

## The Preparation for the Harvest

We are in a time of preparation for Harvest. There is a Harvest when God is coming back and a harvest of believers that we will experience right here and soon in this community. Today I want to speak about this the harvest in this region. God has given us a tremendous responsibility to win souls for him.

God has said:

### **Genesis 8:22**

New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>22</sup> As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night."

### **John 4:35-36**

New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>35</sup> You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe (White) for harvest. <sup>36</sup> The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike!

## **Prayer**

Friends, spiritual spring is upon us here in this church. The period of growth is here, while we have at times felt the wet and cold of winter and growth has been lean, let us thank God for the spring is coming and a harvest is drawing ever nearer.

Now when we think of spring, it conjures up within us a very Disney like image of beautiful flowers, birds singing, and shining sun. Let us not forget that when this season comes there are also rougher days of rain and mud. When these times of rain and turmoil come to us, we should thank God for them because these events cause growth.

In a spiritual spring we will see the young people on fire for God, we hear joyful cries from the people in the church, glorifying God for the awesome things he is doing. We will see revival. Many will come to the Lord. Grace will abound and the people of the church will grow. This is an exciting time of new birth. We are preparing for the harvest

### **Psalm 65:10**

New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>10</sup> You drench the plowed ground with rain,  
melting the clods and leveling the ridges.  
You soften the earth with showers  
and bless its abundant crops.

Let`s take a good look at the four seasons and see what we can discover:

There are four seasons that God has created.

- In winter the fields lie in wait
- In spring the fields are plowed and the seed is sown.
- In summer there is a time of growth
- In fall there is a harvest

## 1) Preparation

Sorry but I am about to use the “W” word here... There is a tremendous amount of work for us to do before the harvest. Yet we must consider the privilege and rewards of serving our Lord Jesus in contrast to our labour.

In the preparation stage we must plan.

- Do we have the necessary storage facilities for the harvest?
  - Do we have the facilities that we need?
- Do we have the tools necessary to plow and harrow the field?
  - Have those who go into the community the confidence and the training required?
- Do we have the seed that we need?
  - Is the word of God established in the hearts of those going out so that the seed of the Gospel can be planted?
- Do we have the labourers that we need for planting?
  - Do we have a team of evangelists to our community?
- Do we have the labourers that we need for caring for the plants?
  - Do we have Mothers and Fathers in Zion who will care for those who are brought into the flock?
- Do we have the labourers that we need to gather the harvest?
  - Do we have the infrastructure to put giftings into place within Gods house so that the fruit of the harvest does not go to waste?

**So... what needs to be done?**

## 2) Plowing

We must plow the field. No one expects to reap the grain as soon as the field is plowed, but just like a diligent farmer we must have faith that the harvest will come. Sometimes God in his infinite grace will overtake our efforts to plow the field and there is an early reaping but that is his sovereign privilege and not something that allows us to shirk our own responsibilities.

Are we softening the soil?

Are we expressing the love of God to the Community in which we live?

Are we establishing relationships that will allow us to speak the gospel into people’s lives?

It is our Job to show the love of Christ. God through the work of his Holy Spirit does the convicting, notice I did not say condemning. The Holy Spirit is even now convicting the hearts of those his is calling. It is like a plowshare that is digging deep into their hearts. It is digging right down to the very core of the person right into their spirit.

Sometimes problems are not taken away when people pray, because the problem is there to solve the person. If the heart is hard the plow needs to break the soil into tiny pieces under the hand of God to make the soil fertile for planting the seed of faith; which leads us to:

### **3) Planting**

Okay so we see that Law and Grace have been applied, conviction has occurred. In short, by the grace of the Holy Spirit and the love of God the field has been made ready. Now as faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ who bid us "Go, make disciples" we ask the almighty Father to bless the seed bag of the Gospel and make it fertile in the lives of those around us. God has given us his promise that his word will not return to us void. (cf. Isa 55:11) So, we walk the field and sow it with the Word of God's grace, the promises of the gospel, and the good news of Jesus Christ.

