

**“Lift up your eyes! Look at the fields ready for harvest!”** We left Jerusalem after the Passover and headed into Judea, the region around Jerusalem. People had started hearing about the **“signs and wonders”** that Jesus had done and his popularity was starting to soar. People started coming to us, wanting to be baptized. Those who had been closely following John the Baptist were now starting to **leave** him and **follow** Jesus. But then we learned that the Pharisees were getting very upset at this growing popularity of Jesus. So we left Judea and headed back to Galilee. But in order to avoid the prying eyes of the Pharisees, we went through the land of **Samaria**, knowing the Pharisees would never venture into that rival land that they **hated** and considered **unclean**.

We became **hungry** and **thirsty** on our journey and so we stopped at Jacob’s well, a sacred site for the Samaritans. We left Jesus there to rest and went into the town nearby to get **“food.”** But as we returned, we saw from a distance that Jesus was talking to a **woman** at Jacob’s well. We were very confused why Jesus would be alone with a **Samaritan** woman—it did not look good. And we knew what kind of women came to get water at midday—outcasts and **prostitutes** who were avoiding others. But as we arrived at the well, the woman ran off excitedly, leaving her **water bucket** behind. We thought that was really strange. The whole reason she had come to the well was to get **water** and she left without any. We then took the **“food”** we had gotten from the city and said to Jesus, **“Eat something.”** But Jesus said to us, **“I have food that you do not know about.”** We were super confused. The whole reason we had stopped here was because we were out of food. Why did we go into town, a Samaritan town at that, to get food if Jesus already had some?! We wondered among ourselves, **“Did somebody bring him food while we were gone?!”** Seeing our confusion, Jesus said to us, **“My food is to do the will of my Father and finish his work.”**

Then Jesus said to us, **“Lift up your eyes! Look at the fields ready for harvest!”** As we lifted up our eyes we saw the fields around us, thinking Jesus wanted us to see the ripening grain—maybe Jesus had picked some grain to eat while we were gone. But then in those fields we saw **Samaritans** coming out from the city to see us. The woman that had run off was **back** and she had brought many from her town along with her. Apparently Jesus had somehow begun to knock down the 1,000 year division between Judeans and Samaritans with one conversation with a woman we assumed was a **prostitute**. Judeans and Samaritans had battled for centuries over who was the Creator’s true **people**, the true favored **nation**. And it had been a bloody battle, filled with hate and violence. We learned from the woman and the gathering crowd that Jesus had told her that there was no right or special place to worship the Creator. This debate had divided us for hundreds of years. Jesus said that the right place to worship was not **Mount Zion** or **Mount Gerizim**, it was not **Jerusalem** or **Samaria**. Jesus told her, **“True worship is in Spirit and truth.”** True worship could happen anywhere, anytime, in any person who was connected to the Creator’s Spirit. According to Jesus, neither the Judeans nor the Samaritans were the favored nation that had a monopoly on the Creator.

Then we heard more about this woman’s story. Jesus had found this Samaritan woman lost in a world of **prostituting** herself and jumping from one **false husband** to another. She had left the Creator behind in order to find **love** and **belonging** in many other places. She had looked to a **false water well**—her nation and its politicians—to fulfill her thirst and desires in life. But these false husbands, this false water well could never satisfy her. So then Jesus apparently offered the Samaritan woman **“living water”**—a **“living”** relationship with her Creator. And she had asked Jesus, **“Where do you get this living water?”** The answer was in Jesus himself. Jesus was the Christ and he was her **true husband**, he was the true water well where she could drink **“living water.”** And so the woman left behind her **false husbands** and **false water well**, so she might drink of **“living water”** and find love, belonging, and the fulfillment of all her needs in Jesus Christ, who had been sent by the Creator. And now Jesus was bringing a number of other Samaritans, lost to the same **false husbands** of their politicians, to the same **false water well** of patriotism back to the Creator. This was the **“harvest”** Jesus was talking about—bringing those lost in their **prostitution** back to the Creator. And our eyes were being opened to see that Jesus’s true **“food”** was doing the **“work”** of this **“harvest”** that his Father had given him. It wasn’t physical food of the **flesh** that nourished and energized Jesus, it was the **“food”** of the **Spirit**—doing whatever his Father asked him.

But it wasn’t just the Samaritans that Jesus was bringing back to the Creator in this **“harvest.”** Sure, the Samaritans had made a false husband and false water well of Mount Gerizim, the city of Samaria, and their sacred temple. But we Judeans had also made a false husband and false water well of Mount Zion, the city of Jerusalem, and our sacred temple. Both of us thought that we were **right**, both of us thought that we were the **chosen** ones. Both of us thought that we were the Creator’s **nation**. And Jesus was showing us that we were both **wrong**. Both Judeans and Samaritans were prostituting themselves, both of them were seeking a **“food”** that did not satisfy and were drinking at a **false water well** that would only leave us thirsty. We were no better than this Samaritan woman that we had judged and condemned in our minds for being a **prostitute**. We were no better than our hated enemies, the Samaritans. We were drinking from the wrong **“water wells,”** we were pursuing the wrong kind of **“food.”** Our own nationalism and political party loyalty was a false husband and we were prostituting ourselves as we joined in their silly battles over what was the right mountain, temple, city, and nation. Yet Jesus was offering all of us **“living water”** and a **“food”** that did not rot and spoil. Jesus was busy with the **“harvest,”** helping anyone who would listen to leave behind our nationalism and political party loyalty. Jesus was trying to save us from our **false husbands, false wells, and prostitution** and bring us back to a **“living”** relationship with the Creator.

**“Lift up your eyes! Look at the fields ready for harvest!”** The fields are ready for harvest all around us. All around us, people are prostituting themselves and jumping from one **false husband** to another, one **false water well** to another, looking for answers, looking for fulfillment in **nationalism** and **political party** loyalty. These false husbands are **failing** them, **abusing** them, and **tossing** them aside. The fighting, hatred, and debates between Judeans and Samaritans still rage today—they just happen under different names. Neither the Americans nor the Chinese are right. Neither the Russians nor the Ukrainians are right. Neither Israel nor Hamas is right. Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats are right. Neither Trump nor Biden is right. The water they **all** offer will **never satisfy** our thirst. The food they offer will only leave us **hungry** and empty inside. People are ready for something deeper and more meaningful. Jesus says to us, **“Lift up your eyes! Look at the fields ready for harvest!”**

Jesus is calling you to leave your **false husbands** and **false water wells** behind, to stop prostituting yourself through nationalism and political party loyalty. Jesus is calling you to eat true **“food”** by obeying the Word of our heavenly Father. Jesus is calling you to drink **“living water”** by worshiping **“in Spirit and truth”** and not according to the flesh. And Jesus is calling you to participate in the **“harvest.”** Like the Samaritan woman, you can offer those around you a glimpse of the better Way—the Jesus Way. You can show those around you where to find **“living water.”** It is not on the **news channels**, it is not from the **Republicans** or **Democrats**, it is not from **America** or **China**. These false husbands and false water wells cannot satisfy us, protect us, provide for us, or make us safe and secure. **“Where do you get this living water?”** It is only Jesus Christ who can give **“living water”** to a thirsty and dying world. **“So lift up your eyes! Look at the fields ready for harvest!” Amen.**