

An Even Greater Harvest
Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC - 3/3/24

We are in a sermon series called Greater. Last week I preached on God's Laws of Harvest. By the way, I thought of another law in our grace groups this week. That law is this: **pruning always results in greater harvest.**

These laws work for anyone – Christian or non-Christian. If a Christian does not live by God's laws of harvest, they will not reap a harvest. If a non-Christian lives by God's laws of harvest, they will reap a harvest. Matthew 5:45 says:

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

In theological terms, we call this common grace. It is common because it is for everyone. This explains why some non-Christians seem to be more blessed than some Christians. If a non-Christian follows God's principles concerning marriage, they will reap a blessed family. If a non-Christian follows God's principles concerning finances, they will reap a blessed checkbook. If a non-Christian follows God's principles concerning work, they will reap a promotions and raises.

We call these laws natural laws because they work in the natural realm. What I want to preach on today is: Not about the natural – but the supernatural.

I'm preaching on An Even Greater Harvest – a Supernatural Harvest. I'll be preaching about a harvest that goes beyond the natural. This kind of grace is uncommon. And where the laws of harvest work for everyone - this kind of supernatural harvest is for God's people. And I believe **you must obey God's natural laws of harvest to in order to tap into the supernatural greater harvest.**

We learn how to do that by looking at supernatural harvest in the Bible. There are many types of supernatural harvest in the Bible. For instance:

1- God can give a harvest so big that it lasts for years!

This happened in the Old Testament when God established the principle of Sabbath rest. Not only did the people rest one day a week – but the entire land also rested every seven years. In Leviticus 25:2-4 God said-

When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops.

But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards.

Now – at first that sounds really good. “Man – God is good. Everyone seven years we get a year off work. I’m going to travel and see the sights and take it easy and rest up. Wait a minute – how are we going to eat?” Well, God anticipated that question and answered it in advance. Leviticus 25:20-21 says:

You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?"

And here’s God’s answer:

I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years.

In other words, this is the ultimate bumper crop. God says, “Yes, I have established laws of harvest that you must live by. But I have the option of overriding those laws and doing something that goes beyond that law. Something greater. Something supernatural.”

One type of supernatural harvest is a harvest so big you live on it for years. You might not think this can happen to you, but it can.

Don’t be so natural minded that you are never supernatural minded. You see people tend to go to one extreme or another. Either they don’t believe in miracles and they only live by natural laws - or they believe in miracles but they take it to this extreme: “God – I like that supernatural stuff. I like that year off so much that I want to live that way all the time. Just give me a crop so big I’ll never have to work again. I want every year to be a year of Sabbath rest.” I can say with confidence that won’t happen.

Most of the time we live by God’s natural laws of sowing and reaping. But don’t let that keep you from believing for a miracle. Don’t let that keep you from praying for something supernatural!

God has ways of blessing you by bringing in unexpected income: gifts, an inheritance, a raise or a bonus. The disciples experienced this when they worked all night without catching any fish. Jesus told them to cast out their net again and they caught a supernatural harvest of so many fish it almost sunk their boat. This was a huge financial harvest for them. A lesser-known story is found in Matthew 17:24-27.

After Jesus and His disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes, he does," he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" He asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes — from their own sons or from others?"

"From others," Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him. But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for My tax and yours."

I've heard a lot of fishing stories, but that's a supernatural one! I want you to notice that Jesus paid His taxes! In those days there were taxes paid to Rome and a temple tax which was for the upkeep of the temple. This reminds me of what Jesus said in Matthew 22:21

Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.

What belongs to Caesar – which represents government? Taxes?

What belongs to God? Tithes.

Jesus taught that we should pay our taxes and pay our tithes. Some people think tithing is only in the Old Testament – but Jesus taught us to tithe in the New Testament in Matthew 23:23.

Yes, you should tithe, but do not neglect the more important things.

