

HEART FOR THE HARVEST

By Rev. Will Nelken

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It's Not About You

Jesus once told a story about a farmer who had great crops, more than he could store...

Luke 12:16-21

¹⁶ "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. ¹⁷ He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' ¹⁸ Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. ¹⁹ And I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!'"

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?'"

²¹ "**Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.**"

From the beginning, God taught us to demonstrate our thankfulness for His gracious provision by being generous to others.

Leviticus 23:22

²² "When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. **Leave it for the poor and the foreigners living among you.** I am the Lord your God."

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

¹⁹ "When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain from your field, don't go back to get it. **Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows.** Then the Lord your God will bless you in all you do. ²⁰ When you beat the olives from your olive trees, don't go over the boughs twice. Leave the remaining olives for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. ²¹ When you gather the grapes in your vineyard, don't glean the vines after they are picked. Leave the remaining grapes for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. ²² Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt. That is why I am giving you this command.

He was not creating a welfare system. He didn't ask us to do the work for them, but to give them a chance to work. He asked us not to pick the branches and the vines down to the bark for ourselves, but to leave some for others.

Somehow, we've got it backwards: we work hard for ourselves and then wonder why we feel so empty. Jesus taught that our major life efforts should be made on behalf of others.

Mark 10:45

"Even the Son of Man came not to be served but **to serve others and to give his life** as a ransom for many."

If we use our strength to serve others, then we will feel full.

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ *“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing?”²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are?²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?*

²⁸ *“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing,²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.*

³⁰ *And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?*

³¹ *“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.³³ **Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.***

It’s a Timely Matter

Harvest is not a season; it is an event. I worked for two years in the Washington apple harvest as a migrant worker. Until the crop was ready, there was nothing to do but wait for God to work. But when the sugar content reached its peak, the harvest was on, 9 hours a day, 7 days a week, until it was done. Harvest is an event.

Mark 4:26-29

²⁶ *Jesus also said, “The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground.²⁷ Night and day, while he’s asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens.²⁸ The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens.²⁹ And **as soon as the grain is ready**, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come.”*

That means harvest timing is mission critical. A blacksmith must “strike while the iron is hot” or his strength will be wasted. A Gospel harvester must reap when a soul is ready, or his hard work will be in vain. Therefore, we must learn to recognize the signs of spiritual development and readiness, and be ready to expend whatever effort is necessary.

Proverbs 20:4

⁴ *Those too lazy to plow in the right season will have no food at the harvest.*

There is a time for planting and a time for harvesting. One always follows the other. No planting, no harvesting. It’s the law.

2 Corinthians 9:6

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.

It is equally important to work when it is time to harvest as it is to plant in the Spring, or else the hard work of tilling and sowing will be for nothing.

Proverbs 10:5

⁵ *He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.*

John 4:35-38

³⁵ "You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, **wake up and look around**. The fields are already ripe for harvest. ³⁶ The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! ³⁷ You know the saying, 'One plants and another harvests.' And it's true. ³⁸ I sent you to harvest where you didn't plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest."

Are you awake? Are you looking? Will you take another look (because seasons change)?

You may plant where another reaps, and you may reap where another has sown. That is of little consequence. What's important is each one doing his or her part at the appropriate time.

Workers Needed

Matthew 9:35-38

³⁵ Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ He said to his disciples, "**The harvest is great, but the workers are few.** ³⁸ **So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.**"

This is Jesus' only recorded prayer request... "Ask of me."

Today, we are still surrounded by every kind of disease and illness. People are more confused and helpless than ever. The plethora of self-help manuals and seminars have not improved the situation.

The bottom line is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer, whether the questions are about disease or health, or poverty or wealth, or relationships, or significance, or God.

And people are listening, more than ever! But who will tell them?

Acts 8:26-35

²⁶ As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹ The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

³⁰ Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

³¹ The man replied, "**How can I, unless someone instructs me?**" And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

³² The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter.

And as a lamb is silent before the shearers,

he did not open his mouth.

³³ He was humiliated and received no justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth."

³⁴ *The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?"* ³⁵ *So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.*

Romans 10:13-15

¹³ *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

¹⁴ *But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? **And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?*** ¹⁵ *And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"*

Compassion is not a feeling; compassion is a response. We must act. A compassionate heart makes beautiful feet! Good news messengers are a welcome sight!

Be good news. Don't let the world intimidate you. People are dying to know the life you have in Christ. Don't be afraid to share it.

Live the Gospel. Be genuine. Get personal. Build relationships. Tell the truth.

This is our Year of Harvest. Do you have the heart for it?