

Gleaning

Some have wondered if the harvest is over and if we are now at the point of gleaning. What do you think? Well let's first look at what gleaning is. (km 11/10 p. 1 par. 3)

The rules for gleaning are that the harvesters leave what is forgotten or dropped for the gleaners, that is to say the poor, the foreign resident, the fatherless child, and the widow. The harvesters are also directed to not gather the corners of the fields nor go back over their crops to gather what has ripened later. (De 24:19-21; Lev 19:9-10; 23:22)

Ruth chapter two reveals the timeframe for the gleaners regarding wheat. Ruth *"worked with"* the harvesters. She followed along and gleaned with them until the harvest ended. (Ru 2:19, 23) So wheat harvesting and gleaning occurred at the same time. Gleaners followed the harvesters through the fields picking up what they drop and gleaning the unharvested corners all while the harvesters are harvesting.

So how does that relate to what we are doing today? Here is Jesus' illustration about the field of wheat, representing the field ministry today.

(Matthew 13:24-30) He presented another illustration to them, saying: "The Kingdom of the heavens may be likened to a man who sowed fine seed in his field."²⁵ While men were sleeping, his enemy came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat and left.²⁶ When the stalk sprouted and produced fruit, then the weeds also appeared.²⁷ So the slaves of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow fine seed in your field? How, then, does it have weeds?'²⁸ He said to them, 'An enemy, a man, did this.' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go out and collect them?'²⁹ He said, 'No, for fear that while collecting the weeds, you uproot the wheat with them.'³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the harvest season, I will tell the reapers: First collect the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them up; then gather the wheat into my storehouse.'"

Here Jesus explains the illustration to his disciples:

(Matthew 13:36-43) Then after dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples came to him and said: "Explain to us the illustration of the weeds in the field."³⁷ In response he said: "The sower of the fine seed is the Son of man;³⁸ the field is the world. As for the fine seed, these are the sons of the Kingdom, but the weeds are the sons of the wicked one,³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is a conclusion of a system of things, and the reapers are angels.⁴⁰ Therefore, just as the weeds are collected and burned with fire, so it will be in the conclusion of the system of things.⁴¹ The Son of man will send his angels, and they will collect out from his Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and people who practice lawlessness,⁴² and they will pitch them into the fiery furnace. There is where their weeping and the gnashing of their teeth will be.⁴³ At that time the righteous ones will shine as brightly as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Let the one who has ears listen.

Before we examine Jesus' illustration and how it relates to evangelizing today, let's go over a few terms so we can better understand the illustration.

Sowing

Sowing is the scattering of seed and represents evangelizing.

(Matthew 13:18-23) "Now listen to the illustration of the man who sowed."¹⁹ Where anyone hears the word of the Kingdom but does not get the sense of it, the wicked one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart; this is the one sown alongside the road.²⁰ As for the one sown on rocky ground, this is the one hearing the word and at once accepting it with joy.²¹ Yet, he has no root in himself but continues for a time, and after tribulation or persecution has arisen on account of the word, he is at once stumbled.²² As for the one sown among the thorns, this is the one hearing the word, but the anxiety of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.²³ As for the one sown upon the fine soil, this is the one hearing the word and getting the sense of it, who really does bear fruit and produces, this one 100 times more, that one 60, the other 30."

(Luke 8:11-15) Now the illustration means this: The seed is the word of God.¹² Those alongside the road are the ones who have heard, and then the Devil comes and takes the word away from their hearts so that they may not believe and be

saved. ¹³ Those on the rock are the ones who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy, but these have no root. They believe for a while, but in a season of testing, they fall away. ¹⁴ As for that which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, but by being carried away by anxieties, riches, and pleasures of this life, they are completely choked and bring nothing to maturity. ¹⁵ As for that on the fine soil, these are the ones who, after hearing the word with a fine and good heart, retain it and bear fruit with endurance.

Seed

The seed is the message about God's kingdom.

(Matthew 13:18-23) "Now listen to the illustration of the man who sowed. ¹⁹ Where anyone hears the word of the Kingdom but does not get the sense of it, the wicked one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart; this is the one sown alongside the road. ²⁰ As for the one sown on rocky ground, this is the one hearing the word and at once accepting it with joy. ²¹ Yet, he has no root in himself but continues for a time, and after tribulation or persecution has arisen on account of the word, he is at once stumbled. ²² As for the one sown among the thorns, this is the one hearing the word, but the anxiety of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³ As for the one sown upon the fine soil, this is the one hearing the word and getting the sense of it, who really does bear fruit and produces, this one 100 times more, that one 60, the other 30."

