

It's Harvest Time

by David Wilkerson

Jesus said the harvest is truly plenteous, but the labors are few, and God is looking for a few who will be faithful to reap the spiritual harvest.

Duration: 43:03

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:36-38, Matthew 23:13, Matthew 23:37, John 10:1

Topics: "Harvest"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of harvest time and how it relates to the current generation. He emphasizes that God knew the unique challenges this generation would face and the temptations they would encounter. Despite these challenges, the speaker believes that in times of darkness and distress, people become more open to the gospel. He draws parallels to the story of Israel, where God brought them low before their deliverance, and suggests that a similar pattern may occur in the United States and the world.

Transcript

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It's harvest time. I'm reading to you from Matthew 9th chapter, verses 36 through 38. That when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

Then saith he to his disciples, the harvest is truly plenteous. Notice that word, plenteous. But the labors are few.

Pray you therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that you send forth labors into his harvest field. Jesus said this is harvest time. He said, in fact, the harvest is plenteous.

Now, I'm trying to see what caused Jesus to say this, and what kind of atmosphere this statement came forward. What did he see would cause him to say the harvest is ripe and it's plenteous? Was there some kind of a spiritual awakening that no one else saw but Christ? Were the priests beginning to turn to him? Were the Pharisees and scribes beginning to open their hearts to him? Was there some kind of move in the synagogue toward Christ or the things of God? What evidence was there that Jesus would say the harvest is not only ripe but it's plenteous? What about the masses of the people? Was there any turning to God among the masses of the people at this time? I don't see any evidence whatsoever. In fact, I see Christ's integrity and divinity being questioned by the Pharisees.

Their religious crowds attempting to kill him. They take him to a hillside ready to cast him over. The thieves and the robbers have taken over the temple.

I hear Jesus saying woe to Chorazin, Bethsaida, woe to Tyre, Sidon, woe to Capernaum. Woe, woe, woe. And yet Jesus says it's a time for harvest.

No evidence whatsoever in the land that there's a turning to God. No spiritual awakening in sight anywhere. And the masses are in total distress, the scripture says.

Matthew 9.36, but when he saw the multitudes, he was moved compassion on them because they were distressed, they were downcast like sheep having no shepherd. A stressed out, depressed society. And the Bible says, then Jesus said, the fields are white, ripe, plenteous for harvest.

Do those words of Jesus have any meaning to us today? What evidence do we see in America or in the world today that it's harvest time? Do you see evidence of the United States or any nation repenting? I see Europe going totally away from God, secular society. You see it all over the world, millions turning to Islam. You see a most depressed, stressed society in all of history.

Are the churches, the old line churches, what about the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Baptists, and even the Pentecostals, is there some gray stirring? We had it here in New York after 9-11 when the towers fell. We're six months of people rushing to churches and crying and weeping and prayer meetings in Yankee Stadium and all over the country. And our Congress on the steps of the Congressional Building, all singing God Bless America and saying their sweet little prayers.

Six months of a little stirring, and then six months later, less people attending church in New York, United States, than before 9-11. There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever, no evidence of a moving or turning to God in a massive way. In fact, Jesus looked over the city of Jerusalem just before, or in this same time element, and he wept over Jerusalem.

He said, your city is going to be left to you desolate. The disciples, he looked over the city and he's looking at hardness and blindness, a nation that's headed for judgment. He said, your house is left to you desolate.

But this is the time of harvest. Amazing. Jesus gives us a picture of what it's going to be like in the last days.

Because you see, the last days begin at the ascension of Christ. The last days started there and will end. It is coming and we're getting very near that place now.

The disciples asked the Lord to show them the signs of the last days. And the Scripture said, he said, the earth will be full of distress, the nation's distress with confusion. The sea and the waves will be roaring.

Men's hearts will fail them for fear and looking after those things that are coming upon the earth where the powers of heaven will be shaken. And when you read the rest of the challenge, Christ will lead many astray. Nations will be divided, famines, earthquakes, tribulation.

