

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtmnc.org Today's Date: July 10, 2011

The Law of the Harvest

by Dan Trygg

“He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, ‘Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴ and as he sowed, some *seeds* fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶ But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸ And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear.’”

Matthew 13:3-9

“And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

Galatians 6:9-10

“...he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.” 2 Corinthians 9:6

I was talking with a friend the other day, discussing some of the frustrations of ministry. We were bemoaning the people we had invested in who have not progressed very well. We looked back over the past 15 years, or so, and talked about some of the disappointments and defeats in our ministry efforts. We listed off this one, who had gone back to drugs and a life of crime, or that one, who had been kept from effectiveness for the Kingdom because of materialistic distractions. Another one, who had been a leader, is now isolated and bitter. Unresolved conflict and judgmentalism had hobbled, then finally hog-tied him. Still another got pulled away into doctrinal disaster, and left us to join a like-minded group. A different person is into conspiracy theories, another deeply into politics. They spend their time, attention and energies there, and do little for Christ. Then there is the woman who has had a string of relationships. Her focus has been more on human love than on Jesus, and her lack of stability shows that. Another fellow is all about business success, and has no time for the Lord. Then there are those who do not bear fruit because they are virtually never here. They go to the cabin, or the time-share, or on this trip or that, enjoying their hard-earned rewards but having little impact for Jesus. Then there are the many who seem to stay stuck. They do not put forth any effort in their spiritual lives. They come late, or only attend sporadically, and they contribute virtually nothing. Why they come is a mystery. Nothing seems to be happening in their lives. Each of these scenarios could be multiplied ten, even twenty times over, with various minor changes, and you still would not exhaust the number of people who have been part of *my* ministry alone in the past fifteen years. **It is mind boggling when you begin to think about it, and it can easily get to be very depressing if you start going down the list of those who have washed out, or who have become stuck, or who simply seem to fritter their lives away.** And *I* haven't been one to “tickle the ears” of people, or not challenge them. I have continually called for commitment and discipleship. I have supported, encouraged, given rides, supplied books, Bibles and study materials.

My friend was getting depressed. He knew about most of these people, plus he has his own list of people from his ministry efforts, and sees much the same kind of things. **As he talked, I reminded him that he was one of the success stories. He was one who had listened, responded, invested, put forth effort, took risk, made changes, and was willing to serve.** He was willing to do the little things, setting up chairs, picking up people, meeting others one-on-one for Bible study and accountability. **He showed up.** He *showed up* for church. He *showed up* for AA. He *showed up* for early morning Bible studies. He *showed up* to meet with me weekly for discipleship. He *showed up* for prayer meetings. He *showed up* for Greek classes. He *showed up* for work projects, and to serve others. **He invested in personal growth.** He read his Bible. He spent time in prayer and personal worship. He read other books. He worked through sermon notes and study materials. He listened to tapes and CD's. He studied theology. He went to a couple of counselors to work on issues. He went to seminars. He took up the guitar to be able to lead worship. He spent hours and hours practicing. He took guitar lessons. He *showed up.* He *paid for* the lessons. **He supported the church.** He *paid* his AA dues. He *supported* the ministry. **He took risks. He tried new things.** He stepped out of his comfort zone. **From the beginning, he was working with others.** He worked with youth. He worked with AA buddies. He worked with others in Bible study. He played guitar with others, and eventually began to teach others how to play.

He has his issues and his faults. He's never been perfect. He has offended people, but he worked it out. He has been immature and foolish, but he has been growing. **He admitted where he was wrong, and resolved to do better.** Others have hurt and offended him. He worked it out, or he put it aside so that the offense didn't cripple him. **He tried some things that didn't succeed. He came back and tried something else,** or made changes and tried again. He is like the good soil in Jesus' parable, “...these are the ones who have **heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance**” (Luke 8:15). The result is that his life has

literally touched and influenced, “thirty, sixty and a hundredfold”. Has he *reproduced* thirty or sixty or a hundred more like him? No, not yet. But he is now sowing seed in the lives of others, and some are beginning to respond as he did.

