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The Crazy Farmer and the Plentiful Harvest

Matthew 9:27-38

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Scripture tells you to submit to authority, so . . .

1. Stand up, close your eyes, and keep them closed until I say you can open them. Now turn and give a high five to your neighbor. If you miss, try harder. Some of you may be injured, some mad . . . you feel harassed and helpless.
2. Now, open your eyes. I want you to tell the person next to you about your experience. Tell them, but you can't speak. You can't use words. OK, you may sit down. Do you feel harassed and helpless?

Matthew 9:27:

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

The New Testament talks a lot about blindness, as if our real problem is a type of blindness.

The scribes, Pharisees, and religious leaders thought our problem as people is a failure to *do* the law,

but maybe we can't even *see* the law.

They thought our problem is that we can't *do* the good,

but perhaps we can't even *see* the good.

Jesus says, "Love your neighbor," and we ask, "Who's my neighbor?" Perhaps we can't even *see* our neighbor. I say, "High five your neighbor," and you can't even *see* your neighbor. And the harder you try, the more you hurt him and harass him.

Anthony DeMello wrote:

A man born blind comes to me and asks, "What is this thing called green?" How does one describe the color green to someone who was born blind? One uses analogies. So I say, "The color green is something like soft music." "Oh," he says, "like soft music."

“Yes,” I say, “soothing and soft music.” So a second blind man comes to me and asks, “What is the color green?” I tell him it’s something like soft satin, very soft and soothing to the touch.

So the next day I notice that the two blind men are bashing each other over the head with bottles. One is saying, “It’s soft like music”; the other is saying, “It’s soft like satin.” And on it goes. Neither of them knows what they’re talking about, because if they did, they’d shut up. It’s as bad as that. It’s even worse, because one day, say, you give sight to this blind man, and he’s sitting there in the garden and he’s looking all around him, and you say to him, “Well, now you know what the color green is.” And he answers, “That’s true. I heard some of it this morning!”

The fact is that you’re surrounded by God and you don’t see God, because you “know” about God. The final barrier to vision of God is your God concept. You miss God because you think you know. That’s the terrible thing about religion. That’s what the gospels were saying, that religious people “knew,” so they got rid of Jesus.

The religious folks’ concept of Christ crucified the real Christ.

Did you notice Jesus “sternly warned” these two blind guys to keep their mouths shut? In the gospels, it seems like Jesus tells folks to shut up more than speak up—at least the religious ones. Maybe the blind men see, but they don’t *really* see.

Did you notice they called Jesus the “Son of David”? That was the popular term for the Messiah—the One who would come to deliver Israel from the Romans, like David (a physical deliverance). Son of David is what the crowds call Jesus on Palm Sunday, five days before they crucify Him for not being the Messiah they thought He should be. They thought they knew the good, and they couldn’t even see the good.

Our false concepts of Jesus still crucify the real Jesus. If Jesus walked through our churches in American today, I wonder if He’d spend more time telling us to speak up or shut up. “Stop talking *about* me. You have not yet *seen* me.” The two blind men see Jesus, but they don’t yet see Jesus truly. They’re still blind.

To see is to see light. All we really see is light, reflecting off different objects in our world. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” If we don’t see Jesus, we really can’t see anything truly. These two men don’t see Jesus and so can’t speak Jesus. They are still blind and therefore mute.

Verse 32:

As they were going away, behold, a dumb [mute] demoniac was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, “Never was anything like this seen in Israel.” But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.”

The Pharisees saw but didn’t see; they were blind.

They spoke but didn't speak; they were mute.

The Pharisees could speak the word "Jesus,"
but they couldn't speak Word, which is Jesus.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" His name is Jesus.

Years ago I was tucking my son into bed. We'd said prayers, and then he said to me, "Daddy, I know what the most important thing is in the world." And I said, "What is that?" He said, "The alphabet!" I held back my laughter.

Years later I told a friend on the prophetic team, and she said, "He was right." She told me of a vision she had had, and then I realized the alphabet is Logos—Meaning—Word—Jesus. And Jesus *is* the most important thing in the world. Without Him you may speak, but it has no meaning. You may speak, but you're not speaking truly.

Jesus is the Light, and Jesus is the Word, so without Him you are utterly alone. In fact, there may be a kingdom of light all around you. There may be a kingdom of logos (meaning and word) all around you, but without Jesus, you couldn't see it or speak to it. You could be utterly cut off from it and alone. I believe that is called *Hell*.

Verse 35:

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom . . .

