

# Treasure Trading

The Mission of the Church Part 08  
Selected Passages 6-29-2014

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Summary: 1) Be the church (salt and light includes making the culture more moral).2) Preach the Gospel (entire New Testament – any passage will do). 3) Call disciples. Point them to the right treasure (unlike the prosperity message and the philanthropy approach). 4) Go fishing (don't let drawing/predestination decrease your urgency – it happens through hard work).

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## Introduction

In our study of the mission of the church in the New Testament, we have been looking into what the Bible says about methods. We learned what the church is, and what we are supposed to do, and now we are focusing on which methods God wants us to use to get it done. The methods for deepening our love for God is to apply the Word of God to the hearts of men and women, and to deal with sin the way Jesus taught us to deal with it. And last week we started looking at what Scripture says about methods for winning the lost. This is the *spreading* part of our mission. What methods does God want us to use to reach a lost world for Christ and fulfill the Great Commission? I told you there we can organize what Scripture says about this under five headings.

### 1) Be the Church

The first one is to simply be the church. Carry out all the various functions of a church so that we grow to maturity and that will result in people being saved. The more we progress in righteousness, the more we can function as salt and light in the world. And one thing I should add about that that I neglected to mention – our functioning as salt and light involves more than just preaching the gospel. We should have an influence on the world that makes the society as a whole more God-fearing. If you look at cultures where Christianity has had an impact, you see less tyranny by the government, less violence, more valuing of things like humility and kindness and generosity, better treatment of women, more justice in law courts, greater freedom, etc. And Scripture is clear that God is much more pleased with a culture like that than a culture that descends into the depths of wickedness. God deals more harshly with the cultures that are more blatantly evil. Natural revelation adds nothing to Scripture, but it does play an important role. It is better when a culture is more responsive to natural law than when they are less

responsive to it – even though they are still unbelievers. They can't be saved that way, but it does create a more fertile ground for the gospel. When a culture descends into the depths of depravity, the work of missions is so difficult because every single part of the gospel message is so utterly foreign and incomprehensible. But when a culture acknowledges the obvious truths of natural law, the gospel is much more easily understood.

It is interesting to watch how that plays out in the book of Acts. God used persecution to spread the gospel – forcing people out of that persecuted area out to other areas. But the times of great evangelistic harvest are more than once connected with the times when the church enjoyed peace and favor with the culture.

**Acts 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.**

So is it worth our time to engage in debate with the world about the evils of abortion or homosexuality or injustice? Yes. (I will add this though – while I think it is good to use natural law to show the world that those things are wrong, we shouldn't be afraid to also use Scripture. Just because they are unbelievers doesn't mean we should be afraid to use the Bible.) But yes, there is also value to pointing to natural law. Is that the primary focus of the church? No. Our primary focus is the gospel. And that brings us to the second heading we looked at last time; preach the Gospel.

## 2) Preach the Gospel

**Romans 10:14 ... how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ... 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**

### The Whole Counsel of God

Preach the gospel. But what is the gospel? It is the entire New Testament. One of the recent fads in evangelical circles is to restrict the gospel to only the basic information about the death and resurrection of Christ. Nothing else in the Bible is the gospel. These people say, "Be careful not to give lost people anything else from Scripture – just the basic information about Jesus. Don't let them know about any of Jesus' commands, because that's law, not gospel." And to defend that view they will usually point to the opening paragraph of 1 Corinthians 15, which focuses on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. They take one passage that mentions the gospel, and try to turn it into a comprehensive definition, and they ignore all the other passages in the Bible that mention the gospel. That is just lazy biblical theology. If you look at all the passages that mention the word gospel, and focus on the ones that tell us what the content of the gospel is, here is what you get: The gospel is the good news of the kingdom, which Jesus preached (Mt.4:23, 9:35, 24:14). It is a message of grace (Acts 20:24) that says that in order to avoid the coming judgment (Ro.2:16, 1 Pe.4:17, Rev.14:6-7) all men must worship, fear, and honor the true God (Rev.14:6-7) through faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sin and rose again according to the Scriptures, guaranteeing the resurrection of believers (1 Cor.15:3-4). Believing this gospel involves repenting (Mk.1:15) taking a posture of obedience (2 Thes.1:8, 2 Cor.9:13) and bowing to Christ as Lord (2 Cor.4:3-5), resulting in justification and a pattern of living by faith (Gal.1:1-18). That is what the Bible says the gospel is. And I think you would be pretty hard pressed to find any passage in the New Testament that isn't explaining one of those points, which means the entire New Testament is the gospel – including all the commands. Scripture says that Jesus went around preaching the gospel (Mt.4:23). And every time one of His sermons is recorded, it is loaded with commands. Paul's message was the gospel, and when we read his books, they are loaded with commands. In fact, the gospel itself is a command. That is why people are punished for disobeying it.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:8 He will punish those who ... do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The whole New Testament is the gospel, and that is great news, because it means we don't have to worry about giving people the wrong portion of the Bible. Some people say, "There's one gospel for Jews, a different one for Gentiles, and don't give people the beatitudes because that's for a different dispensation, and Jesus and Paul had different gospels..." and you come away thinking, "Man, I've got to be careful what I tell people lest I give them the wrong gospel."

