



Friday in Lent

At this point his disciples returned and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, though none of them asked, 'What do you want from her?' or, 'What are you talking to her about?' The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people, 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I have done; could this be the Christ?' This brought people out of the town and they made their way towards him.

Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, do have something to eat'; but he said, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Has someone brought him food?' But Jesus said:

My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work.

Do you not have a saying: Four months and then the harvest?

Well, I tell you, look around you, look at the fields;

already they are white, ready for harvest!

Already the reaper is being paid his wages, already he is bringing in the grain for eternal life, so that sower and reaper can rejoice together.

For here the proverb holds true: one sows, another reaps;

I sent you to reap a harvest you have not laboured for.

Others have laboured for it; and you have come into the rewards of their labour.

Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's words of testimony, 'He told me everything I have done.' So, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and many more came to believe on the strength of the words he spoke to them; and they said to the woman, 'Now we believe no longer because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he is indeed the Saviour of the world.'

John 4:27-42

The witnessing cross

As noted yesterday, in John's narrative of Jesus' ministry there is a strong core of Samaritan believers, suggesting that John's community embraced a number of Samaritans. Jesus is portrayed as one whose vision of the spiritual community encompasses the whole world of people, without regard to ethnicity or culture. This was the practical outworking of the earlier statement of the gospel message, *For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.* The message would not have been lost on John's readers. They were living in a pagan environment and the community probably embraced not only Samaritans but also Greeks. Tradition locates John's ministry as being in the city of Ephesus on the Adriatic... *look around you, look at the fields; already they are white, ready for harvest!* And when they looked they would have seen a whole society *ready for harvest*, with a message that Jesus oversteps all the cultural barriers that may have prevented them from being part of the community.

Perhaps more than any time in human history, the world needs this message of community that transcends all that divides us. Is the church listening to the gospel?