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THE CHURCH'S MISSION: JESUS' EXAMPLE IN JOHN 4:4-42 AS A MODEL

Kenneth D. Mulzac, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of OT and Biblical Languages

AIIAS Theological Seminary

Brief Overview of John 4

Owing to the possibility of opposition by the Pharisees toward His work and ministry, Jesus departed Jerusalem for Galilee (4:1-3). At noon, He rested beside a well in the Samaritan town of Sychar, which means "drunkenness" (vv. 4-6), while the disciples went into town to find food (vv. 27,31). Verses 7-30 record for us the encounter between Jesus and a woman, commonly referred to as the Samaritan woman. Raymond Brown divides the encounter into two parts: The Living Water (vv. 6-15) and True Worship of the Father (vv. 16-26), each comprising two short dialogical exchanges between Jesus and the woman.¹ In vv. 32-38 we have the discourse of Jesus with His disciples (using agricultural metaphors), followed by His witness to the Samaritans who believed and accepted Him (vv. 39-42).

After spending two days with the Samaritans, Jesus resumed His journey. John illustrates the superficiality of the faith of the Galileans (vv. 43-45) by placing it in bold contrast to the expression of faith by a royal official who sought audience with Jesus on behalf of his sick son (vv. 46-54). In that story Jesus confronts unbelief and effects trust. At the same time, He demonstrates that distance has no effect on His miraculous power.

¹Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-XII*, Anchor Bible, vol. 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 176-77.

Setting

The events of John 4:4-42 occurred by Jacob's well (vv. 5-6), which was about thirty meters deep. It was first mentioned by Christian pilgrims in the fourth century C.E. This well was located some eighty meters from ancient Shechem, a town located in the valley between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. Jerome identified Sychar with Shechem. The Syriac reads Shechem.

The town of Shechem was the most important center of ancient Israelite worship. According to Genesis 12:6, Shechem was the first place Abraham went when he entered the land that God was leading him to. Shechem was the place where Jacob went when he returned from Palestine to Mesopotamia (Gen. 33:18-20). Israel's first convocation for worship in Canaan after the Exodus took place on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal, on either side of the valley of Shechem (Deut. 11:29-32; 27:1-13; Josh. 8:30-35). Mount Gerizim became the "mount of blessing" (Deut. 11:29; 27:12); thus the Samaritans were not crazy to think that Mount Gerizim was a holy mountain. Shechem was also the place where the body of Joseph was buried after the Exodus (Josh. 24:32).²

Shechem and Mt. Gerizim were central to the Samaritan cultus. In fact, Shechem was the center of worship for at least 1000 years *before* David established Jerusalem as the locus of worship around 1000 B.C.E. The Samaritan Pentateuch highlights the value of Shechem by adding to Gen 12:6 that Shechem is "the land of Moriah where Abraham sacrificed Isaac."³ In other words, according to Samaritan tradition, the *Adekah* (sacrifice of Isaac) did not occur at Mt. Moriah where the Jewish temple was later erected, but at Mt. Gerizim.

The important point here is the centrality of worship at Gerizim, based on long-standing tradition, adhered to by the Samaritans. This obviously created opposition between the Samaritans and Jews on the point of *religion*.

Further polarization between Jews and Samaritans occurred when the new returnees from Babylonian exile, led by Zerubbabel, refused the help of the local population (Samaritans)⁴ in rebuilding the temple. Ezra 4 records this fact, plus

²Jon Paulien, *John*, Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 100.

³The Samaritans accused Ezra of tampering with the Hebrew text in order to favor Jerusalem over Mt. Gerizim as the site for the second temple. Roland F. Youngblood, ed., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, (1995), s.v. "Samaritan."

⁴Sargon replaced the deported Israelites with foreign colonists (2 Kgs 17:24).

These newcomers intermarried with the Israelites who remained in Samaria. Later their numbers were increased when Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal (the biblical Osnappa, Ezra 4:10) sent more Assyrian colonists to the district of Samaria. These people took the name "Samaritans" from the territory and attempted to settle the land. However, "they did not fear

the resultant opposition which caused the cessation of the rebuilding of the temple (v. 24). Further, Neh 2:10-6:14 records the opposition Nehemiah faced by Arab and Samaritan factions when he attempted the reconstruction of the Jerusalem wall. The gulf between both groups only widened when Ezra called for divorce between Israelite men and their pagan wives who had married during the captivity (Ezra 10:18-44). So there were *ethnic* problems as well.

