

It is not Your will, O Lord, that we should ever delight in the sins of others and gloat over them, but that we should rather understand Your holy mission of having all to be saved and make known to all You place in our lives the salvation so freely offered them in Your Word of Grace. Grant us such hearts of love and compassion for all for Your mercy's sake we pray. Amen.

Just then [Jesus'] disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" So the [Samaritan] woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the town and were coming to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering 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." Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

In Christ Jesus, who sends out both the sower and reaper, so that there is a harvest unto everlasting life, dear fellow redeemed:

Remember God's reluctant prophet, Jonah? He neither wanted to do the work of sowing the word of God nor reaping its harvest in the wicked capital of the Assyrians, the city of Nineveh. God captured him in the belly of a great fish as he tried to run away. After three days he was deposited on dry ground, which impressed upon him that it was futile to disobey God's call to do this work.

Against his will Jonah called the residents of Nineveh to repentance and it worked, the city repented. This then led to a very dark place for Jonah who resented that these people repented and God relented from the

destruction He had threatened to carry out upon them. Far from rejoicing, Jonah was depressed.

What would cause such an attitude in Jonah? We are led to conclude that in his self righteousness, he thought the people of Nineveh, the enemies of Israel, did not deserve the love of God and resented it when it was so richly offered and humbly received. It is the same attitude exhibited by the Pharisees and the scribes in our Gospel lesson, who grumbled against Jesus, saying: "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." Let us check our own attitudes in this regard based on the words of our text and consider - **Whether You Sow or Reap, You Have Reason to Rejoice.**

I

Our text begins with Jesus finishing His conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The disciples returned to Him and were surprised at this sight of Jesus' speaking with her. But there was a sign of this woman being on an urgent mission as she returned into town; she left her water jar, neglecting her original purpose for being at the well in the first place.

Do you remember what happened in the conversation Jesus had with this woman? It was uncomfortable for her. He confronted her sin of disregarding the sacred institution of marriage. She had been married five times and now was living with a man that was not her husband. She wanted to change the subject and put Jesus on the defensive, but that did not happen, of course. In addition to confronting her in her sin, Jesus also came with the good news that He was the long awaited Christ, who came to save sinners. He offered her the living water of His salvation, so that she would not be thirsty again for a righteousness that would find her to be acceptable before God.

Eagerly this woman went back to town to tell her fellow citizens that there was a man, who could very possibly be the Christ. She said: "Come see a man who told me all that I ever did." Very likely those five husbands of hers and her "*live-in boyfriend*" were part of the group who came out to Jesus. Their guilt no doubt weighed heavy upon them as well.

The disciples had gone into town to get some food and offered it to Jesus, but He refused. Something more urgent was now pressing down upon them all that needed their attention. It was a harvest of souls. Jesus came to fulfill the will of His Father who sent Him into the world to save sinners. The work of winning salvation for all of mankind would culminate

in Jesus' death on the cross and fulfilling the sign of Jonah by rising from the dead on the third day. But in order for anyone to benefit from that work, to receive forgiveness, life and salvation they had to hear the good news of this work in their behalf and believe it was accomplished for them. So now a field of a fast growing crop was sprouting and maturing right before their eyes. These Samaritan men were coming to see if what the woman had told them was true.

II

Jesus took the occasion to point out the harvest that was soon to be gathered. As He said to His disciples: "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together."

Jesus pointed to the harvest, but all they could see were green plants, the harvest being still four months away. But the white heads of grain could be seen growing ever larger as these Samaritan men approached. That was the harvest, the harvest of souls. This was happening early in Jesus' ministry, early in the disciples training. The religious pride of their leaders would still have the disciples looking down upon their Samaritan neighbors. But Jesus saw lost souls who needed to be saved.

So Jesus goes on with the lesson they needed to learn: "Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering 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." Who was the sower? Jesus was the sower having done the labor of not only preparing the soil of the woman's heart but scattering the seed of the Good news, which now spread to the men of the town.

The disciples would now be among those who would reap the harvest of souls that repented and would believe. They came out because the soil of their hearts were prepared to receive the seed, the message that their Savior had come among them. They invited Jesus to stay with them and He and his disciples did for two more days. They stayed and associated with these "despised" Samaritan citizens with the amazing result: "many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.'"

What joy must have filled the hearts of the disciples as they witnessed the process of sowing the seed of the Word and reaping the harvest of souls for life eternal. Have and are you experiencing this great joy, my fellow redeemed? Do not think that this joy is just limited to the nice stories in the Bible like this one at Jacob's well.

Have you heard the messages coming from the Christians in Charleston, SC the past few days, to the accused murderer of their brothers and sisters in Christ? Certainly they spoke the words of grief and sadness to the accused, but also spoke words of love and forgiveness. Where do you think they learned to approach this vile sinner in that way? They learned it from the Master Sower and Reaper, who came to fulfill the will of Father to save all vile sinners, you and me included.

God places people in your lives, relatives, friends, coworkers, classmates, yes, even enemies, who have yet had their stony hearts of sin crushed and made into the soft soil to receive the seed of the Gospel. Rejoice that your Lord gives you opportunity to both sow and reap. Perhaps some of those people will have had their hearts crushed by the words spoken by the victim families in SC and you will be there to harvest the crop. Or perhaps you will sow the seed never to see in this life the harvest that will occur after you are out of the picture.

You and I could at times probably identify more with Jonah than the Samaritan woman. But know this: Jesus being the perfect sower and reaper sacrificed His holy life for those very sins too and gives to you His blessed righteousness in this regard as well. You have been set free from all your guilt and shame and have been enlivened through faith to rejoice in the tasks of sowing and reaping that still lie ahead. For Jesus' sake, work now while it is day, before the night comes when no one can work. Amen.