



**Preparing for The Harvest
Matthew 9:35-38
Westport Christian Church
October 11, 2009**

Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." (Matt 9:35-38 NASU)

A preacher wanted to see if a farmer in his congregation was willing to support the Lord's work. So one day he challenged him with some direct questions. "If you had two farms" he asked, "would you be willing to give one to God?" "Why, certainly!" replied the man. "I only wish I were in a position to do so." The minister then asked, "If you had \$10,000, would you give \$5,000 to the Lord?" Without hesitation the man responded, "How I'd love to have that kind of money! I'd enjoy giving generously like that." Then the preacher asked this pointed question: "If you had two pigs, would you give one to the church?" The farmer hesitated for a moment and then blurted out, "That's not fair. You know I've got two pigs. - Our Daily Bread 1998

If I was to say the word autumn or fall, what comes to your mind? Well for some it may mean a road trip to look at the beautiful color of the leaves. For others it may mean winter is coming. However, the meaning from our passage is the meaning that I would like for us to consider today, "harvest time." For the most part, throughout the Scriptures,

harvest time is associated with gladness and joy. In Jewish history, it was a time of celebration and feast.

"Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field. Ex 23:16.

What does it mean to harvest? Webster's dictionary defines harvesting as the gathering in of ripe crops or fodder. We all know that there is more to it than that, don't we. Harvesting is hard, dirty work. As a farmer your whole livelihood depends on it. Harvesting can bring great joy if the yield is abundant, harvesting also can bring great satisfaction. It is an opportunity for you to see the fruits of your labor. From the seed planted in the ground, to fully mature and now ready for the harvest.

During the history of this great land, harvest time was a time of celebration as well. People came together to help each other during this time of year to gather in the crops of the fields. I remember hearing stories how someone would have some equipment that the neighbors didn't, so they would work together during harvest time. It always ended with a time of feast and celebration. As the men worked hard in the fields, the women worked hard preparing a great meal that all could enjoy.

On this fall day in October, I would like for us to look at the harvest. Not the harvest of grain from the fields, but the harvest of souls for the Kingdom of God. The word harvest is used 17 times in the New Testament in reference to the second coming of Jesus Christ. We need to be preparing for the harvest. So, today I would like for us to look at the harvest and our role in it.

Just like working in the field we must . . .

I. PLOW

If you are going to prepare for a harvest, you must first work the ground. If I went and purchased some seed and just walked out and threw it on the ground, would I receive a harvest? No. Why not? There are many factors, first, some birds could eat some of the seed. It would not get the proper moisture to start the growing process. There are many reasons, are there not?

There is a process which we must go through in preparing for a spiritual harvest as well. We must plow. We must prepare the soil in order to plan for a harvest. How do we plow for a spiritual harvest? By sharing

the truth with love and compassion. John the Baptist was plowing the hearts by telling of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Himself went around preaching and teaching. Many times, He did this before or after He shared love and compassion. Preaching the need for repentance, a change of heart. Not only did Jesus Himself do this, He called together others and sent them out to start the preparation. In Luke chapter 10, Jesus, sent out seventy to plow ahead in preparing the way.

There must be a preparation of the soil and there must be a preparation of the heart. The driving rain with the winds and the heat of the sun dries out and hardens the soil thus it must be turned over. The troubles of life with its problems and toils often harden ones heart. There is a crust that builds up and calluses over which needs to be softened and loosen.

You may be wondering, how do we do that? By going out and building relationships. We need to do this by letting people know that we care and we want to show them how they can have a changed life. We do that by showing compassion and giving assistance when we can. We do that by showing people Jesus in our lives. There are many people that you come in contact with every day that doesn't know about the true life in Christ.

Are you preparing them by being kind and considerate? Or are you beating on them like the rest of the world. Are you showing them Jesus, or showing them the game that so many play? The world doesn't need any more hypocrites. It needs the love of Christ which cultivates, preparing hearts for the harvest. If we have prepared the soil then we are ready to.

