Harvest. Both a joy and a trial! I speak from experience after helping harvest hazelnuts for Childers’ Hazelnut Haven. Having been surprised by the prolific crop and being without harvest equipment we did it the good old fashioned way – we picked them up by hand – approximately 1500 pounds of them. Fortunately there were many helping hands toward the end. But even then we could have used more harvesters.

Apparently that is not a problem of our time only. The song Toni sang suggested that. It said,

“My house is full, but my field is empty
Who will go and work for Me today
It seems my children all want to stay around my table
But no one wants to work in my field
No one wants to work in my field.”

And Jesus said the same thing, as we read in the text: “Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’” Matthew 9:35-38 (NASB).

And, ‘do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’” John 4:35-37 (NASB).

Here are three basic facts about harvest:

I. THERE IS AN ABUNDANT HARVEST TO REAP:
A. “The harvest is plentiful,” and, “fields are white for harvest.”
1. “The states less religious than Oregon, in order, are Washington, Alaska, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. In a 2006 Gallup poll, Oregonians tied for seventh state with the lowest church attendance, at 32%, along with California and Washington. Church attendance ranged from 58% to 24% in the poll.” Wikipedia.
2. Population prediction for USA in 2017 is 328,131,072 with China at 1,372,088,192.
3. Total population is predicted to be 7,407,534,413.
4. But those are just numbers – numbers that represent every individual on earth.

B. Sir Rodney has the correct view:

C. People are not numbers – you and I are not impersonal statistics – the fields of harvest are people who need the Lord–and though there are many lost it is not a game of numbers — it is one person at a time gleaned for Jesus.

D. Lift your eyes and look:
   1. At school.
   2. At work.
   3. At the gym.
   4. At the sports event.
   5. At the neighborhood.
   6. At home.

E. You should be proud of, and motivated by, Brendan Boyer, a teenage boy, who came forward last Sunday asking prayer to help him witness to a friend. That’s where to begin – with a friend or loved one. Let the Lord open other doors for you! “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest. ... lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”

II. THERE IS AN ABSENCE OF HARVESTERS:

A. “The workers are few.”

B. Why? Why do so many stay out of the harvest?
   1. Fear
      a. Of failure.
      b. Of rejection.
      c. Of persecution.
   2. Indifference.
      a. To any but our own problems.
      b. To the souls of others.
      c. To the Christless eternity of the lost.
   3. Ignorance
      a. Of the need
      b. Of responsibility
      c. Of Scriptures.
      d. Of how to share faith.
   a. Too many non-essential activities.
   b. Burning the candle at both ends.
   c. Trying to keep up with the Jones”.
5. Self indulgence.
   a. It isn’t convenient.
   b. I’m not comfortable sharing my faith.
   c. It’s too difficult.
C. We would do well to remember that every heart with Christ is a missionary and every heart without Christ is a mission field.
D. Toni sang,

   “Push away from the table
   Look out through the windowpane
   Just beyond this house of plenty
   Lies a field of golden grain
   And it’s ripened unto harvest
   But the reapers, where are they?
   In the house
   Oh, can’t the children Hear the Father sadly say:
   ‘My house is full, but my field is empty,
   Who will go and work for Me today?
   It seems my children want to stay around my table,
   But no one wants to work in my fields,
   No one wants to work in my fields.’”
E. The story of the hen and her friends is timely. Once upon a time, there was a hen who lived on a farm. She was friends with a dog, a cat, and a duck.

   One day the hen found some wheat grains on the ground. She decided to plant the seeds and she asked her friends, “Who will help me plant the wheat?”

   “Not I,” barked the dog. “Not I,” purred the cat. “Not I,” quacked the duck. “Then I will,” said the hen.

   When the seeds had grown, the hen asked her friends, “Who will help me harvest the wheat?” “Not I,” barked the dog. “Not I,” purred the cat. “Not I,” quacked the duck. “Then I will,” said the hen.

   When all the wheat was winnowed, the hen asked her friends, “Who will help me take the wheat to the mill to be ground into flour?” “Not I,” barked the dog. “Not I,” purred the cat. “Not I,” quacked the duck. “Then I will,” said the hen.

   The tired hen asked her friends, “Who will help me bake the bread?” “Not I,” barked the dog. “Not I,” purred the cat. “Not I,” quacked the duck. “Then I will,” said the hen.
When the bread was finished, the hen asked her friends, “Who will help me eat the bread?” “I will,” barked the dog. “I will,” purred the cat. “I will,” quacked the duck. “No!” said the hen. “I will.”

When the Lord asks, “Who will work in the field for Me?” Quickly respond, “I will!”

### III. THERE IS ABOUNDING JOY IN THE HARVEST:

A. “He who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.”
   1. Jesus said that we who labor share the joy, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” John 15:8-11 (NASB).
   2. And those who “were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.” are overjoyed to be delivered from that dread estate.
   3. Jesus said even heaven joins in because, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10 (NASB).
   4. Paul wrote: “After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you! Yes, you are our pride and joy.” 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 (NLT).

B. There is a great song by Ray Boltz that expresses this joy from the perspective of the saved who are in heaven,

> “Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
> I am a life that was changed.  
> Thank you for giving to the Lord.  
> I am so glad you gave.”

> Then another man stood before you  
> And said, ‘Remember the time  
> A missionary came to your church  
> And his pictures made you cry.  
> You didn’t have much money,  
> But you gave it anyway.  
> Jesus took the gift you gave  
> And that’s why I am here today.’”

C. The proverb reminds us, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls.” Proverbs 11:30 (NASB).
   1. Wise because it is work that lasts for eternity.
   2. Wise because it puts us on God’s side and in His favor.
   3. Wise because it robs hell and populates heaven.
   4. Wise because it produces true joy.
D. Tony Abram said, “The greatest joy next to the joy of your own salvation is winning another soul to Christ. ... I do not believe that a blind eye that is opened, a cancer healed or any other physical healing brings great joy in heaven. I am sure it does not make the Lord sad, but the Bible teaches us that there is GREAT JOY in heaven over one sinner that repents.”

1. We share that heavenly joy when anyone comes to Christ.” Not only in the world to come, but in this very world, working in the harvest and winning souls is a benefit and joy for all. Think of it:
   a. Can you contrast the joyless and godless culture around us with a culture shaped by God?
   b. Can you envision how sublime, safe, serene and satisfying the world would be if everyone lived like Jesus?

2. There is joy when the prodigal comes home – no longer alienated– no more separated – no more lost.

E. When I was in first grade, for some reason, which I can”t remember, my class was taken to the high school. When whatever it was had been completed, high school kids (who looked like giants to me) were rushing around ready to head for home. I was more than bewildered. I had no idea of where I was supposed to be, or what to do. Panic began to choke me. I thought I’d never see home again. I was abandoned and alone in that mob of giants. Boy! Was I relieved when I saw my teen-aged sister Barbara – she knew I was there and she came to take me home! She came to get me and joy replaced horror!

PRAY AND INVITE

We are either a sheaf to be brought in or we are workers bringing them in. Sign on with Jesus today and go where He wants you to go! Jesus is an equal opportunity employer. If you apply, you are hired! When you hear Jesus calling, “Help Wanted!” respond “I’ll help!”