

0331

You reap what you sow

Galatians 6:6-10

Sunday, May 14, 2023

Mother's Day

Text

⁶Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Prayer

Introduction

You reap what you sow.

Planting season is wrapping up. I know that some farmers around here are already finished with planting.

In just a few months, it'll be harvest time.

Now for our farmers, imagine that we came harvesting season, and I asked you if I could borrow your combine.

And you'd be puzzled. You'd probably say "you're not a farmer."

I tell you, "I know, but I'm going to try to harvest this year.

And you're even more confused by me and you say "Harvest what? You don't have any fields"

And I'd tell you, "I know that. Silly. I want to harvest my yard."

And you're thinking "Your yard? Did you plant anything?"

"Nooo, but I still want to harvest."

And you're trying to explain "but you didn't plan anything."

"I know, but I still want to see what I can get."

And at this point, you're probably feeling a little bit frustrated with me. You're thinking "what does he not get?!" You can't have a harvest if you didn't plant anything.

Because you reap what you sow.

And if you don't sow, there is nothing to reap.

And I give this silly illustration, because when we look at it in agricultural terms, it's obvious that you don't have a harvest.

But it's a universal principle of life, and it is the focus of our passage today.

You reap what you sow.

Series context

In our passage, Paul is winding down the Book of Galatians.

He hasn't landed the plane yet, but it's the part of the flight where you can feel them throttling back, you're slowly descending, you hear and feel the landing gear being lowered.

And so Paul is giving some closing remarks regarding conduct and daily life for the Church. And in today's section, Paul will touch upon three areas of our Christian lives: our support of ministers, our Spiritual lives, and good

works towards others. And Paul's point will be that the thread which ties all three of these ideas together is that you reap what you sow¹.

Thesis

Our main point today:

You reap what you sow and if you don't sow, you don't reap what you didn't sow.

With that, let's jump into our passage.

We come to our first point.

Reaping and sowing in ministry

Verse 6:

Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

So:

Let the one who is taught the word: that's referring to the congregation.

Share all good things with the one who teaches.

That's talking about compensation for pastors.

Couple thoughts.

In his book "The Problem of Pain," C.S. Lewis said this about hell: "There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of our Lord's own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason."

That's kind of how I feel talking about money.

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 172.

If I'm being completely honest, it is my least favorite subject to address from the pulpit.

Also, this is part of why it's so important to preach verse by verse. Because one of the benefits of that is that it forces a preacher to touch on topics that he otherwise would not have chosen.

There are a few interesting things to note about this verse. There are a lot of different aspects that go into pastoring. It's shepherding the flock, it's helping with leadership, but the primary emphasis on pastoring here is teaching².

And I would argue that, above all else, that is the pastor's job. To preach and teach the word. And ultimately, when I say: the Word, that's a reference to the gospel message.

But this also gets at the rationale for paying a pastor. While it is not a Biblical requirement that a church must pay their pastor, it is helpful for a pastor to be freed from other vocational obligations to be able to commit the time to study the word in preparation for preaching and teaching.

That's not to say that a pastor who is bi-vocational, where he's the pastor and has another career is incapable of being a very good preacher.

But that there are benefits for a pastor having that time to study and shepherd.

I'll use myself as an example. If I had to have a full time job to support a family, and then preach, I cannot imagine the rapid decline in the quality of my sermons.

Sermons take time.

You reap what you sow.

And so for a congregation, there are benefits in having a teacher who is able to eat, sleep, and drinking preaching.

² Grant R. Osborne, [Galatians: Verse by Verse](#), Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 204.

And again, I'm thankful that I have the privilege to be able to do what I do. Martin Luther said "If I could today become king or emperor, I would not give up my office as preacher."

There are several other passages which talk about this idea of a supported staff member.

1 Corinthians 9:14:

the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

1 Timothy 5:17-18:

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

I read that and thought "Did Paul just compare me, as a pastor, to an ox?"

He did. His point is that as an ox labors in the field, a pastor labors to study and teach the word.

There are no shortcuts. You reap what you sow.

A great teacher needs to be able to also be a great student.

And the last part of that verse: **the laborer deserves his wages** is something that we also see Jesus say in the gospels.

We see similar principles in the Old Testament with the priesthood. People would make their offerings at the temple and a portion of that was given to the priests, which is what they lived on. While we do not have a ministerial priesthood any longer, there is still a teaching office within the church.

Now a person who's cynical might think, "well isn't that a little bit self-serving of Paul?" But what's interesting is that Paul himself did not

primarily earn income through his ministry. He had another vocation. He was a tentmaker.

Now one key difference with Paul is that he wasn't primarily a pastor. He was an apostle and an evangelistic missionary, and he was traveling to areas that had never had the gospel preached.

