

Greater Harvest
Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC – 2/25/24

We are in a sermon series called Greater and today I'm preaching on Greater Harvest. I'm sure all of us are believing for greater harvest in some area of our lives – either financial or relational or vocational. As a church we are believing for a greater harvest of people saved, set free, and disciplined to grow to spiritual maturity.

But, **in order to reap a harvest, we must follow God's laws of harvest.** Harvest is a principle God established from the beginning. Genesis 8:22 says:

As long as the earth remains, planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.

God has promised that as long as there is an earth, His laws of harvest will be in effect.

Law 1- We Must Plant Seed Before we Reap a Harvest

Galatians 6:7 says:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. You will always harvest what you plant.

You will not reap a harvest unless you sow seed. In this message, I'm going to use farming as an illustration because it is a very visible understandable demonstration of God's laws of harvest. If a farmer wants a harvest of corn, he plants corn, not cotton. It is foolish to think you can plant one crop and reap something else.

It's the same with us: we reap what we sow. I know we usually think of this in terms of money, and it is true that you must plant more finances in order to reap a greater financial harvest. But this principle is true in every area of life.

If you want a greater harvest of love, you must be more loving.

If you want a harvest of friends, you must be friendly.

If you want a great career, you must plant the right seeds at work.

But many of us never plant any seeds! There would be nothing more foolish than a farmer who looks over his field and expects a harvest if he has not sowed seed. He can want a harvest, dream about a harvest, pray for a harvest, believe for a harvest, confess "I have a harvest in Jesus' name," get into agreement with others about a harvest and sing songs about a harvest. But that farmer is foolish if he expects a harvest without planting seed. The Bible tells us exactly what happens if we don't plant seed. Proverbs 20:4 says:

The sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.

There are so many foolish Christians who are looking for a harvest, but they've never planted any seed. They excuse themselves by saying things like: "I can't afford to tithe." "My talent is not good enough for God to use." So they do nothing – they plant no seed. But they get mad at God when they don't get a harvest.

So many of us get it backwards. We say things like: God – if you bless me, then I'll bless you. If you give me more, then I'll give to you. But God's principle is that we must plant seeds before we reap a harvest. Believing is not enough. Prayer is not enough. We must also plant seeds. As James 2:20 says:

Faith without works is dead.

Again – think of the farmer. He can believe for a harvest and pray for a harvest, but if he plants no seed he will reap no harvest! It's the same for us. We can believe for someone to get saved. We can pray for them. But if we never plant seeds by sharing the gospel with them, they will not get saved.

We can believe for finances and pray for money, but if we never plant seeds by giving tithes and offerings, we will not reap a financial harvest. We can believe for a job, and pray about a job, but if we never plant seeds by going out and looking for a job, we won't reap a job. Or maybe you already have a job and want to advance in your career. You must continue to plant seeds.

When I used to manage a store, many employees would tell me, "If you paid me more, I would do more." I'd always tell them, "You've got it backwards. If you did more, I would pay you more. I'm not going to give you a raise in hopes you will do more. I'm not going to give you a promotion in advance of performance. You must plant seeds first."

How do you plant seeds at work? By being someone who can be depended on. Doing more than you're asked to do. Being a problem solver, not a problem causer.

If you plant seeds, God's law of harvest says you will reap what you've sown.

It's the same in relationships, whether with friends or with family. In every relationship, people are either making deposits or withdrawals in what we call their love banks. You make deposits in someone's love bank by saying positive things and doing positive things that make them feel loved. You make withdrawals from someone's love bank by saying negative things and doing negative things that makes them feel unloved.

If you make more deposits than withdrawals, their love bank has a positive balance and the relationship works. If you make more withdrawals than deposits, their love bank has a negative balance and your checks start bouncing. You get charged all kind of extra fees. They make you pay for every little thing. If you don't get back into the positive, the account may be closed.

How do you get into the positive? By planting seeds. Speaking positive words that build the person up. Discovering their needs and meeting their needs.

The first law of the harvest says you must plant seeds before you reap a harvest. It's true in every area of life. Another way to say it is this: **harvest comes in a different season than sowing**. Ecclesiastes 11:1 says:

Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get a return.

