

The Harvest

Matthew 9:35-38

How I love the autumn season! There's something about this time of year that stirs the soul—inviting reflection, gratitude, and wonder. The blazing heat of summer has softened into cool, gentle breezes. The air feels lighter, clearer, and even the bugs—those opportunistic creatures that once saw you as a walking buffet—have mostly packed up and left. It's as though nature itself has taken a deep breath and exhaled peace. Walking down a humble trail deep within the forest, I find myself pausing more often. The trees—majestic maples, towering oaks, and elegant birches—are cloaked in the radiant colors of glory. Crimson reds, golden yellows, and fiery oranges shimmer in the sunlight that filters through the thinning canopy above. Each leaf rustling in the wind whispers a testimony of God's creative power. Every sunbeam breaking through the branches feels like a divine spotlight, reminding us of His presence and handiwork.

But autumn is not only a feast for the eyes—it's a feast for the body and soul. This is the season of the harvest. The long days of planting, watering, weeding, and pruning have given way to the joy of reaping. The fruit of labor is now in hand. Fresh strawberries and blueberries—no longer hard or tart, but tender and bursting with flavor—delight the taste buds. And who doesn't savor that first bowl of Hodge-podge, brimming with soft potatoes and vibrant yellow and green beans, drenched in fresh cream? It's comfort in a bowl. And of course, with Thanksgiving on the horizon, our minds and stomachs anticipate the feast: turkey, stuffing, ham, squash, turnip, and those mountain ranges of homemade pies—lemon, blueberry, apple, cherry. It's that beautiful time when the food flows freely, laughter fills the air, and if your belt isn't loosened by the end of the meal, did you even celebrate properly?

Yet, as delicious as all this is, autumn also speaks to something deeper. Beneath the flavors and the colors, the gatherings and the gratitude, there is a spiritual lesson written in the season itself. Autumn reminds us of the beauty of change, the necessity of pruning, the value of perseverance, and the joy of spiritual fruit. Just as the farmer patiently waited for the land to yield its crop, God is cultivating something within each of us—calling us to grow, to bear fruit, and to prepare for a season of spiritual harvest. So today, let us listen not only to the crunch of leaves beneath our feet but to the whisper of God's voice calling us to reflect, to rejoice, and to ready our hearts for what He wants to reap in our lives.

This is the final message in our four-part sermon series on the Parable of the Sower. In week one, we explored the seed and the Sower—and how, while the seed and Sower remain the same, the harvest is determined by the receptivity of the soil, which represents the condition of our hearts. In week two, we looked at what happens after the Word of God takes root—how essential it is for us, as born-again believers, to surrender our dreams, goals, and expectations to Jesus, so that He might till the soil of our hearts and plant furrows of righteousness. Then in week three, we considered the loving but sometimes painful process of pruning—how God, the

Master Gardener, trims away not only sin but even areas of fruitfulness, that we might bear even more fruit to His glory.

Today, we turn to the final theme: the harvest. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to bear much fruit—but we must also walk in wisdom and humility, remembering that we reap what we sow. As we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we do so not to earn God’s favor, but because we recognize the sacred call to obedience. The harvest belongs to the Lord, yet He has invited us into the process. And through faithful surrender, we are being conformed into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

The Fruit Inside Us

Now that we’ve seen how God removes what hinders growth, we turn to the joyful truth that the Holy Spirit actively produces a harvest of fruit in the life of every believer. Among the Spirit’s many roles, one of the most beautiful is producing fruit that reflects the character of Christ.¹ In Christ, we have been set free from the desires of the flesh—from things like sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, hatred, and selfish ambition (Galatians 5:19–20). No longer enslaved to sin, we are now invited to walk by the Spirit, where fruit is not forced but naturally grows out of a relationship with God.²

At the center of this harvest is divine love—the kind of love that is unmerited (Romans 5:8), great (Ephesians 2:4), transforming (Romans 5:5), and unchangeable (Romans 8:35–39).³ This love binds all the other fruits together and flows outward into our lives. From love springs joy—a joy not anchored in changing circumstances⁴ but rooted in the unchanging reality of our salvation and heavenly hope. This leads to peace that surpasses understanding, a supernatural calm that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7). Strengthened by God’s love and peace, believers are empowered to show patience and forbearance (Romans 2:4), extending kindness and generosity—even to their enemies—as Jesus commanded (Matthew 5:43–44). Finally, the Spirit gives us the fruit of self-control, enabling us to say “No” to sin’s temptations. Through the Spirit’s power, we throw off the sin that once entangled and enslaved us (Hebrews 12:1), knowing that in Christ, we are no longer bound but free to live for righteousness (Romans 6:6).

¹ Taken from the Rooted Series from Sermon Central.

² David Platt and Tony Merida, [*Exalting Jesus in Galatians*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 115.

