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*“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)*

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January 2025

No. 469

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## MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

(Part II)

In the first part of this article, we learned that we often miss opportunities by failing to listen to others and by using our time unwisely. Other than those reasons, we also miss opportunities by not being observant. As we are quickly acclimating and becoming used to the instant gratification modern society provides, we’re losing our awareness of the situation and environment around us. We miss so many opportunities because we’re not ready to notice them. This isn’t a symptom of only modern times, however. Jesus had to tell the disciples to be observant of the situation around them

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when passing through Samaria.

Jesus and the disciples with Him found themselves in a unique situation when traveling from Judaea back north to Galilee in John 4. Sandwiched between the two regions was Samaria, and many Jews on similar journeys would deliberately take alternate routes to avoid Samaria. After all, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9). Jesus, however, goes into Samaria and has a conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well, much to her shock. Meanwhile, the disciples were concerned with what many of us often are: What are we going to eat? The Samaritan woman, so amazed at her conversation and conviction that Jesus is Christ, has gone out into the neighborhoods to spread the word. As these people come to gather and see Jesus for themselves, the disciples return. The disciples clearly care for Jesus and are simply concerned for His physical well being, which is no bad thing. However, with their focus on whether Jesus has eaten or not, Jesus notes they're missing a prime opportunity right in front of them:

*Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. (John 4:34-38)*

Lift up your eyes. Jesus tells the disciples that they are missing the opportunity to reap what he has begun sowing because they're focused on eating. How many opportunities would we begin to notice around us if we would only open our eyes and be observant? We've heard people in motor vehicle crashes say they looked but they didn't see the other person. We find ourselves similarly looking but not seeing, and hearing but not

listening. Seeing and listening are both actively making sense of what is around us. Jesus' call for the disciples to open their eyes tells us the opportunities are made evident when we actually make attempts to see and listen to the people and situations around us.

We have found ourselves in a perfect storm of missing opportunities. Days filled with instant gratification have reduced our attention spans to seconds instead of minutes. We have so many distractions in large part due to our prosperity. In Matthew 19, Jesus called on a prosperous young man to get rid of his possessions because they were distracting him from opportunities with his community.

*And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heav-*

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

The Harvester

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*en. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. (Mat. 19:16-24)*

The Old Law commandments that Jesus tells the young man to focus on are within the numbered commandments 5-10, which are all focused on people around us: Our community, including the smallest and most intimate unit of community, the family. Jesus is telling the young man that his possessions and the distractions they provide were coming between the young man and the people around him. Are we so different? We are missing many opportunities to create and strengthen relationships around us because we're so distracted. By removing distractions, we can create opportunities and begin to notice the many opportunities that are already surrounding us.

We can't blame many problems on a single missed opportunity, but rather they arise because we let so many missed opportunities accumulate. Often, opportunities we did not initially want to take wound up being some of the best things to happen to us. We have limited time, so we have to take advantage of the opportunities we get in order to grow in knowledge, build relationships, and help others. We have a clear duty to pay attention: "*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil*" (Eph. 5:15-16). If we put distractions aside, open our eyes, and redeem the gift of time that we're given, we can accomplish so much more for ourselves and those around us.

BEN

FELLOWSHIP GATHERING

Saturday, January 18, 2025 at 12:00p.m.(CT)

The Venue at Smith Farm

1821 County Road 112

Woodland, AL 36280

Covered dish lunch and singing

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Abram was rich in gold, silver, and what else?
2. Who prayed for the fiery serpents to be taken away from Israel?
3. How long did Jonah say it would be before Nineveh was to be overthrown?
4. What did Jesus say is the “great commandment in the law”?
5. Demetrius of Ephesus was a...?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month’s questions?

1. What was God to give Abraham as an everlasting possession? THE LAND OF CANAAN (Gen. 17:8)
2. Who was afflicted with leprosy for speaking out against Moses? MIRIAM (Num. 12:10)
3. What did Joseph want to do when he discovered Mary was pregnant? (QUIETLY) DIVORCE HER (Mat. 1:19)
4. What did the disciples do when people brought their young children to Jesus? THEY REBUKED THEM (Mat. 19:13)
5. During what traumatic event did the apostle Paul take bread and give thanks? A SEA VOYAGE (Acts 27:35)

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## PRIORITIES IN LIFE

Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were two sisters and a brother that lived in the town of Bethany which was approximately two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus apparently stopped at their house occasionally when He came to Jerusalem and grew to love the family members. This was the Lazarus who became ill and died and Jesus raised him from the dead as described in John chapter 11. I want us to consider the following story in the life of this family. Jesus and his disciples came to Martha’s house.

*Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:38-42)*

Brothers and sisters in a family can have very different personalities. In this case, Martha was the owner of the house and she offered to give hospitality to Jesus and His disciples. Therefore, she was very busy preparing the meal for her guests which would have been a small crowd. She was a server and felt the responsibility of getting everything prepared in a timely manner for Jesus and His disciples. She was doing a good work. But her sister Mary was interested in listening to what Jesus had to say. He was likely teaching about the kingdom of God and explaining spiritual principles. It was important to Mary to hear these things. Martha was burdened with all the necessary preparations and she looked at her sister Mary who was not helping her but instead was sitting at the feet of Jesus taking in all that He had to say. Martha needed help, so she approached Jesus, explained her problem, and asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her. Martha thought that Jesus would sympathize with her and get Mary to help. But she was wrong. While serving Jesus and His disciples was a good work, the more important thing was understanding the spiritual matters that He was teaching; since Mary was interested in His teaching, and that was more important, Jesus was not going to take that away from her.

This leads me to ask, "What are the more important things in life?" What should our priorities be? It is obviously important

to provide food and clothing and shelter for our families. The apostle Paul taught Timothy,

*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. (1 Tim. 5:8)*

But Jesus taught us that it is even more important to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Mat. 6:31-33)*

It is not that providing food, clothing, and shelter are not important. I believe that we are taught that it is more important to first seek the things that lead to eternal life and the other less important things will fall into place.

The Israelites were commanded to give to the Lord the first fruits of their produce and cattle. Even the firstborn son was dedicated to the Lord.

*Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me. (Exo. 22:29-30)*

The priority was to give the Lord the first of everything. Solomon gave the following instruction in Proverbs 3:9-10:

*Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*

## GOSPEL MEETINGS

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DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
January 31 - February 2	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Kevin Mills & Christian Mills (Senoia, GA)

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The promise was that God would bless them if they honored the Lord and put Him first. Many people seem to have the priority of taking care of themselves first and then giving to the Lord whatever is left over; with that priority, the Lord is often neglected.

Many people also seem to make it a priority in their life to obtain earthly possessions and wealth. Consider the following parable given by Jesus.

*And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16-21)*

Life is short and we don't know when it will end for us. It is more important to be rich toward God than to store up treasure in this life for yourself.

My encouragement to you is to put the things of God first in your life. That could be your time, your possessions, and the path of your life. Give priority to God.

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