

The Duty of Now

In the movie “Hoosiers” which is based on the true event of the smallest school ever to win the Indiana state basketball championship, Hickory, the coach has gone out to one of the farms to get his hair cut. As he is leaving he sees one of the teachers from the school, whose mother had just cut his hair, working with a pick and shovel to break up the still icy and frozen ground, so she can start planting her garden. He walks over and asks why she is doing this while the ground is still so hard. She says that the Farmer’s Almanac is saying that it is time for planting. He asks her if she always does what the Almanac says. She says it is rarely wrong. The Old Farmer’s Almanac has been around since 1792, predicting weather and giving advice on when to plow, sow, fertilize, harvest, all the things that farmers need to help them have a successful harvest. The idea being that when the Almanac says to do something you better do it, now. 1 Note what Hosea writes in...

Hos 10:12

2

12 Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the Lord Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.

The analogy that Hosea is using, telling the Israelites that it is time to break up the ground of their hearts, to sow righteousness, to reap in accordance with kindness, waiting for the Lord to rain His righteousness on their efforts, is illustrating for the Israelites things that they knew about, farming.

There are some thoughts from this passage that I would like to take a look at in this lesson...

3

- 1) Break up your fallow ground
- 2) Sow with a view to righteousness
- 3) Reap in accordance with kindness
- 4) Seek the Lord until He comes

So then, our first thought...

4

- 1) Break up your fallow ground

This idea of breaking up fallow ground is one of the most fundamental procedures of farming. Ground that has not been prepared properly will not allow the seed to grow, to flourish. The ground must be prepared in such a way as it will both receive the seed and provide nourishment for it. Fallow ground is ground that hasn’t been prepped, hasn’t been plowed or made ready for harvest.

Under the Old Law the Israelites were told...

Ex 23:10-11

5

10 “You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, **11** but on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and

whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Every seventh year they were to let their fields go uncultivated, unkempt, and whatever grew wild would be for the poor and animals. This idea of preparing the land so that the crops would grow correctly and abundantly is nothing new. In fact, there are some who say that the idea of field rotation, that's the idea of rotating your fields so you always have some growing and some lying fallow, came from this time and Biblical instruction.

Having fields that are properly prepared to yield a fruitful crop is what Christ is speaking of in the parable of the sower...

Luke 8:6-7

6

6 Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7 Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.

But, as we know, Christ wasn't speaking of farming in the obvious sense; He was speaking of Spiritual seed and the ground of the heart.

So, if the contrast is being made between a heart that is unprepared or cultivated, fallow as seen in Hosea 10 and a heart that is ready to accept the seed of the Word, Luke 8, what is the difference? What makes a heart ready to receive the Word? How is the fallow ground of the heart broken up, made ready to receive the Word? As we continue to look at the parable of the sower in Luke 8, Christ describes for us part of what a prepared heart looks like...

Luke 8:15

7

15 But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

What kind of heart do we have? Is it good, is it honest? Do you see the criteria that Christ Himself lays down for determining whether or not we have a good and honest heart? Have we heard and obeyed the Word of Truth? A good and honest heart does. The heart that has been prepared is the heart that has been cultivated to be good in nature and honest in application. We are the only ones that can prepare our hearts to be like this.

Two other aspects of the heart that has been prepared are found in...

James 1:21

8

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

A prepared heart is one that is tired of the filthiness and wickedness of the world. It is ready and looking for something other than what this world has to offer. There are so many people that are fed up with what they see out there, they just don't know where to look to find a solution, or, they are just not ready to go the extent that the solution requires. When they are, that is what translates itself in their response to the truth; it is seen in their humility of accepting that truth into their hearts and applying it into their actions.

Breaking up the fallow ground of our hearts, preparing them to receive the Word of Truth, means to develop within ourselves a heart that will be honest, honest with ourselves, not thinking we are something we are not, realizing our own shortcomings and frailties and one that will be honest with the truth, applying it in its completeness in every area our lives.

This can be seen in how our second point is applied in our lives...

9 2) Sow with a view to righteousness

Prov 23:7

10

7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is.

The Psalmist talks about the importance of what we put into thoughts, hearts, minds, however you want to think of that, the point is, according to the Psalmist we are what we think, and here is the real impact of this, we think about the things we put into ourselves. If we choose to fill ourselves with the evil of this world, that is going to be what we think about, and we will become evil. That is what we see in the account of the people during the time of Noah...

