

SOWING AND REAPING

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Psalm 126:6.

As we have been approaching the time designated for our series of evangelistic services, we have been dealing with themes of specific helpfulness for this concerted effort. We have already considered THE NEED FOR A REVIVAL, CAN WE HAVE A REVIVAL?, and WHAT CHRIST EXPECTS OF US. This morning we shall center our thoughts around the theme, SOWING AND REAPING, as suggested to us in Psalm 126:6.

I. The Seed.

The Lord Jesus said, "The seed is the Word of God." Luke 8:11.

1. Its origin is divine.

2. Its value.

In the text the seed is called "precious." In what sense is it precious?

(1) It is inspired of God.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Timothy 3:16-17.

(2) It is a gift from God.

(3) It meets human needs.

(4) It is adapted to all classes.

(5) It is indispensable.

Nothing can take its place.

(6) It produces beneficial results.

Truly, the seed drawn from the Holy Bible is "precious."

II. The Soil.

That in which the sacred seed must be cast is the soul of man. Our appeal must be made to the entire nature: —

1. The mind.

Appeal to the understanding, with all its powers of spiritual discernment, of reasoning, of memory, and of anticipation.

2. The heart.

Appeal to the affections, which have been gathered round objects that are unworthy of them, and that may be directed to God Himself.

3. The will.

Appeal to the will, which has to determine whether or not we will choose Christ for our Saviour, and His service for our portion.

As Christian husbandmen we shall fail unless we direct our efforts to mind, heart, and will, when we work under our Master in these sacred fields.

III. The Sower.

Much Christian effort is a kind of sowing. The chief duty of the Christian is to sow. He is above all things a sower. It matters not in what part of the field he labors, it is his business to sow. The Master is the great sower, and following His example, His servants too must sow.

1. His energy.

He "goeth forth." This shows a set purpose, as well as a fixed and definite design. He does not waste his time in berating other sowers, or in telling what wonders he is going to do in the future; nor does he allow his zeal to evaporate in sentiment or song. He "goeth forth" as an active worker. In spiritual husbandry this is what is needed. There are many who will talk, some who will pray, but not all these really go to the work. If only the much talk and many prayers could be as they ought to be, and will be if they are sincere, translated into work -- active and strenuous work -- what a change would take place in the church.

There is a necessity for going forth. The genius of the Gospel demands it. It is not for some, but for all. It puts us under obligation to go forth. Having received it through others, it makes us feel, as it made Paul feel, that we are debtors to preach it to our fellows. The Master went forth, and so His servants must also go forth. They feel they must. Necessity is laid upon them. Yes, the Christian sower goes forth, and everywhere he goes he scatters the seeds of future happiness and bliss.

What is meant by going forth? He goes forth from God. The chosen servant of God has received a divine commission from heaven. This going forth implies that the worker had been with God in prayer. We must go fresh from the mercy-seat to the field of service if we would gather plenteously. Our truest strength lies in prayer. We are losing much of blessing through our negligence in private supplications. The Lord lendeth much of Himself to the person who is much with Him. He endows with marvelous power the person who has learned to live close to Him, and to walk in the light of His countenance.

2. His emotion.

"And weepeth." The burden of the Lord is upon him. This burden is made up of a deep sense of: --

- (1) His own insufficiency for the work.
 - (2) The urgent need for the work to be done.
 - (3) The shortness of time which remains for this work to be done.
 - (4) The heavy responsibility resting upon him to be faithful in the work.
- There may or may not be tears upon his face, but there certainly will be in his heart. Often will he weep there.

Why does he weep? Because of: --

- (1) Felt responsibility.
- (2) Discouragements in the way.
Ignorance, drunkenness, sensuality, a disposition to cling to sins and force their way to perdition.
- (3) Lack of appreciation.
- (4) Meager results of former sowing.
- (5) Inability to reach those who need us most.

The useful worker for Christ is a person of tenderness, not a Stoic; not one who does not care whether souls are saved or lost. The weeping shows you what kind of person it is whom the Lord largely employs; he is a person who is in earnest, a person of tenderness, a person who loves souls and is filled with compassion for them. He weeps to think that he is such a poor instrument for so good and great a Master.

3. His errand.

"Bearing precious seed." This precious seed is the living word of God for a lost world; truth for the souls who are wandering in fatal error; "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." It is precious because it is the gift of God's love by Jesus

Christ, because of the price paid for it, and because of its wonderful fruit -- peace, love, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We must tell out the truth as it is in Jesus, with the firm conviction that there is life in it, and something will come of it.

IV. The Sowing.

1. The spirit.

The spirit in which we are to sow the seed is that of tender interest, brotherly affection, inexhaustible faith, and patient hope.

2. The methods.

We may write a friendly letter, print the message, teach, address a congregation, or converse with those who are lost.

3. The conditions.

These conditions may be favorable or unfavorable. We may go forth hopefully, expecting great things; or we may be discouraged and disheartened, for we may feel that the hearts are hard, and the minds are dull, and the purpose is set against the truth and the claims of God.

V. The Success.

His success is certain and inevitable.

The character of the harvest which is promised.

(1) It is abundant.

For seeds in the hand there shall be sheaves on the shoulders.

(2) It is gladdening.

The sower goes forth weeping; he returns rejoicing.

(3) It is sure.

1. His return.

"He shall doubtless come again."

Those men always come back to God with their sheaves who went forth from Him with their seed. Some workers can see souls saved and take the honor to themselves, but never that man who sowed in tears; he has learned his own weakness in the school of bitterness; and now when he sees results, he comes back again to God with a feeling of wonder that a soul has been saved under such poor words as his.

This pictures his return from the field. So shall the servant of God, as he wends his way homeward, be seen, not with downcast, disappointed look, but with rejoicing because of the success of his toil. Such men, ere they reach home, find their way lit up with the sunset glow and the eventide light, which the harvest joy brings to them. The return of the faithful sower is: --

(1) Consciously successful.

(2) Personally honored.

(3) Abundantly recompensed.

2. His rejoicing.

"He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing."

At last when Christian service is done, the disappointments and toils of the Christian life will only be raw materials to produce everlasting song. Oh, how we will thank and praise God that we were accounted worthy to do anything for Christ!

How many are the springs of that joy! that he has been himself saved; that he has been allowed to engage in the work; that he has been kept faithful and persevering in the work; and that he has been made successful in the work.

3. His reaping.

"Bringing his sheaves." What a beautifully suggestive picture! The seed is not called his, but the sheaves are his. It is true of the spiritual sower. The seed belong to God, and so are the sheaves, but the sheaves also belong to the sower. It was thus that Paul regarded every convert of his ministry. He was his son in the gospel. So with those whom we win to Christ, some will reach home before we do, others about the same time, and still others will follow.

Is there not enough in the anticipation of all this to make us "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"? The Master has given us the "precious seed," has enabled us to sow it, and has promised us success if we are faithful in our task, and longs to be able to say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And how glad we shall be to hear that welcome plaudit!