

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 42

January 29, 2020

John 4:35-38

Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.³⁶ Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.³⁷ For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’³⁸ **I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor.**”

We'll pick up our reading in **John 4:35** although we've talked about most of this. Let's think about the phrase, “entering into the labor of others”. **You have entered into their labor.** I want to try to understand what Jesus was actually saying ... what was in His mind.

One alternative, at least, in “entering into someone’s labor” is the idea of tearing down the labor of others. Tearing it down destroys that work of other people. But we have the *option* of ‘entering into’ the labor of other people. Building on the work of others is smart; it's practical and is probably necessary in most things. We have to build upon the work that other people have done. We usually don't start something totally from scratch. Maybe in some areas we start building from scratch, but there is usually some labor that has gone on behind it. Even if you are a carpenter and are going to build something from scratch, you probably don't go out into the field and cut down the tree, mill the tree and do all ‘*that*’ work. You probably go down and buy the wood somewhere. Someone else has probably labored for that, and you are ‘entering into’ *their* labor.

If you are a Taxi Driver you might go out and purchase the car and establish your taxi business, but you probably don't go out and build your car. And even if you *did* build your car, you probably didn't go and mine the iron and other materials that went into the building of the car. You probably, at some point, enter into the labor of other people.

That's the way it works also in the life of all of us. In most of our pursuits, someone else has already been working and we simply pick up and enter into their work and carry it on further. I think this is what Jesus is saying. Education it's about stepping into someone else's labor and benefiting from the work they did. Learning to appreciate the work others have done so we could have a job makes us *treat* the job we have with more respect, because again, most of the time, I didn't create the job or the business. And even if someone did create the business, they didn't created everything that went ‘into’ that business; someone else may have done some of that and we just enter into it.

This should make us want to preserve this job so we can pass it on to others. If we destroy what we will pass on, there won't be something left for someone else. You have to take “care” of what you have to pass it on to others so they can enter into that. This perspective is very important, and I think what He is talking about here is that He's saying to the disciples, ‘when you are going to go out here to reap the harvest, it is going to be because other people have done the hard work ahead of you, and you are just going into the field now to reap what **they** have already sown. That's just about the way it works in most of life.

The next section is about the nature of ‘coming to faith’, so I will pick up in verse 39.

³⁹ From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I have done.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. ⁴¹ Many more **believed** because of His word; ⁴² and they were saying to the woman, “**It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves** and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”

⁴³ After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. ⁴⁴ For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. ⁴⁵ So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem and at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast. These are the steps of faith:

1) As we’ve seen in the testimony of John the Baptist and the early disciples, this woman’s testimony is what initially brings the townspeople out. It is **her** testimony. **She** has had the experience with Jesus. She goes into town and she gives testimony about Him that causes them to want to know more. Specifically, her testimony is, “**Come and see a man who has told me all the things that I have done.**” Now, that was her testimony. She may have said more than that, but that’s not recorded. “He has told me **all** the things that I have done.” Now, it’s an exaggeration, but she was duly impressed that He knew she had been married five times, and that she was living with a man who was not her husband. She testified that “He knows a lot about me … about everything I have ever done. This may have been an exaggeration but it got her attention and seemed to be enough of a testimony to warrant a reaction from the citizens of Sychar. So whatever she said, it got their attention and they wanted to know more. The idea that many believed in Him because of this testimony surely is looking at the ultimate response that they got to, rather than the initial response. They may have been curious at first, but they needed to hear more in order to come to faith.

The idea that many believed in Him because of her testimony surely is looking at the ultimate response. **Their faith** needed a firmer foundation than just this woman’s testimony. And over the next couple of days, no doubt, they got more evidence for **their** faith. But the first step was the excitement of this woman who dared to believe that Jesus **could be** the Messiah.

One comment here about what is happening here in the “building of faith” is that often people will initially have faith because people will be excited about our faith. Because it’s exciting to us, and what is usually exciting to us may become contagious and other people may get excited about it too. If we are not excited about our faith, how do we expect anybody else to become excited about faith? That’s the first point

Secondly, even “mustard-seed” faith spreads. You don’t have to have a lot of faith for it to spread. Just a small mustard seed can grow a big tree. It’s the same with yeast. **Mt. 13:33** says just a little yeast can cause a large amount of dough to rise. He said, “**The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.**” So, it’s not that you have to have **great** faith in order to be able to see great outcomes. Even small faith can still accomplish that, so faith is contagious.