Around 330 B.C.E., the Samaritans built a temple atop Mt. Gerizim. This was destroyed some two hundred years later (in 128 B.C.E.) by the Jewish revolutionary, John Hyrcanus. The break was now complete and both groups refused to have anything to do with each other. The division was so deep that a Jew felt that anything touched by a Samaritan was certainly defiled. In fact, to be called a Samaritan was a truly derogatory term (see John 8:48).

These divisions were deep, based on long standing prejudices and rivalries, religion, philosophy, ideology, and hatred. Jesus stepped into this milieu of acrimony and animosity, "this prejudice-filled atmosphere to make a statement about the universality of God's love to 'whoever' (John 3:16) believes."⁵

Discussion

Jesus' actions as described in John 4 appear programmatic for the church in its attempts to make inroads into modern, secular-minded society with the gospel. The fact, simply put forward, is that the same or similar chasms exist between the church and the world today as those that existed between Jews and Samaritans during the early decades of the first century. We do not need to rehearse these differences. Rather, we may explore the strategy Jesus took, which serves as a model for the church today.

the Lord, and the Lord sent lions among them, which killed some of them" (2 Kgs 17:25). In despair they sent to Assyria for "one of the priests" who would "teach them the rituals of the God of the land" (v. 27). Thereafter the Samaritans worshiped the God of Israel, but they also continued their idolatry, worshiping the pagan gods imported from foreign lands (v. 29).

So the Samaritans were a "mixed race" contaminated by foreign blood and false worship. The Jewish historian Josephus indicates that the Samaritans were also opportunists. When the Jews enjoyed prosperity, the Samaritans were quick to acknowledge their blood relationship. But when the Jews suffered hard times, the Samaritans disowned any such kinship, declaring that they were descendants of Assyrian immigrants. Ibid.

⁵Paulien, 102.

Initiative

John 4:4 says that Jesus had to go through Samaria. This is a statement of theology, not of geography. There were several routes available for someone travelling from Jerusalem to Galilee. However, the route through Samaritan territory was the most direct and the shortest. "In this case, the necessity lay in the plan of God. . . . His meeting with the woman at the well was God ordained."⁶ In 3:14, "the expression of necessity means that God's will or plan is involved."⁷

With His request, "Will you give me a drink of water?" (4:7)⁸ Jesus initiated conversation with the woman. This is in sharp contrast to the disciples, who "marveled that He talked with the woman" (v. 27). According to Jewish ideas, to touch anything, especially a drinking vessel, used by a Samaritan, would render a Jew inevitably defiled, since Jews considered Samaritans "unclean." Further, the Rabbis taught that

a man must not be alone with a woman in an inn, not even his sister or daughter, because of what men may think. A man must not talk with a woman on the street, not even his wife, and especially not with another woman, on account of what men may say.⁹

Obviously, Jesus was breaking the social norms. The narrator contends, "For Jews do not associate with Samaritans (v. 9)." This becomes even more intriguing as John unfolds the kind of woman Jesus was now engaging. The fact that Jesus was conversing with this particular woman highlights the value of His taking the initiative.

The event took place at noon. This was an unusual time to be drawing water from the community well, since women generally preferred the cool hours of the early morning or late afternoon. Therefore, the time of day provides a hint that the woman may have been a social outcast, possibly because of her adulterous lifestyle (cf. vv. 17-18).

Right from the start, the woman had three strikes against the possibility that she might develop a relationship with Jesus. She was a woman in a public place, she was a member of a hated race, and she was living in sin. No respectable Jewish man would have been caught speaking to her. But Jesus *took the risk* of reaching across all these barriers to provide for her

⁶Ibid., 103.

⁷Brown, 169.

⁸Except otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

⁹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 274. See especially n. 68.

the living water that He had come to give to whoever was willing to believe.¹⁰

The church must be willing to initiate contact with the world. (In the view of John, the world is related to the unbeliever.) In taking this risk, the church follows the example of its Founder. His foundational principle was to make salvation available and real for “whosoever believes in Him” (3:16). He would take any measure, design and devise any possibility, and execute any means by which He could encounter a soul. This was His *modus operandi*. It should be that of the church too.

