

The beautiful fall colors display the phenomenal artistry of the God who simply said: "Let it be," and it was. Today's Devotional based on Hosea 10:12 is designed to focus our hearts and minds on sowing and reaping. God bless you as you read, meditate, and pray.

REAPING WHAT WE SOW

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris

Posted on October 22, 2020

"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love."

Hosea 10:12

Alright, all you farmers and gardeners! You understand the inexorable, or changeless, law of sowing and reaping. Plant wheat and you will harvest wheat. Plant alfalfa, and you will reap alfalfa. Plant cherry trees, and you will, in time have trees that bear cherries. Plant a row of carrots, and you will have carrots for your table. Plant tomato seeds and you will not have watermelons! The law is plain: You reap what you sow. How does this law work spiritually in our lives? There are four basic steps that can be easily developed from Hosea's prophecy.

1. Prepare the soil.

The first act is to "break up the fallow ground." (Hosea 10:12b) This is added to God's word to Hosea in defining Israel's sin and God's instructions for renewal: "Jacob shall break his clods." (Hosea 10:11) How well I recall as a young boy being raised on a dirt farm in the Yakima Valley, Washington State. Where the sandy soil ended and the clay soil prevailed, large dirt clods developed. Fields in that condition required special treatment, by breaking up the clods and fertilizing the fields. The horses or tractor, after we bought one, pulled a device made of several large boards about 3 inches thick and overlapping. We rode on this as it literally smashed, thus breaking up, the large clods. This was necessary before attempting to plant the crops.

In our spiritual lives, the idle, empty, non-bearing fields of the heart and mind need to be prepared, and become the soft, fertile soil that can accept, protect, and nourish the tiny seeds of righteousness to full production. Conformity to the Word of God, time spent in fervent prayer, taking care of the whole person are all characteristics of what it means to prepare the soil of life.

2. Plant the seed.

It goes without any need for discussion or explanation, that whatever seed one puts into the ground, it will produce after its kind. Being raised on a dirt farm in Washington State, we had rather large corn crops. Most of them were what we called "field corn." But in the field just west of our house, my Dad always planted at least four rows of "sweet corn." Obviously this was for our family's consumption. We enjoyed a LOT of corn on the cob, as well as canning dozens of quarts of corn for winter meals! Loved it! My Mother also insisted on a well-cared-for garden of many kinds of vegetables. I don't recall enjoying working in the garden ... but then, what young boy does? Well, that is history. On with the lesson. What Mother ... or rather WE, as told to do it – planted was what would come up, grow, and produce what it was intended to produce.

For our spiritual lives Hosea makes it plain. "Sow for yourselves righteousness." King Solomon, human author of the Book of Proverbs (See Proverbs 1:1) wrote plainly: "He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow." (Proverbs 22:8, NKJV) Happily, it is the Apostle Paul who helps us glean truth that is encouraging: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." (2 Corinthians 9:6, TNIV) Out of the prepared soil, the growing seed now produces that which defines what was planted.

3. Protect the growth.

What a rewarding day it was when we looked down the corn rows and saw the tiny green sprouts, knowing that before long it would grow and grow and finally produce the ears for harvest. But it was so necessary to remember that the young, growing crop required care and protection from the farmer. Where we lived, in the Yakima Valley, in central Washington, this meant three basic activities:

(1) Regular irrigation. The large “sprinkler systems” used today were not developed at that time. We irrigated by running water down little ditches between the rows of corn, or on the alfalfa fields. The vast Sunnyside Irrigation System provided the water for our fields, although we paid for it! It had to be directed to the applicable places by the farmer. This we did!

(2) General cultivation. This meant driving the tractor (or team of horses) down the rows of corn pulling a “cultivator” that destroyed weeds that would threaten the growing corn.

(3) Special hoeing. At certain times larger weeds escaped the cultivating process, and needed to be removed by people walking the rows of corn with hoes that could destroy the large weeds the cultivator did not or could not remove. I think I walked many, many miles in this process. But it had to be done if we would have a bountiful harvest.

Spiritually, we need to be on guard against the destructive forces that may even look respectable, but in reality, are destructive. These need to be removed ... and that is through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. I keep insisting that daily reading and studying the Word of God and intercessory prayer are so necessary for this process in protecting us as we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18)

4. Pick the harvest.

This is “reaping what was sown.” Every farmer or gardener knows this changeless law of sowing and reaping. It was what we expected every summer and fall on the farm. In the Scriptures we read that Israel sowed “the wind,” the useless seed of foolishness and self-centeredness, and reaped the harvest, “the whirlwind” of irresistible destruction.

In our spiritual lives what we sow in character we will reap in character. The DNA of our spiritual hearts will produce in kind. We will evidence on the outside what we are on the inside. Through Hosea, the Lord said: “sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love.” (Hosea 10:12, TNIV) The Hebrew word הֶסֶד - *hesed* is translated in various ways. English words often used are “kindness,” “loving-kindness,” “mercy,” “loyal love,” or “unfailing love.” In Kingdom work, and in interpersonal relations, the latter seems very appropriate. Do what is right (righteousness) and you will reap “unfailing love” in return. God has promised this for His people.

And now, the concluding thoughts for this Devotional. Perhaps we need to hear the words of the Lord spoken to Hosea: “It is time to seek the LORD, until He comes and showers His righteousness on you.” (Hosea 10:12b, TNIV) Is it possible that we stand before the Lord as did Israel when God said to them: “You have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your own strength...” (Hosea 10:13)

Do we have any obnoxious weeds growing in our lives? The words of God to Israel are penetrating to our souls, ... and powerfully applicable for all people in every generation. Hear them now: “You must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.” (Hosea 12:6) God adds to this: “Return ... to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall. Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him: ‘Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously...’” (Hosea 14:1, 2 TNIV) And God’s

gracious answer is: "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them." (Hosea 14:4)

The concluding word from the Lord through the Prophet Hosea is so helpful: "Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them." (Hosea 14:9)

So today, let's sow some seeds of righteousness. A kind word. A loving smile. A simple gift. And ... you name it! And now, how about reaping the result? It will come. In God's timing.