The marketing technique of the Kingdom is “word of mouth”. That is the main marketing technique of the Kingdom of God. How does the Kingdom spread? It spreads primarily by word of mouth. To my knowledge, Jesus did not hire a marketing campaign manager, hire advertisers, or get an airplane to spell out “Jesus is Lord” to fly it over the cities. Jesus counted on “word of mouth” in order for the Kingdom to spread … from one person to another. The impact of Jesus on one person influences others. The greater the impact; the greater the influence, and then others are drawn to Him. Those are the first two points.

The third point is that faith takes time to grow by being informed. It takes time to grow faith. The Sycharians, I call the people who lived in the city of Sychar Sycharians, (that's what I call them) … they asked Jesus to stay with them, and He stayed for two days! Jesus knew that they needed time for their faith to develop, so He changed His schedule; He stopped and He took two days to be with them. Time is needed for faith to ferment; people have to stop and they have to listen. People need to block off time for faith-building.

I am studying with a couple. On Sunday afternoon we had our second study. We spent about an hour in study together after spending about an hour and a half during the first study. I had sent them some videos to watch which they saw between our studies, and they had, between themselves, probably four or five hours of intense conversation about the videos and the first study. By the time they got to the second study, they had an hour and a half; a couple of hours watching videos, then another three to four hours discussing that (they told me) so we are up to about 7 hours and they are up to about 11 hours of time **they** have spent so far in building faith.

The young man I am working with right now, when I first started to study, he said he honestly did not even know if there was a God. So we aren't talking about somebody who has had a life of faith that we're just beginning to build on it. We're starting about somebody that is ground level. So we have started spending the time that is needed in order to build that faith. Now, I know where I **want** him to be. I want him to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. But it is going to take some time to build the foundation so that it will reach that point where he can confess that Jesus is Lord. So we are going to take the time that is necessary to build that faith. So … it takes time. That is the **nature of faith**.

Fourthly, they listened to Him. If you are going to build faith, people will have to stop and listen. **Romans 10:17** says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” So Jesus can make His own case for faith if people will stop and listen to Him.

Now this is an important point: I understand that I cannot make a better case for Jesus than Jesus can make for Himself. Jesus doesn't need my help making His case. He is very capable of bringing people to faith. What I have to do is expose them to the Words of Jesus.

So, the pressure is off me because they aren't “**my**” words; it's not what **I** am going to be with coming up with clever ways of trying to lead people to faith. I need to connect people with Jesus. There is no **substitute**; NO substitute for the very words of God and Jesus. And it says in the text, verse 41, “… and many more believed because of His word.” Many more believed, not because of HER word, but because of Jesus' word.

Peter made the same confession in **John 6:68**. When Jesus said “do you want to leave too”, and Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? **You** have the words of eternal life.”

The Father, Himself, made it clear at the Mount of Transfiguration that this is **God’s** own testimony. This isn’t the testimony of man. God said in **Matthew 17:5**, “**This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him**”. God is making His **own** case. Jesus is making His **own** case. Exposing people to Jesus and His words is essential to faith. It **must not** be merely the testimony of others. Jesus Himself takes the stand and He testifies about Himself. He **knows who** He is and **why** He is here so He is His own best witness.

Now, there are other witnesses. Jesus even said in **John 5:33-35** that I have allowed, even some other witnesses like John the Baptist, not because I needed his testimony but I knew that you considered him to be a prophet and I knew His testimony would help you! “**You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.** ³⁴ **But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.** ³⁵ **He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.**” True faith is not built on the testimony of other people; it’s built on the testimony of Jesus.

The Sycharians say, “We have heard for ourselves”, so now they have heard the very words of Christ for themselves. Until a person hears for themselves, their faith will be dependent upon the faith of others. So **our** job, in helping people to develop faith, is to help ‘wean them off’ our faith, or their parent’s faith, onto **their own** faith … to being able to hear the words of Jesus for themselves.

The fifth step of faith, and all of this is coming straight from this text, is when **believing** turns to **knowing**. It turns into a conviction. So, what did they say? They say “**They know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.**” Where did they get to, what was their conclusion that after two days of hearing the words of Jesus **they knew?**

John 4:42, “It is no longer because of what you **said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and** know **that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.**” It was hearing for themselves that they concluded, ‘that **we know**’ He’s the Savior of the world. It was their conviction, based on what they heard from Jesus Himself.

