

Open Your Eyes!

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[0 : 00] We're going to open our Bibles now and find our reading for this morning, which you'll find in John's Gospel at chapter 4. If you have one of the blue church visitors' Bibles, it's page 889.

And we're going to read together most of this chapter, beginning at verse 1, which is a marvelous story of an encounter the Lord Jesus had with a stranger, a woman who was entirely foreign to him and to his Jewish disciples.

John's Gospel, chapter 4, then at verse 1. Now, when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself didn't baptize, but only his disciples, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, weird as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.

[1 : 18] And Jesus said to her, give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, how is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?

For Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

The woman said to him, sir, you have nothing to draw water with and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob?

He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock. Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again.

But whoever drinks of the water I will give him will never thirst forever. Water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

[2 : 22] The woman said to him, sir, give me this water so I'll not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water. Jesus said to her, go call your husband and come here.

The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, you are right in saying I have no husband, for you have had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband.

What you have said is true. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.

Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know.

We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

[3 : 26] God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming.

He was called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. Just then his disciples came back.

They marveled that he was talking with a woman. But no one said, what do you seek or why are you talking with her? So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.

Can this be the Christ? They went out of the town and were coming to him. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, Rabbi, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about.

So the disciples said to one another, has someone brought him something to eat? Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

[4 : 33] Do you not say there are yet four months? Then comes the harvest. Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life so that the sower and reaper may rejoice together.

For here the saying holds true, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored and you have entered into their labor.

Many Samaritans from that time believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them.

And he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, it's no longer because of what you said that we believe.

For we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is indeed the savior of the world. Amen.

[5 : 34] May God bless to us his word. If you could turn to the passage that Willie read earlier, I think it's page 889 in the Bible.

So I think it might go up on the screen as well. I'm not sure. I think you'll agree that John captures the wonderful sense of farce going on here, allowing us to see what's going on while the disciples can't quite see.

And Jesus ends up telling them to open their eyes to see what he can see. And as he makes that big reveal, we love that kind of humor, don't we? Where we know what's going on, we know the big picture. And there's somebody who's only got a partial picture.

A friend of my son-in-law hatched a plan to propose to his girlfriend. In this guy's head, this was a brilliant plan. Always is in the guy's head, of course. He wrote in ribbons on a lovely park.

I think it was near Plymouth. He wrote in ribbons, will you marry me? And then he covered this message, this question, with a picnic blanket, laid out a beautiful picnic. And then invited his girlfriend to come and eat a picnic with him.

[6 : 40] What he hadn't factored was that she was really irritated in the first place to be invited out again. Because they'd been going out for years. And she said, look, this is going nowhere. Until you pop the question, let's just stop doing this.

So he gave no indication there was anything other than a picnic. So she was pretty cross anyway. And so sat down and at the picnic. Now, it didn't get off too well because he was thinking, I need to make the big reveal.

And we've got to eat this picnic first. So he didn't even talk to her. He just scoffed the food. He ate really, really badly. Just cramming food in his mouth, drinking back the drink.

And then thinking, I need to get on with this. I need to get on with this. And she was just really taken aback by his behavior. And then he said to her, again, because he's keen to make the big reveal, can you clear up? I said, what?

Please? Can you clear up, please? So she clears up. And then he realizes that he is sitting on the picnic blanket. So he can't even make the big reveal now. So he just shuffles off the picnic blanket and says, can you clear that up as well?

[7 : 43] So she rips the picnic blanket away. And the big reveal, will you marry me? And, of course, it changes everything. And she says, yes, and they all live happily ever after.

Now, if any of you young men here are thinking, that's really cool. That is not really cool. That goes on your stupid idiot. Don't ever try this list. Not your really cool list.

Now, the disciples, they're so focused on the details of the picnic, buying food, making sure Jesus has eaten, that they miss the message under the blanket, so to speak, that Jesus spells out to them in verse 34.

My food, says Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying? It's still four months until harvest.

I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest. Even now, the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

[8 : 45] Thus the saying, one sows, 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.