II PLANT

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, we stated, I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. (1 Cor. 3:6-9)

What are we to plant? God's Word. Who are the ones to plant it? You are. Yes, I am to plant as well but the impact that you as individuals will have is much greater than what I can do. A survey was taken and ask, how did you come to hear and learn about Jesus, this was the response..0001%TV or Crusade, 1-2% Cold turkey evangelism

2-4% Church program, 3-6% Sunday School
4-6% "Walk-in", 6-8% Minister
74% Friends and relatives. 6-8% if a minister invited, 74%
if a friend or relative. Now to me that's astounding.

In a gallop poll taken in 2001, six million people were asked, "What would it take to get you to church?" Their answer, "Someone to ask me to attend." Have you asked anyone lately? Now many people say, "I just don't know what to say." The best thing to tell anyone is to tell them what Christ has done for you! Yes, there are times when we ask people and ask people and no one shows up. Does that mean we are to quit? Absolutely not! Think about the farmer in the spring. He gets the crops planted and it rains and washes some out. Does he quit and say, "I tried?" No, he goes back at it and plants some more, does he not?

Jesus tells us in Matthew 10 that not everyone will heed our message. So we are to shake the dust off and go to the next. Our job is to plant the seeds of the message of salvation. That's our job. If each of you went to work Monday and told your boss, "you know I think I'm going to give up because there seems to be no response from my job." What would they tell you? Now be careful you're in church. They wouldn't like it would they?

As a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, it is the duty of everyone to plant seeds. Again, the best way is through the love of Christ. Each person should be spreading the word. The story is told of a small dog which had been struck by a car and was lying along the side of the road. A doctor, driving by, noticed that the dog was still alive, stopped his car, picked up the dog, and took him home with him. There he discovered that the dog had been stunned, had suffered a few minor cuts and abrasions, but was otherwise all right. He revived the dog, cleaned up the wounds and was carrying the animal from the house to the garage when suddenly it jumped from his arms and scampered off. "What an ungrateful little dog," the doctor said to himself. He thought no more about the incident until the next evening when he heard a scratching at the door. When he opened it, there was the little dog he had treated with another hurt dog.

Through kindness and compassion, we need to be planting seeds.

We also need to . . .

III PRAY

In verse 38 of our text, Jesus said, "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Matt 9:38 NKJV)

Pray and ask God to send servants. I truly believe some of you here today because of the prayers that have been coming from this congregation, asking God to send us workers. We must pray that God will give us guidance and direction in the path that He would have us to follow. We need to be a praying church. We need to understand the importance prayer and how we are tapping into the resources of God.

So many times we fumble around in life just like we fumble around in the darkness. Have you ever gotten up in the middle of the night to go to the restroom or something? You don't want to turn on the light for whatever reason. Often we stub our toes, or run into something, when all we have to do is flip a switch. When we don't ask for God's guidance or His help, we are fumbling around in the darkness, when all we have to do, flip on the switch.

Prayer is the one thing that every person can do, yet it is so many times the last thing we do. Jesus said, ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers. If we want to be involved with the harvest then we must pray! He may not answer our prayers the way we want them, in the time we want it but He will answer them. Prayer is our fertilizer that we add to our plowing and planting.

With that in mind, today is the day you get your prayer cards back. Those of you who wrote a name of someone that I was to pray for two weeks, get them as you leave today and for the next two weeks, you pray for them every day. Pray that God would soften their hearts. That the seeds maybe planted and grow to bring glory and honor to our Lord. Conclusion; Harvest time is a wonderful time of the year. A time to see the fruit of your labor. If we are going to be part of the harvest then we must prepare now. We must plow ahead, with the cultivator of kindness. We must plant the seed of the message of Christ. Be sowers of the gospel. We must pray. Asking God to help us as we strive to produce fruit for the Kingdom. "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest." (John 4:35)

Along interstate I-10 in Louisiana was a billboard that would catch your eye. Across the Mississippi River above the city was a picture of Jesus Christ hanging on a cross, head bowed down with these words underneath. "It's your move, Christ paid the price, salvation can be yours." "Now it's your move." Are you ready for the harvest?

AMEN!