

“THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

November 5, 2017, 10:30AM

Scripture Texts: Mark 4:26-29; Galatians 6:7-10

Introduction.

Today is our annual Harvest Dinner. It's a wonderful reminder of harvest feasts when friends and family and neighbors would gather to celebrate another year of God's goodness and bounty. It's a reminder of one of the infallible principles of life, you reap what you sow.

Last week we considered the Butterfly Effect, the small influences that added together shape our lives today. This morning we consider the sowing and reaping that have influenced our lives and the lives of those we are influencing.

Sowing and reaping applies to our intentional investing in the lives of others, whether children, grandchildren, relatives, friends, neighbors, classmates, co-workers, colleagues.

I saw an incredible picture of this last Monday night when I met with Ruth Bajame and her kids and their spouses to talk about Roger. The message that came through the clearest and loudest was that Roger was one of the most intentionally influential people they knew.

He intentionally invested in his kid's lives, he poured himself into them, taught them, trained them, corrected them, helped them, pushed and challenged them, encouraged them. He taught them about life, how to solve problems, how deal with tough situations, how to deal with mistakes and failures, how to take responsibility, how to care about others.

Roger loved his kids and they knew it and they learned about God and God's grace from him. They learned from his example of leading his family to worship and honoring the Sabbath.

I want to challenge us about how God wants to use us as influencers in the lives of our family and those around us.

Time magazine likes to do lists of influences, every year they devote an issue to the 100 most influential people in the world. They have also made a list of 15 most influential internet websites in our lives and in our kid's lives. It's scary to see how many God-denying and godless influencers there are in our lives and in our kids world.

Parents are God's number one hand-chosen instrument He wants to use to shape the eternal souls of our kids for Jesus Christ. The good news is God never calls us to a task that He doesn't equip us for and give us what we need to do it. And one of the tools is understanding the life principle of sowing and reaping.

From our texts we can glean several spiritual truths and applications.

You reap what you sow.

The principle is obvious if you sow corn you get corn, yet many people don't live by it. They are lazy but hope for good results; they don't study but hope for a good test score; they do the same thing over and over and expect different results. The sow wild oats and hope for nothing, or they sow nothing and hope for something. They invest nothing in their marriage or family and somehow expect everything to be great.

Don't deceive yourself, God is not mocked, if you are sowing disobedience, if you are sowing ungodliness, if you are sowing sin, you will not reap blessings or good results. Sooner or later in life you sit down to a harvest dinner of bad results and consequences.

Parents have no choice but to sow, to be an influence, so all that remains is what kind of seed we will sow, and the kind of seed will determine the harvest. Just as we always sow, also there is always a harvest.

Children are a reflection of their parents and what their parents teach by words and actions.

Children Learn What They Live

By Dorothy Law Nolte, Ph.D.

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.

If you sow the truth of the Word of God in the hearts and lives of others, the Word of God will grow and yield a harvest. Sow in faith and faithfulness.

Those who sow in the Spirit are those who rely on the Spirit, depend on the Spirit, call on the Spirit daily and ask for the Spirit's wisdom and guidance and help.

You reap after you sow.

This principle stands against our culture of instant gratification. We want quick results. Instant tea, instant oatmeal, quick rice, microwave meals.

The younger generation expects to have all the blessings and benefits of their parents right away. They want to start where the parents left off, and not work their way up to that level. They don't want to have to wait.

In the spiritual realm this produces a faith without roots. It sprouts up quickly but the first sign of trouble causes it to wither.

Sowing and reaping are two different seasons. There is a season for sowing and a season for reaping. You can't put the cart before the horse. Parenting is like farming, it isn't an event, it is a long slow process.

There is a time lapse between sowing and reaping. Some people are following a bad path and they think they are getting away with it since nothing bad is happening. Some folks can go a long time in the wrong direction, but eventually their sins will find them out, and certainly in the life to come.

God is not mocked, you can't turn up your nose at God or thumb your nose at God and get away with it, even if nothing seems to happen for a while.

In our souls, in our spiritual growth we crawl before we walk, and walk before we run. Do not despise small beginnings. Grace must have a beginning. Nature is never in a hurry. The mightiest oak was once an acorn. The Spirit isn't in a hurry either. The strongest, most mature Christian was once a babe in Christ.

Mark 4:28 First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

The growth is slow, the progress requires much patience, don't give up the influencing when it seems like nothing is happening.

You reap more than you sow.

If farming was a one to one ratio, plant one seed, get one seed back, there wouldn't be much profit in it. If he only got back what he put in the ground, farming would be utter futility.

You sow one kernel of corn and you get an ear with hundreds of seed kernels. Phama planted a couple dozen sunflower seeds and ended up with thousands and thousands of sunflower seeds. The squirrels and birds thought they had died and gone to heaven.

This works both directions, positively and negatively. King David sowed some bad seed and the bad that flowed out of it was terrible and long lasting.

When we sow sin and evil, we get back much more than we bargained for.

Hosea 8:7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.

When it comes to our money this is a hard concept for us to grasp. We are always anxious for our own needs and our own future. We feel that whatever we give is lost to us. If we could only become convinced that our giving prepares for us an even greater harvest.