He's saying, open your eyes, followers. Don't be hungry for your picnic. Be hungry to do God's will. Make that your meat and your drink. You see, the disciples just aren't seeing what Jesus is seeing.

They're meeting exactly the same people, but they're seeing totally different realities. The disciples see going into this dreadful town of Samaria just a means to an end. Let's get food.

Let's get out of here. Let's get back to our own people. In Galilee. And Jesus says, look, open your eyes. Can't you see beyond the picnic and the blanket? Can't you see this wonderful message of love and grace under the surface of this conversation with this woman?

Jesus says, look more carefully. I don't know whether you like those films with the parallel perspectives like Babel or Sliding Doors. And you don't make sense of it, do you, until the two perspectives at some point in the film come together.

[9 : 48] Well, that's what John does for us here. So the opening scene, if you like, think of it like a film. The opening scene is the open road. Okay. Jesus and his followers, they're on an open road.

They're heading towards Galilee. Judea to Galilee. The normal route is to follow the right fork in the road. It's a longer route, but it's the road most traveled.

Jesus took the left fork, the road least traveled. And that made all the difference. Because, it says, verse 4, he needed to go through Samaria. Of course he didn't need to go through Samaria.

No self-respecting Jew goes through Samaria. You would avoid it like the plague. Anybody familiar with the series Firefly? Looking for something. There we go. Okay, there are a few hands up.

In Firefly, basically, their crew would rather go the long way around the entire galaxy rather than go through Reva territory. And by the way, if you enjoyed the reference to Firefly, you're not quite ready for the picnic blanket.

[10 : 50] Sorry, that was mean. They're making you walk into that trap. But anyway, Jesus felt compelled to go to this town of Sychar. There was something important, something he needed to do.

Now, this wasn't the original name of the town. It wasn't originally called Sychar. It used to be called Shechem. But the Jews nicknamed it Sychar as an insult. It's a bit like calling somewhere Nowheresville.

Except it's even more insulting than that, as we'll see in a minute. I sometimes think that's happened to a few of our British place names. I've come across recently the name.

I was looking for funny names. The name Bladder in Paisley. I don't know whether you're from Bladder. Or Backside in Aberdeenshire. Probably Backside in Aberdeenshire.

It used to be called something lovely, like Swallow Vale or something like that. But the guy from the Ordnance Survey had a terrible holiday and thought, right, revenge. Swallow Vale is going to be called Backside from now on.

[11 : 47] Well, the Jews' equivalent of Backside is Sychar, which means drunkards. I mean, it's really pure, isn't it? But blind prejudice is rarely sane.

If you want to get some of the background, read 2 Kings 17 sometime. Basically, the Assyrians, after conquering and plundering this known region, they put people from exiled countries together in this area of Samaria.

So Jews were put here and others from other of the lands were put together. They intermarried. They interbred. They had this kind of mongrel religion.

And so the Jews never associated with Samaritans. And there's a real evidence throughout the Old Testament of a spiritual hunger. The Samaritans want to join in the rebuilding of the temple in Ezra.

They're not allowed to. And so the Jews just go about renaming these Samaritan towns, insulting them. So Jesus' disciples would have much rather gone the longer route rather than through Backside.

[12 : 51] So open road, secondly, closed minds. For the disciples, in verse 8, the stop in Sychar means nothing more than a food stop. It's just scoff and go.

And now I'm imagining one of those rough American truck stops. You know the sort where the improbably blonde family, wife, husband, two kids, they're sort of just having a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

And they look around and see it's just inbred locals. And one guy with just one tooth in his head is staring at them and say, hey, honey, let's leave here. And that's kind of the image perhaps we have for these disciples looking around this Samaritan town.

You see, as far as the disciples are concerned, well, not wishing to be unfair to them, as far as first century Jews were concerned, the Samaritans are a joke. They're a racial and a religious joke.

So the disciples, they head off to town to buy grub. They go off to buy the picnic, looking down at the locals everywhere they went, getting their food ready to come back to Jesus.

[13 : 52] Now, if the camera followed them, you'd see them reluctantly coming off the road, going off to buy food. But the camera actually stays with Jesus, who sits at a well. He's hungry.

