

What About the Harvest?

John 4:34-38; Matthew 4:19; 9:36-38; Psalm 129:5-6

What is the thing that God, the Father, is most concerned about? What is central to God's will and heart? What is Christ's plan and desire for us? If I am yielded to God's plan for me in this world, what would it be? Why do we need strong, vibrant, victorious families and strong vibrant churches? What is God's heart beat for YOUR family? The Scriptures are abundantly clear as to the heart of God... of Christ... and of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Father has a dying, lost, hell bound world on His hands and in His heart.

I. THE HARVEST SPEAKS OF ABUNDANCE:

(John 4:34-38; Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:1-15)

A. Lift up your eyes... look on the fields.. they are white to harvest.

When you consider a field how many grain would there be in a head of wheat, or a square foot, or a square yard? How many kernel of grain in an field of corn prior to being harvested? How many grains of barley, oats, or wheat in a head of grain or a field of grain? Who could know for it is a vast amount. This indeed represents the fact that all about us are multitudes of people without Christ, without salvation. Do we care? A sower went forth to sow the seed, the Word of God, are we sowing?

B. The world of people are in abundance.

In our world are multitudes. Now we have over six billion but it won't be long before that number is seven billion. A vast number are being added daily. Some twenty years ago we were told that the additional numbers over 110,000 a week being added to the world's population. Numbers without end are dying daily without Christ. Do we care?

C. A farmer would not sow if there was no increase.

Why does he sow? Because there is life in the seed and he knows that by sowing he can have a harvest, even a multiplication of the number of the seed sown. God has put the power of life in the seed, life given by God. And God has laid down the law of the harvest, that all seed (all life) will reproduce after its kind. (Gen 1. There is an abundance of people around us everywhere and we are to reproduce after our kind. **God would plan you where He wants you.**

II. THE HARVEST SPEAKS OF ACCESS:

(Peter - Acts 2; 10; Philip Acts 8; Paul Acts 13)

A. The harvest is not hidden!

We don't have to look for it for it is around us everywhere, no farmer plants where he cannot find the harvest or the field!

B. The Lord of the Harvest.. will guide us!

The Holy Spirit knows who, where, when.. He testifies through us -- Jh 15:26,27 The Holy Spirit goes before us to prepare the heart, to work in the life as we minister the truth of the Word of God to them.

III. THE HARVEST SPEAKS OF A PROCESS:

There is the process of soil preparation, sowing the seed, watering - nurturing, and then the harvest!

A. The soil of the heart must be prepared.

The farmer tills the soil; he prepares it that it might receive the seed. We are to

till the soil so hearts are soft, pliable, receptive and open to receive the gospel. We must work at building relationships. We must win hearts for a hearing for the gospel. We must work at building need and desire. We must labor at stairstepping people to Christ and expecting an increase, little by little... here a little - there a little. It is a prepared heart that hears and responds. (see Acts 8, 10, 9, 11, Cf. Rom. 10:13)

B. We must plant seed; sow seed in hearts.

(I Cor. 3:7,8; Jh 4:34-38; Psa 126:5-6) There isn't much sowing so there isn't any harvest. A sower when forth to sow and he anticipates there will be four kinds of soil (or hearts) as depicted in chapter 13 of Matthew, chapter 8 of the book of Luke and chapter 4 of the book of Mark. Sowing must take place. We can't make the decision for the lost, but we can sow the seed. Seed has to be there to germinate, and grow. It will not take place at the same speed, etc.

C. We must water the seed; (Psa. 126:5-6)

There must be tears, a broken heart for the lost. We need the compassion that Christ had, and Paul spoke about as recorded in Romans 9:1 and 10:1,2.

I am reminded of the old deacon who rode his horse out to call on a man that he had prayed for and wept for. Now his burden was so great that he could do nothing but go to see him. He arrived at the man's house, but his burden so overwhelmed him that all he did was stand there and weep. He rode back home and in dejection told his wife of his failure and inability to even speak. Later that day the man came to town and riding directly to the blacksmith shop he said, "*I heard a reason why I need to be saved today that I never heard before. Since you are so concerned for my soul, could you tell me how to be saved?*"

A church had a member they often called "*weeping Joe.*" Joe never did anything publicly for he was not a deacon, or a teacher nor did he hold any office. But he was the most important member of the church. He often went to the basement to the old coal bin to weep over souls while the pastor preached. He prayed for many who came to Christ over a period of many years. He had the burden Christ spoke of as recorded in Matthew 9:36-38. At another point of time, Christ wept over the city and the Jewish nation. God will honor real concern and heart burden.

D. Then-- there will be a harvest.

We want a harvest without labor, investment or concern. We want a harvest without the process which demands that we give of ourselves. Or we think it is all our fault if no one is saved, or we are not ready to do the harvesting. When we compare this farming we realize there is much more to it all than just the harvest.

God vested ***life in the seed*** -- there is life there, divine life (Heb. 4:12; Matt. 4:4; Jh. 6:63; Jh 5:29; I Pet 1:23) but we must sow the seed. Then God promises the harvest when we fulfill the directions as given in Psalm 126:5-6.