Gen 6:5

11

5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

When man ignores God and His Word, the only result that can come is that man's thoughts become evil, disobedient, without God in them. That is the evil that is seen in those people before the flood. They pushed God out of their thoughts, out of their hearts. That happens when we don't continually seek after God.

Matt 6:33

12

33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you

What are we sowing in our hearts? If you want righteousness to be the fruit that is harvested, righteousness is what must be sown. You don't get potatoes if you plant turnips. You don't get righteousness if all you sow is unfaithfulness and disobedience. Remember the passage we looked at in...

James 1:21

13

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

James says that we are to receive the Word implanted. What does that mean to you? What does it mean to have the Word of God implanted in us? A point that needs to be made here; we understand this term "implanted" to mean something that is intentionally put into something. When we plant seed, it is done with intent, we intentionally plant the seed where we choose, and we intentionally pick the type of seed we want to plant. It is not an accident, nor is that the idea that James is trying to convey. The idea is that there is intent to put the Word into our heart. Now God doesn't force His will onto anyone, so if the Word is to be implanted into someone's heart, it must

be done by the choice of the one whose heart it is. It must be done intentionally. Remember that Christ told the disciples to...

14 *“Seek first the kingdom of God”*

We seek for what we want. Hosea tells the Israelites to...

15 *“Sow with a view to righteousness”*

What are you wanting to grow? Is that what you are planting? Nutritionists tell us that we are what we eat. If we put the world into us, it is only the world that can come out, but if we put the righteousness of God into us, then it is righteousness that will come out. Our next thought is the logical result of sowing with a view to righteousness...

16 3) Reap in accordance with kindness

Gal 6:7-8

17

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will 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.

Paul makes it very clear, a man will reap that which he sows. What I find interesting is how this passage is worded...

18 *“God is not mocked”*

This doesn't mean that God is not being teased, this is talking about God not being fooled. We can try all we want to make it appear as if we are doing God's will, we might fool the world and others into thinking we are doing God's will, we might actually even fool ourselves into thinking we are doing God's will, but God cannot be deceived, He knows exactly what we have sown in our hearts and He knows exactly what we will reap. He knows that if we sow disobedience and unfaithfulness then that is all that can be reaped. Isn't that what Paul says in verse 8 of this passage? If a man sows to the flesh, then from the flesh he will reap, but if he sows to the Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, then from the Spirit he will reap eternal life. That is the promise and the hope of the harvest that Christians look forward to. When you plant a garden; tomatoes, peppers, squash, your hope is that the weather cooperates, there is enough water for them to grow, bugs and gophers don't eat them before they grow, that is the promise. The hope is found in the fresh salsa, salads, and spaghetti sauce, whatever you are looking forward to. The hope of sowing with a view to righteousness is secured in the righteousness of God's Word and the promise is realized in eternal life.

In the book of Revelation, in the discussion of the Lord with the seven Churches, 5 times we see Him say...

19 *“I Know Your Deeds”*

To the other two Churches He says...

20

“I know where you dwell”

And...

“I know your tribulation and you poverty”

God cannot be fooled nor deceived and we shall receive as our deeds of life dictate. In the next verse in the passage we looked at in Gal. 6...

Gal 6:9

21

9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Note how Paul condenses what we have been talking about...

22

1) Break up your fallow ground

Put the world from our hearts, don't lose it. Put the desires for the pleasures that it offers behind us and prepare ourselves in honesty, goodness, and humility to accept and implant into ourselves the Word of Truth.

23

2) Sow with a view to righteousness

Understand that we are what we choose to put into our hearts. Be patient, God keeps His promises.

24

3) Reap in accordance with kindness

Cling to the hope and believe in the promise of God of eternal life

What are we seeking, what are we sowing, what shall we reap?

Hosea tells the Israelites to seek The Lord until He rains His righteousness on them. Therein is our last thought...

25

4) Seek the Lord until He comes

1 Tim 6:10-11

26

10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. **11** But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

Pursuit of God is seen in fleeing from the world, but only when that pursuit is in accordance with the seed of His Truth that we implant into the fallow ground of our hearts.