Some people don't understand this, but it costs money to run a church. As long as the church is on this earth there will be expenses. There will always be cost for the building, utilities, supplies and salaries. That's why Jesus said "Render unto Caesar" - pay your taxes so the government will have money to operate and "Render unto God" - pay your tithes so the church will have money to operate.

I pray you catch the vision for this. Many people never think about how much money it costs to run a church. Where does that money come from? From God through us. The point is that for God to supply the money the church needs means that He has to bless you first.

You might not see any way in the natural that God can bless you. But remember, we're talking about supernatural harvest. To receive this harvest, you must walk by faith, not by sight.

One way God has blessed Deb and me is with free trips. Traveling was always a dream for us and we've been all over the world. It started when Deb worked for SW Airlines and we took 50 free flights.

We've been blessed by family and friends with many other free trips. We stayed in a condo on the beach at Sanibel Island, Florida every year for many years that we didn't have to pay for. We took our family to Disney World and didn't have to pay for it. We've been all over America and we've been to Europe, Africa, Asia, Central America and S. America and didn't have to pay for it.

We've taken a free cruise to the Mexican Riviera. I'll never forget when we were given that trip. Deb and I were invited by another couple to go on that same cruise earlier in the year, but we couldn't afford it. Deb tried to figure out how to make it work, but I told her to forget it.

Now let me tell you – my wife is a woman of faith. She believes big.

We would not be in the house we are in if she had not believed for it first. We would not have started this church if she had not believed for it first. And when we could not afford to go on that cruise – she began to believe for that cruise to the Mexican Riviera. Frankly, I forgot all about it.

Then, one day at church someone came to me and said, “Our company is renting a whole cruise ship to go on a cruise to the Mexican Riviera. We have a few extra rooms, so if you want to go, you can go for free.” I asked, “When is it?” They gave me the date and I said, “Thanks for the offer, but we can’t go. That’s the week of our fall festival.”

After church on the way to lunch, I said to Deb, “You’ll never believe this. We were offered a free cruise to the Mexican Riviera, but we can’t go.” She said, “What do you mean, we can’t we go?” I said, “It’s the week of our Fall Festival.” She gave me this look like “What planet are you from?” Then she said to me, “I don’t know about you, but I believed God for that exact cruise and I’m going on it. We have a lot of capable people and the Fall Festival can go on without us. So you can choose to cruise or you can stay and play.” Needless to say, it was an awesome cruise. And the festival went on without us.

My point is – when we were first asked to go on the cruise, we could not afford it and I told my wife to forget it. But she began to believe God would provide. She did not know how or when – but she believed He would. And He did – from an unexpected source.

Through the years, God has also given us cars and TV’s and appliances and many other blessings through unexpected sources. God has given us money from unexpected sources – gifts, refunds, bonuses, raises. **We miss out on blessings when we don’t believe for nor expect a super-natural harvest.** I encourage you to begin to believe for an even greater harvest!

2- God can give a supernatural harvest that is small, but daily.

Again, this happened to Israel in their wilderness journey. God provided food for them every day in the form of manna. Psalm 78:24-25 says:

He rained down manna for the people to eat, He gave them the grain of heaven. Men ate the bread of angels; He sent them all the food they could eat.

It could be that God blesses you a little every day instead of a lot on one day. That’s still supernatural harvest. It’s still God’s provision.

3- God can give a supernatural harvest where we did not sow

I’m not saying you reap without sowing, but you reap where you didn’t sow.

Again – think of the children of Israel when they came into the Promised Land. God said in Joshua 24:13

I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.

Since it took God’s supernatural power to get them into this land, this was a supernatural harvest. Think about it. All of us reap what we did not plant.

We all reap living in a nation with the freedoms that other people gave their lives for. We work at companies that other people gave their blood, sweat and tears to build. Or think about the church. Most of you show up every week to reap the benefits of what others have planned for, prepared for, prayed for, practiced for all week long. We all reap where we did not sow and we can believe for that in a greater measure.

4- God can give a supernatural harvest by speeding up the seasons.

We find this in Amos 9:13

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes.”