³ James Montgomery Boice, [*“Galatians,”*](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 498.

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, [*“Galatians,”*](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 498.

We Reap what we Sow

As the Spirit produces fruit within us, Scripture reminds us that our daily choices still matter—for “whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (Galatians 6:7–8). The Christian life is not passive; it is a Spirit-led partnership of planting seeds that lead to an eternal harvest. There are ultimately two ways to live, and each produces radically different outcomes.⁵ A life sown to the flesh, driven by self-interest, often seeks to protect personal gain—even if it means dominating others.⁶ Though this path may produce temporary pleasures, its harvest is fleeting—destined to perish, like dust returning to the ground.

In contrast, those who walk by the Spirit have surrendered to a power not their own—embracing God's control to live holy lives and do good works that please the Father (Matthew 5:16).⁷ These deeds do not earn salvation, but they bear witness to it, producing fruit that is not temporary but eternal. And though we may not see immediate results, Paul urges us to not grow weary in doing good, for in God's perfect timing, we will reap a harvest—if we do not give up (Galatians 6:9–10). As Jesus said, the good soil produces “a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:23). Let us then sow faithfully, knowing the harvest is in God's hands. So, we continue to love, to forbear, to carry one another's burdens, to preach the Gospel message while we serve knowing that God alone is enough, our portion and eternal reward (Psalms 73:26)!

Examining the Fruit of Your Life

If we truly reap what we sow, then it's essential that we pause and examine the fruit in our lives—to discern whether we are truly walking by the Spirit or slowly drifting back toward the desires of the flesh. The prophet Jeremiah rightly observed, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure—who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). This echoes the deep internal conflict King David expresses in Psalm 139. His words are not those of tranquil meditation, but a

⁵ Ronald Y. K. Fung, [The Epistle to the Galatians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 295.

⁶ L. Ann Jervis, [Galatians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 2011), 149.

⁷ Ronald Y. K. Fung, [The Epistle to the Galatians](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 296.

painful plea for divine inspection. David knows the darkness that can hide in the corners of the human heart⁸—the parts of us that love sin and shrink back from the God who lovingly prunes.

David confesses that while he wants nothing to do with the wickedness around him, his concern is not self-righteousness—it’s humility. He fears that if he’s not careful, he will imitate the very evil he despises.⁹ You’ve likely heard the phrase, “hate the sin, but love the sinner.” But isn’t that easier said than done? Often, the very sins we hate most in others are the ones we’ve secretly indulged ourselves. So, David prays with boldness and surrender:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”

(Psalm 139:23–24)

It’s as if David is saying: “Lord, don’t hold back. Expose what I cannot see. Show me the sin I’ve grown comfortable with. Cut out what is choking my communion with You.”¹⁰ And this is no small request. For the Divine Gardener—the One who formed David in his mother’s womb and is present everywhere—to prune the heart is to invite the removal of even the most deeply cherished sins. It’s an act of painful grace.

Yet here is the hope: while sin corrupts and separates, the Holy Spirit creates fellowship, unity, and holiness with our Creator.¹¹ And though the bait of Satan is often appealing, we must remember—we have been given a new nature. We are partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). We are no longer slaves to sin, but with God’s help, we can recognize the destructive paths of thought, word, and action, and invite the Gardener to plant in us a desire for His will—a will that is infinitely higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8–9). So, while David’s prayer is an invitation to painful pruning, it is also a plea for joy—the joy of being drawn nearer to the One who is his portion, his delight, and his everlasting reward. Is my life marked by divine love, or have I settled for behavior modification instead of heart transformation?

⁸ Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, [“Foreword,”](#) in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 487.

⁹ James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms 107–150: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1211.

¹⁰ Daniel L. Akin, Johnny M. Hunt, and Tony Merida, [Exalting Jesus in Psalms 101–150](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2021), 291.

¹¹ Scot McKnight, [Galatians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 271.

Let me tell you a quick story about an amazing couple I had the honor of meeting in my last church. What struck me most about them was the unspeakable joy they always carried in their hearts. I usually spent Saturdays preparing for Sunday's service, and the husband would often stop by the church to chat. He always greeted me with a smile and a sincere "Thank the Lord!"—no matter what kind of week he'd had.

One day, I visited their home, and I quickly realized that their joy wasn't rooted in wealth or comfort. They lived meagrely and valued simplicity, yet their contentment radiated from something far deeper. Not long after, the wife was diagnosed with cancer. The entire community rallied together to raise money for their medical expenses. And they received so much help, in fact, that they had a little extra left over.

So, what did they do? They bought some fast food—a rare treat for them. And wouldn't you know it; I happened to be visiting that day. The first thing they did was offer my wife and me some of their little feast. I was so humbled to see the poor offer food to someone who had more than enough. That day, I learned something I'll never forget: joy and contentment don't come from having much, but from knowing that God is enough. Truly, He is our portion forever. Amen.

