

Union Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **The Acts of the Holy Spirit, Part 5: Bringing in The Harvest**

July 16th, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Acts 5:12-41; Matt 13:1-9,18-23**

1. **The Harvest is Ripe**

Jesus set an example for us in his attitude regarding those who did not have an intimate relationship with God the Father, those who are not in restored fellowship with God and haven't experienced the salvation of Christ.

"When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, **"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."** Matthew 9:36-38 NIV

When his disciples returned from buying food, they were astonished to find Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4). To Jesus, this was a time of harvest, a time to bring this lost woman into a relationship with God the Father. So, he said to his disciples:

"Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, **open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.** 36 Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. **38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for.** Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor." John 4:35-36, 38

We have been commissioned by Jesus to go into the world and make disciples for him. This disciple making involves sharing the good news of the kingdom and teaching those who receive that news all that the Lord has taught us.

- **The Good News of the Kingdom (the Gospel)**

What is the good news? In short, Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. This was the core message of the early disciples and apostles. And this must be our message and emphasis.

"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah."

Acts 5:42 NIV

And the message was,

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. **39We are witnesses...**" Acts 10:38 NRSV

How could they (and we) be effective witnesses to the power of Christ?

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 NRSV

The same Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus is available to us.

We have no excuse. We are to wait on God for a constant outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us. Without that power we cannot be as effective as Jesus was in transforming lives.

- **Ask, Seek, Knock**

It takes persistence in prayer to experience the power of the Holy Spirit.

"So I say to you: **Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.10For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.**

11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?12Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

13If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:10-13 NIV

Jesus himself taught us why this is so important. The parable of the Sower illustrates plainly the challenge of breaking through with the message of the kingdom into the lives of people and to see their lives transformed.

2. Parable of the Kingdom: Sowing & Reaping

Jesus described the parable of the Sower as a fundamental parable that we must understand and work with. He asked his first disciples:

“Do you not understand this parable?”

Then how will you understand all the parables?” Mark 4:13 NRSV

- **The Seed is the Word**

So, what did the Sower sow?

“The sower sows the word” Mark 4:14

“The word of the kingdom” Matthew 13:19 NRSV

“The message about the kingdom” Matthew 13:19 NIV

The Word of God is really important - it has power to transform. Like seed, if nurtured and watered in the human heart, it will grow and bear fruit.

- **The Human Heart is the ground for the Word**

Anyone who hears God’s word is like the ground on which seed is sown.

Not every ground is well prepared to bear fruit. One can hear God’s powerful word of promise and covenant and still receive little or no grace.

- **4 Types of Ground**

- a. **The Path/Stony Ground**

“A sower went out to sow. 4And as he sowed, **some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.**”

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path.” Matthew 13:3-4, 19 NRSV

The key here is **understanding** the word or news of the Kingdom of God.

We must work with and depend on the Spirit of Understanding (The Holy Spirit). Without that our work will not bear fruit. This requires prayer and patience, and following the leading of the Holy Spirit

b. Rocky Ground

"Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. 6But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away.

20As for what was sown on **rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away."**

Matthew 13:5, 20 NRSV

Persecution and resistance from the devil are inevitable when we seek to share the gospel. Some fall away because of it. But we are not without help. Having roots means being solidly ground on God's word in faith and being confident that the Lord will help us. Sometimes the Lord will deliver dramatically, as he did the apostles in Acts 5:

"They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life." Acts 5:19-20 NIV

c. Thorny Ground

"Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

22As for what was sown among **thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing."** Matthew 13:7, 22 NRSV

These are the hooks that hold many in bondage: cares of the world, lure of wealth.

d. Winners: Good Soil (page 5)

"Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

23But as for what was sown **on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields**, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." Matthew 13:8,23

3. Advancing the Kingdom of God

Advancing the kingdom of God involves spiritual warfare.

We must have no illusions about that. But what will help us to overcome and fulfil God's call on our lives? How can we effectively get the good news of Christ across and see lives won and transformed for Jesus?

- **Attitude and Disposition**

"They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

42Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah."

Acts 5:40-41 NIV

- **Dependence on the Holy Spirit**

As Paul explains:

"God, ...has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

2 Corinthians 3:6 NRSV

"When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom.

2**For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.**

4My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but **with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God."**

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NRSV

That is a worthy model for us to follow.