

“HARVEST FESTIVAL”

“The Five Laws of Harvest”

Scripture Reading – Mark, 4:1-9, 13-20

Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered round him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times”.

Then Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear...”.

Then Jesus said to them, “Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown”.

‘Jesus said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces corn – first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come”.’

Mark, 4:26-29, NIV

There is a principle at work at harvest that is generally a principle for the rest of life: **‘YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW’**. In other words, your personal, material, and spiritual harvest is in direct proportion to the seeds you have sown.

‘Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.’

II Corinthians, 9:6, NIV

“THE FIVE LAWS OF HARVEST”

There are laws of sowing and reaping in nature that also apply in the spiritual realm...

1. THE LAW OF IMPLANTATION

‘Jesus said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground...”.’

Mark, 4:26, NIV

The first law is that there must be an implanting if there is to be a reaping. If you want a harvest, you must plant. There can be no harvest unless seed is scattered to the ground...

SOMETIMES WE SOW OUR OWN SEED

‘Jesus said, “Listen! A farmer went to sow his seed... The farmer sows the word”.’

Mark, 4:3, 14, NIV

In ‘THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER’, seed was planted by hand.

As the farmer walked across the field, he threw handfuls of seed on to the ground from a large bag slung across his shoulders. The plants did not grow in neat rows as they do with today's machine planting. No matter how skilful, no farmer could keep some of his seed from falling on the footpath, or from being scattered among rocks and thorns, or from being carried off by the wind. So the farmer would throw the seed liberally, and enough would fall on good ground to ensure the harvest.

Jesus teaches us the necessity to sow the seed of the Word of God.

Our sowing of the seed should involve the indiscriminate retelling of the Word of God. All of us are meant to recruit disciples, and we do not sow seed only to those we think we should, because the Gospel is to be ‘sown’ to everybody. We do not discriminate. We do not sow seed only to those we think should be in God's Kingdom. We do not sow seed only to those of the middle class. We do not sow seed only to those who share our political views. We do not sow seed only to those who belong to a certain racial majority. We sow indiscriminately.

SOMETIMES WE REAP FROM SOWN SEED

‘Jesus said, “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. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘ONE SOWS AND ANOTHER REAPS’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour”.’

John, 4:35-38, NIV

'If you suffer without succeeding it will mean later on that someone else may succeed without suffering. Or, if you succeed without suffering it is because somebody else has already suffered. But there is no success without suffering.'

Adonuirum Judson

SOMETIMES WE MUST SOW OURSELVES

'Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds".'

John, 12:24, NIV

2. THE LAW OF IDENTIFICATION

'Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground...".'

Mark, 4:26, NIV

The second law is that we reap the same as we plant. The harvest we will experience will be directly related to the seed that we sow. We reap the same as we plant...

Now this man put a seed in the ground.

What kind of a crop would you expect him to reap if he put, for example, wheat in the ground? Wheat! If he put barley in the ground what would you expect him to reap? Barley! If he put corn in ground what would you expect him to reap? Corn! No real surprises there, then!

'God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds". And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.'

Genesis, 1:11-12, NIV

These verses put an end to 'THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION'.

They tell us why there is no such thing as evolution. There is a locked-in likeness in nature. You reap after the seed that is put in the ground. What you reap is after the seed of its kind. That law can never be changed. You will never get figs from an olive tree. You will never plant corn and get wheat. The farmer will only reap a harvest according to the kind of seed sown.

The same truth applies in society today: 'WE REAP WHAT WE SOW'.

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to criticise. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy. If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty. If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident. If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns how to have faith. If a child

lives with approval, he learns to like himself. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns how to find love in the world.

The same truth applies in the spiritual realm: 'WE REAP WHAT WE SOW'.

If you sow the seed of discord, you can never reap a harvest of unity. If you sow the seed of hypocrisy, you can never reap a harvest of holiness. If you sow to the flesh you cannot reap of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because 'FLESH GIVES BIRTH TO FLESH' but 'SPIRIT GIVES BIRTH TO SPIRIT'.

'Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you".'

Luke, 6:38, NIV

Do you know the way to get what you need?

It is to give what you need. That is the way to get what you need! Do you need love? Give it. Do you need friendship? Give it. What does the Bible say? I am going to tell you something that is going to surprise you... Do you need money? Give it. Oh no, you say, hoard it, keep it, save it. Give it! Jesus said, "GIVE, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU. A GOOD MEASURE..."

3. THE LAW OF INCUBATION

'Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how...".'