Normally there is a time of waiting between sowing and reaping. But sometimes God overrides that law and speeds up the harvest. **What are the keys to a supernatural greater harvest? In every single case it took faith and obedience.**

We see this in the life of Elijah. In a time of famine, God told him to go to a certain creek for water and God had ravens bring him food. Then the creek dried up! By the way – God is your source, never a creek, a job or anything else. God can use many different channels to get provision to us. So – don’t despair when your creek dries up! God is still your source!

So God told Elijah to go to Zarapeth where a widow would provide him with food. So Elijah went there and asked her for food. 1 Kings 17:12 gives her answer:

"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread — only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it — and die."

Have you ever wondered why God led you to a particular place? You’d think when you follow God, His provision would be obvious. After all, we’ve all heard it said, “Where God guides – He provides.” But what if you believe God to provide and His provision is this – go to a starving widow woman and eat her last meal?

Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.

For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.'" She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.

You might think – “Well, yeah, but that was Elijah.” Here’s what the Bible says about Elijah in James 5:17. ***Elijah was a man just like us.***

God can bring a supernatural harvest to you and through you just like He did with Elijah –

5- A harvest where what we have lasts longer and goes farther.

Supernatural harvest comes from seemingly impossible situations. This widow woman faced a hopeless situation full of impossibilities. But Elijah served the God of the impossible. The God of an even greater harvest!

When God finds you in a place of great need, He will not leave you there. But to unlock a supernatural harvest like the one this woman experienced, we need to trust and obey by giving to God what we have. One of the greatest principles for breaking through in the miraculous is to understand that the little that we have, when given into the hands of Jesus, will be translated into incredible abundance.

You might not have much, but God wants your “not much.” God always starts with what we've got, so give God what you have. It may not look like much to you, but He'll take it and multiply it.

You take the energy you've got and give it to Him.

You take the time you've got and give it to Him.

You take the money you've got and give it to Him.

You take the talent, the relationships, or whatever it is that you've got and say, "God, here's what I've got."

Then God takes those things and multiplies them!

God likes to take small things and accomplish big things.

God likes to use ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary tasks.

All it takes is for you to release what you have into the hands of God.

In 2 Kings 4:1-7 a woman went to Elisha and said that her husband died owing money to a creditor who was coming to take her 2 boys as slaves.

Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil."

Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

The prophet refused to allow this woman to be passive. Elisha made a demand on her when she thought she had nothing. Her instant response was that she had nothing. But then she thought again and said "... except a little oil." And she brought to the prophet the little that she had.

One of the greatest principles for breaking through in the miraculous is to understand that like this woman, our expectations must increase before we see actual increase!

The prophet told her to ask everyone for empty jars and he said – "Don't ask for just a few." The principle is this: before you see a supernatural harvest you must believe big, ask big, expect big.

We limit our ability to receive by limited giving, limited faith or limited asking. If your asking is small, your harvest will be small. Elisha told the widow "Don't ask for just a few." He was saying, "Don't short-change yourself. Make room for abundance." In this story – the oil was limited by her ability to receive it! As soon as the last vessel was filled, the oil stopped flowing. If she had borrowed only 1 container – then just 1 would have been filled. If she had borrowed 50 containers – then 50 would have been filled.

The amount of her harvest wasn't determined by God, it was determined by her ability to receive it! My question to you is: how much are you asking for? I want to motivate you to move from no containers to 1 container. From 1 container to 10. From 25 containers to 100. Stop going around year after year with that same low expectation! Stop asking for just a few and start asking big! **I'm encouraging you to have a radical faith in El-Shaddai – the God who is more than enough!**

Stop asking for just a few by believing for just enough to pay your bills.

Then start believing to get out of debt.

Stop asking for just a few by just believing for a minimum-wage job.

Then start believing for a good-paying job!

Stop asking for just a few by expecting everything to go wrong.

Then start believing for things to go right!

Believe for supernatural harvest, believe for supernatural favor and believe for supernatural provision in Jesus name!