

“You Reap Whatever You Sow”
Galatians 6:6-10; Luke 10:1-3, 16-20

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July 3, 2022

“You reap what you sow.” How many of you have heard THIS expression before? It ranks up there with other similar ‘pithy’ sayings: ‘You get what you pay for.’ ‘You are what you eat.’ All ways to express the basic truth that what you get OUT of something in life... be it agricultural, financial, or physical... will come in direct proportion to how much you put INTO it. The more resources of time, talents, and treasures that we put into our vo-cations, re-lations, or avo-cations, the more that we will have to show for those ‘investments.’ If one ‘sows’ abundantly, most often one will also ‘reap’ abundantly. AND, vice versa.

But having good life results are not only about *quantity*, but *quality*. If a farmer wants a good crop, he must use quality feeds and nutrients. Filling our human bodies with junk food will NOT result in ultimately being physically healthy. Filling our MINDS with junk will also not result in being mentally healthy. Another old saying: Garbage in, garbage out.

As we read these two passages today, and their references to ‘reaping’ and ‘harvesting,’ the authors used common, everyday ‘secular’ examples to point to un-common, extra-ordinary SPIRITUAL truths. We know how much effort it requires to have successful businesses, financial security, dependable homes that we HOPE will last. Are we just as willing to invest **ourselves** in a dependable, trustworthy and secure **God** whose Kingdom we KNOW will last? As much as we can be concerned with good harvest of crops, or clients, or profits, how about good harvests of **people**? I know that we can worry a LOT about the RESOURCES of our earthly lives... but I believe what makes our lives the richest... ‘recession-proof’... is RELATIONSHIPS. Vertical and horizontal. **Jesus... others... yourself.**

So, in keeping with the ‘agrarian’ model that we’ve been given, I’d like us to think about how we are caring for the spiritual ‘fields’ we’ve been given. You and I are the **workers**, the ‘field hands,’ if you will. All those others whom we encounter in the world are our **harvest**. And the ‘seed’ that we are entrusted to plant is Jesus. Whose servant Paul reminds us all, **“You Reap Whatever You Sow.”**

So, we’ll start with whom should come first in our lives, **JESUS**. The ‘seed.’ Now, a seed sounds pretty small, and insignificant. Easy to overlook. And yet, without the seed, NOTHING

happens! No growth. No life. Starvation. Death. And if you and I don't have that 'seed' of Jesus in us to begin with, how can we hope to 'plant' it in someone else? How can we love someone else with the love of Christ unless we first know it ourselves? Remember the order of that mission statement: KNOW CHRIST. (THEN) MAKE CHRIST KNOWN.

Now I know that we have a LOT of 'mature' Christians in this room. You have 'known' Christ a long time. But I also know that we have all known a LOT of people 'a long time.' Ones that we also haven't seen in a 'long time.' And while 'absence' may make the 'heart grow fonder,' it can also make the 'mind grow weaker!' I have wonderful friends from my childhood, from elementary and high schools, from college, that I love dearly. But as time goes by, I forget what they look like. What they sound like. Who they are. Because I haven't been spending that most valuable resource we have with them: TIME.

How much time do you and I spend with the One who should be our 'BESTIE' on this earth? (Jesus!) And yes, I included myself. No finger pointing here, cause I KNOW that I myself need to spend more time alone with my Lord. Friends, if I am going to be best able to plant the seed of Jesus in someone else, I darn well better plant my 'own-self,' my own 'seed' in JESUS. Remember what Paul wrote: ***'If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap from the Spirit.'*** (Gal. 6:8)

The Spirit, whom with the Father and SON is worshipped and glorified. (Nicene Creed) I know full-well that I can spend so much time working FOR the Lord that I forget to work WITH Him! Alongside Him. 'Near to the heart of God.'

You heard how excited the disciples were when they came back from their 'planting time' out in the 'fields,' of how empowered they were by working in His Name and by His Spirit. And what did he say? ***"Do not rejoice that the (evil) spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*** (Luke 10:20) Yes, there's 'power in the blood'... just don't forget WHOSE blood it is! In all the work WE do to 'water and fertilize,' we must never forget who makes it grow: God. The God who brings life through the seed that was buried and rose from the earth

Which brings us to the ones who need to receive that 'life-giving seed'... **OTHERS.** Those 'fields' that are ripe for the 'harvest.' You may notice that there's not a lot in these passages describing what those 'fields' are like. You may have also noticed that there was a large 'hole' in

the middle of the Luke passage. THAT's your homework. To go back and read how Jesus described what those 'workers' would encounter in those 'harvest fields.' I left you with just the two 'teasers,' if you will. Where Jesus tells them to:

"Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves." And that ***"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."*** (10:3,16)

'Wolves.' 'Rejection.' Jesus was telling His disciples to not be fooled by that benign sounding 'harvest fields.' It's not easy. It's hard work. Things don't always go as planned. Just like harvesting a natural crop involves a lot of 'blood, sweat and tears,' where one will encounter 'hostility' from different creatures, so too does harvesting a spiritual human 'crop.' Let's just say you have to put up with a lot of 'crop' from people... well, 'crop' with a different vowel...