And so for Paul, he worried about trying to earn income from his gospel work as a potential hindrance to new converts.

He talks about his rationale for why he didn't want to be paid, among other places, in 1 Thessalonians 2:7:

⁷ But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

So I'm an ox and Paul is like a nursing mother.

⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

⁹ For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

Paul also talks about how he did not take a salary in both First and Second Corinthians.

In 1 Corinthians 9:18, he says:

What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

And so again, for Paul, even though he could have received financial support for this work, he had chosen not to.

My point is that Paul establishes the principle, but also says it's not a requirement of a church that they must have a pastor who is paid.

Commentary

Taking it back to our passage, Paul is talking about reaping and sowing.

If a church doesn't support the one who is supplying the teaching of the Word, I think the reason why they don't is relevant. Sometimes churches don't support a pastor because they can't.

There are many churches in other parts of the world that are underground house churches of just a few families, where they don't have the resources to have someone who is a full time pastor.

That's understandable.

You have lots of church plants in America that start out really small. They don't always have the funds to pay a pastor. Sometimes those people take more of a missionary route and raise their own support for the first few years while the church is growing.

But typically in those churches, the idea of a pastor who is unsupported by the church is intended to be short term.

Some churches don't pay their pastors because they think it's unbiblical. I would argue that it's clearly Biblical and, as we've already discussed, it's been shown in numerous places.

Some churches in America can't afford it. Most churches are small. In our country, there are about 300,000 churches. There are some good, Biblical churches that are preaching the gospel that only have a handful of members.

This church, for many years, did not have a full time, staffed pastor. It was still a good church. They had their reasons. From my understanding, part of that went back to its Apostolic roots, and part of it also went to its goal of funding missionaries.

My point is not to criticize the church in the past. They had their reasons.

But I do think that a goal for any church ought to be to eventually be to the point where you're able to support a pastor. Because you reap what you sow. And a church that is able and chooses to support a pastor is also sowing in what they are taught.

And a church where the Word of God is sown, where the gospel is sown, where the truth is sown is a church that will continue to reap harvests as the living and active Word of God works in the hearts and souls of the people of God.

We come to a second point.

Reaping and sowing in the Spirit

Verses 7-8:

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

These verses are really the key to this principle of reaping and sowing.

But what's interesting is what precedes it.

God is not mocked.

Our world wants to mock God with the way people live, wants to make a mockery of Biblical teachings and commands, wants to make a mockery of teachings of Jesus that our modern world finds antiquated.

God is not mocked.

His truth and the way that he has ordained his creation is not up for a vote, it is true if we live by it or not, it is true if we believe it or not.

While people do not have to follow his principles and laws, when we don't we reap the consequences of that.

Because you reap what you sow.

Meditation

That statement works both positively and negatively.

If you sow good things, you will reap good things.

Not in a prosperity gospel kind of way. It's not a ponzi scheme. It's not "Give us \$1,000 and you'll absolutely benefit back exponentially in a financial way."

Rather, as we sow seeds of faith and devotion to God, we reap the Spiritual blessings of a relationship with God.

But reaping and sowing also works negatively.

Because if you don't reap, then you don't sow.

Spiritual life

It's true of our Spiritual lives.

If you don't invest in a prayerful, worshipful, knowledgeable, service-filled, God-honoring, truth loving, Christ exalting life, then you will not sow a great relationship with God.

Because you reap what you sow.

If you know your closeness with God, your love for God is not in a great place right now, examine your own life and habits.

You reap what you sow and if you don't sow, you don't reap what you didn't sow.

Everyone is sowing something.

When you don't sow into your relationship with God, you're actually sowing to yourself.

That's what verse 8 is saying.

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Because if you don't sow into your relationship with God, that's not neutral. You can sow for God or you can sow to self.

If you sow for God, you'll reap Godliness.

If you sow to self, you'll reap selfishness.

So never be surprised when God's principle of reaping and sowing works exactly as the Bible says that it will work.

Don't be shocked. Why? Because God is not mocked.

A farmer who doesn't plant any seeds won't reap a harvest. But he is still going to reap what he sows. He sowed nothing, he will reap nothing.

Think about marriage. You reap what you sow. If you're not being intentional about finding quality time, having meaningful conversations, laughing together, working through struggles together, finding things you enjoy doing together, then it's not surprising that you're going to have a marriage that is not a great marriage.

And really, that's true for every domain of life. If you don't work hard at any endeavor or any pursuit of life, you will not reap a good harvest.

As a preacher, I reap what I sow. If I'm not constantly studying the Bible, I'm not going to be preaching Biblical sermons. I'm not going to be preaching Jesus, I'm going to be preaching myself.

That's true for a kid in school. If you don't work hard and apply yourself, then you're not going to have good grades.

