

The Labor for the Lost # 11

John 4: 34-38

In our previous study we considered the Basis for Christian Living, concerning our personal relationship with Christ. Every believer has an obligation to live and walk in a way that pleases the Lord. We are to live a life of purity, fully submitted to the Lord.

That is a very important aspect of our lives. Without a right relationship with Christ, we will accomplish very little for Him. However, that is just part of the equation. Personal purity is necessary, but it isn't the only aspect of Christian living we are responsible for. It isn't enough to live a pure life within our homes, churches, and even among the world. A life of purity will be a great example and witness to the world, but we are called to take our lives a step further with the Lord. Not only are we to live pure and upright before Him, we are also called to actively engage those who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior.

I could live as spiritual and pure as humanly possible, but if I never shared my faith or reached out to the lost, then I would not be fulfilling the work my Lord left me to do. Serving the Lord isn't only about church attendance and refraining from things that defile. We must engage in active service for Him among the world. We are called to make disciples. That is impossible unless we seek out those who need the Lord. I want to discover the [aspects](#) of service our Lord speaks of as we consider: [The Labor for the Lost](#).

I. The Commission to our Labor (34-35) – Here Jesus speaks of the responsibility each believer has to labor for Him. He hasn't yet given the Great Commission to the disciples (and ultimately to us as well) but He points to that Commission in these verses. Notice:

A. The Submission Required (34) – [Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.](#) Keep in mind who is speaking. Jesus, the only begotten, God in flesh, declares that He has not come to accomplish His will. He has come to do the will of the Father. Jesus was fully submitted to God's will as He walked this earth. If our Lord was willing to submit to the will of God, doesn't it stand to reason that you and I should as well? There can be little question concerning God's will for humanity. He sent Christ to offer Himself as the sacrificial atonement for sin. God desires that sinners be saved. We must submit to His will in that regard.

- Notice also, Jesus desired to [finish his work](#). He was actively engaged in the work of God, bringing about redemption from sin. He fulfilled that work, but there is a work for us to do in sharing the Gospel with those who have not heard and believed. We must submit to the work of God in our lives, just as Jesus did in His.

B. The Instruction Revealed (35a) – *Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?*

Jesus instructs the disciples to consider the urgency of the time. It is likely they were a bit complacent as long as Jesus was with them. They probably tended to think there was plenty of time to engage in work. Jesus wanted them to realize that the time was at hand. Men needed to look to Him by faith at that moment, not later.

- I am convinced that one of Satan's greatest lies concerns time. He would have us believe there is no need for concern, no need to be in a hurry. There is plenty of time. After all, we've heard all our lives that Jesus was coming again and He hasn't returned yet. It's not that we don't believe He is coming, but we tend to think His return will be later rather than today.
- We need to heed the instruction of our Lord. We cannot assume that His return will be four months, four years, or longer away. Even if His return isn't in our lifetime (although it may be today) we are living in harvest time right now. None are guaranteed tomorrow. We are surrounded by those who have not been saved. Their eternal existence hangs in the balance. We must seek them today, while there is yet opportunity!

C. The Perception Reiterated (35b) – *behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.* The disciples were challenged of the Lord to open their eyes and look around. The fields were white, ready to harvest. Everywhere Jesus went He encountered those who need to look to Him by faith. Everywhere He went He saw souls in desperate need of a right relationship with God. There was no time to waste, no need to put it off; the time had come for harvest!

- Surely we all sense the need in our day as well. All we have to do is open our eyes and look around. We are surrounded by sin and wickedness. Many live their lives as if they are accountable to no one. Statistics consistently show, even here in the Bible belt, at least 50% of the population is un-churched, and certainly more than that are lost. There is no time to waste! The harvest is now. We all know those who are not saved. Surely we realize the urgency of the time.

I. The Commission to our Labor (34-35)

II. The Compensation for our Labor (36) – God is sovereign and there are no other gods beside Him. He could have just demanded that we labor for Him, but He offers compensation for those who faithfully labor in the harvest. Notice what Jesus reveals concerning our compensation.

A. The Benefit (36a) – **And he that reapeth receiveth wages.** Jesus reveals those who reap in the harvest will be compensated for their work. The disciple's labor would not go unnoticed or without reward. God was mindful of their efforts and He would reward them accordingly.

- We too can claim that promise. We don't serve the Lord just for the benefits He offers, but it does pay to serve the Lord. We are assured of His blessing in this life as well as in the life to come. God is faithful and He will honor those who are obedient to Him.

B. The Bounty (36a) – **And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal:** The compensation the disciples received would not be limited to this life alone. In fact, the future reward would far outweigh the blessing they received in this life.