He's thirsty. He wants to have a drink. And, of course, he has this conversation with the Samaritan woman. And when the disciples come back with a picnic, in verse 27, they're surprised.

Effectively, they're thinking, she's not our sort. What is he doing? And in verse 27b, John tells us that what he and the other disciples were thinking, but couldn't even be bothered to ask, was, what do you want?

Or, Jesus, why are you talking to her? But they would rather ignore this woman than ask their racist questions in front of her.

What a waste of space they're thinking. Let's just get lunch and let's get out of here. You know, it's so easy, isn't it, to write people off. To look at people and think, oh, they could never be interested in my faith.

[14 : 51] They're far too intolerant of Christianity. And write them off. I've done it spectacularly many times in my life. At college, had a friend called Martin. And he was sort of like one of the new atheists before there was new atheism.

One of those friends you might invite to an event, and you're quietly relieved when they don't turn up. Well, I invited all the guys in my hall of residence to a mission event at university. It was the last night.

No one came apart from Martin. I saw him slipping at the back. I thought, oh, Martin's going to give me grief for this. The drama sketch was a bit naff, and no doubt it was going to pick holes in what the speaker said because he's a scientist and blah, blah, blah.

But anyway, at the end of the talk, which a guy called Andrew Page gave, he said, by the way, if you're here as a guest tonight, and this has made sense for you, and you want to make that step of becoming a Christian, why don't you ask the Christian who invited you along and ask them to pray with you?

And so he left it there. So I was just collecting my thoughts at the end of the talk, getting ready to clear up, and Martin came up to me and said, Richard, can we pray? I looked at him and said, very funny, Martin.

[15 : 56] I'm just not in the mood. I've got a lot to do. And he looked really hurt. He looked really hurt. He said, no, mate, I'm serious. I want to become a Christian. You're serious?

Yeah. He said, talk to the Christian who invited you. You invited me. Aren't you going to pray with me? So I prayed. He prayed. Then I sort of got all moisty-eyed. And that was that.

And Martin went on to become a really, really strong Christian. Now, that was a real kind of slap in the face of me. So easy to write people off to say, oh, they're not this sort.

They're not ready for this. And maybe we know people, family, friends, colleagues, and all the rest of it. They're perhaps being antagonistic to Christianity, perhaps sarcastic. Why not just pray for them?

Just be a good friend. Just share what's most on your heart. You know, Christianity is only that far from any serious conversation, whether you're talking about general culture, a serious issue in the news.

[16 : 55] There are all sorts of things going on. And the gospel is really close to that. Why not just strike up those kind of conversations? So we've got an open road. We've got closed minds.

And now we see a pair of open eyes. We see Jesus, earlier in the chapter, asking a Samaritan woman for a drink. Now, she shocked, verse 9, shocked that a Jewish man takes a drink from the hands of a Samaritan woman.

So Jesus just ignores 400 years of sectarian and religious hatred. And he replies to her, oh, if you knew the God, if you knew the gift of God, verse 10, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would ask him and he would give you living water.

You see, Jesus looks beyond the racial and the religious differences, and he sees a woman worn down by disappointment and hurt. She's weary. She has heavy burdens in her life.

And her life can be likened to the daily grind of fetching water, getting thirsty again, fetching water, fetch, drink, thirst, fetch, drink, thirst. No doubt, as a young woman, she dreamed of being rushed off her feet, perhaps somebody proposing romantically over a picnic blanket to her.

[18 : 11] But reality can be very different, can't it, to dreams. And she has five failed marriages and can't even be bothered to tie the knot with guy number six.

Her life is a train crash. But she still has that inconsolable longing. She still cares. She's really hungry. She's really open. And somehow Jesus recognizes that.

That's true of the students on campus. That's true, no doubt, of your colleagues, of your neighbors, of perhaps members of your family. We are hungry for something more than just a treadmill of A-levels, degree, good job, better job, buy stuff, buy more stuff.

They're made in God's image. We perhaps see the confident exterior, the pursuit of pleasure, not seeing how studied the coolness is of some of our student friends.