Believers will be hated because they even mention the name of Christ. Many will fall away, the Scripture says, because of an increase of sin. The love of many will grow cold, false prophets will deceive many.

And these prophecies are happening before our very eyes as I stand in this pulpit this morning. The most distressed, depressed generation of all times. The most sinful that would cause even the most vile sinners 30 years ago to blush today if they experienced and saw what we see and hear.

The vexation that we as Christians endure that they could have never understood. And you've got to be totally in denial if you don't see everything being shaken that can be shaken on earth. Everything's being shaken.

If the Lord of the harvest describes the harvest as being ready in the darkest of times, you better believe it. He said, get your eyes off the conditions. I'm telling you, the harvest is ready.

Now, Jesus understood the hearts of men, how in the time of prosperity they turned their back against God. When the multitudes fainted with distress and scattered and lost during Christ's time, He said, then, He said, the harvest is ripe. But you go back and look at Israel and you see the pattern.

And the law of the harvest is simply this. The darker the generation, the whiter the harvest. The darker the times, the more open people will become to the gospel.

There has to come a time of distress. Remember, God told Israel, your time has come. It's harvest time for you.

Deliverance is coming. But first, there came nine national calamities, weather changes, unpredictable, unprecedented, natural disasters. And even that did not shake them.

There had to be one final calamity that everybody in Egypt, from Pharaoh and every citizen of that nation, could not say, this is nature out of control. This is not a tsunami. This is not nature.

This is not an earthquake. This is not a mudslide. This is not rainstorms.

These are not hurricanes and tornadoes. This is not nature out of control. This is the hand of God.

But just before that dark night, Israel was prepared and ready and the harvest began. What's it going to take in the United States? What's it going to take in this world? There's coming a time when what happens? Every man on the face of the earth will say, this is not nature out of control. This is God.

But just when they waxed fat, see, God prospered them and they kicked. They grew fat. They were covered with fatness.

Then they forsook the Lord. But the Bible said, God brought them low. God brought them low.

Not just nature out of control, but God brought the nations low, brought Israel low. And in their distress, they called upon the Lord. In Psalm 18, 4, David said, the sorrows of death compassed me and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

Then in my distress, I called upon the Lord. Psalms 107, 6, they cried to the Lord in their trouble. He delivered them when they were in distress.

Trouble, distress, perplexity birthed a cry of help. You see, no country is closed to the gospel of Jesus Christ as far as God is concerned. In Indonesia, especially, and in Sri Lanka, you know, these nations had shut Christ out completely.

The gospel was shut. But after the tsunami, relief groups went in. We sent two doctors from World Childhood, World Childhood, supported two doctors, went into Sri Lanka.

And Sri Lanka had been closed. No one could go. No Christian could go near some of these Buddhist areas, especially.

And these two doctors went in to especially the place where the railroad, that the train had collapsed. And many, many were killed during that train crash from the tsunami. And in that very area, these Christians flooded in and the Buddhists saw such Christ likeness.

They saw such giving and such tenderness among those that would come. So my doctor friend, one of my dear friends, was asked to go into a room. They took him into a palace and put him in an isolated room.

And a man came in, and he didn't know until later he was one of the chief Buddhist leader. And he said he was sick. And my doctor friend ministered to him.

And the man said, we see something different. He said, you are welcome. You're welcome.

You see, in the distress, people are forced to face eternity, thoughts of eternity. And folks, in this hard time, Jesus said, the harvest is ripe. It's plenteous.

You see, communism tried to rid God out of Russia. But Jesus came back and said, all you did was ripen the harvest. China tried to keep Christ out.

And all they did was ripen the harvest. In the Ukraine, they tried to outlaw God and tried to destroy Christianity. And all they did was start a Holy Ghost revolution.

And now there's a born-again man who is now the premier in Ukraine. Belarus is next. New York Times today called Belarus the most communist-dominated nation on earth now.

And already the Christians are beginning to pray that nation is next going to be shaken. This proven pattern is all through the Bible. The darker the times, the whiter the harvest.

Now, let's talk about that harvest this morning. In the 1980s, the church growth movement was birthed. They called it the decade of harvest.

