

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, November 16, 2014

Series: From Promise to Provision
Message: Building Our Faith While Awaiting the Harvest
Scripture: Proverbs 20:4, James 5:7-9

- I. We are continuing in the series: “From Promise to Provision,” which explores the process of living in God’s very great and precious promises. (2 Peter 1:4) We must recognize that **seedtime and harvest** is a fundamental precept of God and includes the seasons of sowing and reaping.
 - a. God operates by the following pattern:

Seed (Word of God) – **Planting** (Understanding) – **Nurturing** (Faith) –
Pruning (Growth) – **Fruit** (Harvest) – **Producing more seeds** (Multiplication)

- II. This week, we are exploring how to navigate the seasons between planting and awaiting the harvest.
 - a. It is frustrating when we reach a season of expected harvest and do not find the anticipated fruit.
 - b. God safeguards our seed so that it produces fruit **in season**.
 - i. **Psalms 1:1-3** ¹ Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water, **which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.**
 - c. However, we have the responsibility of continuing in faith during the in-between seasons of growth.
- III. **What are we doing with our present season?**
 - a. **PROVERBS 20:4** *A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.* The **New Living Translation** reads, “Those too lazy to plow in the right season will have no food at the harvest.”
 - b. One commentator remarked that, “a lack of work leads to lack of benefits.” There is a natural discomfort to cultivating and nurturing seeds so that they can mature, but those who are faithful reap the fruit of a sweet harvest.
 - c. Plowing is necessary step in the cycle of producing fruit – if we skip the step then we will affect the quality or even presence of fruit.
 - d. The Hebrew writer encourages us:

Hebrews 10:35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷ For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” ³⁸ and, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” ³⁹ But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

IV. A farmer nurtures and cultivates his soil in every season

- a. James 5:7b *See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains*
 - i. One cannot expect a harvest if they are not patient with the process. While we are enduring, we have to remain confident that our faith is producing the fruit of a rich harvest.
 - ii. *1 Peter 1:6 NLT So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.*
- b. JAMES 5:8 *You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near*
 - i. How can we be patient and stand firm? We must build up our faith in the midst of the seasons between planting and harvesting
 - ii. *Jude 20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.*
 - iii. Faith is our confidence and trust in the character and nature of God that leads us to a place of obedience regardless of the earthly circumstances presented to us.
 - iv. Faith is like a muscle: It can be strengthened or be left to deteriorate. Using your faith in the proper way builds up greater faith.
 1. In the First Century, as the church was strengthened in faith, they grew daily in numbers.
 2. Our constant prayer should be: Lord, Increase our faith!

V. 4 practical ways that we can build our faith

a. 1 – Pray

- i. Biblical faith must be grounded in the faithfulness of God and the sovereignty of His will rather than in the strength of our own desires and expectations.
- ii. Therefore, Biblical faith will thrive on a healthy relationship with God in which we are confident of his character and His thoughts towards us. Hebrews 11:6 declares that “anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Prayer is the best way to spend time with God and to strengthen our relationship. Prayer produces a level of confident trust in God.

b. 2 – Meditate on the Word of God

- i. If the object of our faith is in God – then the strength of our faith is in His promises. Any other foundation is susceptible to the erratic circumstances of life. Biblical faith rests on the question “What has God said?” From this question, we have assurance that God watches over every promise that He makes.
- ii. Meditating on the Word of God focuses our faith on the right expectations. Too often, our faith is grounded on what we desire rather than on God’s will being done. Building our faith on the Word of God allows us to filter between our own desires and God’s will.

c. 3 – Walk out our faith

- i. One individual commented that “faith makes the impossible - possible but it doesn’t eliminate the responsibility of working according to our faith.”
- ii. Walking by faith will always involve a level of risk. We should not be afraid of encountering risk, but instead, evaluate whether our faith is properly grounded in Biblical promises so that it will sustain us until the time of harvest.
- iii. Our Patriarch, Abraham, is a great example of how to walk out our faith: *ROMANS 4:18*
Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

d. 4 – Encourage one another

- i. Biblical faith grows in community. The Hebrew writer instructs us to consider how we can “spur one another on towards love and good deeds, ... encouraging one another—and all the more as [we] see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)
- ii. One popular catch-phrase unfortunately has led many Christians to an unbalanced approach to community. We often refer to the experience of David in 1 Samuel 30:6 and declare that, “Sometimes, you just have to encourage yourself.” While this is true in certain circumstances, God designed us to be mutually edified by one another’s faith. In 1 Samuel 30, David still relied on the Abiathar, the priest, and six hundred men to walk out his faith.
- iii. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“¹THESSALONIANS 8* *But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”*
- iv. In order to produce a harvest, all of us will need strengthening and encouragement in the faith. When we share in biblical community, we are positioned to thrive rather than seeing our fruit wither away by itself.

Group Resource

Let's Talk Notes– Sunday, November 9, 2014

Series: From Promise to Provision
Message: Building Our Faith While Awaiting the Harvest
Scripture: Proverbs 20:4, James 5:7-9

- 1) Review the sermon notes from this past weekend. What one principle or insight resonated with you?
- 2) **Read** the New Living Translation of Proverbs 20:4. Share your reflections on this verse.

“Those too lazy to plow in the right season will have no food at the harvest.”
- 3) The Hebrew Writer declares that God’s righteous ones will *live by faith*. What are the qualities of someone who lives by faith? In verse 36, the writer instructs us that we, “need to persevere so that after [we] have done the will of God, [we] will receive what he has promised.” What is the importance of the sequence outlined: (1) doing the will of God; (2) persevering; then (3) receiving what is promised? How does neglecting the prescribed sequence shortchange the quality or presence of the expected harvest?
- 4) Meditating on the Word of God focuses our faith on the right expectations. Too often, our faith is grounded on what we desire rather than on God’s will being done. What scriptures have grounded you in the seasons of seedtime or harvest?
- 5) The sermon reminded us that walking by faith will always involve a level of risk. Pastor Joseph stated that, “we should not be afraid of encountering risk, but instead, evaluate whether our faith is properly grounded in Biblical promises so that it will sustain us until the time of harvest.” Has the fear of risk affected your faith? How can you overcome that fear so that you can properly walk in faith. **Read** Matthew 14:22-33. How did the fear of risk affect Peter’s faith?
- 6) Pastor Joseph shared the principle that “Biblical faith grows in community!” When we proactively live out our faith in community, we position ourselves to thrive and reach the expected harvest. What are challenges that hinder us from living in community? If you have had an experience in which biblical community helped to build your faith, please share the experience with the group. Has someone ever encouraged you during a difficult season and help build up your faith?
- 7) The prayer of the righteous man or woman is: “Lord, increase our faith!” Share with the group one way in which you would like the Lord to build up your faith and pray for each other’s request.