You reap what you sow.

Do you have an area in your life. In your walk with God or in your personal life where you're not harvesting that way you'd like?

May I ask you to consider what seeds you're planting?

We are not passive bystanders in our walk with God.

Living by the Spirit

Grant Osborne notes a progression from Paul on Spiritual life in the Book of Galatians³.

In Galatians 3:2 and 14, Paul talks about receiving the Spirit. We do this when we come to faith in the gospel.

Chapter 5, just before giving the fruit of the Spirit, Paul says that we are to walk by the Spirit in 5:16.

Galatians 5:18, Paul says to be led by the Spirit. In Galatians 5:25, Paul talks about walking in step with the Spirit.

And here he talks about sowing to the Spirit, and not to the flesh.

As we've said, it works positively and negatively, both for what you do and what you don't do.

But it also works quantitatively.

Sow a lot, reap a lot. Sow a little, reap a little.

Is God the priority of your life?

Or do you pretty much live your life for you, do your own thing, and sure, you're a nice person, but God isn't really at the center of it?

³ Grant R. Osborne, [Galatians: Verse by Verse](#), Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 207.

Then you will not reap what you have not sown.

And my point with this isn't a guilt trip. It's an encouragement.

That if you would like to know God, if you'd like a better relationship with God, if you'd like more joy in God, know that you reap what you sow.

the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

If you reap faith in Jesus Christ, you will sow redemption.

If you do not reap faith in the gospel, then you will not reap what you have not sown.

If you reap faithlessness, you will sow judgment.

We come to our third point.

Reaping and sowing in doing good

Verses 9:

⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Paul calls the church to not tire of doing good.

Perhaps a reminder that we all need sometimes. It can be easy to get cynical. People don't always respond with the gratitude which they should. We can serve, and it's not like we want a parade, but the occasional notice is appreciated.

I know some could say, "well that shouldn't be why you serve." And it's true. It shouldn't be. But we're still human.

Paul says to not grow weary, because the same principle of reaping and sowing also applies to our service and generosity.

That it comes with its own blessings. You reap what you sow.

Paul points to eternal rewards.

It's not that the good we do brings salvation. Keep in mind that we've preached the whole Book of Galatians so far. Paul beats the drum over and over again about justification by faith in Christ alone.

But there are eternal blessings and rewards for the Christian who is generous to others. That's what Paul is saying when he says: **in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.**

Verse 10:

¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

The household of faith is familial language, in referring to the Church.

Now we should do good to all. And we certainly have obligations to our families: our spouses, children, parents. They are our priority. And probably because that should go without saying that Paul doesn't feel the need to say it here.

But when we've taken care of our own household, we should also look to support the household of faith. That there is a special bond that the body of Christ has. And that Christians should look out for each other support, and serve one another.

This is similar to what Paul had said in the previous section when he talked about how we are to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).

How do we do good to one another? What are the ways we can sow into the lives of others?

Through financial support when someone has a financial need.

Through service when someone needs a hand or when you have a skill or ability to do something for someone that they can't do. Or when they need help.

Through hospitality: inviting people over for a meal, for company, enjoying their fellowship.

By praying for people and their needs, praying for their families, praying for people as they come to mind.

And by giving our time. By being a friend, by taking an interest in others, by knowing and being known.

And as a church that is committed to sowing to Godly things, to sowing into the lives of others, we will also be a church of people who harvest greatly.

Conclusion

As we wind down, I return to a question I asked earlier in our time this morning.

Do you have an area in your life where you're not reaping a harvest?

What seeds are you sowing? And in what fields are you sowing them?

Because there are no shortcuts.

You reap what you sow.

And so if you're not sowing in your walk with Christ, in your marriage, in your work, in your friendships, then do not be surprised when you don't reap great harvests in these areas.

Gospel

It might be easy to look at this all as if it's transactional.

But just remember: God is indebted to no one. God is not mocked.

All of these various harvests we reap are ultimately out of the goodness of a generous and loving God.

And he provides because his son, the Lord Jesus sowed love and reaped hatred, he sowed friendship and reaped betrayal, he sowed life and reaped death.

Let us not boast, let us not become enamored with our own supposed goodness. Because the only reason that God gives us any eternally good things is because we have a savior who sowed the life of righteousness that we could not and he reaped the harvest of judgment that we deserved.

We sowed lives of sin which deserved God's wrath but because of Christ, we are able to reap the harvest of eternal life.

If you've never sown faith, you will never reap the harvest of forgiveness.

But Jesus invites you. He is the one who came into a fallen world and who never grew weary of doing good. For he lived a life without sin.

You reap what you sow. May we be a church of people who will sow faith in Jesus as Lord and savior so that we will reap the eternal life with him that he has for us.