Mark, 4:26-27, NIV

The third law is that you cannot rush the harvest. The seed will germinate and shoot when it is ready. You cannot make it grow. You cannot rush the seed...

That little seed has to sleep in the ground.

The moisture comes and impregnates the coat. The sun warms the ground and the little seed sheds its shell, like a man sheds his overcoat. Eventually, out of that ground there comes a little green shoot of new growth. Night and day passes whilst this work continues unseen. Some seeds spring up almost immediately, whilst other seeds take a long time to mature. But there is one of the laws of the harvest, not only do you reap what you sow, not only must you sow if you reap, but you always reap later than you sow. You cannot rush the seed...

'Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.'

Ecclesiastes, 11:1, NIV

'Cast your bread upon the waters and it will get soggy.'

Ecclesiastes, 11:1 is a very well-known verse, and is quoted even today. Unfortunately, many people who quote it are unaware of its real meaning. Solomon is talking about investing. He is talking about sowing. He is talking about waiting for the harvest. A truth that applies in the material and spiritual worlds.

There is an old, old story about a missionary who spent many years labouring overseas for Jesus, who finally came home to die in his homeland. He thought at least there would be some friends to meet him when he got off the ship. When he was coming down the gang-plank there was a brass band and a crowd. He said, "I did not expect this. This is wonderful". But then he noticed that not an eye was upon him. On that same ship was President Roosevelt. Theodore Roosevelt had been overseas in Africa, where he had been big game hunting. The brass band was for him. He was over there hunting animals, whilst the missionary was over there winning souls, and there was not one soul now to greet him. For a moment. He felt almost bitter and dejected. "Why God, why? Why? Why can this man come home and a crowd greet him, but I come home and there's not even a soul. Why?". The Lord spoke to him, "My son, you are not home yet".

What a day there is going to be 'when the saints go marching in'.

We are not home yet. This world is not our home. Our home is in heaven. Sometimes it may be in the better land we reap the harvest, but there is no such thing as sowing without reaping.

'Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.'

Galatians, 6:7, NIV

4. THE LAW OF INTENSIFICATION

'All by itself the soil produces corn – first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come'.

Mark, 4:28-29, NIV

The fourth law is that there will be a harvest. When you put a seed in the ground you always get more than a seed back. You always get back much more than you sow...

'Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.'

II Corinthians, 9:6-8, NIV

What kind of harvest do you want?

The purpose within your heart holds the key. If you purpose a little harvest, then give a little. If you purpose a big harvest, give a lot. If you think you are losing out you will give only grudgingly, but if you think you are investing you are going to give cheerfully. It all depends on the purpose of your heart, and what you seek.

'THE LORD LOVES A CHEERFUL – HILARIOUS – GIVER.'

People say give until you hurt – but that is bad advice. People say give until it sops hurting – and that is better advice. Give until it feels good, until you are happy about it. In response, God is able to give us a sufficiency in all things – material, physical, and spiritual.

The Law of Intensification is the Principle of Multiplication.

'Any fool can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the apples in a seed!'

You reap more than you sow.

God wants you to have your needs met, but he wants you also to be able to meet the needs of others. God does not just bless you, so you can put it in the barn. God blesses you so that you can keep on investing it, and let it continue to grow. And while you are investing it, and while it continues to grow, then you are blessing others, and you take that surplus and you are able to help the things of God.

5. THE LAW OF IMPLEMENTATION

'Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground..."'

Mark, 4:26, NIV

The fifth law is that unless you implement the plan, there will be no harvest.

'Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.'

Ecclesiastes, 11:4, NIV

Consider the farmer who has seeds and it is planting time.

Before he starts, he looks up into the skies and says, "You know, we may have a drought this year. We may not have enough rain this year. I just do not think I will chance it. I just think I will keep my seed in the barn because I do not know what is going to happen. I will play safe".

By playing it safe, there will be no harvest to look forward to.

A rich man, as he lay dying, was obsessed with his hands, he just kept examining them. They wondered if he had lost his mind. But still he kept looking at his hands, and muttering about them. His friend said, "Jim, why are you talking about your hands". He said, "Look at them. They are so empty. They are so empty. Must I empty handed go. Must I meet my Saviour so? Without one soul with which to greet him. Must I empty-handed go?"

Start today planting the Word of God.

Start scattering the seed so you can start reaping a harvest. Listen, it is going to be over before long. There is only so much time to plant. There is only so much time to reap. Just go ahead and plant. Just scatter the seed. Some of it will fall on stony ground. Some of it will fall by the wayside. Some of it will fall among thorns. But some of it will fall on good ground.

'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour.'

I Corinthians, 3:6-8, NIV