

One Sows and Another Reaps

Jn. 4:35-38

I. Introduction

- A. Jesus, the Great Teacher, has much to teach us by example about winning souls
 - 1. He teaches the need for compassion (Mt. 9:35-36)
 - 2. He teaches the need for prayer (Mt. 9:37-38)
- B. Jesus taught His disciples about sowing and reaping (Jn. 4:28-38)
- C. In our study, I focus on "the true saying" of Jesus that provides valuable insight in the process of winning souls

II. Winning Souls Involves both Sowing and Reaping

- A. Sowing Process
 - 1. Agriculture: sowing involves preparing the soil and planting the seed
 - 2. Soul-winning: planting involves preparation and planting
 - a. Preparing hearts to receive the gospel
 - b. Preaching the gospel involves time, education, influence, often with little visible results
- B. Reaping Process
 - 1. Agriculture: at harvest, the farmer reaps what has been sown
 - 2. Soul-winning: at conversion, the Father reaps
 - a. Souls who have heard the Word
 - b. Souls who have decided to obey the Word
 - i. The harvest is a time of great celebration

III. We may Reap where Others have Sown

- A. If this was Samaria...
 - 1. Jesus sent His disciples to reap where others had worked (Jn. 4:38)
 - 2. Who planted?
 - a. Jesus, in conversation with the woman at the well (Jn. 4:5-26)
 - b. The woman, in telling the city about Jesus (Jn. 4:28-30)
 - i. The disciples benefitted from the sowing of others
- B. This is Often the Case Today
 - 1. Sometimes people seem "ripe" (ready to be harvested)
 - a. Ready to obey the gospel
 - b. Requiring little effort on our part
 - 2. Someone likely prepared the soil earlier
 - a. Perhaps the example or teaching of a friend or family member
 - b. They were not ready then, but are now
 - i. We often benefit from planting done by others
- C. This can be Misinterpreted
 - a. We might think we have won souls ourselves
 - b. We might think those who convert many are great themselves

- i. The harvest does not always reflect where the work has been harder
- D. We must be careful not to boast if we are privileged to reap where others have sown. But we can rejoice, for reaping even when others have sown is an exciting time for the workers!

IV. We may Sow where Others will Reap

- A. If this was Samaria...
 - 1. Jesus planted, but the disciples would reap
 - 2. Samaritan woman planted, Jesus and His disciples reaped (Jn. 4:39-42)
 - a. Here planting and harvest, though separated, occur close together
- B. This is Often the Case Today
 - 1. There are times when there is much planting
 - a. Lives are influenced by godly examples of other Christians
 - b. Souls are taught the Word of God
 - 2. But the harvest is not enjoyed by those who planted
 - a. Few seem to respond to our efforts
 - b. Much time and energy is spent with little immediate results
 - 3. Reaping often comes later
 - a. It could be years before the Word bears fruit
 - b. It could be long after we are gone
 - c. Could be done by others
 - i. In such cases, sowing and harvest occur far apart
- C. This can be Misinterpreted
 - 1. Those who sow with little visible reaping might think they have failed
 - a. Discouraging reach
 - b. Enticing them to stop their efforts
 - 2. Others might think those who sow with little visible reaping are failing
 - a. Assuming they need not plant the seed
 - b. Assuming they need not be diligent in their efforts
 - i. Failure to harvest does not always reflect hard work being done
- D. When planting efforts appear to produce minimal fruit, we should not jump to conclusions. This can lead to discouragement and other misjudgments.

V. The need to be diligent in sowing and reaping

- A. Diligent in Planting
 - 1. There will be times when it will mean mainly sowing the seeds
 - a. Teaching the first principles of the gospel of Christ (Mk. 16:15-16)
 - b. Influencing souls by our example (1 Pet.3:1-2)
 - 2. There may be times when we see little fruit of our efforts
 - a. Jeremiah prophesied for nearly fifty years with little success
 - b. Jesus and His apostles endured periods when few would listen
 - 3. But we can take comfort in knowing that the Word of God is never sown in vain
 - a. Always fulfills its purpose (Isa. 55:10-11)
 - b. It has the power to save those who believe (Rom 1:16; Jas. 1:21)

- c. God says we are only responsible for planting the seed (Ezk. 3:17-19)
 - i. Even if we never reap, we can rejoice in the work of planting, knowing our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58)
- B. Diligent in Reaping
 - 1. There may be times when we could reap where others have sown
 - a. Souls come to us, wanting to study, ready to obey
 - b. We are privileged to reap from seeds others have sown
 - 2. There may be times when much reaping comes with a little effort
 - a. Souls seem to be quick to respond
 - b. The number of members increases
 - 3. But we must be careful not to boast
 - a. The power is in the seed, not the sower and the reaper (Heb. 4:12)
 - b. The providence of God is at work, He gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-7)
 - i. While we reap, remember the contribution of others (including God), and rejoice together in God's work (1 Cor. 3:8; Jn. 4:36)

VI. Conclusion

- A. Brothers and sisters in Christ, are we not workers in the vineyard of the Lord?
 - 1. Then do not hesitate to reap where others have sown
 - 2. Then do not hesitate to sow what others might reap
- B. Could the principle "One Sows and Another Reaps..."
 - 1. Encourage us when it seems that we are sowing with little visible fruit
 - 2. Foster humility when reaping where we have not sown
 - 3. Finally, if we are not now reaping, then at least sow!