The word for “know” is eido (ειδω). It means to know how, to regard with favor. These people came to a conclusion which led to a conviction. To know what we believe and why we believe it is essential. The woman’s focus was on Christ, the Messiah. “Could this be the Messiah? Could this be the Christ?” But their focus was not, in **their** words, was not the conclusion that He was the Messiah, but the conclusion **they** came to was, “He is the **Savior of the world.**”

It is interesting, and I don’t think I have this in my notes, but I find it interesting that they say, “He is the Savior of the **world.**” They didn’t just simply conclude that he was the Savior of the Jews, although Jesus said to the woman, “**Salvation is of the Jews**” in 4: 22. The Sycharians concluded that He was the Savior of the whole world. Jesus had already taught that to Nicodemus in **John 3:16**, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

But they came to the conclusion based on something He had taught them that He was the Savior of the world which was good news *for them* because they weren't Jews. *They* were Gentiles. *They* were Samaritans. They were partially Jew, but were considered Jews to be Gentiles.

Thus far, in John, we have seen several designations for Jesus up to this point. He is called the Word, the Life, the only begotten, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, Rabbi, Messiah, King of Israel, the bridegroom, the Son, a prophet – all of these are designations of Jesus in the first 4 chapters of the book of John. Various people *view* Jesus from different angles, and see various aspects of His true identity. ***But this embryonic faith must give birth to firm conviction; a true knowledge of things; a true reality that is fixed in our hearts as a non-negotiable part of our thinking.*** Our very lives and identity depend on that.

Carole: You said that the Samaritans had the Old Testament. It wasn't the Hebrew Scriptures but in Greek or Aramaic that they understood, so maybe, from knowing their own Scriptures, they knew a Messiah was coming who would be a savior and they just put it together.

Rod: Well, that's very likely. The Samaritans primarily studied the first five books, the books of Moses. They didn't like to get into some of the rest of the books because, again, it showed *their* origins, where they came from and all of that, but yes. I'm not saying that there is anything incompatible with Messiah and Savior. I'm simply saying that when they chose to say who they believed Jesus to be, they used 'Savior' and not 'Messiah'. And I think there is something significant in every designation that people use.

I'll give you another example of this. Actually, I happen to own this; I even wrote it in my journal because I am doing a journal on the Holy Spirit now. I finished my first journal. I found something I don't ever remember seeing and I've been studying the Bible for a long time. In the book of Luke, when it refers to God, it often refers to Him (not exclusively; but often) refers to Him as "***The Most High***" God. Now, why is that significant? It is significant because *that* is the way many of the **Gentiles who were believers** in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ... they referred to Him as the ***Most High God***. One of the most notable of those folks was a man called Melchizedek. Melchizedek lived in the time of Abraham; and in fact Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek and he was the priest of the ***Most High God***.

That phrase, Most High, was often used by "non-Jewish" people who had come to believe in the One True God. They used "Most High" because most of the people around them believed that there were many gods, and they needed some way to designate God in heaven to distinguish Him from all the other gods. So they called Him, "***The Most High God***." It became a term that was **very** common to distinguish Him from the other gods. In calling Him the Most High God, it became a term that was very common, but not among the Jews who believed in only one God. They were monotheists.

Carole: It sounds like, as Paul was saying to the people, "Let me introduce you to the unknown God. They had all these gods they were worshipping, but there is one you don't know about. Let me show you who He is" (**Acts 1:23**).

Rod: But I'm saying, the people who used the term Most High; they *did* believe in the same God who was called Yahweh, Jehovah or Adonai. That's just simply the phrase they would use that the Jews didn't use. Remember ... who wrote the book of Luke?

Carole: A Greek Physician.

Rod: Yes, a Greek doctor wrote that, and so when he used the term for God, he used "*The Most High God.*" It was the term that **he** was familiar with as a Greek; "The Most High". It was just interesting because I had never seen that and it wasn't just said once, but repeated several times in Luke. It even talks about the Spirit of the Most High overshadowing Mary.