. . . the Good News of the kingdom—that it is at hand . . .

. . . and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus said that their leaders were "blind guides."

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

"The harvest is plentiful." What a thoroughly bizarre thing to say! (That just hit me this week.) He didn't say the harvest *will be* plentiful; He said, "The harvest *is* plentiful." In John 4, He says, "Look! The fields are already white for harvest." The disciples must be thinking, "What the rip are you talking about? I don't see any harvest." Think about that.

This is the start of His ministry. All we've really seen is a leper, a Roman centurion, a mother-in-law, a couple of demoniacs living in a cave on the other side of the sea, a guilty paralytic, tax

collectors and sinners, some stupid disciples, an unclean women with an unstoppable menstrual flow, two misguided blind men, and a mute demoniac. And Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful.”

More than that, Israel was now an occupied and oppressed people group. God had built a great nation of them under King David, but now Roman crosses lined the roads into the city of David. Thousands of Jews were crucified by the Romans. Soon Jerusalem would be literally plowed into the ground by the Romans, and Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful.”

Why would a Son of David say that?
Why would a Son of God say that?

Jesus knows these people will crucify Him. Thousands will follow for a while, but none will truly see Him or speak Him until after He’s killed. He says, “This generation is an evil and adulterous generation.” He teaches that His hometown Capernaum is more corrupt than Sodom. And He says, “The harvest *is* plentiful,” not *will be* plentiful. The harvest . . . I guess we don’t see it . . . or Jesus is crazy.

“The harvest is plentiful.”

When I was a kid, we had a garden. My father did most of the work breaking soil, spreading manure, tending, and watering. All of that was a real pain and took a long time. We kids didn’t want anything to do with it. But we fought over who got to labor in the harvest. We fought over who got to pick the tomatoes or cucumbers or green beans.

So when Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful,” that’s good news. But it’s also *shocking* news, because we didn’t know anybody was still growing a garden! We thought we no longer lived in a garden. Long ago we were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, but maybe there’s an even bigger garden than that garden.

Over the centuries, God referred to Israel as His vineyard. But now the state of Israel lay in ruins. Maybe there’s a bigger vineyard. Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful,” as if we lived in some garden or vineyard or field, and were part of that field.

We can no longer work the Garden of Eden,
but maybe we’re being worked in a bigger garden.
We can no longer dress the vines in Israel,
but maybe we’re being dressed like branches on a vine in a bigger Israel.

- So Jesus looks around at lepers, Roman centurions, broken families, tax collectors, sinners, corrupt Pharisees, unclean menstrual flows, blindness, and demonic oppression . . .
- He looks around at the broken nation of Israel: chaos and sin . . .
- He looks at Roman crosses lining the roads to the city of David . . .

- He looks at all this *crap* and says, “The harvest is plentiful.”

What harvest? We don’t see fruit; only chaos and *crap*.

Remember the story Jesus told about the fig tree with no fruit? The servant says, “Let’s break up the soil and throw some ‘koprion’ on it”—some *crap—dung it*, in the King James Version, “and maybe then it will bear fruit.” Do you ever feel broken and dunged on?

Well, Jesus looks around at all this chaos and dung and says, “The harvest is plentiful,” as if all has gone according to plan, and He sees it.

So what’s the harvest?
 Who’s growing it?
 Why can’t we see it?
 What’s the harvest?
 What’s the fruit?

In the last two chapters, Jesus has seen something that the others didn’t seem to see or value. And Jesus has desired something others thought was an illusion. He has seen *faith* and desired *mercy*.

Over and over He’s seen faith and then healed, as if to say, “OK, I got what I wanted. Now, sure—rise, speak, see, whatever. Your faith has made you well.”

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” So if you always saw everything, you couldn’t have faith in anything. Yet if you were blind and now see, perhaps you could have faith in what you see, because you *grew* faith while you were blind. Perhaps faith and mercy are grown here in this world and harvested as treasure for all eternity.

Jesus says, “Look! The harvest is plentiful.” He’s seen faith and desires mercy.

Faith.

In a sense, every person has faith. This whole debate about keeping faith out of government is philosophically absurd. Everyone has faith in something or someone, be it themselves, the Constitution, the Democratic party or the Republican party, the Bible or Jesus. My atheistic geology professors at CU had boatloads of faith in their theories. But they couldn’t see or prove one of their theories. They had *faith*.

God designed this world so that you must have faith. To be human is to have faith, and any philosopher knows that. The question is, “Where do you put the faith you have?”