In other words, the harvest does not come immediately after planting. There is a time to plant and a time for harvest. Who determines when the harvest comes? God.

Law 2- We Must Persevere Until the Harvest

Galatians 6:9 says:

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

In other words, you can sow seeds and still miss the harvest by giving up! How do we give up? We quit believing – we quit praying – we quit expecting anything. Jesus established this principle in Matthew 9:29

According to your faith it will be done to you.

We talked earlier about how faith without works is dead. But planting seed without faith will not result in harvest either. James amplified this principle in James 1:6-7.

When you ask for something, you must believe and not doubt, because those who doubt are like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. They should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

We must have faith and we must pray. James 4:2 says:

You do not have, because you do not ask God.

If we've planted seed and prayed and exercised our faith in God – we must not give up on our harvest. Some of us have missed out on our harvest because we gave up. I wonder how close some of us were to a harvest when we gave up.

How close were we to a financial miracle when we quit tithing?

How close were we to a healing when we quit praying?

How close were we to a miracle when we quit believing?

Don't give up before your harvest. God says it will come at the proper time.

So – if you've planted seed and haven't seen a harvest yet, just know it's not time yet. The times and seasons are in the hand of God and we must trust Him. Our harvest will eventually come – some of it in this lifetime and some is stored up in heaven for us. James 5:7-8 says:

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. You too, be patient and stand firm...

God is telling us to trust His timing. If you give up, you will miss out. If you choose to stop, you'll lose your crop.

Law 3- We Reap More Than We Sow

If this were not true, no farmer would plant anything. Think about it. If he only got back what he planted, what's the point of planting seed? What makes sowing the seed profitable is the fact that we reap more than we sow.

If I take one kernel of corn and I plant it in the ground, am I going to get one kernel back? No. I'm going to get a stalk with several ears of corn, with several thousand kernels. You always get back more than you give. Give what you have and God will multiply it to bless you and others. Mark 4:20 says:

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.

But this is not just true for the farmer; it is true for everyone. By the way - I do not believe we should give just to get. That's selfish. I believe that all of us should give out of obedience to God. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says:

You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a cheerful giver."

There is no option not to give – just how much you give.

Law 4- We Reap in Proportion to What We Sow

This almost sounds contradictory to the previous principle, but it's not. The previous law stated that we always reap more than we sow. This law says that our harvest will be in proportion to what we sow. Both laws have to do with quantity or amount. However, the previous law was God's part, and this law has to do with our part.

**God's part is to multiply whatever seed is sown.
Our part is to sow all the good seed that we can.**

2 Corinthians 9:6 says:

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

What you reap will always be in proportion to what you have sown. If you do not sow, you do not reap. If you sow sparingly, you reap sparingly.

If you want to reap a big harvest, you must sow in a big way.

If the farmer only cultivates one acre, he can only reap what one acre can produce. However, if he has 100 acres under cultivation, his harvest can be 100 times greater. If you want to see a large crop, you must plant many seeds. Whatever you sow, God will multiply it so that it will be more than what you sow, but it will always be in proportion to what you sow.

When the pilgrims settled in the United States, their farming technology was limited. They dug a hole in the ground, planted an ear of corn, and added fish for fertilizer. By working hard, a colonist could grow the equivalent of four bushels of corn a year, or about one bushel for each month in the growing season.

By the time of the Civil War, farmers used mules and developed plows and other tools enabling a man to grow the equivalent of a bushel of corn a week or 16 bushels of corn a year.

But today, with advanced technology, petrochemical fertilizer, soil analysis, and massive tractors, a farmer can grow the equivalent of a bushel of corn for every 10 minutes of the growing season.

The principle of sowing seed has not changed; farmers can do nothing to change how God has created the growth cycle. But they increased their harvest. How? By planting more seed.

God is a God who wants to pour out His supernatural blessings, but He will not pour out His blessings if we do not sow seeds. We need to look for ways to plant more seed. **God multiplies what you give – not what you hold on to!**

Some people think if we give something we lose it. But actually, when we give something we sow it and it will bring a harvest. I encourage you to give generously because the level of your giving to God determines the level of your blessing from God! Jesus said in Luke 6:38

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

So, when you ask for God's blessing He says, "May I borrow your measure?"