And they said that the churches are no longer relevant. They're out of date with the modern society, especially the birth of the baby boomers generation. And so they said, you have the church, it's too traditional, it's got to be updated, you have to contemporize your music, contemporize your worship style.

And so this was the beginning of the movement of technology into the church of Jesus Christ. And it was thought you've got to break from your small thinking. They called it the decade of harvest.

And out of that decade of harvest, and this church growth movement began in Fuller University in California and spread to other Christian universities and books and tapes came, and all the young pastors said, yes, we're going to modernize the church. We're going to be contemporary and we're going to be seeker-sensitive and we are going to use every modern convenience and instrument to bring them into the house of God. It was the beginning of the megachurch period.

Large churches sprang up all over America, 10,000, 15,000, 25,000 and 30,000 people, huge campuses that looked like shopping malls, including McDonald's and all of the modern conveniences. And then the sermons were being illustrated above with film clips from modern, even R-rated movies, because people relate to that. And then at the end of the 1980s and early 1991, 1992, surveys were taken even by the church growth movement.

They were very honest about it. They wanted to see if this new modern approach would bring in the harvest. And this research was by Gallup and the Barnum group, research group.

Two very valid, respected research agencies. And they found out that during the 1980s, there was absolutely no growth in evangelical churches, none whatsoever. And all the megachurches, the large churches, were made up primarily of those who were transfers from small churches.

And the little church could not compete with the big church. They didn't have money for all the bells and the whistles. They didn't have the money to compete.

They didn't have the music. They didn't have the money. And the people flocked to something that would be a little more contemporary, a little more exciting.

And the morals were no longer to be challenged. You were no longer to think in theological terms, but in contemporary terms. And you were not to have what they called narrow thinking, but you're going to have corporate thinking.

And after this, now going into 1997, the latest survey say there are less baby boomers going to church than any time before. And the statistics are getting worse. There's a stagnation in the church, the evangelical church nationwide.

There has been absolutely no growth. I came upon a book this past week written by Dr. William Sharma. And his book is entitled Stealing Sheep.

And he was in the church growth movement. And he was very, very, very successful. But he got convicted.

He said, where are these people coming from? Where are all these people swarming into my church? And he got convicted because he was in numbers now. And he got convicted. He said, I am evaluating my success and who I am by the numbers in my congregation.

And Brother Chadwick got convicted by it and said, no, this is not right. Because in his time, he realized that some of the churches were near closing down because the people were attracted to the special music. And all of the excitement that was happening in this church.

But he said, we were not winning souls. You understand the latest statistic is that there are just a minute few Christians who've ever won a soul to Christ. Very few have ever won a soul to Jesus Christ.

And now they have admitted it's a well-known fact that the church growth now, there is no harvest. This is church transference, transferring people. And the Pentecostals are among the switchers.

They call them switchers. They switch churches. And Pentecostals are the main switchers.

I'm not going to comment any more on that. I've been thinking about this harvest. No growth.

Oh, yes, big churches. But Jesus said the labors are few. He's saying that to his apostles who are not labors.

They were not ready because they can't even figure out why he's talking to the Samaritan woman anyhow. They're not ready. He said the labors are few.

He can't even use his own right now. They weren't ready. And he said the labors are few.

What about all these megachurches? What about this church? What about the thousands that come here? What about the thousands who go to Brooklyn Tabernacle? Wonderful churches where the Spirit of God owns. But he's still saying there are few labors. And he's talking about our generation, too.

And I got to thinking, what if the Lord, just before he left the Garden of Gethsemane, and he's looking down to the future, he's looking down through history, and he sees our time. And there's a great heaviness in his heart because he sees that the harvest is not being reaped. There are not many harvesters.

There are few labors. And he said never has it been riper before than in the last of the last days. And he looks at this, and there's a grief in his heart because he sees a backsliding.

He sees a people going for prosperity and for success and fame and leaning on the flesh, using every flesh method known to mankind and looking more like the world than the world itself. And Jesus looks down and he says to the Father, Father, they are not going to get this harvest in. I want you to allow me to send a host of angels.