When all the other things that we put our faith in (governments, theories, systems, religions, flesh, self) fail, we’re ripe for putting our faith in Jesus. But, you see, faith grows in the chaos and dung over a long time. Soil is broken and dung mixed in, and the fruit grows by forces beyond you. In a moment, a person may pick it and put it in a basket, but they didn’t make it.

Remember when Paul went to Athens and saw all the idols? He complimented the Athenians saying, “I can see you are very religious, but I saw a statue to the unknown God. I’m here to tell you about Him. Put your religion, put your faith, in the right basket. His name is Jesus.” Paul knew God had been working for thousands of years in Athens, preparing for the moment he rode into town.

Jesus knew His Father had been working from the point of creation, preparing for the moment . . .

- . . . the leper said, “You can make me clean”
- . . . the centurion said, “Master, only say the word”
- . . . Matthew said, “Come to my house”
- . . . the woman touched the hem of His garment
- . . . the blind man said, “You can make me see”
- . . . His disciples cried out on that chaotic sea, “Save, Lord, we are perishing!”

His Father had been working this field all along.

I heard somewhere that when Anne Sullivan was finally able to tell Helen Keller the story of Jesus, Helen Keller responded, “Oh, that’s who I worship.” Faith grew in her blindness and muteness. Anne Sullivan didn’t make that fruit, but she got to hold the basket when it was harvested.

My friends, the harvest is plentiful. I believe that theologically it has been plentiful for 2000 years, but especially today. Just go to the movies and talk to people. There’s faith all over. It just needs to be placed in the right basket. You can say, “Wow, that Keanu Reeves guy—Neo—was amazing! You like him? He’s kinda like Jesus, you know.”

Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful.” Jesus saw faith, and He said, “God desires mercy.”

Mercy.

Faith is an amazing harvest, but mercy will take your breath away. I believe mercy is how faith is harvested. It’s mercy that wins our faith. We are saved “by grace through faith.” It’s “kindness that leads to repentance.”

In Matthew 3 we read, “Bear fruit that befits repentance.”

- You can’t repent unless there’s something to repent of.
- You can’t have mercy unless there is a law that’s been broken.
- You can’t forgive unless there’s a debt to forgive.
- You can’t see grace unless there’s been a sin.

So Paul wrote, “Where sin increased grace abounded all the more.” The harvest of mercy was plentiful.

Jesus just quoted Hosea saying, “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy—grace, forgiveness, khehsed, covenant love—not sacrifice.’” That’s fascinating, for mercy *is* a sacrifice.

- To forgive a debt, someone sacrifices the debt.
- To extend grace, someone suffers an offense.
- To show mercy, someone absorbs vengeance.

God desired mercy, so in Jesus He says, “I’ll be the sacrifice, and I’ll give you my mercy. You can give it back to me in others.”

Perhaps sin is mercy before it’s been harvested, crushed, and turned to wine by Jesus. “Fruit that befits repentance” is at least confessed sin. Forgiven sin is mercy. “Shall we sin that grace may abound?” No way! We’ve already sinned long ago in a garden. But “at the right time [when our sins had become ripe], Christ died for the ungodly.” For God is harvesting mercy in this fallen world. God is harvesting faith and mercy, and the “harvest is plentiful.” But if we don’t see the harvest, we can’t speak to the harvest, we can’t work the harvest. We’ll only harass the sheep like blind men swinging sickles or swords.

The Word is a sword.

Brennan Manning tells about meeting a twenty-one-year-old woman in the French Quarter in New Orleans. She asked for some money for a mission. When he asked what her mission was, she responded, “The Unification Church.” She was a Moonie, that is, a pagan, lost, confused, harassed, brainwashed, and bewildered. Brennan found out her name and said, “Susan, I admire your integrity and fidelity to your conscience. You’re doing what you believe in. You’re a challenge to anyone who claims the name Christian.”

Rosalyn (Brennan’s wife) hugged her. “Are you Christians?” the girl asked. Rosalyn said, “Yes.” The girl lowered her head and started to weep. She said, “I’ve been here eight days. You’re the first Christians who have ever been nice to me. The others have either looked at me with contempt or screamed and told me that I was possessed by a demon. One woman hit me with her Bible.” The Bible is a sword. But I don’t think she was reaping. She was trampling.

You know, if we don’t know what fruit God is growing, if we can’t see the harvest and can’t speak to the harvest, then we’ll trample the vineyard—trample the ripened wheat. And we’ll even hate the tree—the fruit tree.