(Luke 8:11-15) Now the illustration means this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those alongside the road are the ones who have heard, and then the Devil comes and takes the word away from their hearts so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rock are the ones who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy, but these have no root. They believe for a while, but in a season of testing, they fall away. ¹⁴ As for that which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, but by being carried away by anxieties, riches, and pleasures of this life, they are completely choked and bring nothing to maturity. ¹⁵ As for that on the fine soil, these are the ones who, after hearing the word with a fine and good heart, retain it and bear fruit with endurance.

The Harvest (material noun)

The harvest, used as a material noun, refers to the crops in the field, the thing to be harvested, and represents people.

(Matthew 9:37-38) Then he said to his disciples: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

(Luke 10:1-2) Then he said to them: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

(Revelation 14:15) Another angel emerged from the temple sanctuary, calling with a loud voice to the one seated on the cloud: "Put your sickle in and reap, because the hour has come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."

The Greek word *polus* translated as "*great*" has the meaning of much or many. So the statement "*the harvest is great*" has the meaning of: "there are a lot of crops".

The Harvest (common noun)

The harvest, used as a common noun, refers to the harvesting event itself.

(Matthew 9:37-38) Then he said to his disciples: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

(Luke 10:1-2) Then he said to them: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

(John 4:35) Do you not say that there are yet four months before the harvest comes? Look! I say to you: Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting.

(Matthew 13:39) The harvest is a conclusion of a system of things, and the reapers are angels.

Harvesters

The harvesters are the reapers, those that collect the crops. Jesus tells us that the reapers are angels.

(Matthew 13:39) The harvest is a conclusion of a system of things, and the reapers are angels.⁴¹ The Son of man will send his angels, and they will collect out from his Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and people who practice lawlessness,⁴² and they will pitch them into the fiery furnace. There is where their weeping and the gnashing of their teeth will be.⁴³ At that time the righteous ones will shine as brightly as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Let the one who has ears listen.

(Revelation 14:15-16) Another angel emerged from the temple sanctuary, calling with a loud voice to the one seated on the cloud: "Put your sickle in and reap, because the hour has come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."¹⁶ And the one seated on the cloud thrust his sickle into the earth, and the earth was reaped

At Armageddon the angels collect the wicked and destroy them. The "*righteous ones*" are left where they are. The righteous are not harvested. (Ps 37:10; Mt 13:49)

What about John 4:38? Is not Jesus calling the apostles reapers?

(John 4:35-38) Do you not say that there are yet four months before the harvest comes? Look! I say to you: Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting. Already³⁶ the reaper is receiving wages and gathering fruit for everlasting life, so that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together.³⁷ For in this respect the saying is true: One is the sower and another the reaper.³⁸ I sent you to reap what you did not labor on. Others have labored, and you have entered into the benefit of their labor."

Jesus was not calling the disciples reapers. He was referring to a saying (in red).

What did he mean by "*in this respect the saying is true*"? The saying that Jesus was quoting points out that the sowers and the reapers are not the same. In that respect it is true since Jesus will send the angels to do the reaping, and they are not the ones who sowed.

But if that part of the saying is true than what part of it is not true? Well what saying did Jesus just refer to? "*Do you not say that there are yet four months before the harvest comes?*" So Jesus was pointing out that the timeframe was wrong, but the separation of the sowers and the reapers was true.

Harvest (verb) / Reap

To harvest is to gather the crops, to reap. This form of "harvest" is not used in Jesus' illustrations or anywhere else in the Greek scriptures. No human is said to harvest or reap the figurative wheat, that is to say those who respond favorably to the message.

But what about these scriptures?

(Matthew 9:37-38) Then he said to his disciples: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few."³⁸ Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

(Luke 10:1-2) Then he said to them: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

Those scriptures don't say to "*beg the Master of the harvest to send out*" harvesters. They call for workers to be sent out. And it doesn't say that the workers are sent out to harvest. The "*harvest*" is the crop itself. So the crop (the field), "*is great*" (is large). Yes the earth is a big place filled with many people. And what other workers are there in fields besides harvesters? Answer: Sowers (cultivators). So Jesus is saying to beg the Master to send out sowers into the field. There were a lot of people who hadn't yet heard the word about God's kingdom.

What about 2 Corinthians 9:6? Does it not say that men also reap?