**So... what happens, if we don't plow first?**

#### **Matthew 13:3b-9:**

Jesus said: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. **4** As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. **5** Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. **6** But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. **7** Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. **8** Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! **9** Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

### **4) Harrowing (weeding)**

Now when many of you educated in the scriptures get to this point, I will often hear: "but has not the Lord said in Matthew 13:28-30:

#### **Matthew 13:28-30:**

**28** He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' **29** But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest; and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

And this is true. Stay with me as here is what I am actually saying about Harrowing.

- 1) Harrowing as weeding is not what we are talking about
- 2) Harrowing as Acutely Distressing - As an experience - Don't be distressed to care for another, just because it's out of your comfort zone or expertise. Note: This type of harrowing is not what is meant here.
- 3) Harrowing as caring for a planted seed; we cannot expect to sow seed and then leave it. We must care for where the seed has been sown. We must pray that it goes deep into the heart of those who hear it. We must carefully cultivate and nurture it as it grows.

Now visualize a farmer out in the field, some of the seeds have not found their way into the furrows made for them. This is when the farmer pulls out his rake and gathers the seed that is scattered. The

prayers of the church and pastor make up the request for God's harrow to bring in the scattered seed and to bury it in the love and warmth of the rich soil, so that it may grow. When put into the furrow, the seed planted in the heart then gets a chance to germinate and grow in an environment wherein it can flourish.

**For a revival to take seed and grow, we must be good stewards and do our preparatory tasks. Revivals without doing the preparatory work of prayer, intercession, caring and preparing to receive, seldom last.**

We must look forward in faith with a hopeful expectation of what God is doing. We must not be discouraged in the season of preparation. We must be diligent to prepare the way for the preaching the Gospel. The word of God must land on fertile soil if it is to bear fruit. While we all know that it is the Holy Spirit that draws all men to Christ, we are not given a license to be negligent in our duties to plow the field.

Now most of us can do these things, perform our duties and rejoice in faith, yet there is an aspect of the work which we are NOT capable of... That's right it is totally beyond us!

While we can plow, sow and harrow we will be in a total drought if we don't have showers from an open heaven. We will be labouring in vain unless these efforts are blessed by the rain of the Holy Spirit's influence. It is the Holy Spirit that does the work in the human heart. We are but servants of the Lord, without him all our efforts would not amount to any more than dry ground.

Grace falls like rain... If there is no rain there is nothing to soften the soil of a person's heart. Don't believe me ever notice how before God softens the heart. Many people have had their hearts hardened by their own experiences or by the world to a point where often a man feels nothing, yet after the rain from heaven is upon them, there is a brokenness and openness. A person who was once hard now feels everything. Where there was once flint in his eyes, there is now healing tears.

### **Spring:**

Many of the things that have been done, the plowing, the sowing and so forth have been done in preparation for the growing season. God has instructed his faithful to plow the field, to sow the seed and to care for the field. This season goes for as long as it pleases the Lord and he as the great husbandman of the farm decides that it is time.

Do not be discouraged, The Holy Spirit has been working in the background and just like a planted field before the spring; those who labour may not yet see its fruit.

Next in this marvelous cycle, we see the grace of God as he pours out his Spirit and his grace falls like rain upon those seeds that are planted in the field. We begin to see the fruit of all the planting; we begin to see new life springing forth. Where we have beheld a broken, muddy field, we now see the work that all the preparation has done. There are small beginnings, as Mark 4:28 tells us:

### **Mark 4:28**

New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>28</sup> The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens.

Nothing that we do can make the harvest grow any faster than that which God has put into place. We can care for the plant, we can nurture it, water it and so forth, but it will grow as it has been made to grow. We cannot expect a full crop of ripe harvest in a day. We must be patient to receive the promise.

When grace first hits the seed it can only partake of what it needs to grow. When it has grown to maturity, it can absorb more. We must expect a new seed to absorb and use that which a fully mature plant can.