Back to our text in **John 4:42** we see a shift of faith – from the woman to the people of Sychar. This reminds me of parents and children. Children begin with riding on the currents of their parent's faith. At some point, the shift must occur, and faith becomes their own. As it has been said by many preachers, I don't know who the first one to say this is, "God has no grandchildren. He has no grandchildren; He only has children." I can only imagine that Jesus must have viewed this new-found faith with some skepticism. That's my opinion because Jesus knows what is in man. He knows the fickleness of man. Men can believe easily and fall 'out of faith' as easily. Later, Jesus will wonder if faith will even be found on the earth when He returns (**Luke 18:8**). And the reason I believe that Jesus may have been somewhat skeptical of their coming to faith after a couple of days of saying that He was the savior of the world, the Messiah, was because the Jews themselves who spent a considerable amount of time with Jesus and saw the miracles that He did; they were called "disciples" of Jesus. They are called disciples! Read John 6. They're following Him, but when He starts teaching them, and getting into some demanding things about their relationship with Him, they walk away from Him (**John 6:60**). They become offended by Him. A person can be designated and called a disciple, but yet it doesn't mean that the next moment they won't be running away from Him. Even His own Apostles had a little trouble with that at the end where they left Him as well. Jesus knows that faith is fickle. People can declare something very strongly right now in the heat and excitement of the moment, and then, days later, cool off and not continue to walk in that faith.

But we don't know what happened to these particular people. We do know later on when Jesus came back through Samaria, at least some of the Samaritans would not even allow Him to stay in their town. They had gone from inviting Him to be there for two days (and it may have been a different city) but read **Luke 9:52-54**. "When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;"⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.⁵³ But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem." And **verse 54** says, "When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"" That's when James and John get so angry that they want Jesus to call down fire from heaven and burn these people up because they won't allow Him to stay in their city. Again, people can be fickle.

It is my job; and other Captive * Christians, to live out examples of committed lives, faithfully proclaiming the Gospel and to try to persuade men.

There are lessons to be learned from John 4 from that story but we must not romanticize the outcome or minimize the effort required for faith to come to maturity.

Buffy: Why did you say “captive”? *

Rod: I said that because there was a book that was written by George Barna called, “The Seven Tribes” where he breaks America down into seven different tribes. And when he’s talking about Christianity, he says there are those who are “*captive*” Christians and those who are “*casual*” Christians and he has certain criteria to measure that. *Captive Christians* were ***much more committed, much more dedicated*** to Christ in their daily lives and their practices than the Casual Christian. So, what I’m saying here is “If we are going to spread faith, it will usually be done by Captive Christians...people who have been taken captive by Christ... who belong to Him firmly.”

Again, we need to be careful. In any of these stories, we can rejoice that Jesus came there, He taught them, they ‘came to faith’, but we seem to extrapolate from that all of these things that must have happened after that. We think that these Samaritans turned into these wonderful Christians who began to spread the gospel throughout the whole world, build churches ... and we don’t know that any of that happened.

It’s similar to the Ethiopian eunuch in **Acts 8**. We know he went on his way rejoicing and we think, “Wow. He went down and won the entire African continent to Christ!” We don’t **know** that. We don’t know that. We have hopes that he told people about Christ, that he spread the gospel as much as he understood it, but sometimes we romanticize, as I call it, these stories and think, “Wow. All these wonderful things ...” but we don’t even know the outcome of the story. Human nature tells us that that doesn’t always happen. It doesn’t happen in the lives of everybody that we baptize in the pool; that they come up out of the water and they walk faithfully for the rest of their lives. That doesn’t always happen. I mean I hope it would be; we need to cultivate that.

And we also don’t need to minimize the effort that it takes to bring people to faith because if we do, we may ‘shortcut’ the process of people coming to faith and say after a couple of days, “Well, aren’t you ready to be baptized yet? I mean, it only took two days for the people in Sychar to come to faith. So what’s wrong with you?” And we can even point to shorter periods of time than that; the Ethiopian eunuch, the jailor, Paul himself... It took a short time for them to become Christians, but even Paul said when he was talking to Agrippa and even said to Paul, “**Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?**”

²⁹ Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.” **Acts 26:28-29**

So, some people take longer to come to faith than other people do, and we need not to let “one size fit all” in this.

So the effort required for faith to come to maturity, surely, in the thinking of Jesus, He understood these things. But these realities did not stop Him from seizing the opportunity and spending the time to do all He could to bring salvation to these Samaritan communities.

Jesus is telling us something:

- 1) All people are important and are valuable to the Father.**
- 2) No matter what one's past or background, all are potential recipients of eternal life and spiritual water.**
- 3) The Power of testimony is great even when the testimony is not 100% accurate (like the Samaritan woman's testimony).**
- 4) People are worth time spent.**
- 5) Our food or sustenance should be living out the will of God, including His will that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.**
- 6) Jesus shows us that we can enter a person's life anywhere, and use whatever illustration is at hand.** (That's what he did. He started where she was ... drawing water out of the well. He used that very water as His illustration to try to lead her to faith.)
- 7) Jesus shows us we should answer peoples' questions and not 'dumb down' our answers.** (He didn't 'dumb down' His answers to her. His answers were straight forward.)
- 8) Jesus teaches us that we are merely a part of a much bigger picture of sowing and reaping.**
- 9) Jesus was constantly modeling for His disciples the work God called Him to do.** (He lived out the mission before them.)

