

Vision 2026, John 4:35, 1/5/26

I'm coaching Middle School Wrestling for the first time this year and now I'm realizing why coaches always have a whistle in their mouths. I'm constantly fighting for their focused attention. Getting these boys to lock in is a challenge. But it's not just middle school boys is it? Have you ever been caught not really listening when someone is talking to you? Yeah—we probably all have. Maybe it was your manager giving a team briefing while you were already thinking about lunch. Or you're in school, the teacher suddenly calls on you, and you realize... you have no idea what the question even was.

I'll be honest—this happens to me more often than I'd like to admit. And usually, I don't admit it. Shannan will be telling me something, and at some point she'll stop and say, *"You didn't hear a word I just said."* And I'll respond confidently, *"Yes I did."* She'll say, *"Okay—what did I say?"*

And that's the moment I realize I'm already toast. I try to quickly replay the last three words I heard, but it's too late. The evidence is in—I was physically present, but mentally somewhere else. Created for connection...

And here's the thing—this doesn't just happen in conversations. It happens spiritually. We can be physically present, maybe participating or going through the motions on the outside, and yet spiritually we may be missing what God really wants to show us or what God is doing all around us, or a gospel opportunity right in front of us.

And that's what is happening in John 4, Jesus looks at His disciples and essentially says, *"You're here—but you're missing out on what's really what's happening. Open your eyes and see what I see."*

Jesus' words to his disciples are *the* same words to us today. That's what this morning is about. We want to open God's Word, and see what Jesus sees with spiritual eyes. We want to catch the vision of what God is already doing—and where He is leading Brandywine Valley Church in 2026.

A little background before we jump in. Jesus has just finished a life-altering conversation with a Samaritan woman drawing water at a well in her hometown. This conversation broke several of the cultural rules of the day. She was a woman—speaking with a Jewish rabbi. She was a Samaritan—part of a people group despised by the Jews. And she was an outcast even within her own community. And yet there is Jesus—crossing social, ethnic, and spiritual boundaries to show his disciples and show us that no one is beyond the reach of His love and saving grace.

27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman.

But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"

30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him. 31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" (maybe he's hiding some falafel and humus in his robe pocket).

34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

This is one of the moments where I'm convinced Jesus had a sense of humor. I don't think he said this with a straight face. Jesus lets them sit in their confusion for a moment because He's about to teach them something deeper. He's not dismissing physical needs—He's reframing priorities. *"There's a time for food, yes—but don't miss what's happening right now."* Then he says-

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.

In other words, Jesus is saying, *"You're focused on lunch—but do you see what's happening right now? This Samaritan woman is receiving my grace and having her life changed, this is a gospel not only for the Jewish people, and look—people are already coming out of the towns toward us, spiritually hungry."* He's warning them about spiritual autopilot. About being too distracted to pay attention to what God is doing right now. *"Fellas—lift your eyes. Catch the vision. The harvest is already here."*

Like the disciples, sometimes we miss the moment of spiritual harvest because we're on spiritual autopilot. Going through the motions... but checked out. We miss opportunities because they don't fit our timeline, agenda, our calendar. Or like Tim said last week, we regard people according to the flesh. We think they are a lost cause. We might see people with messy lives but Jesus sees them as spiritually thirsty like the woman at the well.

So the question is: *Do we catch the vision? Are we opening our eyes to the spiritual harvest all around us?* Because make no mistake, the Spirit is on the move in our day, just as He was in Jesus' day.

In fact, over the last two years, something remarkable has happened. A 3 decade-long trend of people leaving the faith and dropping out of church has plateaued and is now reversing.¹ People are beginning to come to grips with the reality that the secular experiment is empty. And here's what's so encouraging to me, the Gen Z and Millennials are attending church more frequently than older generations — a reversal of long-standing patterns.

¹ https://www.barna.com/research/belief-in-jesus-rises/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

We are seeing this right here in our community with the growth of our student ministry and among college age students. A few college students from Brandywine and other area churches caught a vision for spiritual revival in their generation and started a ministry called the Barn that we've been supporting. It's exploded, hundreds of young people are coming to hear the preaching of the gospel and worship the Lord, gathering outdoors in the heat of the summer and the cold of the winter!

When we stop and open our eyes, despite the culture wars, political division, international conflicts, economic uncertainty, and a pending AI apocalypse- things that we are often focused on- there is a spiritual harvest ready! We have a culture that is spiritually open, relationally empty, and searching for hope and real community. People who may not yet know the name of Jesus, but who are asking the questions Jesus came to answer, and longing for a future Jesus came to offer.