But they're lost. And we need to open our eyes, says Jesus, to see what he sees, to feel what he feels. And he says to her, verse 10, If only you knew the gift of God, what's on offer, what I'm offering you, if only you knew who it is who's asking you for a drink, you'd ask me and I would give you living water.

[19 : 24] I think the shocking thing here is a woman who appears to have an insatiable appetite for men, Jesus is appealing to her desire. He's saying, if only you knew who I was, what I was offering you, you would ask me and I would give it to you.

So he's suggesting that the problem for our friends, who we assume are not interested in hearing about faith and Jesus, we assume, oh, it's because, you know, they have so much desire, they're just too worldly or whatever.

And Jesus says, no, it's because their desire is not enough. We can easily be distracted, can't we, by promotion at work, getting the kids into good schools, partick thistle, winning a single game of football or whatever it is.

We can be easily distracted. And Jesus says, if you knew what was on offer, who was offering, you'd ask me and I'd give it to you. And it wouldn't just be one drink.

It would be a fountain of eternal life welling up within you. C.S. Lewis put it brilliantly, which is hardly surprising. He says this, God finds our desires, this is in *The Weight of Glory*, God finds our desires not too strong, but too weak.

[20 : 34] We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. We're like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he can't imagine what's meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.

We're far too easily pleased. And he knows that she has this hunger. And she eventually understands, because Jesus speaks into her life, what he's offering and who's offering it.

And she leaves her water jar at his feet, the very one thing that symbolized the emptiness of her life. She leaves it there with Jesus, runs back to the town and says to all the men, interestingly, all the men in Sychar who obviously know her, come and see a man who's told me everything I ever did.

My life is changed. I'm a new person. You come and meet him. And they're going to kind of work out whether he could possibly be the savior of the world. Because if he can save this woman, a Samaritan, maybe he could be everyone's savior.

And that's the message to us. Open your eyes. To the disciples in verse 27, all they can see is, oh, what does she want? Why is Jesus talking to her?

[21 : 48] It's just blind prejudice. Jesus wants to spend the time with her. Some years ago, a guy called Vic Jacobson was watching the news when he saw new age travelers turning up in the new forest.

You probably remember this. And loads and loads and loads of wagons turned up and they parked on the grass verges. And Vic was shouting at the TV, saying, how disgusting. What did it look at the litter?

Oh, that's a beautiful spot. They're going to ruin it. And his wife, also Christian, she said, Vic, how can you be so hard-hearted? They've got young children. There are babies there. You should go to the shops and take some groceries to them.

So he didn't live far away. He said, what? He said, yeah, I think you should think about that. Anyway, as he thought about it and prayed about it, God convicted him. So he did this massive shop and turned up to these new age travelers who wondered what on earth he wanted.

But anyway, he came bearing goodies and they needed the stuff for the kiddies. And he discovered that a lot of them were really spiritually hungry. In fact, some of them were Christians. They were pretty untaught.

[22 : 50] They were pretty confused. And over the years, as it turned out, a great harvest was won because he opened his eyes. He looked beyond the outward exterior.

We really mustn't look at some people as, I don't know, high maintenance, challenging, a drain on my time, a disruption to my schedule. Let's cry out, Lord, give me a softer heart.

Open my eyes that I see people as they are lost, hungry, thirsty, and in need of this glorious gospel. So eyes opened, harvest reaped.

Something amazing has happened. She goes back, tells the men of psych art, come see a man who told me everything I ever did. And they make their way to Jesus to see whether he truly is the savior of the world.

One woman comes to Jesus, goes back and tells others. That makes all the difference. My sister became a Christian, came home. I became a Christian. My mother became a Christian.

[23 : 50] The testimony of one person has a real impact. Well, the response is the whole town, verse 30, is making their way to Jesus. So Jesus is still by the well with the disciples.

They're talking about eating a picnic. And the whole town is coming towards Jesus. This zombie army of lost, hungry souls is on its way slowly down the road, ready to surround Jesus and his disciples and ask all the questions to see whether Jesus really is their savior.