You want to hear some good news? There is only one true gospel, Paul and Jesus preached the exact same message, and everything in the entire Bible either is the gospel or points to the gospel. Have you noticed how there is no predicting what passage the Holy Spirit will use to bring someone to faith? He does not just use John 3:16. My sister got saved listening to a Sunday school class on the parable of the talents. When she heard that God is not a hard master – that pierced her heart and she was saved. R.C. Sproul got saved from **Ecclesiastes 11:3. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie.** Every passage in the Bible is either the gospel or points to the gospel.

And when the Father is drawing a person, that person's heart will soak in the truth of the Scriptures like a sponge and will come back for more. And that appetite will just increase until that person has heard enough to understand enough of the gospel to be saved. And that can be a long process. Sometimes you can tell people about the cross, but it doesn't sink in. They think they get it, but they don't. But then one day they hear a sermon on James 4 about how those who are friends with the world are enemies of God, and suddenly it all makes sense and they understand the gospel for the first time. Someone else maybe doesn't get it until they hear what Jesus said about how to view money. And someone else needs to hear a sermon on Judgment Day. And for someone else it doesn't click until they hear a sermon on Christian marriage or humility or forgiving others or courage or wisdom or a soft answer turns away wrath, and for the first time they see that virtue as beautiful and good and desirable, and they realize Christ's way is best.

That is why at Agape our main focus with regard to winning the lost is not on special events. Things like VBS or outreach concerts or Thorntonfest – those things have their place, but we are careful about how much time and resources we pour into them because the absolute best recipe for wining people's hearts to the Lord is exactly what we do here every single Sunday. You can't really improve on that.

When my kids were growing up, I did not have the expertise needed to run blood tests and discover exactly which nutrients and vitamins were lacking and in what quantities. We just put a bunch of food on the table every day and they ate it, and guess what? They have all quadrupled in size since they were toddlers. You just put the food in there and God does the rest. Is there something to be said for using some skill and wisdom in giving someone the particular principles in Scripture that speak most directly to their situation? Sure. But don't forget that all Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. That is why Paul made sure he proclaimed **the whole counsel of God** to the people he preached to. He wanted to make sure he didn't leave anything out, and that is why he could say he was innocent of the blood of all men (Acts 20:26-27).

## 3) Call Disciples

So method #1 is be the church. Method #2 is preach the Word. And method #3 is Call Disciples. And this is where we spent most of our time last week. When you are sharing the gospel with an unbeliever, don't give the impression that becoming a Christian is like just signing up for something or identifying yourself with a cause. Let them know it is like getting married – a whole life, total, exclusive commitment.

But let me clear up something that I might not have been clear about last time. My point was not that every presentation of the gospel must be some long, complicated, belabored lecture. All I was saying is that we need to let people know how much Jesus demands so they can count the cost before making a commitment. It does not have to be long or complicated. I'll show you: Jesus said that becoming a

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<sup>1</sup> See also 1 Peter 4:17.