I want to send to America. I want to send a host of angels. I want to send to Europe.

I want to send to the whole world. I want to send angels to bring in the harvest. Now, the Bible says they will bring in a harvest, but that's the harvest that we bring to Christ.

And suppose the Father agreed. And somewhere in this, even in this decade, a thousand celestial beings appeared in America. And they're in radiant, supernal appearance.

And they so radiate that no human being, no person can deny their otherworldliness. They're from another world. And these angels have come for the harvest.

They appear on radio and television and are being interviewed. What a, what an excitement. What a story that would be as they appear in pulpits and they're announced and people are coming to hear these angels.

And they are holding meetings and they are in conferences and everywhere, everywhere. These thousand supernal beings are here to bring in the harvest. Nobody would talk about heaven like they could talk

about it.

No one could talk about the fruits of heaven and the river. No one can talk about the cross. No one could expose sin such as these angels.

And like so a thousand Jonahs, America would be wooed and warned. A thousand angels. But just suppose that in a short time they become enthralled with the world and the spirit of Lucifer begins to move in their midst.

And they begin to compete with one another for audiences. And they begin to fight with one another and accuse one another of false doctrine. And they became intrigued with the technology.

And they become seduced by those things, the sons of God looking upon the women of the earth. How long do you think it would take that they would lose their influence? How do you imagine that they would bring in the harvest? They would have diminished their testimony. They would have voided everything.

Suppose they became like that. In other words, like us. Like the world today.

Like our ministry today often. We've diminished our testimony because we've become so wrapped up in the things of the world. We no longer seek the face of Christ.

And we no longer show to the world that the Christ we preach has the power to change us. Why would anybody want my gospel? Why would anybody want my gospel if all they saw in me was a murmuring, complaining spirit? Why would they want my gospel if I say Jesus is enough? He's my everything. He's my supplier.

He gives me joy. He gives me peace. And they see me rocking around with a wrong, sad face.

And I'm sad, Samuel. Why would they want my religion? Why would they want my Christ when I preach that He's all victorious and yet I don't show that victory? I don't have that countenance. Jesus in the Song of Solomon talking to His bride.

This is what He said. Oh, my dove, my bride, let me see your countenance. Let me hear your voice.

Sweet is your voice. And your countenance, your appearance is comely, I mean, pleasant, beautiful. God's been convicting me.

If all the world hears me, say the devil's after me. If all the world hears is the devil and all hell's against me, and it is. Oh, hell, I'm going to show you in just a minute why there are so few labors and what the labors are going to have to go through to be approved.

But you see, God's countenance counts. How we appear before the world. Oh, there's times of weeping.

There's times of brokenness. But God's been speaking to my heart. Why the sour countenance before an ungodly world who said, what difference is your Christ? You say he's a physician.

He must not be a very good surgeon. He must not have good medicine. He doesn't seem to be healing you.

That's not for you. That's for me. Well, you take it if you feel so.

But you see, we don't have to suppose anything here. I was supposing angels, but he didn't send angels. He sent us.

And then Jesus said the labors are few. The labors are few. What does Jesus mean by this? Few labors.

Because just like Gideon's time, there were thousands that came at the invitation. And they volunteered for this war. And God saw that the multitudes of his people had fear and unbelief.

And God knew they didn't have what it would take to face the hard times. And he whittled it down to 300 of his servants, 300 that were going to go through the fires. A true laborer is a Christian whose walk proves that Christ is enough, that Christ is all sufficient.

The labor is the instrument that God uses. We become the instrument. Now, in the days of Christ, the harvesting instrument was called a scythe.

It was a long, curved, single-edged blade with a long, curved handle. And that curved blade on the scythe had to be hammered out on an anvil. And that metal was placed in a hot, white-hot fire.

And it was brought out, just a straight piece of metal. And the blacksmith had to take a hammer, and he hammered it into a curve. And he kept hammering.