- What a blessing to consider what waits the children of God. There can be no doubt that God has blessed us abundantly in this life, but what we enjoy in this life will not compare to what we shall receive. Salvation affords eternal life with Christ!

- We also need to notice that Jesus spoke of **fruit unto eternal life**. Here He speaks of labor and fruit that will last beyond this life. Much that people enjoy in this life is temporal; eventually it will wear out and decay. The wages that we receive of the Lord for our labor in the harvest will be eternal. Jesus speaks of those we influence in regard to their salvation. When you have an active part in someone's salvation, fruit is laid up in heaven in your account. Only those things that are done for Christ will follow us home, but He will reward all we do for Him in heaven. That ought to encourage and challenge us to be faithful in the harvest.

C. The Blessing (36b) – **that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.** We will look at the cooperation of labor further in a moment, but we discover that nothing done for the Lord is in vain. We may never fully realize the outcome of our efforts, but we can rest assured that our Lord is keeping a record. He is aware of every word you have spoken on His behalf. He is aware of every deed you have done for Him. He knows the difference we have made in this world for His glory and the good of others. Regardless of our position in the kingdom, or the individual labor we perform, all will rejoice around the throne of God together. Every effort for the Lord, no matter how small or insignificant it seems, will be rewarded of Him.

I. The Commission to our Labor (34-35)

II. The Compensation for our Labor (36)

III. The Cooperation in our Labor (37-38) – In these closing verses Jesus deals with the cooperative effort of those who labor together in the harvest. In them we see:

A. The Presence of Individual Gifts (37) – *And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.* Jesus knew the disciples were different. They had different personalities and different backgrounds. Their abilities were different, but God had equipped each of them to be effective in their area of service. Some would sow and others would reap, but the harvest needed the cooperative effort of each one using their gifts to ensure the harvest.

- The same is true for us today. All are not gifted the same. Some sow, others water, and then there comes the harvest. Most of the time, when someone comes to know Christ in salvation, their life has been influenced by many people in various ways. Often someone shares their faith and plants a seed. Sometime later someone else will come along and share their faith, confirming what has already been planted. Eventually the harvest will be reaped in that soul, but it was the cooperative effort of individuals, using the gifts they possess, that led to the harvest.

- Each of us is different, possessing varied gifts, but we are all necessary in the harvest. Never assume that your efforts are of little value. *Eph.4:11-12 – And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*^[12] **For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:**

B. The Progression of Divine Growth (37) – *And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.* Do you see the progression in what Jesus reveals? One sows and another reaps. We all know that it takes time for a seed to germinate and grow into a mature plant, ready to harvest. This process is out of our hands. We can plant the seed, and even water the plant, but it is up to God to provide the growth and increase. We do what we can, all we can, but ultimately it is God that provides the individual stages of development necessary for harvest. *1 Cor.3:6-7 – I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*^[7] *So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

- I would never advocate laziness or disobedience, but that offers us great liberty. Kingdom growth is not dependent upon our works. God takes the effort we put forth, through the gifts He has given, and He provides the increase. You may be obedient to what God has asked of you, and yet you have not experienced the outcome you desired. Leave the increase in God's hands! If He has called you to sow, then sow the seed, but leave the rest to God. If He has equipped you to water, then be faithful in watering, but give God time to provide the growth as He sees fit! It does no good to pick green fruit. If we are faithful in doing what God has called us to do, He will take care of the rest.

C. The Profit of Cooperative Effort (38) – I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. Jesus tells the disciples they had reaped a harvest in fields where they had not labored. They entered a spiritual field that was ready for harvest and reaped that harvest, but prior to the harvest, they had put forth no effort in that particular field. The efforts of those before them had sown the seed and helped ensure the harvest.

- We need to be reminded that it takes all of us working together. Remember we talked about those who are saved have usually been influenced by others on several occasions prior to their salvation. It would arrogant and foolish for me to assume that all who were saved in a service where I had preached were the result of my efforts alone. No doubt the seed had been planted, watered, and nurtured by others. In His time, God gave the increase. We must be content to use the gifts we've been given, and work alongside others in the harvest. 1 Cor.3:7-8 – So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. ^[8] Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Conclusion: Surely you would agree that the fields are white ready to harvest. There is no time to waste; we must be actively engaged in the work we've been given. If we are to reap the harvest for the glory of God, it will require each of us doing our part.

Have you been faithful to the work our Lord has called you to? Are you laboring in the harvest for Him? Do you need strength and guidance in your labor? Maybe you need to come and seek the Lord's help in your labor. Maybe you are burdened for a loved one and would like to come and pray for them and those whom God has called to reach them.

You may be here and have never been saved. The seed has been sown and you feel the Lord drawing you to Him. If that is the case, why not come to Him by faith. If the Spirit is dealing with your heart, I wouldn't put it off.