

The Harvest
Matthew 9:35-38

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Today, we turn to the final theme in our Parable of the Sower series: The Harvest.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we're called to bear much fruit—but we must also walk in wisdom and humility, remembering that we reap what we sow.

As we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we do so, not to earn God's favor, but because we recognize the sacred call to obedience.

The harvest belongs to the Lord, yet He has invited us into the process and through faithful surrender, we're being conformed into the image of His Son.

Romans 8:29, *"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."*

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These past few weeks we've seen how God removes what hinders growth, so today we're going to learn that the Holy Spirit actively produces a harvest of fruit in the life of every believer.

Among the Spirit's many roles, and one of the most beautiful, is that of producing fruit which reflects the character of Christ.

In Christ, we've been set free from the desires of the flesh; from things like sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, hatred, and selfish ambition.

We're no longer enslaved to sin, but now invited to walk by the Spirit, where fruit isn't forced but grows naturally out of a relationship with God.

At the center of this harvest is divine love, the kind of love that the Bible tells us is unmerited, transforming and unchangeable.

This love binds all the other fruits of the spirit together and flows outward into our lives.

From love springs joy, a joy not anchored in changing circumstances but rooted in the unchanging reality of our salvation and heavenly hope.

This love leads to peace that surpasses understanding, a supernatural calm that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6–7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Strengthened by God's love and peace, believers are empowered to show patience and forbearance, extending kindness and generosity, even to their enemies as Jesus commanded.

Finally, the Holy Spirit gives us the fruit of self-control, enabling us to say “No” to sin's temptations.

Through the Holy Spirit's power, we throw off the sin that once entangled and enslaved us, knowing that in Christ, we're no longer bound but free to live for righteousness.

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Then, as the Holy Spirit produces fruit within us, Scripture reminds us that our daily choices still matter, for *“whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”*

The Christian life isn't passive; it's a Spirit-led partnership of planting seeds that lead to an eternal harvest.

Galatians 6:7–8, *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”*

As this passage indicates, there are ultimately two ways to live, and each produces radically different outcomes.

A life sown to the flesh, driven by self-interest, often seeks to protect personal gain, even if it means dominating others.

Though this path may produce temporary pleasures, its harvest is fleeting, destined to perish, like dust returning to the ground.

In contrast, those who walk by the Spirit have surrendered to a power not their own. They have embraced God's control to live holy lives and do good works that please the Father.

Now don't misunderstand what is being said. These deeds don't earn salvation, they bear witness to it, producing fruit that's not temporary but eternal.

Though we may not see immediate results, Paul urges us against growing weary in doing good, for in God's perfect timing, we'll reap a harvest if we don't give up.

Jesus even tells us that the good soil produces “*a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown.*” That’s why we must sow faithfully, knowing the harvest is in God’s hands.

As we continue to love, to forbear, to carry one another’s burdens, to preach the Gospel message, we serve knowing that God alone is enough. He’s our portion and eternal reward!

Psalms 73:26, “*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*”

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Therefore, if we truly reap what we sow, then it’s essential that we pause and examine the fruit in our lives, to discern whether we’re truly walking by the Spirit or slowly drifting back toward the desires of the flesh.

The prophet Jeremiah rightly observed in Jeremiah 17:9 that “*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure—who can understand it?*”

This echoes the deep, internal conflict King David expresses in Psalm 139. His words, in that Psalm, aren’t those of tranquil meditation, but a painful plea for divine inspection.

David knew the darkness that could hide in the corners of the human heart, the parts of us that loves sin and shrinks back from the God who lovingly prunes.

David confessed that while he wanted nothing to do with the wickedness around him, his concern was not self-righteousness, it was humility.

He feared that if he wasn’t careful, he would imitate the very evil he despised.

You've likely heard the phrase, *"Hate the sin, but love the sinner,"* which, by the way, doesn't come from the Bible but from Mahatma Gandhi. Regardless it's easier said than done.

Often, the very sins we hate most in others are the ones we've secretly indulged ourselves.

So David, praying with boldness and surrender in Psalm 139:23–24 says, *"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

It's as if David's saying, *"Lord, don't hold back. Expose what I can't see. Show me the sin I've grown comfortable with. Cut out what's choking my communion with You."*

This is no small request, to prune the heart is to invite the removal of even the most deeply cherished sins. It's an act of painful grace.

Yet here's the hope: while sin corrupts and separates, the Holy Spirit creates fellowship, unity, and holiness with our Creator.

Though the bait of Satan is often appealing, we must remember that we're partakers of a divine nature.