Some people use a shovel as a measure and some use a spoon.

You might see other people getting shovelfuls of blessing and you ask God why He isn't blessing you more. And God says, "I'm pouring out blessing as fast as I can with this little spoon you gave me to work with!"

So how much blessing do you want from God? A spoonful or a shovelful? We reap in proportion to what we sow. Sow something and you reap something more. Sow nothing and you reap a big ole harvest of absolutely nothing!

Law 5- We Must Sow our Seed, Not Eat our Seed.

2 Corinthians 9:10 says:

Now 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.

This means that you should not spend all the money you make on yourself. Some of it is to be sown and we should not eat the seed we should sow!

I heard a story about a missionary who ministered to a tribe who lived close to the Sahara Desert where the food for the whole year must be grown in the 4 months of the rainy season. Then the people must live on that until the next harvest. During the harvest people are full of joy because they have plenty to eat. But as the months go by, the amount of food starts to diminish and people have less and less to eat. During the months before the rainy season, people are eating very little.

The missionary tells how he saw a 6-year-old boy running to his father shouting with excitement, "Daddy, we can eat, I found grain." The father says, "Son, you know we haven't had grain for weeks." The boy says, "No, I found grain in the hut where we keep the goats. Mommy can cook a meal for us so we won't go to bed hungry tonight." Then, the father had to explain to his son, "That's our seed. That's what we save to plant for next year's crop. If we eat our seed, we will have food today, but we will starve next year."

When the rain finally arrives in May, the young boy watches his father do the most unreasonable thing he can imagine. Instead of feeding his hungry family with the seed, the father takes it and with tears running down his face, he plants the seed in the ground. Why? The man owns the seed and he can do anything he wants with it. He can feed his hungry family with it. But he believes in God's principle of harvest. The act of sowing the seed hurt so much that he cried. But his African pastor had taught him the truth of Psalm 126:5-6

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they shall doubtless return with rejoicing, bringing their harvest with them.

The pastor said, "Brothers and sisters, this is God's law of harvest. Don't expect to rejoice later on unless you've been willing to sow in tears." Sowing in tears means that giving costs us something. There is some giving that hurts. There is some giving that is a true sacrifice. It's when we're not giving our leftovers or giving out of our abundance. It's giving when that makes no sense to the natural mind.

We must be like King David who said in 1 Chronicles 21:24

I will not give to God offerings which cost me nothing.

If your giving is not costing you something – you’re not sacrificing.

Law 6: We Cannot Do Anything about Last Year’s Harvest, But We Can Do Something About This Year’s Harvest.

Whatever we did last year, last month, last week, is over and past. Nothing we do today can change what was sown or what will be reaped as a consequence. There is not a believer alive that does not have some wasted time, and perhaps many have wasted years. There is nothing we can do about those wasted years.

If we failed to produce a harvest last year, our complaining and wallowing in self-pity will only cause us to fail to produce anything again this year. And even if we did use the opportunities the Lord gave us and produced a good harvest last year, we cannot rest on our laurels.

What we can do now is sow good seed now that will produce a full harvest that will glorify the Lord. We must forget about the past crop failures and concentrate on the good seed we can sow right now.

These are the laws of the harvest: we must plant *before* we reap, we must persevere *until* the harvest, we reap *more* than we sow, we reap in *proportion* to what we sow, we must *not eat* our seed, we must look to the *future*, and lastly:

Law 7- We Must Praise Before the Harvest

Just like you must plant seed before you reap a harvest, you must also praise before you reap a harvest. Psalm 67:5-6 says:

May the people praise You, O God; may all the people praise You. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us.

Again – we usually get it backwards. So many people think they’ll praise God after they see the harvest. They’ll give thanks after their prayer is answered.

But God says:

Praise Me – then you’ll see your harvest. Give thanks – then I’ll give your answer.

Rejoice – then you will receive. Show some appreciation – then see the manifestation. Magnify the Lord – then He will magnify your harvest!

Bless the Lord – then He will bless your harvest!

If you want a greater harvest, start planting seed.

Then praise God in advance of the harvest.

Then persevere until you see your harvest.

Don’t give up. Don’t ruin your harvest. We have God’s Word on it!

At the proper time we will reap a harvest if we don’t give up!