

Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13: 1-9

*Do you not say, "Four months more and then the harvest?" I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.*

John 4:35

## **Expecting How *Much* Harvest?**

We just finished with Thanksgiving here in the United States, a period where we who are believers express our gratitude to God for His Providence and for the harvest which has (more or less) concluded. It is a curious coincidence that the very next events to come up in what has become known generally as the Holiday Season are Christmas and Hanukkah; remove the influence of faith, and these particular dates are also connected with abundance and its sharing with others.

It is, perhaps, fitting under the circumstances to note that God also is interested in harvests, only of a different kind. The big question is, are *we*?

Let me ask a simple question: When a farmer plants seed, is he looking for a *small* harvest or a *large* one? Obviously, he wants a large one – first, in order to return his investment on the seed he purchased (and possibly pay back the money he borrowed to buy the seed), and to make a profit from what is left over. No one plants a crop looking for a tiny harvest.

There are many references in the Scriptures to farming and raising crops, often used as parables and analogies, as Jesus Himself did in the aforementioned passages. Why? Because it was something people knew in the agrarian society of ancient Israel. Even today, with family farms dwindling and the job of raising crops done more by large conglomerates, many people often raise gardens for the home – and most folks *still* understand the concept of wanting a large yield for their efforts.

In addition, there are references in the Word to the concept of sowing and reaping. Dr. Charles Stanley of Atlanta's First Baptist Church is famous for, perhaps, putting it in the simplest terms possible; "we reap what we sow, more than we sow, and later than we sow." I like to reference Dr. Stanley in this matter since, unlike so many preachers today, he understands the idea of sowing and reaping in areas of both sin and righteousness. Most pastors who use this school of thought tend only to do so in terms of sowing finances; every time the collection plate is passed, people get the "thirty, sixty and a hundred fold" reference in an effort to get them to tithe or give larger offerings to the church. In some churches, it's about the only time you *ever* hear that reference.

Yes, this principle does work for finances and, yes, it also works for the actions we take in our lives. But there is a larger purpose at work here as well – that of souls for the Kingdom of God. He is the One who created us and wants us to live with Him forever, which is why He went to all the trouble of making a way for us to be reconciled to Him. Indeed, the entire story of the Bible is the redemption of the human race. Despite the fact that many view God as a stern disciplinarian ready to smack down "sinners," God reminds us that He is the One who is not willing that *any* should perish, but all to come to repentance and salvation (2 Peter 3:9).

Knowing this, we must ask ourselves – would God be pleased with a small harvest of souls or a large one? Don't misunderstand me; I'm not trying to freak anybody out or lay a guilt trip on believers, thinking *I'm not doing enough; no matter what I do, it's not enough*. Jesus Himself said the work of the Lord is to believe in the One who He sent (John 6:29). And “believe” means to trust in, cling to, and rely upon in every area of life.

The point I'm driving at is our attitude toward the very idea of a harvest. We speak a lot of Revival, especially as we see the culture deteriorating, but what do we mean when we say we want Revival? What is our motivation? Is it the motivations of the Lord – seeing as many of His creation brought into the Kingdom and rescued from Hell? Or are we interested only in seeing “our own” saved, and those “others” can just take their punishment and like it (the lousy *creeps...*). It's an easy enough mind-set to get into, especially at this time of year when you see stories like some low-level thief ripping off a Salvation Army kettle or stealing toys from charities for poor children, or certain organizations doing everything in their power to take the “Merry” out of Christmas, and erase even the name of the holiday from the public dialogue.

This is where we have to remember that, in the end, we're not talking about *produce*, but *people* – the one element of God's creation that He made specifically to have a relationship with. He made us, He loves us and He wants us with Him forever. Hell was created as the ultimate, eternal place of punishment for Satan and the angels he suckered into joining his rebellion (Matthew 25:41). It was not made, and was never meant, for *us*.

Part of the problem is that most efforts to advance the Kingdom of God focus not so much *on* God as on the individual sins to be cleansed. Jesus Himself said that once He is lifted up, He will draw all men to Himself (John 12:32). Sin must be addressed in this culture and this nation, but not to the extent of ignoring the One Who corrects the problem.

If we look on sin as a disease, then obviously the Lord Jesus is the cure. It is only natural, then, that we lift Him up and not the works of Satan that we're trying to fight. When a person is diagnosed with a disease, they focus on it just enough to realize they are sick, and immediately move to the next question – how do I get rid of this? *Is there a cure, and how do I get it?* Patients who sit around obsessing over the illness to the point of not even searching for a cure never seem to get one.

There are two things we need to understand:

1. God will not have sin in His Kingdom. In Revelation 21: 8, Jesus says very plainly that, “*(T)he cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*”
2. Because of this, God won't remember *our* sins in His Kingdom; neither will we. In Isaiah 43:25, the Lord says that “*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and remembers your sins no more.*”

The work of Satan is impermanent; it will not endure, and Satan himself will spend eternity in the place created for him and his demons. Even if we *wanted* to (which I rather doubt anyone would after gaining entry into Heaven), we couldn't even visit the place, as Jesus Himself pointed out in His parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16: 19-31). So, it's likely we will not waste one moment thinking about that loser in eternity. So why

focus on him and how impermanent works *now*, only to have to break it – like a bad habit – later?

*“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him,”* says the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2: 9 (quoting Isaiah 64: 4). In other words, what’s coming in Heaven is so fantastic, it’s beyond our imagination. We will have all eternity to explore the riches of God’s love and creativity. That’s the practice we need to develop now, and that’s what we need to present to people about the Kingdom of God. But before we can fully enjoy that (although we can access the Kingdom now on Earth by getting closer to the Lord), we’ve got work to do. Don’t get me wrong, personal and cultural sin should be confronted and dealt with. But once it’s gone, we have so much that is *better* to focus on and enjoy.

For the Glory of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ  
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