Confrontation

In 4:10 Jesus invited the woman to receive “living water,” but she side-stepped the issue by telling Jesus that He had nothing with which to draw water (v. 11) and by asking if He is greater than Jacob (v.12). In vv. 13-14 Jesus insists that He will provide an abundant supply of water that will quench thirst forever and provide eternal life. This is generally interpreted to mean the gift of the Holy Spirit whose indwelling becomes a source of new life that holds unlimited possibilities for the believer.¹¹

To this remarkable invitation, the woman responds, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water” (v. 15). Jesus immediately seized upon this opportunity to confront the woman with the sinful realities of her lifestyle (vv. 16-18).

This confrontation (vv. 16-18), however, is not one that is spiteful or vindictive in nature. Rather, it is more like an invitation. (The approach appears Rogerian from the point of view of counseling psychology). As Jon Paulien comments insightfully, “For the woman at Jacob’s well, this was the crucial moment of judgment. How would she respond?”¹²

Jesus was not judgmental or condemning. In a rather gentle and inviting manner, He confronted the woman’s sordid life and focused her attention on making a choice, a decision for acceptance or rejection of His gift. In doing this, He preserved the dignity of the woman while allowing her the opportunity to confront her own self, her own character and life, her own moral and ethical choices. This is what makes the drama of the confrontation so impressive.

The church must confront sin but it must be willing to do so on Jesus’ terms. Regarding this confrontation of sin, it is necessary to understand that Jesus uses

¹⁰Paulien, 103 (emphasis mine).

¹¹See Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1934), 1033. This interpretation is based on John 7:38-39.

¹²Paulien, 104.

the method He sees most fitting to do so. It appears that for those situations where sin is systemic, Jesus used an aggressive, strong-arm tactic. Such was the case when He threw the moneychangers out of the temple precincts while brandishing a whip (John 2:12-17). However, when Jesus confronted sin or ignorance on a personal level he appears generally to use a less aggressive approach. Such is the case in face-to-face encounters with people like Nicodemus, whose apparent ignorance of salvation is strange (3:1-21); or the nobleman, who needed to exercise his faith (4:46-52); or the woman caught in adultery, who needed forgiveness and unconditional love (8:1-11).

While the church must be applauded for its role in helping to stamp out evil in society at large (for example, legalized racism in the United States and apartheid in South Africa), it cannot rest on its laurels in happy bliss. It must be about the business of confronting these evils as it involves itself in Christ's ministry of embracing "whosoever believes in Him."

Revelation

Jesus' confrontation produced a response on two levels:

(1) *The woman herself* (v. 18). Jesus was not uncovering anything new to the woman. She was already aware of her adulterous lifestyle. But it highlighted to her that her secret was open, no longer hidden. It was beyond the town limits. She was exposed. This was the moment of judgment. Would she confess and receive the gift He was offering or would she reject it and continue a life of exposed shame? She attempted to deflect attention from this moment of personal revelation and response by sidestepping it, changing the subject to prophecy and worship (vv. 19-21). Jesus provided an adequate response to the issue of worship (vv. 21-24),¹³ thereby forcing the woman to go back to the idea of the prophet. This she did by bringing up the subject of the Messiah (v. 25). This change of subject introduces us to the second level of revelation.

(2) *Jesus Himself* (v. 26). The self-declaration of His messiahship is tersely expressed, "I who speak to you am he," (v. 26). He is the *ego eimi*. Paulien comments, "The openness with which Jesus confesses His Messiahship to the Samaritan woman is breathtakingly unique to all four Gospels (vs. 26)."¹⁴

The Samaritans emphasized that the Messiah would be a reformer like Moses (cf. Deut 18:15-18). He would be the Taheb, "the one who returns," as a prophet

¹³Jesus' point in vv. 21-24 is that the location of worship is not as important as the attitude of the worshipper. It is not *where* you worship that is significant, but *how* you worship. Jesus, in effect, tells the woman that the Samaritans' knowledge of God was limited, since their Scriptures were limited: they accepted only the Pentateuch. Since the Jews had the Pentateuch plus the Prophets and the Writings, their understanding of God was more complete.

