

Incapable, yet Faithful

Mark 4: 26-29

Our text today once again deals with sowing and harvest. While the sower must put forth sufficient effort in preparing the soil and sowing the seed, he has no control over the harvest. He can faithfully cultivate the ground, keeping the field free of weeds that rob the plants of nutrients and hinder growth, but the Lord is responsible for the harvest. The sower is incapable of causing the seed to germinate in the ground, producing much needed rain at the right times throughout growth, or making the sun to shine on the field. While the sower does all he can, he must depend upon the Lord for a good harvest.

Our work in ministry is guided by these same principles. We are called to share our faith, planting the seeds of the Gospel, but we have no control over the harvest. We can be faithful to plant good seed, but the Lord must prepare the hearts of those who hear and cause the seed to germinate and take root in their hearts. He alone is responsible for the harvest.

As believers, this can be frustrating at times. We like to share our faith and see immediate results. While this can happen, most of the time it doesn't. When we are met with immediate success while sharing our faith, very likely someone has already come before us planting the seed, and we have been used to water that which has been planted. We must always remember that the Lord is responsible for the harvest. We are not called or able to save anyone; we are called to present the Gospel. While we have limitations regarding the harvest, we must remain faithful to sow the good seed. Let's take a few moments to consider the [principles](#) of this parable as we think on: [Incapable, yet Faithful](#).

I. The Activity in the Harvest (26-27) – In the opening verses we discover Jesus' description of the activities involved in the growing process, leading up to the harvest. Consider:

A. The Sowing (26) – **And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.** Again Jesus reminded the hearers of the necessity for seed to be sown if there was to be any hope of a harvest. In order for the farmer to reap a harvest, he had to be committed to sowing good seed. This was foundational for the harvest. Apart from sowing seed, one could never expect to reap a harvest.

- We will discuss several aspects of the harvest that are completely out of our control, but this principle will never change – if we ever expect to reap a harvest, we must be willing to sow good seed. This principle is true in the physical realm, as well as within the spiritual realm. A farmer can't expect a harvest if he never takes the time to plant the seed. Likewise, we can't

expect those apart from Christ to come to Him in salvation if the Gospel is never presented. If we desire a spiritual harvest, we must be willing to sow the Gospel.

B. The Waiting (27) – *And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.* Jesus revealed that following the planting of the seed comes a period of waiting. The farmer has done his part; he has prepared the soil and sowed the seed. Now all he can do is wait for the Lord to provide the harvest. There will be some work along the way to keep the weeds removed, but the farmer has no control over the growth of the plants or the yield of the harvest. Only time will reveal the abundance within the harvest.

- This is often the hardest aspect of sowing and harvest. Many of us lack patience. We desire immediate results. However, reaping a harvest never happens overnight. We must do our part, faithfully sowing the seed, and wait patiently for the Lord to provide the increase.

C. The Hoping (27) – While the farmer waits for the plants to mature and yield their fruit, he is required to depend on the Lord and hope for a good harvest. The amount of yield is totally out of his control. No doubt he tends the field as the harvest is producing, but he cannot cause the plant to produce her fruit. He must patiently wait, with hopeful anticipation for the harvest.

- This too is a difficult aspect for many who sow the Gospel seed. We must be careful not to pick green fruit. We have no control over the harvest. We lack the ability to save. As much as we would like to see folks come to saving faith in Christ, the harvest is out of our hands. We must do our part, bathe our efforts in prayer, and trust the sovereign will of God for the harvest.

II. The Mystery in the Harvest (27b-28) – As Jesus continued to share the principles related to sowing and harvest, He addressed the great mystery within the harvest. Consider:

A. The Germination (27b) – *And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.* While the farmer was faithful to sow the seed, he could not control whether the seed would germinate and produce a plant or not. He was faithful to sow the seed, and in time the seed germinated and produced a plant. The farmer did not create anything, and he really can't explain how it happened. He did his part and Lord did the rest.

- The principles related to sowing and harvest are quite miraculous. One takes a mere seed, places it in the ground, and with the right temperatures and moisture, the seed produces a plant. Sometimes seeds can lay dormant for extended periods of time, but eventually germinate and a

plant is produced. The same is true regarding the sowing of the Gospel. As desperately as we would like our efforts to be fruitful, only the Spirit can prepare the heart and cause the seed to germinate, producing life. We don't understand it, and we can't explain it! Fortunately we don't have to; we are not called to produce life, just plant the seed!

