

In recent weeks, we have journeyed together through our series, “From Seed to Feast.” We have explored the stages of spiritual growth and stewardship, from the initial blessing of the seed to the nurturing of the soil.

We have talked about the meaning of seeds as the potential blessings God gives us that require planting and nurturing. We have discussed how our choices in where to plant or invest these seeds are crucial, that it is essential to ensure we are sowing in healthy soil.

Last week, we talked about nurturing and tending to the growth of the seed with diligence and vigilance to ensure its health and fruition. All this is within the context of our role as stewards of the blessings God has entrusted us. This includes us, our family, people we care about, our church, and every other area of our lives, like our jobs and schools.

Today, we focus on the following pivotal stage after planting and nurturing: The Harvest. If we planted good seeds in good soil and were good caretakers, then there would be a crop that signals the time for the harvest.

What is the harvest? In the agricultural world, the harvest is the season of reaping, the time when all the hard work, patience, and dedication bear fruit. How many of you are farmers or grew up on a farm? How many of you know and understand the process of harvesting?

I raise this point because the concept of ‘harvest’ has become distant and unfamiliar for many in our contemporary society. The direct connection between the land, the farmer, and our tables has been obscured by convenience. Most of us have become detached from the farm-to-table journey. For example, if you ask a child (or any person for that matter) where food comes from, they might eagerly respond with “Kroger” or “Walmart” rather than “The Farm.” I have heard some say that chocolate milk comes from brown cows.

Why is this important? Throughout this series, our analogy of seedtime, soil, nurturing, and harvesting underscores the vital processes leading up to the feast. Think of it this way: In our spiritual journey and life as a whole, just as in agriculture, there is a process, a progression, that we often overlook. The blessings, spiritual growth, and rewards we seek in our faith journey are not pre-packaged, available for instant pick-up from the aisles of convenience.

What does this mean? It means there is work for us to be done. As we reflect on this, let’s revisit the Parable of the Sower. This is Matthew 13: 3-8, where Jesus said,

“Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

As I have explained in the past weeks, in this parable, Jesus teaches that a seed’s growth depends on the soil’s quality. Later, he explained that the different types of soil represent the conditions of our hearts, and our receptiveness to God’s grace determines his blessings on our lives. Jesus

speaks like this to get to the main point to encourage us to have a good and receptive heart to his teachings, saying, “Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

In this parable, the seed and the soil are good, the nurturing has taken place, and now the field is ready for the harvest.

Jesus spoke about the need for workers when the harvest is ready. Matthew 9:35-38 explains,

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Jesus, with compassion in his heart, sees the multitudes, weary and in need of hope and good news. He likens them to ripe crops awaiting harvest. At the same time, Jesus highlights the scarcity of workers to come to them and bring them good news. The way to understand this is that the vast fields of people ready to receive the good news require urgent attention from Jesus’ disciples. Many are ready to receive faith and hope, but who will tell and show them the way?

Reflecting on this passage, I wonder: Shouldn’t many workers be ready if the fields are ripe for harvest? So, where have all the workers gone? How does this speak to us?

When we speak of the harvest, we often conjure images of abundance, of baskets brimming with fruits and fields golden with crops. Yet, we need to understand that while the harvest is there, a process still needs to take place to bring the food to the table. The harvest itself is not the end; what comes next is perhaps the most demanding phase before we get to the feast. How so? We can’t talk about harvest without talking about people willing to work to pick up the crop.

In my younger years (way younger years), I had hands-on experience with farming, mainly harvesting corn. It was a challenging task. The first day I went to the field, I needed to prepare better. The next day, suffice it to say, I learned to wear long sleeves, a hat, and gloves. Still, it took a long time and hard work. If you know a thing about harvesting, you know you have to get into the field and find your way through it. The crop is not just waiting for you like on a silver plate; you have to work for it, dig it up, cut it off, and clean it up. Harvesting requires dedication, time, and effort. And without harvesting, there is no food at the table.

How does this speak about stewardship? Just as a farmer works tirelessly, sowing seeds, nurturing plants, and eventually reaping the produce, we must invest in our well-being, faith journey, and what God calls us to do. Just as crops don’t harvest themselves and food magically appears on the table, blessings and spiritual growth will not merely manifest without effort.