You know, the cross is a tree—the *tree*—the “skulon.” There has never been a more fruitful tree. Yet if you’d been standing there that day, all you probably would have seen was chaos and dung, even while God was harvesting an entire new creation.

In Revelation 14, right after John sees all sorts of chaos and dung, he sees one like a Son of man coming on the clouds of Heaven, and He reaps the harvest of the earth. The grim reaper is not

grim. It's Jesus. And He reaps a grain harvest. From grain we make bread. Jesus took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body for you."

Paul writes, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." And Jesus *is* the Word of God. Faith is something God grows. And faith in Jesus *is* Jesus. Like Augustine said, "Your faith in Christ is Christ Himself in your heart."

The fruit of the Spirit
is the fruit of faith in Christ
and the fruit of Christ.

You believe His Word
and ingest His Word
and become His Body
and do His deeds.

God is harvesting faith in Christ in you.
Christ is harvesting Christ in you—
His own body and blood.

Next in Revelation 14, John sees another harvest, the grape harvest. These grapes are placed in the great winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, where they are trodden outside the city of Jerusalem. The wine forms a river of blood that fills all Israel to the depth of a horse's bridle. This harvest is plentiful, wine that is blood, blood that is wine.

Confessed sin is fruit that befits repentance, and Jesus causes us to confess. "Apart from me you can do nothing. I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in me that you may bear much fruit." Perhaps "abide" that you may confess much sin—much self—much "flesh."

Jesus takes our sin. He bears it to a cross outside Jerusalem. I believe His cross is the winepress. There He is crushed by the fury of the wrath of God. His blood is our wine—the new wine—mercy, grace, khehsed, covenant love. "We love because He first loved us." It's His mercy—His life—in us. And He took a cup saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

In this world, God is harvesting faith and mercy—
that is, bread and wine
that is, body broken and blood shed.

That is, God is harvesting Jesus, the "perfect image of the invisible God." God is making man in His image. Jesus is the perfect man—Ultimate Adam. We are His Body and His Bride.

What is the harvest? *Christ*
Who is the harvester? *Christ*
Who am I? I don't know.

But my “life is hid with Christ in God,” and it’s “no longer I who live but Christ in me.”
And the harvest is plentiful.

But now, how can I work the harvest if I can’t see the harvest? And if I don’t see the harvest, I can’t speak to the harvest.

I can’t see unless Jesus makes me see. (He is the Light.)

I can’t speak unless Jesus makes me speak. (He is the Word.)

I can’t live unless I die and live in Him. Then I see Jesus and speak Jesus. I’m the body of Jesus harvesting Jesus, body broken and blood shed.

So Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” He does not say, “Get out there and get to harvesting!” He knows we’re blind and mute, and we’ll trample the harvest. He says, “Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” Pray because you must *be* the Body of Christ to harvest the Body of Christ.

Late one night in Grass Valley, California, Father O’Malley was writing his sermon by candlelight. A terrible storm had knocked out the electricity but not the phone lines. The phone rang. It was the hospital in Auburn. They wanted him to drive through the storm and give an old patient with a failing liver his last rights. Father O’Malley did.

It was about 3:30 a.m. when Father O’Malley met Tom in the hospital. The staff didn’t know Tom’s whole name. They had been treating him off and on for a while, but he always paid in cash. He lived alone up in the woods where he’d been drinking himself to death for years. He was mean and rude.

After Father O’Malley said the prayers of the last rite, he asked, “Would you like to make your confession?” Tom snapped, “Absolutely not.” But O’Malley stayed and talked to the old man.

They talked for several hours. Several times O’Malley said, “Would you like to make a confession?” Finally Tom said, “Father, when I was young, I did something so bad I’ve never told anyone. It was so bad that I haven’t spent a single day since without thinking about it and reliving the horror.” (You see, the old man believed his life was a waste and he couldn’t be forgiven.)

As the sun was rising, Tom finally confessed his sin. He said, “I worked as a switchman on the railroad. Thirty-two years two months and eleven days ago, I was working in Bakersfield on a night like tonight (two days before Christmas). I was drunk when I went to push the switch for the 8:30 freight. I pushed it the wrong way. At 45 miles per hour, that freight train slammed into a passenger car at the next crossing and killed a young man, his wife, and their two daughters.

There was a long moment of silence. Father O’Malley gently placed his hand on Tom’s shoulder and said, “If I can forgive you, God can forgive you. Because in that car were my mother, my father, and my two older sisters.”