These are nine lessons that I gleaned from John 4 in the story of the woman at the well. The challenger Deep, the name I call this study, is certainly evident in a well near Sychar. But I'm not yet finished with John 4.

John 4:43-44

After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. ⁴⁴ For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

We learn that Jesus stayed for two days in Sychar assuming He spent the rest of the day at the well there sometime after 12:00 noon, and all the next day spending two nights there. Then He would have departed, maybe on the third day (we don't know exactly the time He left on that day). This is about the same amount of time He was in the tomb, although this is probably not significant ... I don't think.

He returns to His original plan to go to Galilee. This is what He was planning all along; to go to Galilee. Remember **John 4:1-3**: Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), ³ He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.

He left Jerusalem, He cleansed the temple, He chose some disciples to be with Him, and now He was going back to Galilee. Remember, the reason He went to Galilee leaving Judea was because of His popularity ... His popularity was growing. He was baptizing more people than John the Baptist. And because His popularity was growing, people were now coming to Jesus instead of John, so He decided to leave Jerusalem to go to Galilee.

In Samaria, people were coming in association with harvest, (and surely Jesus saw it that way in Judea), but He **had** to balance this with His **greater mission** of securing salvation for those who would put their faith in Him, and do so in His Father's timing. Here's what I mean:

Even though the fields were white to harvest, and Jesus wanted to harvest as much as He could while He was on this earth, He had **another** mission that He was accomplishing; and that was the mission of bringing salvation to the entire world. So if His popularity increases too quickly, and He has to fit what He's doing into the timing of God, He has to train disciples, He has to wait for the time He is supposed to go to the cross and the resurrection.

So Jesus has these two **competing values**; one is to win as many right now as possible; but do not lose sight of what you are supposed to be doing. Even in the limited commission He told His disciples in **Matthew 10:5**, "**Only go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" Was that because He didn't love the world? No, He loved the world, but he knew that in those three years, He didn't have time to do everything. So, yes, "win some; but also complete this work of saving the world."

It seems for Jesus everything is a balancing act. **He has an appointment with death** that secured salvation! That is an appointment **I** do not have. I do not have to function on the same level that Jesus functioned on because I'm not heading toward some place where I have to show up on a hill called Golgotha and die for the sins of the world. You and I don't have those agendas.

I have appointments, but I'm not aware of the **timing**. In other words, I do not know the timetable that God has me on. In **Galatians 4:4** it says, "**But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman ...**" Now I don't know if I was born at the right time or not! I was born 10 years after my other brother, and 13 years after my oldest brother, but I don't know if I was born on June 25, 1953; of whether I was born at the right time or not. I'm sure it was time plenty for my mom. She probably thought she was "past" time. I don't have a "time thing" going on in my head; but Jesus did. He had a goal. "He had set his face like flint" it says because He had to go to Jerusalem to die.

Mine, though important to me, it doesn't involve the salvation of the world as Jesus' did. So in this, I cannot think like Jesus does. There are things about the thinking of Jesus don't apply to me because I don't have this bigger agenda out here that **He** had to accomplish. And He was the only One who could accomplish those things.

But there is another significant testimony injected here. In **John 4:44** it says, "**For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.**" Since John inserted it here, it must mean that Jesus said it as they made their way to Galilee.

That's the only way I can interpret this because He wasn't in his own country in Samaria, but Galilee was his country. Nazareth was in Galilee. So, as he headed that way, He told them, and testified that ***a prophet does not have honor in His own country.***

Later, recorded in **Mark 6:1-6**, this testimony was repeated. It says, "Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him.² When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.⁴ Jesus said to them, "**A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household.**"⁵ **And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.**⁶ And He wondered at their unbelief.

This affected his ability to do mighty works among them ***because of*** their lack of faith. And He quotes the passage that a prophet is without honor in His own country.

When this statement is coupled with the one made in **John 2:23-25** and perhaps with the one in **John 3:20-21**, it shows us that Jesus, as He ministered to people had in His mind an understanding of their fickleness.