Meanwhile, verse 31, I find this hilarious, oblivious to this tsunami of Samaritans pouring down the main road, oblivious to that, meanwhile, the disciples are chatting to Jesus about the picnic.

You couldn't make it up, could you? The scene in my mind now is the climax of the film The Blues Brothers. Do you remember? The whole town is descending on the office block to arrest Jake and Elwood, the police, the National Guard, the Navy SEALs, the Marines, the tanks, the helicopters.

Meanwhile, Jake and Elwood are in the lift. It's going up very slowly, playing elevator music, and they're about to pay a tax bill. Meanwhile, verse 31, the disciples are saying, Jesus, you haven't eaten any of the picnic we got here.

[25 : 04] And when Jesus says, I have food to eat you know nothing about, they have a little chat amongst each other and say, oh, do you think one of the locals gave him food? Do you think it was that dodgy woman? Meanwhile, the town is getting closer and closer.

The harvest is literally coming to Jesus and coming to his followers. Any minute, there'll be more Samaritans around them than they can shake a stick at. Samaritans full of spiritual questions.

All the disciples need to do is to look up, and then they'll see this army of hungry people coming towards them. I went to a college reunion two years ago with Ruth, and the first person to greet me was Steve.

And I was thrilled to see him because I ran this Agnostics Anonymous group at college, and he was the first guy to actually believe that Christianity was true. Largely convinced himself through doing, he was doing ancient history for part of his degree, and he realized the Bible documents were reliable, it kind of made sense.

He became a Christian and then resented the skepticism of the other guys in the group. And because of the change in him, another five of them also became Christians. And I think Jesus is saying to all of us, are we willing to look up, can we believe that those hard friends, those distant friends, the colleagues, the people in our neighborhood, can we believe that they could possibly be interested?

[26 : 25] The harvest is there. And in verse 30, it's about to descend upon you. And in verse 40, we see that the disciples and Jesus have two solid days of talking this through, where the Samaritans consider whether Jesus really is the Savior of the world.

So Jesus thinks, hang on, the harvest field's coming to us, my disciples are looking down at the picnic, they're not looking up, I need to do a bit of a reveal, I need to explain to them what I'm about.

And so he essentially says to them, look, my food, 34, is to do my father's will. That's my meat and drink. Excuse me. I'm really grateful for a picnic. Thank you.

But do you think that's really what makes me tick? Finding the best picnic spot and eating food? That's not why I've come. I want to finish my father's work. Now, he's saying, my father is looking for followers who are going to become my bride, who will worship me in spirit and truth.

I don't care what their religious affiliations are. I don't care what their racial background is. I just want people who seek me and who will worship in spirit and in truth.

[27 : 34] And that woman, she is now my bride. She is now one of my followers. She has received forgiveness, cleansing. Living water is welling up within her. My food is to do his will.

You see, while you were shopping, I was actually sowing a harvest. And here it comes. Look over your shoulder. Here comes the harvest. You were shopping. I was sowing. So come and reap a harvest. You didn't even sow.

So the challenge for us, I think, is to see what Jesus sees, to see people as Jesus sees them. Now, when, just quickly as we wrap up here, when Jesus says his desire is to do his father's will and to finish his work, that's one thing for Jesus and another thing for us.

When Jesus says 34, I'm going to finish my father's work, we need to think cross, the cross on which he died, his great hour. That's where he achieved for that woman at the well, what he promised.

In verse 10, they weren't platitudinous religious words. Oh, I will give you a well of living water, welling up to eternal life. No, no, Jesus realized in promising her that he had to go to a cross.

[28 : 44] And in the noonday heat, just as he thirsted by the well, in the noonday heat, he would thirst as he hung upon the cross. As he came to terms with all the sin and rebellion of the world, with that woman's broken life and that woman's sin, with your sin and mine, God settled righteous indignation.

He bore that upon himself. And he was out of love. And Jesus spoke two times in John 19 on the cross. Once, he says, I think it's verse 28, I am thirsty.

Of course he was. He's been strung up on a cross in the middle of the day. But then he spoke a second time just before he gave up his life. Verse 30 of John 19.