He put it back and forth into the fire and bring it out and hammer it on that anvil. And then when he got it in shape, the curved blade, one side of it, the inside has to have an edge. It has to be sharp to cut down the harvest.

And then he would take a rough-edged thing called a file, and he would file and file. You say, poor illustration because the iron has no feeling. Well, the Bible always uses these illustrations like we are trees.

And he gives all these illustrations. We're sheep, for example. But, you see, this explains why there are so few laborers.

Because, you see, I can't become an instrument for the harvest until he has made me capable. When the Holy Spirit sees that I'm prepared. And, folks, God knew what we would face in this generation.

He knew this generation would face exotic temptations that no other generation has known. If you would have told people just 50 years ago the things that we see and have in our hand now, the technology of it. If you would have told a generation 50 years ago that there would be television wristwatches.

That there would be pornography even on the wristwatch. If you would have told the past generations the things that we see and hear. If you would have talked about militant homosexuality and homosexuals getting married.

They would have walked away in disdain and said, you're crazy. They would have never believed. And the Lord knew what we would face.

He knew the depths of depression. He knew the depths of loneliness that would come upon this generation. He knew all of that.

And He can't send just anybody out into that kind of atmosphere. There has to be preparation. There has to be a blade that's gone into the fire and shaped and filed in and out of the fire and placed on the anvil.

And that hammer keeps coming down. Not because God's trying to drive out sin. But because God says, here's one that will take it.

Here's one that I can use. And the fire has come. And some of you are in that fire right now.

You've been hammered and hammered and hammered. And you've been in the fire one fire after another. And you feel the rough edges.

Why? Because God said, I have only a few who are going to be ready for this harvest. And they have to experience. They have to go through these fires that others are going through so that they can comfort others.

And Paul the Apostle, yes, he says, the devil hindered me. But read the next verse. He said, I rejoice with a crown of rejoicing.

I must have in me and in my walk personal proof that all of God's promises work for me. I'm saying it's a time to shout when you're in the fire. Because God is making you a laborer.

God is doing something. Now, folks, the worst thing that can happen is for somebody that's got a good job to go to somebody that's unemployed and say, just hold on. It's a very easy thing for somebody that's living well and drives a nice car to tell you when you can't, when you have fear in your heart that you can't pay your mortgage.

And when you're living from paycheck to paycheck, there's somebody that's got money in the bank. They can say, God is faithful. Just trust him.

But it's a different thing. When you've been through it, when you've experienced it, and things have been so hard, you said, there's no way I can come out of this. And the Lord says, back into the fire.

Little more. Little sharper. You don't know what I have in store for you if you could see the harvest that's coming.

God doesn't need a bunch of evangelists. He doesn't need a bunch of people running around with entourages and cameras. He needs ordinary Christians who've been in the fire, who've been hammered and hammered and hammered.

I'm going to close with this. The question is, is Jesus enough in your life? I mean, is he everything? Is your Christ, have you proven to your family? Husband, have you proven to your wife? Have you proven to your husband, ma'am? Have you proven to your children? Have you proven in any circle in which you live and survive, or in your business or your job? Have you proven that in the hardest time, you can not put on a false mob, but you can put on Jesus. You can put on Christ.

And you can say, I may not see it yet, but I'm coming through. God is going to give me victory. My Christ is alive.

He has changed me, and it works. In my time in age and ministry, I know that I know that I know that the gospel I preach has kept me. And no matter what comes, there may be some of the darkest days ahead.

There may be some of the times, but I'm not going to talk about to the world. I'm not going to talk about the devil to the world and how he's trying to get me down. The Lord has convicted me, saying, don't talk about the devil.

Talk about the victory of the cross of Jesus Christ and the power and His glory. Jesus says, quit limping around, strengthen your knees, and get up. Oh, let me see your voice, your countenance.

Let me see your beauty, and let me hear your voice. And remember, the countenance comes before the voice. Let's stand.

In the annex and here in the auditorium, I have to say this. I refuse to weary myself any more about how to bring in the harvest, what plan, what strategy. Yes, I can weep for lost souls, but I'm going to tell you something.