IV. THE HARVEST SPEAKS OF DANGER:

(John 4:34; Jeremiah 8:20; James 5:20)

A. There is the danger of missing the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

It was the Holy Spirit who lead Philip in Acts 8 both to Samaria and down to the desert to minister to the man from Africa. Then in Acts chapter 10 the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter about going to Cornelius's house. Peter's heart had to be prepared that he would be willing to go and minister to a Gentile. In Acts chapter 11 we read of Barnabas and Paul (then called Saul) going to Antioch to minister. Again it is obvious the Holy Spirit gave direction to them as He did to Paul as recorded in Acts 16. Possibly the most powerful portion in this regard is the call given by the church at Antioch and the Holy Spirit as Paul and Barnabas were sent on missionary journeys. (Acts 13)

B. There is the danger of neglect -- (Acts 20:20; 5:42) What if we neglect the command of the Lord. Are we truly commission and command driven to do His will?

C. There is the danger of a white harvest...

The harvest is "*white unto harvest*," which means that it is nearly past harvest time. A white harvest in the wheat field means that the waving, golden grain is no longer golden, but even the stock is turning white. Being overripe the head is opening up and grain is falling to the ground.

Years ago an itinerate harvester who harvested wheat from Texas to Canada told me that often when there is too much rain, and it is difficult to get to the field, etc., there is the danger of the wheat beginning to fall on to the ground. And then as the sickle cuts the wheat, shaking the head even more, wheat falls from the head and much of the crop can be lost. Are we reaching the whitened harvest for the Lord?

Also there is the danger of not being at the right place at the right time. That is true in the experience of the harvesting business I just alluded to. Even local news papers would have headlines... *Harvester Hurry!* Why, because they were needed NOW. Do we realize that the Holy Spirit as the *Lord of the Harvest* would want to lead us, and we can enter into a divine appointment such as Peter had in Acts chapter ten.

It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to open the heart and ours to sow the seed, to water, and to harvest.

V. THE HARVEST SPEAKS OF PREPARATION: (Matt. 4:19)

A. Preparation of time:

When I grew up on the farm in Nebraska, I often had the experience of being involved in preparation for the harvest -- whether it was hay, corn, wheat, oats, etc. So we must invest our lives, take time to have a strong prayer life, memorize Scripture and do whatever the Lord would lead us to do in preparation.

My father would also take time to study the crop to be harvested. There was the right time to begin the harvest, so there is the teachable moment, to receptive time in the hearts of unsaved. We need to understand these things and prepare accordingly.

B. Preparation of heart:

What are our priorities? Will we be involved in the harvest if we don't prepare our hearts? I doubt it! The Word says, "*Keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issue of life.*" I know for myself, if my heart is carnal, or I have given myself to carnality or worldliness I won't be involved in the harvest of souls. Possibly spiritual deadness is one of our greatest dangers?

C. Preparation of equipment:

There is the preparation ahead of time of equipment, even getting extra feed ready for livestock so we would not be delayed at harvest time and doing what ever had to be done to free ourselves for the rigors of harvest time.

VI. THE HARVEST SPEAKS OF DEMANDS: (II Tim. 2:9)

A. Need of dedication:

Maybe one of our failures is indifference or being asleep in the time of harvest which brings shame to us. How sad when a son sleeps in the midst of harvest time for to win souls is wise. (Proverbs 10:5; 11:30) There must be surrender of life, body, yes, all we are. (II Cor. 5:14,15; Rom. 14:9) Submission to God will cause us to be command and commission driving.

B. Need of priorities being right: (Matt. 6:33)

It will require preparation for whatever it takes -- zeal, willingness, submission to leaders, giving our best, setting aside other agenda's, and making God's will all consuming. And desire comes from obedience, compassion comes from the process of ministering to the lost.

VII. THE HARVEST SPEAKS OF JOY, AND FULFILLMENT: (John 4:34-38;
I Corinthians 3:5-11)

A. Gathering fruit -- Jh 4:36

What a privilege to gather fruit unto eternal life. The fruit of soul winning is an eternal soul brought into the Kingdom of God. What a joy and privilege!

B. Gathering together -- Jh 4:36 - 38

The labor is a mutual labor of working with others. Some sow, some reap, in fact we can be involved in all of the process -- which is soil preparation, sowing, watering, and harvesting. Working together can be a great thrill as some come to Christ.

C. Gathering rewards -- I Cor. 3:8

God promises to reward those who labor. Christ is coming soon and He announced when He comes His reward is with Him to give to every man according as his work may be. (Revelation 22:12) Receiving the soul winners crown would be one of the greatest joys of that hour.

D. Gathering with God -- I Cor. 3: 7, 9a

Such a ministry is being co-laborers with God. Not only with others of like mindedness, but with God the Father. Remember the story of the Prodigal Son and the evident desire of heaven for souls to be saved, for reconciliation and restoration of the lost and wayward. Amen!

E. Gathering and caring for the harvest.

To be involved then in discipling... teaching... protecting... laboring to mature others so they become reproducers... what a joy! What greater blessing can there be than to feed the new converts, and witness their growth and maturity into Christ-likeness?