We're no longer slaves to sin, and with God's help, we can recognize the destructive paths of thought, word, and action, and invite the Gardener to plant in us a desire for His will, a will that is infinitely higher than ours.

Isaiah 55:8–9, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

While David's prayer is an invitation to painful pruning, it's also a plea for joy. The joy of being drawn nearer to Christ. So, are our lives marked by divine love, or have we settled for behavior modification instead of heart transformation?

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That's why once we've invited God to search our hearts, the next step is not passivity but surrender.

Paul tells us to *“work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in us, both to will and to act according to His good purpose.”*

This isn't a call to earn salvation, but a call to live it out with deep reverence and dependence on God's enabling power.

Remember, we work out our salvation not to earn it, but, because it was bought with the blood Jesus shed on the cross. This was all that we might be raised to new life with Him.

Even though, at conversion, we receive a new identity and a new heart, that doesn't mean our desires are always aligned with God's will. We can't simply “will” ourselves to live a life worthy of the Gospel.

As Paul painfully confesses in Romans 7, *“The good I want to do, I do not do—but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing!” “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

The key to living a holy life is not striving harder but yielding deeper. To be *“transformed into His image”* requires a holy fear of God, a trembling that takes sin seriously and never stops inviting the Father to prune and the Spirit to renew our minds.

Though we're no longer slaves to sin, the sinful nature still lingers and it can't be overcome by human effort alone.

But here is our hope: if we ask, God will give us both the desire and the power to resist sin and walk in righteousness.

James 4:7–10, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

The Christian life is a spiritual battle, but we don't fight unarmed. We've been given the full armor of God, so that we may stand firm, draw near to God, and fulfill the purpose for which we were redeemed.

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Yet, if we resist the Gardener's pruning, we may remain in the field but we'll never bear fruit. In Matthew 9, Jesus reminds us that while the harvest is ready, the real question is: Are we?

When Jesus was ministering in Galilee, it had around 200 towns and villages, with a population approaching three million people.

As Jesus looked upon the crowds that gathered to hear Him preach, *"He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."*

The spiritual leaders of Israel had abandoned their calling. Instead of leading the people beside still waters, they had left them vulnerable prey to the wolves of Roman oppression and religious hypocrisy.

Most of these souls had no true knowledge of Christ, and their daily lives were marked by confusion, weariness, and despair.

Even if one-third had some connection to God, that still meant nearly two million people were walking the broad path to eternal destruction.

Moved with compassion, Jesus turned to His disciples and told them in Matthew 9:37b-38: *“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

We live in a global age connected by the internet and media causing us to be increasingly divided by different beliefs.

People cling to contradictory ideas and shift their convictions with the wind of changing circumstances.

Truth has become relative, and it's increasingly rare to find someone who holds firm to anything let alone the unchanging Word of God, and yet, the harvest today is even larger.

With over eight billion souls alive in the world, most remain lost on a path that leads away from Christ and toward eternal separation from God.

But, before we can reach them, we must start with ourselves. We must first clean the inside of our own cups.

To sow the seed of God's Word, we must live holy and set-apart lives, so that our light shines clearly and our deeds glorify our Father in heaven.

This can only happen if we daily work out our salvation with fear and trembling, continually inviting the Lord to examine our hearts, reveal hidden sin, and prune away anything that doesn't bring Him glory.

The fields are truly ripe, but have you prepared your heart to plant His seed?

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Conclusion

So, as this final chapter of our four-week journey through the Parable of the Sower ends, we're left with one unavoidable question: What kind of soil are we?

Have we surrendered our hearts to the Gardener's pruning shears? Have we invited the Holy Spirit to root out sin and cultivate fruit? Have we traded the fleeting pleasures of the flesh for the eternal joy of Spirit-led obedience?

The harvest doesn't just happen. It's the result of sowing, growing, pruning, and waiting. And in the same way, the spiritual harvest that God desires in and through our lives will not happen by accident.

It comes through surrender, through Spirit-filled perseverance, and through a heart that says daily, *"Search me, O God... and lead me in the way everlasting."*

The fields are white unto the harvest. Over eight billion souls live on this planet, and many of them are lost, hurting, confused, deceived, and wandering like sheep without a shepherd.

So today, let's not walk away from this series inspired but unchanged. Take hold of the plow and open your heart to be tilled, weeded, and made ready.

Rise up, not as passive spectators, but as faithful laborers in His harvest field, ready to sow truth, shine brightly, and bear fruit that will last. Let us be not just hearers of the Word, but as laborers in the field, bearing fruit that lasts.