

Mark 4: 26-29; “The Harvest Has Come”, Session # 9 on the Parable of the Growing Seed, Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 1st, 2023.

Mark 4: 26-29 – “And Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.” “For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.” “But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

1. In relation to the Growth of the Christian Plant to Mature Ripeness in 3 stages in our Parable I made its growth into 7 points in the Development of Christian Maturity:

1. The Blade becomes a head of grain by practicing righteousness and loving the brethren.
2. The Full Head of Grain shows increasing ripeness which is Christian maturity.
3. Progress to Maturity will Ultimately Depend Upon What You Sow To.
4. Maturity in Regard to Bearing One Another’s Burdens.
5. Maturity in Becoming Like Christ in our Thoughts and Behavior by Learning to Bear Reproach.
6. Maturity in learning to give and receive Reproof.
7. Maturity in Perseverance and Steadfastness.

In living the Christian life there is a definite progression to maturity which leads to spiritual ripeness if we have consciously tried to learn from Christ and abide in Him and bear fruit to Him. According to the grace which God gives, this will eventually lead to full spiritual ripeness, the full head of grain. When the Lord sees that we have learned what He wants us to learn, and He sees that we have fulfilled the purpose for which He has called us, then He will put in the sickle.

Christ putting in the Sickle in our Parable means that He perceives that we are ripe enough to be brought home to heaven (harvested) in the time of His choosing.

1. When Christ puts in the Sickle, He is harvesting the whole life of the Christian.

Psalm 139: 16-18 – “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.” “And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when *as yet there were* none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” “*If* I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You.”

I do not think that we reflect enough upon the fact that God, who is the Author of our life is the one who fashions all of our days for us, when as yet there were none of them. His thoughts towards us, over the course of our lifetime, the sum of them is very vast. More in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with you. I believe that this last statement refers not only to the fact that when I wake up every morning from my sleep, that I am still with God, but even when I lie down in death, when I die, I wake up in glory. My life has been reaped to God.

Philippians 1: 21 – “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.” “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” “But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.” “For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” “Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.” “And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you

all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

Paul was in prison when he wrote this. He did not know what lay ahead for him. He did believe that through the prayers of Christians for him he would be delivered from the situation that he was in. However, he hoped that in nothing that he did would he be ashamed. He wanted Christ to be magnified in his body, whether by life or death. And then comes this tremendous statement in verse 21 – For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. What does this mean?

It means that his whole life had its highest focus on Christ and his relationship with Him. He knew that it was Christ who saves all Christians and calls them with a holy calling, not according to their own works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to them before time began. (2nd Timothy 1: 9) Paul’s whole life centered around knowing Christ, walking with Him, and serving Him according to the grace given to Him.

Therefore, his greatest desire while he lived was to fulfill the ministry that he was given, and bear fruit to God in it. If he lived on in the flesh, he knew that it would mean fruitful labor, and yet he says, he did not know what to choose. He was hard pressed between continuing on in life or going home to be with Christ which he knew would be far better. Nevertheless, he did not want to be selfish about it. To remain in the flesh would be better as it was more needful for those he ministered to. And so, he concluded that he was confident that he would remain and continue with them for their progress and joy of faith.

2. Christ Himself is our forerunner and example in the harvest.

John 12: 24-26 – “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.” “If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”

Now, notice here that Christ is speaking of Himself as the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying. He would remain alone, He says, if He didn’t go to the cross and lay down His life for sinners. But when He died, He produced much grain; many seeds of righteousness came from His death, even us who are His elect people, planted by the Father in His grace. Our response to this is because we love Him, we will not love our own life more than the life that we have with Him and from Him. We will lose our selfish sinful life, and learn to hate in this life, and thus we will keep it for eternal life. We will serve Him and follow Him and He says, and where He is, there we His servants will be when we die. If we serve Christ, the Father will honor us.

3. We Do not lose heart while we wait and labor.

2nd Corinthians 4: 16-18 - Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

As you get older you will find that it is a terribly difficult thing to face the fact that your outward man is perishing. What helps us not to lose heart is that, even though this is so, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day. Paul calls this growing older – momentary light affliction. And this momentary light affliction, he says, is producing in us, it is working for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but the things which are unseen. We don’t look at the

temporary things that are passing away. We are looking at the things which are eternal. That is what is coming at the time of our death, the time when we are reaped for eternal life. It will be nothing less than unending glory. The unending glory of beholding Christ and being in the presence of the glory of the Father and the Spirit. Our spirit will be made perfect, and we will joyfully await the time of our glorification when the Lord returns a 2nd time.