¹⁴Paulien, 105.

like Moses. Hence, the Messiah “would teach them a better way of worship. Jesus reinforced the Samaritans’ correct picture of the Messiah by revealing Himself openly to them in a way that He never did among the Jews (John 4:23-26).”¹⁵ This self-revelation is based on the divine condescension, where the pre-existent Word became flesh and dwelled among us. The human side of this is seen in Jesus’ tiredness (v. 6) and thirst (v. 7). The divine side is seen in His revelations: (a) giving eternal life (“living water,” v.10); (b) exercising supernatural knowledge (vv. 17-18); (c) explaining the proper way to worship (vv. 23-24); and (d) identifying Himself as the Messiah (v. 25).¹⁶

It is the responsibility of the church to consistently paint a correct picture of the Messiah. It can be argued that Jesus revealed Himself. But it can be argued also that the Bible contains a complete picture of the Christ, and when He lives in us (Gal 2:20), we become, in effect, the revelation of His character. Paulien makes an insightful application for us as a church today:

The lesson for Seventh-day Adventist readers is quite pointed. A people may have a corner on revelation (Ellen White) and know exactly what they are about, yet may miss out on God’s next great revelation, because their adherence to past revelation makes them less open to the new work God wants to do in changing times (5:39, 40). People who have an abundance of revelation seem to find it easy to pick and choose what they want to follow, whether intentionally or not. People with little revelation may at times be more focused in the simplicity of their understanding.¹⁷

The effect of Christ’s self-revelation was a response by the woman. She promptly accepted Him as the Messiah, then issued an invitation to the townspeople, “Come, see a man who told me everything that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” (v. 29). It was this invitation, issued in conjunction with a provocative question, which excited the people to investigate. The result was marvelous. Many believed in Jesus on the basis of the woman’s confession and testimony (v. 39). Jesus accepted their invitation to stay with them for two days, then, based on their own hearing of His word, many more believed (vv. 40-42). In this Samaritan town of Sychar (“drunkenness”), Jesus found disciples. Unlike the Jews, cultured in their religion, tradition, and vast knowledge, who demanded

¹⁵Ibid. Brown, 172-73, indicates that Jesus, who “does not give unqualified acceptance to the title of Messiah when it is offered to Him by Jews, accepts it from a Samaritan. Perhaps the answer lies in the royal nationalistic connotations the term had in Judaism, while the Samaritan Taheb (although not devoid of nationalistic overtones) had more the aspect of a teacher and a lawgiver.”

¹⁶Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 88.

¹⁷Paulien, 105-6.

signs before they would believe (cf. 2:18; 4:48), the hated and despised Samaritans believed on the basis of the word of Jesus alone (4:42).

Instruction

Just as Jesus made the startling revelation of His Messiahship, the disciples arrived and were marveling that Jesus was speaking with the woman. The use of the imperfect tense indicates that their shock was more than momentary surprise. Yet none of them dared confront Him (v. 27). Instead, they implored Him to eat. Jesus took this as His starting point, the daily necessities of life. With the woman it was water. Water was the symbol that pointed to Jesus' ability to give eternal life. In dealing with the disciples, Jesus talked about food to describe His mission (v. 35), and, by extension, the mission of His disciples. Jesus used this as an opportunity for instruction to His disciples (vv. 31-38). Three notable factors arrest our attention here:

(1) *Jesus is purpose-driven* (vv. 32-34). In v. 32 ("I have food to eat that you know nothing about") He betrays the fact that the disciples are slow to comprehend the purpose of His mission. This is certainly illustrated in their question, "Could someone have brought Him food" (v. 33)? Just as the woman misunderstood about the water (vv. 7-11), the disciples misunderstood about the food. In both cases, Jesus was speaking on a spiritual level, while the others were understanding on a material or temporal level. Jesus then plainly revealed that He was not talking about food for physical sustenance but that He was talking about His mission: to willingly obey God and complete the task for which He was sent (v. 34). It was this singularity of purpose that motivated and drove Him.