This principle applies to every other aspect of our lives. For example, like farmers, if you are a mom, dad, or grandparents, if you sow values and faith in your children, nurturing through guidance and discipline, the harvest will be seeing your child mature into a responsible and faith-driven individual. Now, apply the same logic to your other relationships, work, school studies, and so on, and you will begin to see the big picture of what it takes to get to the feast, that time of contentment and bliss.

So, when Jesus said, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field,” he was implying that the harvest time is not a period of rest; it demands the dedication of willing workers who do what needs to get done. The work of planting and nurturing leads to this anticipated moment of seeing the fruit of our work. But then, it is a time to rise early, work late, and pour every ounce of our being into the task before us: the reaping. It is a reminder that while God provides growth, our hands must gather for the sake of our well-being and those entrusted to our care—including our church. But not many are willing to do it.

Would you be one of those workers for the sake of your family, church, friends, and yourself? Would you show up and stay committed to God’s path for you? This is what harvesting requires, showing up, a drive, and resilience. Think of it this way: just as the corn won’t pick itself up, the blessings God has for you won’t be realized unless you actively participate in receiving and sharing them. When Jesus says, “The workers are few,” he is speaking to the reality that many people are unwilling to show up, serve, give, and help; instead, they want the final product—a warm meal on the table brought by someone else.

Can you imagine a farmer abandoning his field and giving up the harvest because it is too much work? That will be the most self-defeating farmer. Crazy, right? But that is us sometimes. We give up the blessings because it takes more effort to reap than anticipated, and we don’t want to get in there, work for it, and get dirt under our fingernails. I have seen people lose the blessing around the corner because they were unwilling to keep going forward.

My friends, if this is you today, let me give you a word of encouragement using the apostle Paul’s words in Galatians 6:9, “Let’s not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Paul is basically saying you can’t give up because your harvest time is always within reach. If you don’t want to miss the harvesting seasons in your life when they come, you need to be ready to bring it. The blessings we seek, the growth we desire, and the relationship we yearn for with God and others can’t be found in the express lane. Just as the physical act of harvesting requires hands to gather, our spiritual blessings and growth need active participation and dedication.

Here is the invitation and good news: Don’t abandon your field or let the crops go wasted because you think it is too much work. Use what God has given you, your talents, gifts, time, and energy, and plant them in good soil where they can thrive as if they were seeds. Then, show up and do God’s work. Work and invest in your spiritual growth and the well-being of the people you care about and your church family. And don’t ever forget that you are not alone in this task. Other workers are laboring alongside you because this is a community effort and calling.

If you do all this, your harvesting time is coming. Jesus promised it. So, prepare your hearts and hands, for the time of harvest is upon us, and Jesus is calling for workers to go into his harvest field. The feast is coming and is going to be glorious!

As we reflect on the lessons of the harvest and our spiritual journeys, we are reminded of the importance of commitment and active participation. The harvest doesn't just symbolize the rewards of our labor but also our dedication and promises for the future. It is a reminder that what we give today will shape the blessings and growth of tomorrow.

With this spirit in our hearts, we now approach a moment of dedication and thanksgiving. As part of our community's tradition, we come together to submit our pledges for the upcoming year. Let these pledges testify to our shared commitment and symbolize the harvest we hope to reap together.

### **Liturgy of Consecration of the Pledges**

**All: Gracious and loving God, as we stand before you, we offer our pledges, embodying our commitment and aspirations. These pledges, reminiscent of seeds sown with hope, encapsulate our dreams and the future fruits of our dedication.**

**Minister:** We present these pledges as symbols of our shared journey for the upcoming year. Do you, the congregation, promise to uphold and honor these commitments for the betterment of our community and the glory of God's kingdom?

**People: We do.**

**Minister:** We give thanks to you, O Lord, for the blessings you have showered upon us, for the growth we have witnessed, and for the harvest we anticipate. Are we, as a community, ready to give back, support our church's mission, and sow seeds for tomorrow's blessings?

**People: We are ready.**

**Minister:** As these pledges are consecrated, let's pray they serve their intended purpose, nurturing our congregation and extending our reach. Will you, the congregation, join in ensuring these pledges bring growth, abundance, and a deeper connection to God's purpose?

**People: We will.**

**Minister:** With hearts brimming with gratitude, let's consecrate these pledges to God's purpose. May they be a beacon of hope, growth, and unity.

**All: With hearts full of gratitude, we consecrate these pledges to you. Bless them, O God, and multiply their impact. Let them be a source of nourishment, growth, and abundance in the days to come. In your holy name, we give thanks. Amen.**