Where do I need my eyes opened to spiritual opportunity—because the Spirit is already On the Move there?" Places we're already in but much like the disciples we're spiritually on autopilot. *"What if the harvest isn't across the world—but across the cubicle?"*

- A coworker who keeps things professional but drops hints about stress, burnout, or purpose.
- A team member who just went through loss, divorce, or disappointment and suddenly feels more open.

Or the harvest is across the lunch table at school.

- It looks like noticing the friend who's hurting, sitting with the person who's alone, or listening to the one who asks hard questions
- Sometimes it's as simple as recognizing that what's showing up on someone's social media isn't confidence—it's a cry for help.

Or the harvest is across the fence.

- Neighbors that we see every week but we've rarely taken the time to know.
- Or the neighbor whose house and property tell a story—that life has gotten heavier than they can handle on their own.

The harvest often isn't far away. It's right in front of us—waiting for us to lift our eyes.

And we don't just want to lift our eyes individually—we want to lift our eyes together as a church. The question for us is: **Where is the Spirit on the move among our church right now?**

Take a few minutes to give you a preview of where we are headed, and what we see the Spirit doing here this year. Keeping in mind, we hold loosely plans, we always want to be ready to move where we sense God moving.

Our **On the Move** Initiatives are Simple

Building our Faith: *We are building resilient disciples of Jesus in an increasingly post-Christian culture.*

Focus On Prayer: And that is why we are starting our year with a prayer emphasis. In fact we are coming together with five churches in Wilmington all uniting for 21 days of kingdom-focused prayer asking for God to bring personal, church, and community revival. The next three weeks will be a series called “Pray like Jesus” and we will be praying for the churches in our community by name, and together learning to pray the Lord’s prayer customized for our lives and community for the next 21 days, and then gathering altogether Feb 1 for a prayer and worship time.

Focus on Deeper Relationships: We’re also continuing to strengthen our Life Groups ministry, because discipleship happens best in meaningful relationships. Our desire is for everyone who wants deeper community and spiritual growth to have a place to belong. Our **Life Groups Fair is January 11**, and we’re excited to help people take that next step.

Focus on Leadership for Sustainable Growth: As we build a growing vine of discipleship, we also need a strong trellis to support it. That means continuing to move toward a biblical leadership structure—elders, men and women serving as deacons, and simplified committees. Lord willing, we’ll vote on proposed bylaw changes in May and begin implementing them over the following year. Before that, we’ll host a family gathering so everyone can understand the changes, ask questions, and walk forward together.

Reaching our Community: *We are mobilizing our church to demonstrate and declare the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Focus on Learning from the Early Church: Beginning with Missions Month in February, we’ll launch a year-long journey through the Book of Acts, “tell the story.” We want to see how the Spirit was on the move in the early church—and allow that same Spirit to shape our vision for the church today.

Focus on Inviting others to “Come and See” Push to Easter April 5: “Invest and Invite.” As we move toward Easter on **April 5**, we’ll lean into an “**Invest and Invite**” emphasis—praying intentionally for people God has placed in our lives and inviting them to take steps toward Jesus.

I’m praying for 100 people in our Christianity 101 class...

Focus on Serving our City: **Go Week- May 3-10**, Last year was our greatest participation yet, and we’re excited to build on that momentum—deepening our impact as we serve and share the gospel together. Begin praying now about how you might participate—maybe taking a day off, or even the whole week—to join what God is doing.

Shaping our Future: *We are redesigning key areas of our church building to align with our ministry needs and introduce the generations to Jesus.*

Focus on Facilities that Facilitate Ministry: We're moving forward with a significant renovation of key areas of our building. I often say it this way: *facilities facilitate ministry*—and that's the heart behind this project. In February and March, we'll also be inviting those who are newer to Brandywine to come together, hear the full vision, and find their place participating in what God is doing here. Lord willing, we'll break ground next month, with renovations continuing through much of the year.

Which means we will also have to **Focus on Flexibility**. With renovation comes disruption—which means this will also be a year where we focus on flexibility, communication, grace with one another. Schedules will shift. Spaces will change. But our mission remains the same.

The question for us in 2026 isn't whether the Spirit of God is on the move—the question is whether we are lifting our eyes with Jesus and moving with him.

The reason there is a harvest at all is because Jesus first gave Himself for us. Communion is where we're reminded that we don't carry this mission in our own strength—we carry it as people who have been forgiven, healed, and made new. As we come to the table, we come grateful, humbled, and ready to follow wherever He leads.