I entitled this study, “the law of the harvest”. If you look at the passages at the top of this study, you will notice that they are all about sowing and reaping. In Jesus’ interpretation of the parable of the soils (Lk. 8:11-15), the good seed of the gospel landed in different places. **The success of the message was directly proportional to the condition of the heart of those who heard the message.** *Some hearts are dull and imperceptive.* They are like the path or roadway in the parable. The seed did not get into the soil at all. The enemy came along and “ate it up”, removing the message from their thoughts before it could even take root. *Other people are like the stony ground. There is an initial receptiveness to the message, even joy, but their hearts have only a limited receptiveness.* When difficulties come because of the message, ...when it is either hard to obey, or when others persecute or mock because of their new stated beliefs..., they quickly go back to their old ways and forget about Jesus. The message never really gets established in their lives, and it comes to nothing. They drop out. *A third type of hearer receives the message, but it never comes to fruition, due to the competition of “weeds”, which steal away the resources of life.* These “weeds” are the “worries and riches and pleasures of this earthly-life” (Lk.8:14), or “...the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things” (Mk. 4:19). These distractions and competing interests “enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” **It is only the people who hear the word with understanding, receive it with a sound, healthy and good heart, who hold it fast (so it can’t be lost or taken away), who will also work to bear fruit by perseverance.** Note, that their hearts are basically healthy, not sick, crippled or malformed. That doesn’t mean that they have no issues to work through. It means that *their core motivations are sound, and they have a reasonably healthy capacity to focus and invest in their walk with God. They recognize that this is the key issue, and they apply themselves to grow and serve, develop and produce.* They put their roots down into Jesus, and they bear fruit upward as an offering of service to God.

If you were to just read this parable, you might be discouraged. I mean, after all, of the four types of soil mentioned, only one type is productive. Of course, not every farm would have all four soils in equal parts. Even if it did, however, **the multiplied results of the good soil far outweighs the loss of the other three soil types.** If you lose three out of every four investments, that sounds pretty bad. It could be discouraging, unless you remembered that every *fourth* seed produced 30, 60 to 100 times as much. That would be an incredible crop! So for every 100 pounds of seed you spread, you would get a return of 750 to 1500 to as many as 2500 pounds, ...even with the lack of *any* return of 75% of your initial investment! Even if only one out of ten were reproductive at the 30, 60 or 100 fold rate, your return would be three to ten times your initial investment! Even if only one out of every twenty seeds were productive at that rate, you would *still* come out ahead, ...one-and-a-half times to up to *five* times your initial 100 pound investment. The difference is quite telling however. Instead of a return of up to 2500 pounds for the 75% non-productive farm, the farm that only had 5% (one in 20) of its seed reproducing could only produce up to 500 pounds. That would be quite a difference to bring home at harvest time. Of course, if a crop were fully 100% reproductive, it could produce up to 10,000 pounds of grain from the original 100 pounds of seed planted. God provided such an abundant return to Isaac in Genesis 26:12. He went from famine to riches in one growing season.

There are two very fundamental keys to a successful harvest: (1.) Try to improve the quality of your soil; and (2). Get as much seed out there as possible. *Evangelistic preaching is the work of scattering the seed. Discipleship is trying to improve the soil.* The more people we can follow up with to become mature and reproductive, the more we dramatically improve the impact of the outreach of the church.

As we have illustrated above, **we can make spiritual investments (sowing to the Spirit) in our own lives to deepen and develop our own spiritual maturity. This is the surest way to bolster the impact of the outcome of our lives.** Address the areas of need or weakness in your life, so that you can find further freedom to truly understand, cling to and apply the truth of God in your life. As you do this, God will give you growth, and you will find yourself more ready and able to help and serve others. This will often lead to opportunities to share your faith with people who see the change and growth in your life. This is so easy. It does not have to be some canned presentation. Just tell them your story. Tell them what has God done for you, and also what have you done to deepen your walk with Him.

Finally, do what you can to get the message out. Even in the worst scenarios, where people are only *rarely* attempting to mature and reproduce, *it always pays off to preach the word.* Even in poor conditions, in order to get a crop, you have to sow the seed. Through preaching, people hear, and **some of those who will hear will have a sound, good heart. They will understand the message, hold it fast, and do what it takes to grow in it and to share it with others. Their lives will be multiplied into many others. Their fruitfulness will offset the loss of those who produce little for the Kingdom.**