Working out One's Salvation

Once we've invited God to search our hearts, the next step is not passivity—but surrender. Paul tells us to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling," for it is God who works in you, both to will and to act according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:12–13). This is not a call to earn salvation, but a call to live it out with deep reverence and dependence on God's enabling power. We work out our salvation not to earn it, but because it was bought at a price—the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross, that we might be raised to new life with Him.

Even though, at conversion, we receive a new identity and a new heart, that doesn't mean our desires are always aligned with God's will. We cannot simply "will" ourselves to live a life worthy of the Gospel (Philippians 1:27).¹² As Paul painfully confesses in Romans 7, "The good I want to do, I do not do—but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing!" Who can rescue us from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 7:24–25)!

The key to living a holy life is not striving harder but yielding deeper. To be "transformed into His image" (2 Corinthians 3:18) requires a holy fear of God—a trembling that

¹² Homer A. Kent Jr., "[Philippians](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 128.

takes sin seriously¹³ and never stops inviting the Father to prune and the Spirit to renew our minds (Romans 12:1–2). Though we are no longer slaves to sin, the sinful nature still lingers—and it cannot be overcome by human effort alone. But here is our hope: if we ask, God will give us both the desire and the power to resist sin and walk in righteousness (James 4:7–10). The Christian life is a spiritual battle, but we do not fight unarmed. We have been given the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10–20), so that we may stand firm, draw near to God, and fulfill the purpose for which we were redeemed.

The Harvest

If we resist the Gardener’s pruning, we may remain in the field—but we will never bear fruit. In Matthew 9, Jesus reminds us that while the harvest is ready, the real question is: Are we? Matthew tells us, “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” (9:35). At that time, Galilee had around 200 towns and villages, with a population approaching three million people.¹⁴ As Jesus looked upon the crowds, “He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (9:36).

The spiritual leaders of Israel had abandoned their calling. Instead of leading the people beside still waters, they had left them vulnerable prey to the wolves of Roman oppression and religious hypocrisy. Most of these souls had no true knowledge of Christ, and their daily lives were marked by confusion, weariness, and despair.¹⁵ Even if one-third had some connection to God, that still meant nearly two million people were walking the broad path to eternal destruction.

Moved with compassion, Jesus turned to His disciples and said:

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Matthew 9:37–38).

We now live in a global age—connected by the internet and media yet increasingly divided by beliefs. People cling to contradictory ideas and shift their convictions with the wind of changing circumstances. Truth has become relative, and it’s increasingly rare to find someone who holds firm to anything—let alone the unchanging Word of God. And yet, the harvest today is even

¹³ Homer A. Kent Jr., [“Philippians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 128.

¹⁴ David Platt, [Exalting Jesus in Matthew](#), ed. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 132.

¹⁵ Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 375.

larger. With over eight billion souls alive in the world, most remain lost—on a path that leads away from Christ and toward eternal separation from God.

Before we can reach them, we must start with ourselves. We must first clean the inside of our own cups. To sow the seed of God's Word, we must first live holy and set-apart lives, so that our light shines clearly and our deeds glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). This can only happen if we daily work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12), continually inviting the Lord to examine our hearts, reveal hidden sin, and prune away anything that doesn't bring Him glory. The fields are truly ripe—but have you prepared your heart to plant His seed?

Conclusion

So, as this final leaf of our four-week journey through the Parable of the Sower drifts gently to the ground, we're left with one unavoidable question:

What kind of soil are we?

Have we surrendered our hearts to the Gardener's pruning shears? Have we invited the Holy Spirit to root out sin and cultivate fruit? Have we traded the fleeting pleasures of the flesh for the eternal joy of Spirit-led obedience?

Autumn reminds us: the harvest does not just happen. It is the result of sowing, growing, pruning, and waiting. And in the same way, the spiritual harvest God desires in and through your life will not happen by accident. It comes through surrender, through Spirit-filled perseverance, and through a heart that says daily, "Search me, O God... and lead me in the way everlasting."

Beloved, the fields are white unto harvest. Over eight billion souls live on this planet, and many of them are lost—hurting, confused, deceived, and wandering like sheep without a shepherd. But before we can reach them, God must first reach deeper into us. For we cannot plant what we do not possess. We cannot share light if we are still hiding in the shadows.

So today, let us not walk away from this series inspired but unchanged. Let us take hold of the plow. Let us open our hearts to be tilled, weeded, and made ready. And let us rise—not as passive spectators—but as faithful laborers in His harvest field, ready to sow truth, shine brightly, and bear fruit that will last.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few..."

Will you be one of them?

Lord of the harvest, prepare our hearts, prune what hinders, plant your truth deep within us. Send us—not just as hearers of the Word, but as laborers in the field, bearing fruit that lasts. In Jesus' name. Amen