(2 Corinthians 9:6) But as to this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Yes, but that scripture is talking about reaping gifts, as verses 5 and 7-9 show. Material things are spoken of as being reaped, just as in the following verse.

(1 Corinthians 9:11) If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material support from you?

We can also reap everlasting life for ourselves if our actions and conduct warrant it. (Ga 6:7-9)

What about John 4:35?

(John 4:35) Do you not say that there are yet four months before the harvest comes? Look! I say to you: Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting.

Viewing fields that are ready to be harvested is not harvesting those fields. (Jn 21:23)

What about Matthew 13:30?

(Matthew 13:30) Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the harvest season, I will tell the reapers: First collect the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them up; then gather the wheat into my storehouse.”

The harvest is Armageddon, when the angels will collect the weeds and burn them. Only then will the wheat be figuratively gathered into His storehouse.

As touched on under the subheading "Harvesters," the angels will collect the wicked and destroy them. The "*righteous ones*" will be left where they are. The righteous are not harvested. (Ps 37:10; Mt 13:43) Think of the righteous ones as a permanent thing, something to be cared for, but not something to be harvested and taken away.

(1 Corinthians 3:9) For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field under cultivation, God's building.

If your job was to construct buildings, after it has been built do you harvest it? No, you leave it where it is and move on to build another one. The same goes for the sower. The harvest, that is to say the crop, is planted and watered by the sower, and when it matures and bears fruit the sower's job is done. Just as the construction worker's job is to erect the building, the sower's job is to cultivate the field, not harvest it.

There is only one harvest of righteous men and that is the gathering of the remaining "*chosen ones*" to heaven after the great tribulation. (Mt 24:31; Mr 13:27)

Sum Up

So to sum up this section: Harvesters harvest the harvest at the harvest.

In other words: Reapers collect the crops at the time of the ingathering.

Fulfillment: Angels will remove the wicked from the earth at Armageddon.

Workers

What is the difference between the harvesters and the workers? The harvesters collect the crop, the workers plant and water (cultivate) the crop. The workers represent those that sow seed, **that evangelize**.

(Matthew 9:37-10:1, 5) Then he said to his disciples: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few."³⁸ Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."^{10:1} So he summoned his 12 disciples ...⁵ These 12 Jesus sent out ...

(Luke 10:1-3) After these things the Lord designated 70 others and sent them out by twos ahead of him into every city and place where he himself was to go. ² Then he said to them: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest. ³ **Go!** Look! I am sending you out as lambs in among wolves.

(1 Corinthians 3:8) Now the one who plants and the one who waters are one, but each person will receive his own reward according to his own work.

Even the illustration of the man who planted a vineyard did not include harvesters, but only cultivators. (Mt 21:33-41; Mr 12:1-9; Lu 20:9-16) (See also Mt 20:1-2, 8; 2Co 11:12-15)

Although the work of sowing seed is the responsibility of the "*chosen ones*" (Mt 24:31; Re 22:17 "*the bride*"), the rest of us are privileged to be allowed to help them in that endeavor. (Mt 25:21-23; 1Co 3:9; Re 22:17 "*let*")

Fruit / Bearing Fruit

Jesus does not explicitly say what bearing fruit means in his explanation of the illustration, but he does describe what those who failed to bear fruit did. That gives us a clue as to what fruit refers to. (Ga 5:22)

(Matthew 13:18-23) "Now listen to the illustration of the man who sowed. ¹⁹ Where anyone hears the word of the Kingdom but does not get the sense of it, the wicked one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart; this is the one sown alongside the road. ²⁰ As for the one sown on rocky ground, this is the one hearing the word and at once accepting it with joy. ²¹ Yet, he has no root in himself but continues for a time, and after tribulation or persecution has arisen on account of the word, he is at once stumbled. ²² As for the one sown among the thorns, this is the one hearing the word, but the anxiety of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches **choke the word**, and it **becomes unfruitful**. ²³ As for the one sown upon the fine soil, this is the one hearing the word and getting the sense of it, who really does bear fruit and produces, this one 100 times more, that one 60, the other 30."

(Mark 4:14-20) "The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ These, then, are the ones alongside the road where the word is sown; but as soon as they have heard it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ¹⁶ Likewise, these are the ones sown on rocky ground; as soon as they have heard the word, they accept it with joy. ¹⁷ Yet they have no root in themselves, but they continue for a time; then as soon as tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, they are stumbled. ¹⁸ There are still others that are sown among the thorns. These are the ones who have heard the word, ¹⁹ but the anxieties of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches and the desires for everything else make inroads and choke the word, and it **becomes unfruitful**. ²⁰ Finally, the ones that were sown on the fine soil are those who listen to the word and favorably receive it and bear fruit—30, 60, and 100 times more."