I believe that at that moment the Harvester swung His sickle. Father O'Malley saw Jesus, spoke Jesus, harvested Jesus; Father O'Malley was body broken and blood shed, the glory of God, and the love of God poured out. You see, Father O'Malley couldn't do a thing like that; only Jesus, fully God and fully man.

“Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest
to send out laborers into his harvest.”

So on the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Take and eat of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper He took the cup and said, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.”

If you want Jesus, we invite you to the table for communion. As you come forward, worship so that you may see the harvest and then speak to the harvest. Pray the Lord of the harvest sends workers into His harvest.

If you're saying, “Peter, you're doing it again! What's the harvest? Give me a word . . . nail it down . . . tell me what I should do . . .” — OK, here's the word: *Jesus*. And we already nailed Him down. We *did* do something. So bear the fruit that befits repentance. Amen.

If you've never put your faith in Jesus the Christ, do it right now. You only need faith like a grain of mustard seed. You can say, “I believe; help my unbelief.” Pray this in your heart:

“Lord Jesus, I give you my faith.” I believe He says, “Thank you.” And that's grace. Now I believe He says, “That means you're going to try to trust me. So this is what I want from you. I want you to give me your sins. I want you to confess to me your arrogance, pride, self-righteousness, flesh . . . I want you to confess to me your sin.” So say this as well, “Jesus, I give you my sin.” And He says, “Thank you. And don't worry. I'll help you have faith. I'll help you confess your sin. I'm good, and I'll give you my life.”

If you just prayed that prayer, I think that's what we mean when we talk about Christians, and that's what you are. You were chosen before the foundation of the world, and God has been orchestrating your life, bringing you to this point where you would give your faith to Him and confess your sins to Him.

“The harvest is plentiful.” What harvest? A whole new creation in Him. “But the laborers are few.” How few? Really just one: Jesus. “Pray that the Lord would send laborers into his harvest.” So this is what He did: He hung on a cross and died and gave you His body to eat and blood to drink, and He says, “Now you are my body. I am the harvester. Remember that, or you'll just trample the wheat. But in me we'll go harvesting.”

This sermon was part of our stewardship campaign. What I do each year is ask, “Lord, what’s coming up in the text that I can preach on giving?” I believe that this morning He arranged it. I believe that your money is really a part of you. That’s what scripture talks about. “Where your treasure is, there is your heart also.” It’s the way our society quantifies your energy. So you can work at General Motors, and you can use your energy in other places in other fields.

I could talk about things we could do with your giving, have charts and numbers, talk about old covenant laws regarding tithing and things like that, but I’m not sure if that would be the harvest. Your harvest is in your family, your neighborhood, your children, and also here. We are called together to be harvesters in his field.

So this is what I’d like you to do in the next two weeks. It’s the “very practical application point.” I would like you to take five minutes each day for the next two weeks—it sounds like not a big deal, but it would be cool if we did it—and think about Lookout Mountain Community Church. Think about: electrical systems in Africa and water systems in the Dominican Republic; things we’re doing through LightHeart Ministries in Brazil, and down in the city through Christ’s Body Ministries and Project Cure. I want you to think about things happening here in the youth and children’s programs, in classes, and in singles groups and small groups. Maybe even most of all think about when we come together in this building, worship, and partake of the body of Christ and blood of Christ. We *are* the Body of Christ.

Pray about all those things, and then pray this: “Lord of the harvest, send laborers into your harvest.” Then when we give, I suspect we’ll give the right amount.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

-Matthew 9:27-31

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

-John 8:12

As they were going away, behold, a dumb demoniac was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

-Matthew 9:32-34

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

-John 1:1-4

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

-Matthew 9:35-38

"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

-John 4:35-38

And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

-Mark 4:26-29

Bear fruit that befits repentance

-Matthew 3:8

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

-Galatians 5:22-24

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

-Philippians 1:9-11

He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*: And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

-Luke 13:6-9

“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

-Matthew 21:43-45

And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

-John 12:23-24

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

-I Corinthians 15:20-23

Likewise, my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.

-Romans 7:4

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

-John 15:5

And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

-Matthew 26:63b-64

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia.

-Revelation 14:12-20

"Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

-Matthew 9:38

Human love constructs its own image of the other person, of what he is and what he should become. It takes the life of the other person into its own hands. Spiritual love recognizes the true image of the other person which he has received from Jesus Christ; the image that Jesus Christ himself embodied and would stamp upon all men. . . . Thus this spiritual love will speak to Christ about a brother more than to a brother about Christ. It knows that the most direct way to others is always through prayer.

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

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