

Ecclesiastes 3 Verse 1 Planting and Harvesting

I awoke one morning with the thoughts of sowing seed on my mind and a hymn number that I was calling out to the people, 540 in the Lloyd Hymnal.

540 C. M. *The end of the year.* Sing to the tune "Florence" 121 in the Sacred Harp

1 *HOW swiftly time's revolving wheels Have passed another year! How short is life! my spirit feels, This truth with sacred fear.* Do you feel like time is just flying by? I certainly do.

2 *Think, O my soul, another year Of thy short life is past; I cannot long continue here, And this may be the last.* Do you see your life's end drawing near with haste? I certainly do.

3 *Much of my precious time is gone Ne'er to return again; How swift my passing moments run, Of those which yet remain!* I realize each day now, how precious time is, and how I have squandered much of it away in unprofitable works of fleshly satisfaction.

4 *My soul awake, with serious care, Thy true condition learn; What are thy hopes, how sure, how fair, And what thy chief concern?* We understand that only God can awaken dead souls to newness of life. However, if you have been awakened, then you can see your true condition, which is that your eternal salvation is completely dependent upon God and the finished work of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. Do you live with the expectation, that when your time on earth is completed, you will be carried to heaven and immortal glory? Is that your hope? Is it a chief concern to you? We are given some light into this thought in: ***Mt 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

5 *Here a new scene of life begins; O seek afresh for heaven! Pray for the pardon of thy sins In Christ so freely given.* Do you realize that the manifestation of your newness of life is to be in the here and now? Why do you think that Christ established the Church of Salvation by Grace on the earth?

6 *Gladly devote thyself to God, And on his grace depend; With zeal pursue the heavenly road, Nor doubt a happy end.* Joining the church is the expression of devoting thyself to God, depending on His grace. Having entered into the rest provided for us here; we can seek to walk in newness of life demonstrating the presence of the Holy Ghost in our lives. We can live this new, eternal, life never doubting the finished work of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

My thoughts were of sowing seed and how different it is now; in comparison to how it used to be done. When I was young, our daddy would plow and prepare the garden for planting, and then we would usually plant the garden by hand. Many small gardens are still planted this way, and some are even prepared by hand work and not mechanical means. Today, there are great fields that are planted by machinery that covers many rows at one time; in comparison to when I was small and we planted one or two rows at the time. However, there are still some things that cannot be planted mechanically; they must be planted by hand. Onions are one thing that is planted in fields this way.

As with all planting and harvesting; there is a time to plant and a time to harvest as described in: ***Ec 3:1 To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;*** The hymn above reminds us of being born and the time to die.

I want to address this morning the thought of; a time to plant and a time to harvest; comparing how we used to plant and harvest to the way it is accomplished today; and then, compare that to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Before my lifetime, there used to be traveling preachers; who went about our nation preaching, and teaching, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and establishing churches. This reminds me of the planting we did in the garden; planting one seed at a time. We can compare; planting one seed or plant at a time, to one on one personal evangelism and get the picture I wish you to see.

Today, with the development of modern machinery, planting is done in very differently to planting gardens by hand. Today, the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ; instead of itinerant

preachers (itinerant means: to go from place to place, especially in a regular circuit, as a preacher or judge.) we have the means of radio, TV, and internet through which the Gospel of Christ can be shared around the whole world. The means of planting is vastly different today than it used to be.

This then brings us to the thought of the increase and harvest of that which is planted. When I was young and there was no irrigation, you realized always how dependent you were upon God for the increase and the harvest. If there was no rain then there would be no increase or harvest. The preaching of the Gospel of Christ is the same way today, even if the means of reaching people has changed vastly, the increase, of the number of God's people upon the earth, is still dependent upon God giving the increase. Remember these scriptures in: **1Co 3:6-7; 6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.** The glory, of a sinner saved by grace, goes to God and not to man.

Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Again we see, without God there is no increase.

From these scriptures; there is no doubt that it doesn't matter who the preacher is, or how the preaching goes forth to the world, it is only by the action of God making the work fruitful, that there is any increase in the Church of Salvation by Grace. Just because we have all these modern conveniences and technology doesn't make or increase the church on earth in and of itself. It still takes the power of God, to make the Word of God be effectual in the heart and soul of mankind, to bring forth salvation.

Consider the words of our Saviour in: **Joh 4:35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.** Jesus Christ said this when he was here incarnate; that the fields were white to harvest. A good visual picture for me is to see a field of cotton that is white and the vegetation is shedding off so that we see a picture of a white field when the field is ready to harvest.

We see another picture of this in scripture in: **Re 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.** There is always the planting of seed before there is a harvest. That is the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ being preached in the world today. Whether the sowing, planting, of seed is accomplished by one on one means, or through broadcasting and mechanical means, the increase is still by the blessing of God, and God alone.

What we don't know, and what the song is alluding to, is the time of the final harvest. What we do know is; it is about 2,000 years closer than when Jesus said; "**Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.**" Scripture teaches us this world is the field; see Matthew 13:38. While time exists is the time to plant. When time shall end; the final harvest will be seen. **Re 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.**

Do you see and understand the urgency that the hymn is expressing? By joining the church, we manifest our new birth. By living in accordance to God's Word of Truth, we sow seeds of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this world, the field. God, in his own time and way, will give the increase; for his word will not return unto him void as seen in: **Isa 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**

Returning to the last phrase of the hymn, "Nor doubt a happy end." we can surely trust in the work of eternal salvation, which has been accomplished by Jesus Christ on our behalf. After all, the

new life given us is eternal life. Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Oh! Sing of His Mighty Love! *Hymn 49 in the Old School Hymnal.*

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