(Luke 8:11-15) Now the illustration means this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those alongside the road are the ones who have heard, and then the Devil comes and takes the word away from their hearts so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ Those on the rock are the ones who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy, but these have no root. They believe for a while, but in a season of testing, they fall away. ¹⁴ As for that which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, but by being carried away by anxieties, riches, and pleasures of this life, they are completely choked and **bring nothing to maturity**. ¹⁵ As for that on the fine soil, these are the ones who, after hearing the word with a fine and good heart, retain it and bear fruit with endurance.

Is this illustration about evangelizing? In part it is, since sowing seed represents spreading "*the word of the Kingdom*", and this illustration describes a sower sowing that seed. But the main characters are the four types of recipients of "*the good news*", not the sower. (Mt 4:23)

The first type hears "*but does not get the sense of it*", so it does not reach their hearts and they do not believe.

The second type hear and "*accept it with joy*" but it does not go down deep in their hearts so the truth is not anchored well in them and minor tribulation is enough to cause them to fall away.

The third type listen to the word but they are surrounded by thorns, that is to say the wicked desires and temptations of this world, and they give in to them.

The fourth type are the ones that receive it deep into their hearts and change their lives to match what is required to please God so they can live in His kingdom.

It does not say that the sower bears fruit. The ones who receive the seed are the ones who bear fruit. So is *"bearing fruit"* referring to evangelizing? The first two types failed to evangelize? The third type does evangelize but then stops, *"becomes unfruitful"*? Only the fourth type continues to evangelize and the 30, 60, and 100 refer to how much they evangelize? Is that what this illustration is about?

No. If evangelizing is what *"bearing fruit"* means in this illustration then the sower would be the main one bearing fruit with each scattering of seed he does regardless of the quality of the soil or whether the seed sprouts or not. But this is not an illustration about a sower bearing fruit by casting the seed on various types of soil. This is an illustration about the kinds of people that hear the word, including the ones who accept the truth and leave behind their worldly ways and attitudes.

At Matthew 3:8 John tells the wicked Pharisees to *"produce fruit that befits repentance."* Is he telling them to evangelize? No, he is telling them to change their wicked ways.

Nowhere in the Greek scriptures is evangelizing referred to as bearing fruit, or producing fruit. So what is the term *"fruit"* used for?

At Matthew 7:17 Jesus says that *"every rotten tree produces worthless fruit"*. Is there a form of worthless evangelizing that is not *"fine"*? No. Verses 21-23 go on to speak about those who say *"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?"* That surely sounds like evangelizing does it not? Yes, but Jesus does not condemn them for those good and *"powerful"* works as if they were a form of *"worthless fruit"*. No, he condemns them because they are taking up a position *"between"* Christ and his sheep which he strictly forbade them from occupying. (1Ti 2:5; Mt 23:10; Jn 14:6; Mt 23:8) That's why he calls them *"workers of lawlessness!"* (Greek - anomian = iniquity, disobedience, sin) That is the *"brazen conduct"* referred to at 2 Peter 2:2 which when those men are followed causes *"the way of the truth will be spoken of abusively"*.

Evangelizing is speaking about God's kingdom. Does not Jesus equate fruit to speech at Matthew 12:31-37? There Jesus is accusing the scribes and the Pharisees of speaking against the Son of man and against the holy spirit. He is not referring to evangelizing. Just as fine or rotten fruit is a visible sign that a tree is fine or rotten, their speech is an outward sign that others can see as to whether they are good or wicked. *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."* (Mt 12:34) It is the heart that is being identified by what it *"sends out"* (through speech or actions), and those scribes and Pharisees *"will render an account"* if they speak against the Son of man and the holy spirit.

Remember, it is sowing that symbolizes evangelizing. Also note that the fourth type (fine soil) is not described as harvesting or sowing, but only as bearing fruit. A plant bears fruit within or upon itself. The seeds of truth that the sower sows is said to grow within others, not within the sower. (Php 1:11)

Matthew gives an extra clue as to what bearing fruit means when he says that the one who bears fruit *"produces"*. Matthew used the same Greek word (poieó) translated as *"produces"* at Mt 5:19 where Jesus is speaking about the commandments. There poieó is translated as *"does them"*. At Mt 8:9 it is used twice in the quote *"Do this!' and he does it."* Dozens of times Matthew uses the Greek word poieó similarly. So at Mt 13:23 he is telling us that the ones who bear fruit implement the fruit of the spirit in their lives.

