

“Sowing and Reaping” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Stewardship Sunday 2 October 19, 2025

- I. **2 Corinthians 9:10** – ¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.
- II. **My sermon last week focused on our fears and God’s call.**
 - a. We are called by God to serve or use our gifts, but often we allow fear to rule our hearts rather than step up.
 - i. Esther became the queen in Persia, but Haman, the second in command, plotted to have all the Jews destroyed.
 - ii. We left off last week with Esther planning to approach the king without being summoned, which carried the sentence of death.
 - iii. Mordechai, Esther’s adoptive father, explained that maybe she was called by God into this time and place... for such a time as this.
 - iv. To quickly summarize what happened, the king allowed her to approach him... and Esther exposed the evil plan of Haman who was put to death on the very pole he had made for Mordecai to die on.
 - v. The Jews were saved by the courage of Esther, and even today they celebrate Purim each year as a remembrance of this deliverance.
 - b. So, God’s call for us may not be through raising us up as a queen like Esther, or a great prophet and leader like Moses, or a major missionary and apostle like Paul... yet we are still able to serve in our circles of influence through our vocations.
 - i. Our vocations as parents and grandparents, workers, church members, or as sons and daughters to name a few, are all ways that we can manage God’s gifts of time, talent, and treasure.
 - c. We are living in a time and place that is turning back to the Christian faith... a response to the struggles of the past 25 years that have shaken the confidence of many people, and the lack of stability in the world.
 - i. Go back to 9/11 and a terrorist attack that shook us to the core.
 - ii. Go back to the great recession beginning around 2007 where so many lost their homes and careers.
 - iii. Go back to covid and the unrest of 2020 and we are still seeing the impacts from the isolation of our older family and friends, the time away from school, and the deaths of our loved ones.
 - iv. All of these major events caused many of us to realize that the world is not a safe place (no matter how hard we try to make it safe), and everything we have can be taken away in an instant.
 - v. Within the last five years, a pattern is emerging that shows young people are coming to faith in Christ in great numbers, and for those raised in the faith... they are returning.

- d. I read an article from September that said recent research from Barna Group and Gloom shows a surprising change in church attendance patterns across the United States.
 - i. Younger generations, especially Gen Z (late teens and 20's) and Millennials (30's-40's), are now attending worship more frequently than older adults, nearly doubling their participation since 2020.
 - ii. While attendance among Boomers and older generations continues to decline, these younger groups are demonstrating a growing interest in faith and connection to local congregations.
 - iii. The study suggests that churches emphasizing relationships, service opportunities, and accessible discipleship can help sustain this renewed spiritual engagement among young adults.¹
- e. Another survey showed that Bible purchases are up 41% since 2022, religious and spirituality apps are up 80% since 2019, and Christian music streams on Spotify are up 50% since 2019.²
- f. For such a time as this... we are called into service as a congregation... so how will we respond to God's call?

III. **Our reading in 2 Corinthians is an encouragement to sow generously.**

- a. Some people might suggest that this reading is like that prosperity gospel stuff we see with television evangelists... as they tell you to donate \$1000 and you will see a return on your money tenfold.
- b. However, Paul is not encouraging the congregation in Corinth to give money so they can get a return, but instead, they are blessed by God in all ways... so they can be a blessing to God and others in all ways.
 - i. Verse 11 says, "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."
 - ii. The teaching here is that God has enriched us with time, talent, and treasure to fulfill His purposes and to bring glory to Him.
- c. Here's the best part... this is not some kind of shakedown to force anyone to pay up or else... it is using our gifts for God joyfully... because we know that our response will bring about real change in the kingdom!
 - i. When I know that my gifts are changing the hearts of people, sharing the love of Christ, and bringing about eternal rewards... I am joyful in sharing what I have.
 - ii. Not only that, but it's not just giving financially that matters, because God has gifted us with time, experience, wisdom, talents, spiritual gifts, and much more.
 - 1. Essentially this is what God has produced in us... and with all this produce... we are able to sow generously with good works and sharing the Gospel.
 - 2. The return on this sowing generously is not a giant payday in the stock market or the lottery... but God reaps the harvest of

people who end up glorifying Him in the end... as His kingdom grows and grows through our joyous work.

3. God can take little old you, or little old me, and produce a huge harvest out of our gifts... gifts He gave us in the first place!

IV. **The call of God and our response** to Him started in the very beginning.

a. To Adam and Eve as they rebelled and ate the forbidden fruit, God sought them out in love, "Where are you?"

i. To Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses... to the Prophets of old and all the people in the pages of Scripture, God called them and loved them first.

b. God's steadfast love continued to reach out despite the sin and violence that was thrown back at Him... despite the world becoming more important to His people... the very One who created it.

i. All along He was planning the great day of redemption, that would require His own Son's death to seal the victory for us all...

ii. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ reversed the curse from Adam and Eve, and as we believe in Him, we are free.

iii. Free to love like Him... to live for Him... free to use His gifts without fear or worry... free in Christ to see the reign of God among us now.

1. When God says we can use His gifts generously to reap a great harvest – it means that all He gives us (in fact, our whole lives) can be used to share the reign of God, the kingdom in this very time and place.

V. **Nothing feels better than watching God at work.**

a. How many times did Ascension use its gifts generously to show that Jesus lives and makes a difference in the present time?

i. When I remember our soccer clinic and sharing the story of salvation with those kids – 400-500 per summer – who all received a Bible... as I watched the high school aged coaches and their college aged peers working together in service to God... and the thousands upon thousands of lives that were touched by God's love – I am full of joy.

ii. When I think of the consistent table of presence that the Outreach Board has at the Rockwood Market and other venues as they hand out story of salvation bracelets and Bibles... and when they reach out to the families for a trunk or treat event... or hand out hot chocolate and donuts on Christmas Eve... all sharing Christ's love and the gift of eternal life with people who might not know Him – I am full of joy.

iii. When I see 60 Spanish speaking people at the baptisms of Nuriel and Janice... and I remember the last 25 years of outreach to that community... when I see the children who are now in their 20's and have faith in our Lord Jesus – I am bursting with joy.

b. You see, our response to God's call is to sow generously... and He, in all His glory and love for us, will reap a harvest that will be for an eternity.

- c. How can we ever thank our God enough? How can we respond in thanksgiving and joy enough?
- d. God doesn't need your money or your time or your talents... He wants all of you... because He loves you beyond your understanding... and He knows that sowing His gifts will reap unimaginable joy. Amen.

¹ <https://religionnews.com/2025/09/03/new-study-shows-gen-z-and-millennials-are-now-the-most-regular-churchgoers/>

² Sources: Circana Bookscan; Sensortower; Music Insights at Luminare