

THE LORD OF THE HARVEST
Mt. 9:38; (Lk. 10:2); Jn. 4:35

INTRODUCTION

Everyone is impressed with a bountiful & beautiful harvest. The image of our great wheat fields filled with amber waves of grain runs throughout our great national hymns. I have seen in Southeast Asia the great green rice fields lush with food for millions who would otherwise starve. You, too, have seen memorable harvests of agricultural products if you have ever lived anywhere outside an urban area.

Throughout history various harvest festivals have been important to people of all nations and cultures. In the Bible too this was true of Israel. Early in the book of Genesis we read: "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer & winter, day and night will never cease"

(Gen. 8:22). Early in Jewish history God established the three annual festivals, one of which was the Feast of Harvest, to be celebrated with firstfruits of the crops sown in the fields (Ex. 23:16). The ancient Israelites well understood that "Who reaps the grain and plows the sod Must feel a kinship with his God."

And we in our American religious heritage celebrate the annual Thanksgiving season in the assurance that we are a thankful people who come together to "Raise the song of harvest home" as we pray: "Lord of harvest, grant that we

Wholesome grain and pure may be."
We have so many reasons to remember
"How good the God of Harvest is to us;
Who pours abundance over our flowing fields."
(Thomson, Autumn, l. 169)

Importance of a good harvest:

- (1) to prevent hunger,
- (2) to promote the economy.

I. Who is The Lord of the Harvest? (His Identity)

A. He uses this term of the Person to Whom we are to pray for laborers for the harvest; therefore it must refer to God the Father.

B. But it is not improper to use this term of Jesus too, for he is indeed the Lord of the Harvest.

1.His Compassion

Follows the image of the shepherd and sheep.
He was aroused by the multitudes, because they
fainted and were scattered as lost sheep.

2.His vision of the potential harvest.

II.What is the Harvest He speaks of here?

A.The harvest is compared with the crowds, v. 36.

--Therefore, = lost people.

B.Jesus sees the entire lost world as a great
harvest of souls for whom He is to die.

C.We need to catch a vision of a lost world as a
potential harvest of souls for Jesus Christ.

D.We should share his compassion and vision --

-- to love as He loved,

-- to pray as He prayed, and

-- to do as He did.

III.What is the Special Commission of The Lord of the Harvest?

A.The Commission to the Twelve.

1.He called them personally and as a group,
10:1-10.

2.He instructed them and empowered them.

3.Essentially he commanded them to go, preach,
and acknowledge him or witness to or confess him,
vs. 7, 32-33.

B.The commission to Christians today.

1.We are called personally or individually,
and as groups or churches.

2.We are commanded, as were the apostles, to
go, witness, and preach or send preachers and
missionaries to boldly proclaim his gospel.

3.We have the power of the H.S. with us.

4.We are to be instructed by him and to be
filled with his love and compassion as we work in
every way we can in his great harvest field, either
directly through our own labor or indirectly through
our prayers and gifts through the lives of others
whom we send and support.

5. We are called to recognize the crucial ministry
of PRAYER. God's work can not be done by prayer ALONE,
but it can not be done WITHOUT PRAYER. PRAYER IS NO
SUBSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE: but there is NO
SUBSTITUTE for prayer. We need dedicated workers to
cultivate the field of mankind and reap the spiritual
harvest, while they pray for other reapers.

(OVER)

6, We are called to remember that there is a time of SOWING and a time of REAPING. There are some Christians who are called to a ministry of sowing when the fields are barren and weather conditions or other conditions are unfavorable. In spite of all those faithful Christians do, they live in a place and time and under conditions when spiritual things are neglected and unpopular, and they see no harvest. There have been times in the church's history when there were no genuine spiritual revivals--- superficial numerical growth perhaps here and there, but no genuine spiritual revivals. During those times, and at those places, there is no real Christian work but steady teaching and preaching of the gospel truth, and, of course, the LIVING TESTIMONY of Christian lives. During those difficult times of slow development, with this unrecorded, unrecognized, unromantic work of the Christian home, and church, and study groups, faithful believers are to keep on with their assigned task with loyalty and dedication. Be assured that your labor for the Lord is never in vain. Leave the results with The Lord of the harvest. Another leadership team may get the credit, but what matters is that the Lord gets the glory. This is all that counts when the golden sheaves are gathered in His final harvest festival!

—7. Story about the frightened seminary student who put off as long as he could taking a required preaching course, because he couldn't bear to think of having to preach a sermon in the seminary chapel before the entire faculty and student body.

When his Friday morning came he was very nervous. He was introduced and stood to speak, and looked into the faces of his fellow students and the faculty, and his mind went blank. Finally, he stammered out the only words that he seemed able to say: "Do-do-do you know what I'm going to say?" The students and faculty seemed to shake their heads. "Neither do I!" he stuttered and sat down.

The preaching professor counseled with him and tried to reassure him, and the young man was reassigned to preach the following Friday.

When his turn came again next Friday, he stood to speak, and suddenly his mind went blank again. After a few seconds, he stammered out, "Do-do-do you know what I'm going to say?" The congregation remembered last week, and they all seemed to nod their heads this time. The frightened young man responded, "Then there's no need my telling you," and he sat down!

The kind preaching professor consoled the young student and suggested to the student that he memorize the first sentence of his sermon until it would almost automatically come out of his mouth. So he tried very hard to do this, but it did no good. As soon as he stood to speak and opened his mouth, that first sentence was gone, and his mind was again a blank.

Stuttering he said, "Do-do-do you know what I'm going to say?" This Friday, half of the congregation shook their heads in the negative, and the others seemed to nod in the affirmative. To this the young man responded, "Then those who know tell those who don't know!" And he sat down!

Later the homiletics professor counseled the discouraged and embarrassed student: "Young man, you will overcome your fear, and God will use you. Even today you said something all of us needed to hear. Those who know must tell those who do not know about Jesus." How true, how true! Those who know Jesus as their savior and Lord must tell those who do not know him.

CONCLUSION: We should never become so occupied with the harvest itself that we lose the vision of the Lord of the Harvest. The reason we are so concerned with the harvest is because of the command of the Lord of the Harvest, who is our Lord and God. It is He who redeems, cares, commissions, and sends his workers out into the Harvest fields. We can not save a single soul; we can not call one person to preach the gospel or go out as a missionary of the cross. Only God Himself can do this. What we can do is to teach and minister so that Christians can grow to understand the implications of their profession and to be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and then we can encourage and help them, pray for them, support them and send them and keep them in the harvest fields for the Lord, while we are faithful in serving and reaping in our own little corner of the field here where God has placed us. If we do this, God will richly bless us.

Normood Bap. Ch. 11-10-85, A.M. D46
Pasadena Bap. Ch. 11-30-86, 11 A.M.
Marz. Hts. Bap. Ch. 11-22-87, 7 P.M.
Lake Mag. Bap. Ch. 8-4-91, a.m.