Although all of the fourth type become Christians, not all Christians are equal. Each Christian will display the fruitage of the spirit to varying degrees. Note that before they even hear the word the fourth type are called *"fine soil"* and are described as having *"a fine and good heart"*, so they are already fairly decent people to begin with, they just didn't have the truth. So the good news of the kingdom causes them to become even better people, that is to say, to bear fruit *"30, 60, and 100 times more."* More? More than what? More than they were already doing as fine people with a good heart that had not yet heard the good news of the kingdom.

What sort of fruit does man bear?

(John 15:1-10) "I am the true vine, and my Father is the cultivator. ² He takes away every branch in me not bearing fruit, and he cleans every one bearing fruit, so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in union with me, and I will remain in union with you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it remains in the vine, neither can you unless you remain in union with me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in union with me and I in union with him, this one bears much fruit; for apart from me you can do nothing at all. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in union with me, he is thrown out like a branch and dries up. And men gather those branches and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you remain in union with me and **my sayings remain in you,** ask whatever you wish and it will take place for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit and prove yourselves my disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you **observe my commandments,** you will remain in my love, just as I have observed the commandments of the Father and remain in his love.

What "sayings" were Jesus referring to? His "commandments". What are his commandments? Paul knew what those commandments were and what the fruit is and he relayed that to us.

(1 Corinthians 6:9-10) Or do you not know that unrighteous people will not inherit God's Kingdom? Do not be misled. Those who are sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who submit to homosexual acts, men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ thieves, greedy people, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners will not inherit God's Kingdom.

(Galatians 5:22-23) On the other hand, the fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, ²³ mildness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

(See also Mt 19:17-19)

The final type of soil in Jesus' illustration end their worldly ways and produce the fruitage of the spirit. (Lu 11:28)

(1 Corinthians 3:5-9) What, then, is A-pol'los? Yes, what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord granted each one. ⁶ I planted, A-pol'los watered, but God kept making it grow, ⁷ so that neither is the one who plants anything nor is the one who waters, but God who makes it grow. ⁸ Now the one who plants and the one who waters are one, but each person will receive his own reward according to his own work. ⁹ For **we** are God's fellow workers. **You** are God's field under cultivation, God's building.

The field is what is spoken about as bearing fruit, not the sowers. There is a distinction between the sowers and the field. The "ministers" who plant and water are the sowers, and the field under cultivation produces fruit. If making disciples is considered to be bearing fruit then the sowers would be the ones described as bearing fruit. But the sowers are not described as bearing fruit, and the field is not described as sowing.

(Romans 6:21-22) What, then, was the fruit that you used to produce at that time? Things of which you are now ashamed. For the end of those things is death. ²² However, now that you were set free from sin and became slaves to God, you are producing your fruit in the way of holiness, and the end is everlasting life. (Ro 7:4, 5)

(Hebrews 12:11) True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but it is painful; yet afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Is evangelizing one of the fruits listed at Galatians 5:22-23? No, but it is one of the ways the fruit of the spirit can manifest itself. Those that bear fruit could progress to the point of desiring to help the sowers to sow.

(1 Corinthians 12:27-31) Now you are Christ's body, and each of you individually is a member. ²⁸ And God has assigned the respective ones in the congregation: first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then powerful works; then gifts of healings; helpful services; abilities to direct; different tongues. ²⁹ Not all are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all perform powerful works, do they? ³⁰ Not all have gifts of healings, do they? Not all speak in tongues, do they? Not all are interpreters, are they? ³¹ But keep striving for the greater gifts. And yet I will show you a surpassing way.

(Ephesians 4:11) And he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers,

Being an evangelizer and a teacher was an assignment and a gift to the anointed. Most of the 'assignments' are no more, but evangelizing, teaching, and shepherding are still with us. Those that bear fruit should also *"keep striving for the greater gifts."* Of course none are greater than love. (1Co 13:1-13) (see my article: "Feed My Lambs")

Sowing (continued)

Returning to Jesus' illustration of the field of wheat (page 1), today's field is not a nice clean field covered with golden wheat like the one Ruth worked in. Jesus described today's field as over-sown with weeds. (Mt 13:25) And the field is old now and the weeds have become thick. We have moved far beyond weeds that resemble wheat. These old fields are filled with plants that in no way resemble wheat, many of which are taller than wheat and have thorns or are poisonous to the touch. (Mt 13:22) And vipers and other dangerous predators have moved in as well. (Ps 140:2-3; Mt 3:7) The world is filled with violent, depraved, and apathetic people. Sowers make their way through this dense overgrowth at their own peril searching for someone that would welcome their message.

