

SEEDTIME AND HARVEST

(No. 1221 – 7/11/22 – Sermon Online Zoom)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. **Gen. 8:20-22:** ²⁰*Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in His heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. ²²As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”*
- B. After being spared from God’s wrath and judgment, Noah built an altar and sacrificed burnt offerings; this is the first mention of an “altar” or “burnt offerings” in the Bible. His offering pleased the Lord.
- C. When we realize that we have been spared from God’s horrible wrath and judgment ONLY because of His mercy and grace, we also should offer spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving continually!
- D. In vv.21-22, God is speaking to Himself: “As long as the earth endures...”
1. “As long as” [Heb. *kôl yôm* = lit. “as many as the days”] – note God reckons the lifespan of the earth in *days*, not years or centuries!
 2. The earth is not millions of years old like the myth of evolution promotes—it is probably only 10,000 years or less!
- E. God lists 4 pairs of opposite phenomena: seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.
- F. Seedtime and harvest will never cease... That is the topic of our study.

II. SEEDTIME AND HARVEST: SOWING AND REAPING

- A. The law of sowing and reaping is both natural and spiritual—God instituted this law from the beginning of creation
1. “Seedtime” [Heb. *zera’* = “seed, seed-sowing, planting”]

2. Found also in **Gen. 1:11-12**:

*¹¹Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: **seed-bearing** plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with **seed** in it, **according to their various kinds.**” And it was so. ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing **seed** according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with **seed** in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.*

3. Each seed contains a library of coded information (DNA) that ensures it will produce the same “kind”—you will always reap what you sow!

B. Seeds summarized

1. Contain life, DNA, great potential to grow and multiply (crabgrass, orchids, etc.); some remain viable for thousands of years (pyramids)
2. Need water, proper soil and cultivation
3. The more seeds you sow, the greater the harvest

C. The law of sowing and reaping applies to good and bad seeds

1. **Gal. 6:7-9:** *⁷Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*
 - a) If we sow to the flesh, we will reap destruction
 - b) If we sow to the Spirit, we will reap eternal life
 - c) Note: Destruction and life are the same destinations for the broad and narrow roads (Mat. 7:13-14)
2. **Job 4:8:** *As I have observed, those who **plow evil** and those who **sow trouble** reap it.*
3. **Prov. 11:18:** *The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who **sows righteousness** reaps a sure reward.*
4. **Prov. 22:8:** *He who **sows wickedness** reaps trouble, and the rod of his fury will be destroyed.*
5. **Hos. 8:7:** *They [Israel] **sow the wind** and **reap the whirlwind**. The stalk has no head; it will produce no flour. Were it to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it up.*

III. JESUS' PARABLES ABOUT SEED SOWING

Jesus gave a number of important parables concerning seeds to explain the kingdom of God including: 1) The Parable of the Sower; 2) The Parable of the Wheat and Tares; 3) The Parable of the Seed Growing; and 4) The Parable of the Mustard Seed.

A. The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20):

*¹Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around Him was so large that He got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ²He taught them many things by parables, and in His teaching said: ³"Listen! A **farmer went out to sow his seed.** ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." ⁹Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." ¹⁰When He was alone, the Twelve and the others around Him asked Him about the parables. ¹¹He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹²so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"*

*¹³Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? **How then will you understand any parable?** ¹⁴The **farmer sows the word.** ¹⁵Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the **word that was sown** in them. ¹⁶Others, like seed sown on rocky places, **hear the word** and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes **because of the word**, they quickly fall away. ¹⁸Still others, like seed sown among thorns, **hear the word;** ¹⁹but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and **choke the word**, making it unfruitful. ²⁰Others, like **seed***

sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.”

1. Understanding this parable is key to understanding all other parables
2. The seed is God’s word
3. **Isa. 55:10-11:** ¹⁰*As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields **seed for the sower** and bread for the eater, ¹¹**so is My word** that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*
4. **1 Pet. 1:23:** *For you have been born again, **not of perishable seed, but of imperishable**, through the living and enduring **word of God**.*
5. In the Parable of the Sower, all 4 groups received the *same seed*—what varied was the ground/cultivation

B. The Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Mat. 13:24-30, 36-43):

²⁴*Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a **man who sowed good seed** in his field. ²⁵But while everyone was sleeping, his **enemy came and sowed weeds** among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ²⁹‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰**Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.**”*

³⁶*Then He left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” ³⁷He answered, “The **one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man**. ³⁸The field is the world, and the **good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom**. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are*

angels. ⁴⁰“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will **weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.** ⁴²They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

1. This seed is different from that in the Parable of the Sower—these are 2 different types of people—one group is harvested for the fiery furnace of hell (those who sin and do evil), the other group (the righteous) for the kingdom of God
2. There are 2 different sowers here—Jesus, the Son of Man, and the evil one, the devil
3. The harvesters are the angels; the harvest is the “end of the age”

C. **The Parable of the Seed Growing (Mark 4:26-29):**

²⁶He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A **man scatters seed on the ground.** ²⁷Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the **seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.** ²⁸**All by itself** the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the **harvest** has come.”