### **Let's examine the life cycle of the plant a bit...**

- It is Planted (The Gospel is Shared)
- It Rains (The Holy Spirit Draws)
- It begins to germinate (A stirring in the heart Persons occurs)
- It Sprouts (A desire to seek after salvation in Christ)
- It Grows (It grows in relationship and Knowledge of Jesus)
  - Wind Blows & Storms Come
- It is Harvested (It produces fruit)
- It Reproduces (It makes disciples)

All of this requires that it be maintained with the living water.

Now let's think about what happens when the plant springs forth from the soil... It leaves behind the earthly things and embraces the heavenly. It constantly grows, ever reaching for the promise of the sun.

The grounding is solid, the hungering and thirsting for righteousness established, but now the plant is reaching for God. The seed has moved beyond the warmth and security and nursery of the soil and now must stand fast in the storm and the wind, ever reaching heavenward because his security is in God alone.

The mature plant has come to trust in God and does not worry when the wind blows because the plant is not what it once was and it recognizes that no matter what happens for this point on, God's grace has been sufficient.

Food for thought... Not everyone is the same plant... God has a purpose for your life, just as he has a purpose for the person next to you. If you are called to be a rutabaga, don't expect everyone else to be one too, they might be a carrot, or a stalk of grain. A rutabaga judging a carrot for the leanness of its shape hardly fits the design of the husbandman.

### **The Husbandman and His Servants:**

We must never forget that the field of the harvest is NOT growing of its own accord. It is NOT a wild thing but a carefully planned and managed thing. We might not understand what the Master has planned for us but do not doubt there is a plan.

We have a part to play, but Jesus is the one who determines the parts. It is our role to be ever vigilant to those young seedlings. It is not enough to bring someone into the kingdom, rejoice, and hand them over to the Holy Spirit like our responsibility is done. We must care for the young in Christ. If you have brought them to Christ, watch over them as a mother brooding over her children.

If my kids ever get sick, my wife or I can tell with one look. As Disciples of Christ, we need to have a tender and caring heart for those who come to Jesus. We must be vigilant to care for them. We are called to care for them.

### **John 21:15-17**

New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>15</sup> After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

<sup>16</sup> Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

<sup>17</sup> A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep.

Do you see that we as the body of Christ have a responsibility to care for those to whom we witness, bring to the Lord and help to grow? Responsibility doesn't end when the planted seed sprouts.

### **Charles Spurgeon once said about revival:**

"Shepherds are up all night at lambing time to catch up the lambs as soon as they are born, and take them in and nurse them, and we who ought to be shepherds for God, should be looking out for all the lambs, especially at seasons when many are born into Gods great fold, for tender nursing is wanted in the first stages of new life."

Jesus said:

### **Matthew 9:37**

New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>37</sup> He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few.

### **Conclusion**

As we are coming into a season of spring, the harvest will be great. We must be good stewards and prepare our hearts, minds and our church to receive those whom God will call.

To summarize here are some things that I hope you will take away from today:

- 1) We must be responsible to do the work of the Lord even when we do not see immediate progress.
- 2) We as Seasoned Christians must be gentle, kind and nurturing to young believers.
- 3) We must have patience for the Holy Spirit to bring about the growth we long to see.
- 4) We need to recognize that God has done so much for us already that his grace is sufficient for us, everything else is a blessing.
- 5) We will see the fruit of what God is doing. In the meantime we must fulfill our duty of gratitude. If we see a shoot springing up rejoice for Jesus has done a great thing. The fruitful harvest will come in Gods timing. Don't miss out on what he is doing now.
- 6) We need to encourage each other. Share testimony; proclaim the good things that God is doing in our lives.
- 7) We must make disciples of Jesus Christ as he is the Lord of the Harvest

God has given to this church in prophesy a vision.... This church will be placed upon the rock and that rock is Christ. We will soar like eagles on the wind of the Holy Spirit who will direct us where he wills. As the eagles call forth with their beaks they shall become as silver trumpets. Their call will go forth to gather the people together and to send them out. We have the promise that the wheat will become white and that each harvest will be greater than the last. It has been said that the Silver and Gold rain will fall and Gods presence will be in this place. Truly this is a day to celebrate what God is doing right here, and right now.

We must stay on mission, to do this we must:

- Worship God
- Love all people
- Embrace our community

**Prayer**