Most of these two passages, however, apply to the 'workers'... US! ***"OURSELVES."*** As you go back to read the 'gap' I left out of the Luke passage, read both of them with 'your own-self' in mind. This is not some entertaining piece of fiction to merely amuse yourself with... but marching orders from our Lord and King! Here's a few: ***"After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go."*** (Lk 10:1)

'After what?' you might ask? This too is part of your 'homework'... You may also be wondering about the number "70." Also sometimes translated as "72." It comes from the number of nations of the world listed in *Genesis 10*. A foreshadowing of Jesus final command in Matthew to ***"Go into all the world."*** Aside from being part of the larger group of '70,' Jesus also ***"sent them in pairs."*** Our efforts to do God's work is not to be done completely by ourselves. We were meant to be in COMMUNITY. Translate, the CHURCH. 'We are better together' ... whether as '72'... or '2'.

[It is also important to note that Jesus sent His disciples to *"every town and...."*]

It is also important to note that Jesus sent His disciples to ***"every town and place where he himself intended to go."*** Wherever we may sense the will of God sending us, we can rest assured that there is NOWHERE that our God has not been before us, preparing the way, and

that Jesus will be behind us and beside us. This blessed assurance of our Lord, to borrow from a military term, 'having our 6'... as well as our '12,' and '3,' and '9'... goes along with what he told them upon their return: **"See, I have given you authority... over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you."** (10:19) 'Nothing will hurt you.' Sounds similar to some other words of comfort: **"I will never leave you nor forsake you."** (Heb. 13:5, Dt. 31:6-8)

Finally, Paul charges the church... Galatia, or Welsh, or LC, take your pick...

"So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith." (6:10) 'WHENEVER you have the chance, work for EVERYONE's good. And especially for fellow believers.' WOW. Talk about 'no rest for the weary!' Cause I'm thinking that there are a LOT of 'opportunities' to 'work for the good of all,' don't you?! We've all heard of that verse, **"Pray without ceasing."** This sounds like 'SERVE without ceasing.' Like being on call '24/7.' I mean, who does Paul think we are... God?

No, just one of his children. Like our brother Jesus. Who no doubt felt like HE was on call '24/7.' But if he said that HE... the very Son of God... came not to be served, but to serve, well... hmmm... maybe so should we? Like those 70 or so disciples who willingly, selflessly went out into their 'harvest fields,' knowing that there were wolves out there ready to devour them... knowing that there were going to be those who rejected them, even persecuted them. And do you remember how Luke described what kind of shape they came in after a long day 'out in the field?' 'They returned with exhaustion.' 'They returned with heat stroke?' No. **"They returned with JOY..."** 'JOY!' HOW? Perhaps because they lived out that acronym: "J.O.Y." Jesus. Others. Yourself. The same 'joy' you and I will experience as we 'sow the seeds' of Jesus in Others, putting Yourself last.

Is 'laboring for the Lord' tiring? It sure can be. But also the most rewarding work we will ever do. An investment that will pay ETERNAL 'dividends.' May we take to heart the encouragement of Paul: **"Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we WILL reap at harvest time, if we do NOT give up."** (Gal. 6:9) May we never 'give up.' Because our God sure never 'gives up' on US. To the LORD of the harvest be all thanks and praise, glory and honor, now and forever. And all of God's 'faithful field hands' said, "AMEN!"

“America” (My Country Tis of Thee)

Who is the ‘Thee’? GOD! Author Samuel Smith 24 y.o. student at Andover Theological Seminary (MA) in 1831. Inspired by Lutheran Hymn “God Bless Our Native Land” and its connection between **faith** and **patriotism**. Baptist minister. Scripture ref. Lev. 25:10 – “you shall hallow 50th year and proclaim liberty” Ps. 33: “Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord.” Gal 5:1 – “For Freedom Christ has set us free” First sun on July 4, 1831 at children’s concert in Boston, his hometown.

Notable performances: MLK used 1st verse in “I Have a Dream” 1963. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young on first episode of Tonight Show (Jay Leno) to air after 9/11

“Lift Every Voice and Sing” - brothers James Weldon & J. Rosamond Johnson 1900
James was Chair of Florida Baptist Academy, Jax FL. Orig. to be a poem honoring Lincoln’s b-day, decided instead to honor struggles of Af Americans following Reconstruction. He was a lawyer, diplomat, professor, writer and poet, and first Af Am leader of the NAACP.

But the hymn’s truest legacy is best expressed by James Weldon Johnson himself. Among the pages of a 1935 collection of his poems, Johnson recalls what happened after the hymn was first performed by a chorus of 500 schoolchildren from the Johnsons’ hometown of Jacksonville, Florida.

“Shortly afterwards my brother and I moved away from Jacksonville to New York, and the song passed out of our minds,” he writes. “But the school children of Jacksonville kept singing it; they went off to other schools and sang it; they became teachers and taught it to other children. Within twenty years it was being sung over the South and in some other parts of the country ... The lines of this song repay me in an elation, almost of exquisite anguish, whenever I hear them sung by Negro children.”

The phenomenon Johnson describes is the central animus of countless music traditions unfolding back through human history: Someone heard it, was moved by it, and kept on singing.

“O Beautiful for Spacious Skies” Katharine Lee Bates, Falmouth, Mass. Her father was a pastor in the Congregational Church; he died when she was an infant. Her mother moved the family to Wellesley. She received a B.A. (1880) and M.A. (1891) from Wellesley College, few years

later prof of Eng. lit. there. She wrote poetry, children's stories, textbooks and travel books. In the summer of 1893 when she was lecturing at Colorado College she went to the top of Pike's Peak. Inspired by the beauty of the view she wrote all four verses of "America the Beautiful." Her poem entitled "America" was published in 1895. Put to the Music by Samuel Ward of Grace Epis. Church, Newark NJ, . Was an instant hit when ultimately published in 1910... seven years after Ward's death.