(2) *Urgency and vigilance* (v. 35). Using an agricultural motif, Jesus called the disciples' attention to the fact that they must be vigilant in reaping the harvest of souls. In an agrarian society, one cannot be lackadaisical or indifferent concerning the time of harvest. One must pay constant attention to the times, the rains, and the tendering, nurturing, and growth of the grain in preparation for the harvest. This is a matter of great importance: one must either stave off hunger or face starvation. It is a matter of life and death. Jesus proclaimed forcefully, therefore, that the same vigilance must be brought to bear on the harvest of souls. To illustrate this He used a proverb: "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest?'" (v. 35). Four months comprised the interval between sowing and harvesting. Yet Jesus, referring to the Samaritans already rushing to meet Him, declared that the fields are white for harvest (v. 35). Brown says,

Jesus announces that in the eschatological order which He has introduced the proverbial principle is no longer valid, for there is no longer any such interval. The OT had prepared for this. Lev 26:5 had promised, by way of ideal reward to those who would keep the commandments: "Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage till the time of

sowing”—in other words, the abundance of crops will be so great that the idle intervals between the agricultural seasons will disappear. Amos' dreams of the messianic days pictured the plowman overtaking the reaper (9:13). So now in Jesus' preaching the harvest is ripe on the same day the seed has been sown, for already the Samaritans are pouring out of the village and coming to Jesus¹⁸

C. H. Dodd claims that this embodies the theme of Realized Eschatology.¹⁹ The harvest in John is not at the end of time (as Matt 13 depicts) but it is now, in the ministry of Jesus and the Church. In other words, the end is now. Indeed, “the harvest has arrived with Jesus' mission.”²⁰

(3) *Cooperative and joint efforts* (vv. 36-38). In these verses Jesus indicates that a bountiful harvest is the result of the cooperative, interconnected efforts of several individuals: “One sows and another reaps” (v. 37). This is not the place for individual triumphalism. Brown comments that originally this was a “pessimistic reflection on the inequity of life.”²¹ For example, Mic 6:15 denotes, “You shall sow, but another reap.” However, Jesus applies it optimistically, since the disciples reap where they did not sow. This shows “eschatological abundance.”²²

In so many instances, we have given kudos to the evangelist who reaps the harvest, while forgetting those who did the hard work of preparing the fields, tilling the soil, planting the seeds, weeding and watering, and so forth, that we have wounded the sensitivities of some people.

The Main Point

With the above four practical and doable factors, Jesus illustrates the main point of His ministry: the *universality* of His mission, the “whosoever” of John 3:16. The Fourth Gospel illustrates this by highlighting two people at the opposite extremes of the “whosoever” spectrum: Nicodemus of chap. 3 and the Samaritan woman of chap. 4.

¹⁸Brown, 182.

¹⁹C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 391-99.

²⁰Köstenberger, 89.

²¹Brown, 182-83.

²²*Ibid.*, 183. When the disciples were “sent” is difficult to resolve. Brown offers two solutions: (a) in the post-Resurrection perspective of the Gospel, the idea of being “sent” was fulfilled in the mission of 20:21; (b) it is possible that this points to a previous mission that is not narrated in John. Cf. Luke 10. To this, Köstenberger, 89-90, retorts that, while the past tense (sent) is usually given, the present tense “send” is “a superior rendering.” Jesus is then talking, not about a past sending, but about “the disciples' mission in general.” Unfortunately, Köstenberger provides no justification or evidence for this conclusion.

The “whosoever” boasts a cosmic and an international flavor. The emphasis clearly is placed on people: “whosoever,” not “whatsoever.” God’s agenda deals with people. But not just in a community or collective fashion but on an individual basis. Note how John values the individual nature of “whosoever” by sandwiching it between two individuals of different background, character and dynamics in chapters three and four:

Nicodemus – Woman at the Well
 Named – Unnamed
 Man of means – Woman dispossessed
 Respected – Rejected
 Loved – Lonely
 Exalted – Disenfranchised
 Esteemed – Disavowed
 Honored – Ashamed
 Jew – Despised Samaritan
 Rich – Poor (otherwise won’t be getting her own water)
 Highly Educated – Illiterate (woman in the 1st century)
 Highly respected – Despised
 Great name- Anonymous
 Holy City – “drunkenness”

“Whosoever” is broadly inclusive of politician and policeman; the prudent and the prostitute; black and white; tall and short; rich and poor; Adventist and Anglican; those with Ph. D’s and those who get only D’s.²³

The point of the Samaritan encounter is that the gospel has broken all barriers: ethnic, religious, geographical, historical, and philosophical. The Good News has penetrated all long-standing walls that have divided and separated people. God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) has been brought to fruition.