1. Nothing that the farmer does can make the seed grow
2. The seed grows “all by itself” (he doesn’t know how!)
3. There is a harvest at the end

D. **The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mat. 13:31-32):**

³¹He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a **mustard seed**, which a man took and planted in his field. ³²Though it is the **smallest of all your seeds**, yet when it grows, it is the **largest of garden plants** and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”

1. Seeds have great potential—small seeds can grow up to become very large trees (redwoods, giant sequoias)
2. God’s kingdom usually starts off small, as with the restored temple (**Zech. 4:10** – MSG):

*Does anyone dare despise this day of **small beginnings**?
They'll change their tune when they see Zerubbabel setting
the last stone in place!*

IV. SPIRITUAL APPLICATIONS

- A. Our very life must be like a seed that falls into the ground and dies (**John 12:24-26**):

*²⁴I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a **single seed**. But **if it dies, it produces many seeds**. ²⁵The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me.*

- B. Financial giving is an important way of sowing seed (**2 Cor. 9:6-11**):

*⁶Remember this: **Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously**. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver**. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written: “He has scattered abroad His gifts to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food **will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness**. ¹¹ You will be **made rich in every way so that you can be generous** on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*

1. Do you want to reap sparingly? All you have to do is be stingy with the seeds you sow! Give a little, reap a little!
 2. God wants to make you rich—SO THAT you can be generous—not selfish and stingy!
- C. In the ministry, we sow spiritual seed in faith, patiently waiting and hoping for God to bring the harvest:
1. The germination of seeds is a mystery—we cannot make it happen (**Mark 4:26-29**):

*²⁶He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though **he does not know how**. ²⁸All by itself the soil produces*

grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

2. Someone else may reap the harvest from what we planted (**John 4:35-38**):

³⁵Do you not say, “Four months more and then the harvest”? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are **ripe for harvest**. ³⁶Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷Thus the saying “**One sows and another reaps**” is true. ³⁸I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. **Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.**

3. Whether we plant, water, or harvest, we are all nothing (**1 Cor. 3:5-8**):

⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶**I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.** ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and **each will be rewarded according to his own labor.**

- a) Some plant God’s word, others water/nourish it, but only God can make it grow!
- b) We are nothing, but God will still reward us!
- c) NOTE: One possible insight into “watering” is found in **Ps. 126:5-6**:

⁵Those who **sow in tears** will reap with songs of joy.
⁶He who goes out **weeping**, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

4. Farmers have to wait patiently for the harvest (**Jas. 5:7-8**):

⁷**Be patient**, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the **farmer waits** for the land to yield its valuable crop and **how patient he is** for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, **be patient** and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

D. Planting seed requires wisdom

1. We must not be deterred by winds, clouds, or negative conditions—we plant by faith and wait on God for the results (**Eccl. 11:1, 4-6**):

*¹Cast your bread upon the waters, for **after many days** you will find it again... ⁴Whoever **watches the wind** will not plant; whoever **looks at the clouds** will not reap. ⁵As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. ⁶**Sow your seed in the morning**, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for **you do not know which will succeed**, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.*

2. Soil must be plowed and prepared before seed can be successfully sown
 - a) **Hos. 10:12**: Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and **break up your unplowed ground**; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.
 - b) **Prov. 20:4** (NLT) *Those too lazy to plow in the right season will have no food at the harvest.*
 - c) In the Parable of the Sower, only those with “good soil” hearts produce a good crop—the soil of the heart had to be broken up and cultivated
 - d) Preparation is everything—sowing seed on unplowed ground is a waste of time
3. Different seeds and soils have to be handled differently—there is no “one-size-fits-all” principle for plowing, planting, or reaping (**Isa. 28:23-29**):

*²³Listen and hear My voice; pay attention and hear what I say. ²⁴When a farmer **plows** for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? ²⁵When he has leveled the surface, does he not **sow** caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not **plant** wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field?*

*²⁶His **God instructs him and teaches him the right way.***

*²⁷Caraway is not **threshed** with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cummin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a stick. ²⁸Grain must be ground to make*

bread; so one does not go on threshing it forever. Though he drives the wheels of his threshing cart over it, his horses do not grind it. ²⁹All this also comes from the **LORD Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.**

- a) Different types of seeds represent different types of people
- b) The Holy Spirit must teach us the correct strategies for plowing, planting, and harvesting (evangelism, ministry, etc.) for each individual: “Caraway is *not* threshed with a sledge [wrong tool!].”

E. Those who sow spiritual seed are entitled to a material harvest

1. **1 Cor. 9:6-15:** ⁶Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? ⁸Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Surely He says this for us, doesn't He? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so **in the hope of sharing in the harvest.** ¹¹If we have sown **spiritual seed** among you, is it too much if we reap a **material harvest** from you? ¹²If others have this **right of support** from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord has commanded that **those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.** ¹⁵But **I have not used any of these rights.** And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast.

- a) Paul explains how ministers who sow the seed of God's word are entitled to financial support from the church—he calls it their “right of support”
- b) But Paul chose not to use these rights—he worked for his own support rather than hinder the gospel

c) **1 Tim. 5:17-18** (AMP): ¹⁷*Let the elders who perform the duties of their office well be considered doubly worthy of honor [and of **adequate financial support**], especially those who labor faithfully in preaching and teaching.* ¹⁸*For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain, and again, The laborer is worthy of his hire. [Deut. 25:4; Luke 10:7.]*

2. This support is not for lazy slouches—it is for ministers who “work hard at teaching and preaching” (1 Tim. 5:17 – MSG); see **2 Tim. 2:6**:

*The **hardworking farmer** should be the first to receive a share of the crops.*

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Sowing and reaping are natural and spiritual laws in creation and in God’s kingdom
- B. Whatever type of seed is sown, seeds always reproduce after their kind—good seeds produce good fruit, bad seeds always produce bad fruit
- C. Seeds have incredible potential for growth and multiplication
- D. Ministry is often compared to farming—it involves plowing, planting, watering, and harvesting
- E. The most important seed of all is God’s Word
- F. There are good and bad rewards:

1. **Gal. 6:7-9**: ⁷*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.* ⁸*The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.* ⁹***Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.***

2. **1 Cor. 3:6-8**: ⁶*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.* ⁷*So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.* ⁸*The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and **each will be rewarded according to his own labor.***

- G. Don’t give up—if we sow good seeds, WE WILL BE REWARDED WITH A GREAT HARVEST!