John 3:23-25

"Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.²⁵ He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person."

John 3:20-21, "Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed,²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God",.

Jesus understood people. He understood their hidden sins, and their shallowness, and their shifting faith. His success did not **depend** on the people He taught; it **depended** on the Father. Jesus **served** people but only **trusted** the Father. He did not allow Himself to think that the salvation of the world depended on His family, His hometown, or the Jewish nation. God wanted to use all of them, but He did not make them indispensable.

In other words, Jesus recognized that fulfilling His mission on the earth did not depend on how many people showed up, believed in Him, or put their faith in Him and stayed around. If His mission to accomplish depended on what people would do, then He was doomed to failure because He could not control that.

And I can tell you, for those of us who preach, it is a big temptation to want to put our success on others by saying, "If I see this, this and this, I'll be a success." And Jesus did not see a lot of fruit from a lot of the work that He did, although there were times when people were just climbing over themselves to get to Him or coming in numerous crowds of people.

But some of those things were short-lived. It was a flash in the pan; it did not reflect a sustainable Kingdom of God. It really wasn't until after the resurrection and after Pentecost and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit that we began to see exponential growth of the Kingdom. That is when we begin to see it. ***And what fueled it?*** Pretty much; persecution fueled it. ***That's*** what caused the kingdom to grow by leaps and bounds.

The idea of **honoring the prophets** was dealt with extensively in **Matthew 23:29-36**. Here, Jesus nails the Jewish leaders for a “**show**” of honoring the prophets by building and adorning the tombs of the prophets. They found it easy to honor **dead** prophets, but those who are alive and messing with their power-base is another matter. They didn’t honor **live** prophets; they honored dead prophets.

They could say, “If they had lived in their times with the prophets, they would not have participated in their murders.” And Jesus speaks of those. He would send prophets, wise men and Scribes who would be killed, crucified, scourged and persecuted by them ...

Matthew 23:34 Jesus told them that the blood of **all** the prophets would come upon this generation in which He lived and He explains this in much more detail in Matthew 24 concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem for their part in killing the prophets and stoning those sent to her; their house was left to them desolate.

A prophet is not with honor in his own country and among his own peoples. This was borne out over and over and over again throughout Israel’s history. Jesus points this out to them in no uncertain terms and says that *the chickens are going to come home to roost*. God has had just about enough of your killing the prophets, and so I am going to bring your city down for that very sin of not listening to the people I have sent to you.

Rather, they **should** have shown **honor** to the prophets. In **Luke 4:24-27**, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. In verse 25-26 Jesus uses the phrase and makes the point that because of people’s lack of honor of Elijah, when there was a famine in the land, Elijah was sent only to the widow of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. In other words, because they did not honor the prophets, when there was a famine in the land, God didn’t send them Elijah. He sent Elijah to a widow of Zarephath; a Gentile.

There were also many lepers but he sent a prophet only to Naaman of Syria. In other words, there were many lepers in Israel, but because they didn’t honor the prophets, God let a gentile be healed by Elisha. The indication is that as the Jews reject the prophets, Jesus and God will turn to the Gentiles; which is exactly what He did.

Paul spoke over and over again in the synagogues. He would be preaching and they would reject him. And Paul would say, “I am going to the Gentiles.” It was always ‘to the Jew first, and also the Greeks’.

Paul makes a huge point of this in Romans and Peter learned this lesson the hard way in Acts. In Luke 4 this was on the occasion of Jesus reading and speaking in the Synagogue of Nazareth. For this, they were going to throw Him off the brow of a hill. That’s how much they **did not** honor Him. They were ready to push Him off a hill.

The esteem or value found in the word “honor” is missing in the hearts of many. In **John 8:49**, when told He had a demon, and that He was a Samaritan, (they called Him a Samaritan) they were dishonoring Him. But He honored His Father.

John 8:48-59

The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?”

⁴⁹ “I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.”

⁵² At this they exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”

⁵⁴ Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

⁵⁷ “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

⁵⁸ “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” ⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

John 12:26 Jesus taught that those who served Jesus would be honored by the Father. “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”

In **John 5:23** Jesus applies honor to the Father as honor to the Son.

“...the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”

These verses go together. In other words, if you honor the Son; you honor the Father. Jesus knew that many, if not most, would not see the value in him, His word or His mission. Too many would value his own life and choices above Him. They would value self, but not Jesus.

Honor is  key to our response to Jesus. The desire for honor was prominent in the thinking of Jesus.