I really believe this with all my heart. If we will submit, we will submit in the hands of Christ and let Him do what He wants to do in us. At the very time He knows that we're fully submitted, we're not murmuring, we're not complaining any more, we're not asking why.

We say, Lord, I know that something good is coming out of this, something beyond mine, and You're going to use me. May I give you an illustration? I preach to pastors and young pastors. I get a burden for these young pastors, and they write to me.

I got a letter this week, and what Gwen and I have been through. She goes into the hospital again Tuesday for knee replacement, and we don't question it any more. Gwen's one of the bravest ladies I've ever known or could ever know.

And I got a letter from a young pastor, and he's describing in detail everything I've been through, everything. If I hadn't gone through this with Gwen, if I hadn't seen, known the victory, I would have never been able to answer his letter. I would have written something like this.

Brace up. Get in your Bible and start praying. I read the letter now, and I weep, because I know what he's gone through.

And you're going to start meeting people going through things that nobody could reach but you. Not my preaching, not any of these pastors could reach it, but you can reach it, because you've been through it. And one thing it produces is compassion.

Compassion. Oh, God, forgive me for the years I spent without it. God's doing something.

God never tries to whip sin out of us. God never beats you down to try to just get a message through to you. He's working on character.

He's working on making a hardened soldier, hardened to the things of this world, hardened against all of the talk of men. And that's what he's doing in this church. All these years of preaching, all the tears these pastors have shed with us, and all of this digging into the word.

Folks, soon, very soon, it's going to pay off like we could not believe. It's payday. It's payday.

Glory be to God. And we won't be having an evangelist come in. It won't be through advertising.

It's going to be through what God does through this body, through the least among us, the most unknown. You may sit somewhere in this church, and you may be sitting hidden back in one of the rooms up there in the annex. But God has your telephone number.

He's got your address, and he knows what's going on in your life, and he's going to bring you through. Hallelujah. I don't know how to give an invitation.

I'm just going to say, if something is causing your heart to burn in you, if the Lord is saying something to you, if you don't know Jesus, or if you've backslidden, and you're not where you should be with the Lord, and there's a hunger, and something added to that hunger and stirred your heart, the altar is open. We're not interested in just filling up this place. Just as the Holy Spirit draws you up in the balcony, if the Holy Spirit draws you, I'm just going to pray with you.

That's all. And wherever you are, up there and here and in the annex. In the annex, just go stand between the screens, and let me pray with you as you just step out.

If you're in the fire, and you were about to collapse, and you're about to say, I can't take it anymore, and you've even thought of giving up, this is the time right now to allow the Holy Spirit to renew you in faith. The psalmist said, God will speak peace to his people and to his saints, but let them not turn back to folly. In the day of my trouble, I will call upon him.

Lord, you will answer me. You are ready to forgive, and you're plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon thee. Give thy strength to thy servant.

That's what the Lord wants. He wants to give you his strength. And all you have to do is say, Jesus, I'm not going to fight anymore.

I'm just going to yield. We don't believe in fate. There's no such thing as fate for God's people.

There is such a thing as the will of God. And you submit to the will of God, and don't be afraid. Don't be afraid.

I got a letter from a sister. She's 102 years old, and she still drives. But she's lost husbands.

She's lost children. It's been years and years of being in the fire. And at 102, she made a shout rise in my heart when I read her letter.

She said, God has been so good. God has been so faithful. 102, and praising God.

Praising the Lord. Don't you think it's time for you to start taking people to hand and say, praise God. In a time that we rejoice in our hard times, literally rejoice, publicly, physically, God change our countenance.

God, forgive us for thinking that a God who saved us by his blood would abandon us in the process of taking us home. Lord Jesus, I thank you. And I can say it, too, after all these years.

And I've lived more than my allotment. But, oh, God, through every hard time, you were doing something in my heart. God, I would hate to think where I would be without that hammer and the anvil and the fire.

And I thank you for it now. I couldn't when I was going through it. But, oh, Jesus, everyone who's going through it will come.

The day will come. Weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Joy will come.

This is the conclusion of the message.

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