He says, it is finished. And it's exactly the same word as we see here in verse 34 of chapter four. I must finish my father's work. And where does he finish that work?

On the cross where he says, it's finished. Not I'm finished. He didn't say, it wasn't a cry of despair. It's the word for completion. So the builder might use that word when he puts the last brick in the house.

[29 : 47] Or the student when you've sat your last exam. Or the homeowner when you've paid the last installment of the mortgage. Finished. It's a cry of triumph. It's finished.

Nothing more to do. Nothing more to prove. Nothing more to pay. It is finished. We can contribute nothing to our forgiveness. Nothing but our sin. That's all Jesus will take from us.

But there is a work he wants his followers to do. And that's to look up and to see the harvest all around us. In our family. In our place of work. In our neighborhood. In the places we play.

In the locality. So he's done the hard bit. He's sown in tears on the cross. And now he says, why don't you reap a harvest you haven't even sown? 100,000 Iranians have come to Christ.

Have become Christians in recent years. And it's so thrilling to see that 25 of them are being baptized here today. It's astonishing. There's a ripe harvest out there.

[30 : 47] I was sharing a conference with the great, great grandson of James Hudson Taylor. In Vancouver. About 18 months ago. And he was saying that the 100 million Chinese believers.

Is likely in the next 15 years. To become 250 million. And they. As you know what's happening in China. They. Many of them are going to travel all over the world.

To all sorts of countries. And take this glorious message with them. Jesus is saying. I've done the hard bit. You can now reap a harvest you haven't sown for. Don't you have a saying? It's still four months until harvest.

I tell you. Open your eyes. Look. Just look at the Iranians. Just look at the Chinese. Just look. At the. This. Kind of generation have been brought up on this. Humorless.

Loveless. Brittle. Secularism. Do you know what? It's offering nothing. It's. It's. It's. It's just dust. It's. It's just ashes in the mouth. Many of our friends are ready to check out the radical Jesus.

[31 : 48] They have that inconsolable longing. They long for something to. To taste. To make sense. To base their life upon. To. To pass on to their kids. To their grandchildren.

To live for. Well the harvest fields are ripe. Many are lost. And thirsty. And if only we would point them to Jesus. They'd be interested. I won't mention her name.

But that my. The. The engineer who was helping me. All this morning at the BBC. She's from Northern Ireland. And she said. He said. Well I sort of lost all faith. But she was on my side.

She said. You tell them what for. She said. Take the agenda off them. You. You. You've got something to say. You. I just thought. There's hunger. She perhaps given up formal Christianity.

Perhaps she was put off by the sectarianism back home. I don't know. But will we come alongside friends. Family. Neighbors. Will we love them. Will we offer them this glorious gospel. Well I'd have loved to have been there.

[32 : 43] Wouldn't you. Verses 40 and 41. Where the disciples finally stop looking down at the picnic. And look up. And go. You know. It's the whole of the town of Backside.

It's turned up. What are they doing here. It was ghastly enough having one of them. But now the whole town is here. Jesus says. Come on guys. Get to work. Get to work. Open your hearts. Open up the scriptures.

And share this glorious message with them. And say for two days. They bring in a harvest. So may we. May I. Open my heart. Open my eyes. To see.

The harvest fields are ripe. Let's pray. Father. Father. Father. We thank you for this really gripping story. In John's gospel. And for what it reveals about the Lord Jesus.

Thank you that he was willing to finish. The father's work. And go. In such personal agony to a cross. Bearing the wrath and the indignation. The settled righteous.

[33 : 39] Indignation against our rebellion. All that's ruined your world. And caused so many countless lives to be spoiled. Lord. Thank you that. On the cross. You came to terms with our sin.

And you offer us. Abundant forgiveness. Eternal life. Welling up from within. Thank you Lord. For this glorious message. That is true. That is relevant. That is beautiful.

Please enlarge our hearts. And open our eyes. So that we would be generous. As we live and speak for Jesus. In our neighborhood. In this community of Christians. In our place of work.

In our family. And we ask it for Jesus' sake. And for his greater glory. Amen.