B. The Growth (28) – *For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.* The mystery and miracle of sowing and harvest continues. Given the right conditions, eventually the seed will germinate, producing a plant. The plant will be small and tender at first, but eventually it will grow and mature, producing small fruits and vegetables. In time these will mature for the harvest. Again, this is a mystery to the farmer. Remember, all he did was plant the seed. The germination and continued growth of the plant were out of his hands. He planted the seed and God gave the increase.

- I enjoy working in my garden and seeing the various phases of growth. I plant the seed, but the Lord provides the increase. As the plants grow, my excitement and anticipation does as well. Looking at this from a spiritual perspective, growth is possible and expected. We can encourage others in the faith, investing in them, but really their growth comes from the Lord. As one yields to the Spirit, He provides the spiritual growth necessary.

C. The Gain (28) – *For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.* As the farmer patiently waits, eventually the harvest is received. What began as a tiny seed placed in the ground, produced a plant that yielded fruit. In time the fruit matured and was ready for harvest. In a good year, most of the fruit reaches maturity, but one never enjoys a 100% maturity rate. Inevitably, some of the fruit will not reach maturity. Again, the farmer has no control over the fruit maturing. That is the work of the Lord alone.

- We can do all we can to nurture and equip young believers to be fruitful, but their maturity rests in the Lord. As much as we would like to see every believer develop into mature believers, this is never the reality. Again, this is not our responsibility. The maturity of fruit rests in the Lord. While many may become anxious and try to persuade a conversion, genuine salvation is never obtained until the Lord has prepared the heart and it is ready for harvest.

III. The Maturity in the Harvest (29) – *But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.* Here Jesus described the field becoming mature and the harvest being reaped. Consider:

A. The Patience Involved (29) – Jesus revealed the harvest is never reaped until the fruit is brought forth. It would do no good to pick the harvest early. The fruit would not be mature and the yield would not be what it should be. The farmer must wait until the harvest is ready before he decides to reap. We too must wait on the Lord and His timing. Trying to reap a harvest before the fruit is ready will not produce the yield desired. Someone may make a profession of faith, but lack the conviction and understanding for true conversion. Patience is necessary when seeking to reap a harvest.

B. The Prudence Involved (29b) – **But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.** The time of patient anticipation eventually comes to a close. The fruit is mature and ready to harvest. A wise farmer knows he only has a certain amount of time to reap the harvest. Too much delay will result in the fruit becoming too ripe or drying out on the vine. Both situations would ruin the harvest, and the yield produced.

- While we need patience to wait upon the Lord until the harvest is ready, we also need wisdom to reap the harvest when the time is right. If you are faithful to sow the Gospel seed, you will eventually encounter mature fruit. There will be occasions when the time is right for the harvest, and we must be committed to sharing our faith. It is impossible for us to know during the initial encounter, but the fields are white, ready to harvest!

C. The Providence Involved (29c) – **But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.** The farmer's faithfulness and patience eventually paid dividends. The Lord saw fit to bless his efforts and produced a harvest, ready to reap. Remember, all the farmer had control over was the planting of the seed. God honored his faithfulness to sow and provided the increase. All glory for the harvest goes to God.

- Nothing in this parable promotes or insinuates laziness on the part of the farmer. He was faithful to sow and labor in the field. However, the end result was out of his control. There is a measure of comfort in this parable for those who sow the Gospel seed. While the Lord does expect us to faithfully sow, nowhere does He reveal that we are responsible for the production of fruit. That is an act of His sovereign grace and providence. In His time, and according to His will, the Lord will produce fruit and superintend the harvest. We must ensure we are faithful to engage in the work He is already doing!

Conclusion: I hope this parable has challenged and encouraged us to remain faithful to the Lord. We must be willing to sow the Gospel seed and trust Him for the harvest. If you are struggling to

sow, seek the Lord's guidance and help. If He is dealing with you regarding salvation, respond by faith with a repentant heart unto salvation!