Can we really out give God? No. God is generous, He is the great multiplier. He graciously gives more back than we give out, as Scripture says, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.

Farmers cheerfully and joyfully sow their seed, burying it in the ground, looking forward to a greater harvest. What we sow on earth lays up great treasures in heaven. By God's generous grace our small efforts can reap huge dividends or rewards.

We Reap the Full Harvest of the Good Only if We Persevere.

I Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Have you ever noticed that weeds need absolutely no attention or effort on our part to grow. They grow all by themselves. But good seed requires effort, energy, perseverance. Good seed has to be cultivated, nurtured, fertilized, tended to. Therefore don't grow weary and give up.

In the flesh we grow impatient, we get tired, we think the effort isn't worth it any more. Maybe we feel the needs are so great and often overwhelming. The enemy of our souls assaults us and deceives us and seeks to hinder every good thing to try to do.

Perseverance requires vigilance. We heard last Sunday evening at the Reformation Service, Dr. Weima preaching about the ongoing battle we are in against evil and the evil one. We need the armor of God to stand and fight. We need the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

Ever since Adam and Eve Satan has not stopped his relentless attack to sow weeds, to sow destruction, to sow crop failure, to overcome good influences with bad ones. Every opportunity for good will be met with opposition.

Persist, plod along, slow and steady wins the race, resist giving up and quitting. In due season ... This is a promise, hope and trust in it. The day of harvest is coming.

Be prepared for not seeing all the results of your labor and influence in this life. My mother's prayers for my brother were answered after she died. Don't grow weary, don't give up.

Most of the Reformers didn't see the full fruit of their labors.

We Can't do Anything About Last Year's Harvest, But We Can About This Year's

Philippians 3:13 Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Last year's seed is in the ground and there is nothing you can do about it, except confess it and repent of it and receive God's forgiveness. Don't let the past rob you of your present or your future. Don't stay in bondage. Turn to God and His grace and power.

If there was failure and fruitlessness, learn from it and grow from it. Wallowing in self-pity will not be fruitful, but a waste of time that will hinder this year's sowing.

The Gospel is about giving us a future and a hope. Ask for God's grace for this year, for a new season of planting.

The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time to plant a tree is today.

II Corinthians 6:2 Now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Now is the time to plant, now is the time to sow more seed, now is the time to exercise godly influence. The days are evil, we need godly seed from godly parents who are depending on and trusting in God more and more.

Our task is to be faithful and trust God with the success and results. God takes our feeble efforts and our failures and gives grace. We are not the ones in the end who change hearts, so we sow and pray, we teach and we pray, we correct and discipline and we pray. Only God can give an increase.

Implications and application.

Being a parent is about the hardest job there is and the one with the most at stake. God has singled you out to be the instrument He most wants to use to shape the eternal soul of this specific little person. It is a high and holy and awesome calling and one that makes us shake in our boots.

The good news we have to remind ourselves of is that God never calls us to do something without giving us what we need to do it. He promises us grace. He doesn't call us because we are able, He calls us because He is able and wants us to depend on Him to do what He calls us to do.

He gives us His Holy Spirit, He gives us His Word and prayer, He gives us His church and fellow believers to walk with us. Give these influencers to your children and others.

God has called parents to be the tool in His hands to create in our kids an awareness of and knowledge of and submission to and love for God. Our kids will not be what God created them to be without this understanding of who God is. The most important thing in the world for our kids to know is the existence, character and purpose of God.

And one of the best tools for showing them this is how the grace and love of God has rescued us and redeemed us from our bondage and slavery to sin.

God has already revealed Himself to you and loved you and saved you so that you can introduce His glory and grace to your children and grandchildren and others.

Don't let a day pass without pointing out some aspect of God's character or nature in the world around them, His power, presence, love, mercy, forgiveness.

God is true to Himself, He is true to His Word, He will keep His promise that if we sow to the spirit we will reap a great harvest, a harvest of eternal life.

Announcements:

Chris Roos
Lori; Phama;

Harvest dinner

Call to Worship:

See bulletin

God's Greeting:

Deuteronomy 4:39 Know this day and lay it to your heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

Call to Confession:

See bulletin

Prayer of Confession:

We confess that we have thought you to be a little God, and the people of the land to be like giants. We have feared men, rather than God. We have held up and revered people at our jobs, at our gyms, even in our own homes and in this church, to give us praise and fill us with the love that only you can provide.

Father, we admit we have too often set our affections on the things of this world. We have prized possessions, and praised people, we've been captivated by books, and entertained by screens, and we have thought you, the God of the universe—who gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not exist—to be boring.

Oh, how sick our souls are! But we have refused to come to Christ to be healed. Our souls thirst for you. But we have refused to come to Christ, the fountain of living waters, that we might drink and be satisfied. Father, forgive us for belittling the kindness and mercy of our Savior, for being hesitant to come to him when he is ever so able and willing to forgive.

Come Holy Spirit. Lead us in repentance. Prepare our hearts and lives to receive the fullness of your Spirit, for your glory, for your namesake, that we might know you and love you and obey you and be your bold witnesses and turn the world upside down for your sake.

Assurance of Pardon:

See bulletin

Benediction:

Philippians 4:19 My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **20** To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.