Fortunately we have been given guidelines for the evangelizing work to help us deal with this degenerated state of the earth ruled over by Satan. (1Joh 5:19) There are both scriptural guidelines and those from the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. (see my article: "The Governing Body")

[w17 p. 7 par. 18] ... be "cautious" and even "shrewd." (Matt. 10:16; Prov. 22:3) ... do not discuss politics. Follow directions from the branch office and from local authorities; never put yourself or others at risk.

(Proverbs 9:7) The one who corrects a ridiculer invites dishonor, And whoever reproves someone wicked will get hurt.

(Proverbs 9:8) Do not reprove a ridiculer, or he will hate you. Reprove a wise person, and he will love you.

(Proverbs 15:12) The scoffer does not love the one correcting him. He will not consult the wise.

(Proverbs 23:9) Do not speak in the ears of the stupid one, For he will despise the wisdom of your words.

(Proverbs 26:4) Do not answer the stupid one according to his foolishness, So that you do not put yourself on his level.

(Matthew 7:6) "Do not give what is holy to dogs nor throw your pearls before swine, so that they may never trample them under their feet and turn around and rip you open. (compare Mr 10:19)

[It-1 Dog p. 644] Jesus Christ compared persons having no appreciation for spiritual things to dogs, saying: "Do not give what is holy to dogs."

[It-2 Pearl p. 594] Evidently Jesus meant that, if a person shows that he is like a dog or a swine, with no appreciation for spiritual things, one should not further endeavor to share spiritual thoughts and teachings with him.

[It-2 Swine p. 1049] The inability of swine to recognize the value of pearls was employed by Jesus in illustrating the unwisdom of sharing spiritual things with those having no appreciation whatever of spiritual thoughts and teachings.

(Matthew 10:14) Wherever anyone does not receive you or listen to your words, on going out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.

[It-1 Dust p. 660] Jesus Christ instructed his disciples that when anyone failed to receive them or listen to their words, they were to shake or wipe the dust off their feet upon leaving that house or that city. This practice served "for a witness against them," implying that Jesus' followers were peacefully departing and leaving that house or that city to the consequences that would come from God.—Mt 10:11-15; Lu 9:5; 10:10-12; Ac 13:50-51.

(Matthew 15:14) Let them be. Blind guides is what they are. If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

(Mark 6:11) And wherever a place will not receive you or listen to you, on going out from there, shake off the dirt that is on your feet for a witness to them."

(John 3:20) For whoever practices vile things hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his works may not be reproofed.

Conclusion

So the answer to the question "Is the harvest over and are we now at the point of gleaning" is "No" since we neither harvest nor glean.

The next logical question is "Is the sowing work accomplished?"

The answer kind of depends on the individual field. I say "kind of" because all of the fields are old now, and even though a field may not have had many sowers go through it there may not be any good soil to sow the seeds upon that isn't completely overgrown with weeds and choked with thorns. (Ps 92:7)

In Jesus' illustration, though three out of four liked what they heard and accepted it with joy, only one in four progressed to the point of bearing the fruit of the spirit. (Ga 5:22-23; 2Co 4:3-4; Eph 4:18-19) Of the people you speak to, though many may seem to respond favorably, how many actually progress to the point of bearing fruit? One in ten? One in a hundred? One in a thousand? None?

When the harvesters come to collect the weeds will any missed wheat be destroyed with the weeds? No. Our not finding a wheat is not a death sentence for them. Their life or death is not in our hands. No wheat will mistakenly be destroyed along with the weeds. (Re 18:4)

And our judging of someone to be a dog or swine and withholding our pearls does not mean they will die. We do not have that power either. We are not the judges of life and death.

No one who deserves to live will be killed at Armageddon! No one!!

(Philippians 1:9-11) And this is what I continue praying, that your love may abound still more and more with accurate knowledge and full discernment; ¹⁰ that you may make sure of the more important things, so that you may be flawless and not stumbling others up to the day of Christ; ¹¹ and that you may be filled with righteous **fruit**, which is through Jesus Christ, to God's glory and praise.

What do *you* think?

:^)

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