Conclusion

The ministry of Jesus to the Samaritans as described in the passage delineates four significant points of relevance for the church today.

(1) *The agenda of the church’s mission.* Jesus’ agenda is people, not programs. The church can learn this by elevating people above programs. Programs are not bad, but often they take precedence over people. For example, pastors are given yearly goals for churches and districts to meet: magazine subscriptions,

²³Kenneth D. Mulzac, *Praying with Power: Moving Mountains* (Huntsville, AL: Beka, 1996), 101.

ingathering, baptisms and so forth. Sometimes in soul winning, the number is made more important than the soul.

(2) *The importance of the mission of the church, which is the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20)*. John 4 records the *only* place in the four Gospels where Jesus explicitly directs His ministry toward the Samaritan populace. [This is unlike the incident where He healed ten lepers and only one, a Samaritan, returned to give Him thanks (Luke 10). It is not certain that this miracle occurred in Samaria]. This is significant, especially in light of Matt 10:5, where Jesus sends out the disciples and explicitly tells them not to go to the Samaritans but only to the lost sheep of Israel. Further, in Luke 9:51-56, an unnamed Samaritan village rejected Jesus, and the fury of James and John was unleashed so much that they wanted to call fire from heaven to destroy the village. Jesus rebuked them for their rash impulse, "You know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (v. 55, KJV). He then explicated His mission: "For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (v. 56, KJV). This outworking of His mission and of the gift of salvation is seen in Jesus' ministry to the Samaritan woman and the town of Sychar.

In the commission of Acts 1:8, Jesus is clear that the Good News must be taken to Samaria, even to the traditional enemies. The point is that the Gospel must penetrate those barriers that separate people. Note that in the Gospel of John, Jesus first witnesses to a Jew (Nicodemus, chap. 3), then to the Samaritans (chap. 4), and finally to the Gentiles who approach Him (12:20-22). This mirrors the Great Commission of Matt 28:19-20.²⁴

(3) *The universality of the mission of the church*. The message of the church is not for a select few, a privileged group, members of the status quo. It is for all people. John later wrote that he saw another angel "having the everlasting gospel to preach unto *those that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people*" (Rev 14:6).

Paulien summarizes the lesson from John 4:4-42:

No matter who you are, no matter what you have done; no matter where you have been or how you have been treated, Jesus' arms are open to you if you are willing to come. Our present society is seemingly becoming increasingly divided into various competing groups. We need to hear that in the gospel there is no more male or female, no more slave or free, no more Jew or Gentile, no more black or white (Gal. 3:28, 29; Eph. 2:11-22). How can anyone claim to understand the gospel and fail to grasp its glorious lack of prejudice toward people of any heritage and background? If Jesus were physically present today, would He be found in our schools and churches, or would He be found in the bars, the prisons, and the

²⁴Köstenberger, 187.

hospices, among the oppressed and those with AIDS? I'm not sure I want to know the answer!²⁵

(4) *Don't underestimate the possibilities of the mission.* Brown's comment is insightful:

If our story in ch. iv . . . has portrayed the steps by which a soul comes to believe in Jesus, it also portrays the history of the apostolate, for the harvest comes outside of Judea among foreigners. We can scarcely believe that the evangelist did not mean for us to contrast the unsatisfactory faith of the Jews in ii 23-25 based on a superficial admiration of miracles with the deeper faith of the Samaritans based on the word of Jesus. Nicodemus, the rabbi of Jerusalem, could not understand Jesus' message that God had sent the Son into the world so that the world might be saved through him (iii 17); yet the peasants of Samaria readily come to know that Jesus is really the Saviour of the world.²⁶

Even the so-called "hard territory" is conquerable for Christ.

²⁵Paulien, 107.

²⁶Brown, 185.