plan our events for us. They talk to us. Yes, they reach the lost for us. That's what they do.

His Word does not tell us that. It doesn't tell us that. God is undoing the falsehood of it even in this text. Look at the passage. The ministry teams, the professionals, the disciples, they're standing on the sideline watching while the real ministry occurs. You know who's doing it? The Samaritan woman; she begins the harvest. She's sharing her simple mustard seed faith in a great God. She's doing the work of ministry. Off she goes. It's ridiculously simple, eternally urgent.

She didn't require a vocational minister. Christ Himself is doing the ministry through her. Look at this picture, "The one who sows and the one who reaps rejoicing together."

Let me give you a window into my own heart about this urgency. Many of you know that in 2003 my wife and I had many back porch prayer times together, where we were asking the question in these words, basically, "God, what is your highest use for our life? Is it vocational ministry? Is it the mission field? Is it staying in secular opportunities and pouring my life into someone there? What is it, God?"

That question was at least answered in part in 2004 as we met a young man, a 12-year-old boy in an orphanage in Kiev, Ukraine. God led us on a faith journey to start our paperwork and make it through that trying time, and go and eventually bring him home with us as another one of our children. I want you to know that while we were there, at one point, and I don't know why, but for whatever reason the government seems to make it a lot more difficult than it would seem to be.

We made it through court, "Whew, it's downhill from here." It's really uphill from here. And we sat and we wait, and we hurry up and we wait, and we hurry up and we wait. And we sat in the back of a car, where our translator was seated with us. We were waiting on one more document in order to get our passport to bring him home. I remember praying this prayer in the backseat of that car and I said, "God, would you please get this paper, so that we can get this passport, so that we can go home, so that we can get back to our life?"

I fell asleep for a little while. When I woke up I got out of the car and I walked a few steps down that street, in front of the rundown government office building, watching the people that walked by with their scuffed shoes and their cigarette in hand and their beer in the other, and the lost look on their face. And I remember specifically God saying to me, "Chris, you see all these people," and they're everywhere. They're milling everywhere. He said, "I love every one of them. It costs me everything to deal with their rebellion. So this is not about you getting back to your life."

He clarified this for me a little more as the days went on. We did make it home. In 2005, God led us to go yet again, take our children with us to go to Kiev, Ukraine, to spend whatever time and whatever money is necessary to bring someone else home with us, another 12-year-old boy. We were successful in that. Praise God we were. And we came back to Birmingham, Alabama in the Fall of October 2007, on a Tuesday morning.

I got a phone call at home and it was from Ukraine, and it was telling me that the 18-year-old brother of my second adopted son had passed away, TB, tuberculosis, entirely preventable, entirely stoppable earlier. I made the decision to take him with me to go and be at his brother's funeral.

You want to talk about radical urgency. You want to talk about closure, the reality of the harvest, that plain wooden box with a blue cloth on the outside of it, and the ropes that had been used so many times on just the dirt grave, to slide it off in there. That's a picture. It's closure. It's the reality of life when you are just another person.

A couple days later we were in an apartment manager's office trying to deal with the close out of some business on the apartment that used to belong to my son's grandmother. We waited. This girlfriend of my adopted son's brother brought the death certificate to us. We waited in this apartment manager's office and she brought it. And I spoke through the translator and I told him to tell her did she need money. Did she need something? Could I help her with anything? I was hopeful that I could.

And at this point the translator turned extremely literal. He stood there emotionless as he was translating directly what she was saying to me. And you know what she said? She shouted at me. She didn't say, "Oh yes, I really need your money." She said, "It's your fault. It's your fault that Ruslan died." She cursed me and she shouted at me, and she walked out of the office.

And I got to tell you that emotionally I recoiled at that. It's obviously not true. The same thing that you would do, that emotional response that flies up in the depth of your mind there somewhere and you say, "It's not my fault that he passed away."

And as the hours went on and I began to process that more on an intellectual level, began to list out the reasons why it was not my fault that he passed away from an entirely preventable disease. But you know, the further I went down that road the more the spiritual aspect of that I began to process. And I had to ask the question of myself, the question of God Himself, "God, could it have been my fault that he has died?"

The Eyes of Christ See the Reality of the Harvest

Four months, then the harvest. What if I had been more sensitive? What if I'd acted with urgency? What if the first time God said something to my heart I'd responded?

I sometimes hear people talking, even a part of this body. They say this: "We are not really radically ready to go after this world with this gospel." They tell me things like, "We don't have the structures in place. We don't have the systems in place. It's too much. It's too fast." And I want to ask you, "Really? Really?"

Jesus Christ says, "Don't wait four months. Pick now," is what He says. See, we blow by the people that bag our groceries. We just blow right by them, didn't even notice them there. The people that clean our offices, we blow by them, too. Even the people that we stand next to in the line that we pick up our kids from school, we just walk by them. They don't really interest us, do they? The fields are what they are. The fields don't have any appeal, because we don't see the reality of the harvest.

The question is: do we believe this Book? Don't wait four months. Pick now.

C.S. Lewis sums it up well. "It's immortals that we laugh with, joke with, work with, marry, exploit, snub. Eternal splendors, immortal horrors." Which one is it going to be? You want to feel like a practical wait to this? You want to see how this might play out in your own life? Try telling your circle at the office why you're taking your son or your daughter with you as you serve in a homeless shelter this weekend. Let's do that as opposed to how we usually spend a weekend, or just tell them why you're giving an hour and a half of your life each week to work in a preschool class.

The circle around the cooler, it might clear out quickly, but then again it might not. See, because you know what people pick up on as urgent to us, when we share about what's urgent to us? Our friends, our kids, our families, they pick up on what is urgent to us. Is it urgent to us to have more stuff? They'll pick up it's urgent to them to have more stuff. If it's urgent to us to pick now, it will be for them as well. Is it four months and then the harvest for us, or is the urgency of Christ in us to pick now?

As we close out today, this is a reflection time for you. I want you to pray through, and to think of your own life, think of the radical urgency that the life of Christ has in us. Remember, if we have His life, we have His urgency. This is our time to respond, that you pray, that you ask God to speak to you about His urgency. Some of you may have never trusted Christ; you've never come to that point where the Holy Spirit has shown you Christ and you have believed on Him. One man said that we are all pathologically self-centered; we need healing from that. So however God leads you to respond, maybe it's deep in your heart that you cry out to Christ for the first time. This is your time of response today.

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