Christian is like finding a treasure in a field. And the treasure is worth way more than all your assets all put together. You see Jesus as such a treasure that you are more than happy to say, “Jesus, You are more important to me than everything else in the whole world. My job, my money, my stuff, family, my health – even my life. If I had to choose between any of those things and You, I would choose You. I trust You so much, that I am resolved to follow Your way even when it’s different from what I would naturally want to do. I believe what the Bible says about You, and I know for sure that Your way is better than any other way. And so I’m committed to follow that way no matter what the cost.” It took me less than one minute to say that. It doesn’t have to be complicated; it just has to let the person know what it is you are calling them to become: a disciple.

## **Point Them to the Right Treasure**

And the key to doing that is to point them to the right treasure. If a Christian is someone who sees Jesus Christ as a greater treasure than anything else in the world, then in order to bring someone to faith in Christ we need to do all we can to showcase the value of Jesus Christ, and downplay the value of every other treasure in comparison.

### ***Prosperity “Gospel”***

This is why the prosperity message is so incredibly damaging. Those preachers like Joyce Meyer and T.D. Jakes and Joel Osteen, who say, “Jesus wants you rich, Jesus wants you healthy, Jesus wants you comfortable, use Jesus to get earthly treasure” – that is not only a false gospel, but it puts people into the opposite frame of mind that is necessary for accepting the true gospel. It points people to the things in this world. And the more enamored you are with the treasures of this world, the harder it will be for you to ever be able to see Christ as a greater treasure. Your heart tends to latch on to whatever you gaze at. So the last thing the unbeliever needs is for some preacher to come along and say, “Here – let’s spend an hour gazing at how wonderful money is, and expensive cars, and nice clothes, and respect from people – Jesus can help you get those treasures.” After a sermon like that I will be even less inclined to be willing to give those things up.

### ***Philanthropic Evangelism***

Another very popular technique for winning the lost takes a similar approach, but it is much more subtle. We could call it the philanthropy approach. The idea behind this method is simple: first meet people’s physical needs, then you earn the right to speak to them about spiritual things. Give them food or clothing or housing, dig them a well, help them out of a jam – do something nice for them in order to “build a bridge” and win their favor, then they will want to come to church even though they aren’t interested in God or the Bible. Then when you present the gospel to them they will be inclined to listen because we have a good relationship. That is the ministry model of many, many churches. Offer humanitarian aid, meet their physical needs, that will soften up their hearts, and maybe they will come to church.

Sounds like a plan, right? Just do whatever it takes to get them to come. In Purpose Driven Church, Rick Warren says, “It doesn’t matter *why* people initially come to Jesus, what matters is *that* they come.” If they aren’t interested in Scripture, give them what they are interested in just to get them in the door.

### ***John 6***

What would Jesus say about that approach? Let’s go back to John 6, because in that chapter Jesus speaks to this very issue. Whenever people want to defend the idea of philanthropy evangelism (meeting physical needs first in order to earn the right to meet spiritual needs), inevitably they will point to Jesus’ as an example. They say, “This was Jesus’ method. He fed people and healed people and met their physical needs, so that they would listen to the gospel and be saved.”

So let's take a look at the greatest feeding miracle Jesus ever performed. He fed a huge crowd – probably upwards of 20,000 people. And He provided an all-you-can-eat meal for them from a few pieces of pieces of bread and fish.

That happens in the beginning of the chapter. Then in verse 22 John skips ahead to the following day. The crowd realizes Jesus is gone, and so they walk back all the way around the top of the Sea of Galilee and find Him again. So far so good, right? These people are coming to Jesus after getting fed a meal. But then look what Jesus does. He rebukes them.

**John 6:26 you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.**

If it does not matter why people come to Jesus; only that they come – why would Jesus rebuke these people? Evidently, it does matter why you come. Jesus rebuked this crowd for coming to Him is because they got food. That is an unacceptable reason to come to Jesus. People who take the philanthropy approach to evangelism think this is a great reason for people to come to Jesus. But it isn't. Why? Because people who come to Jesus for this reason tend to be unreceptive to the gospel when they hear it. They just want to use Jesus to get more food. And when Jesus tells them that what they really need is Him, not physical food, they grumble and complain and argue. And the more Jesus talks, the more disgruntled they become. And at the end, here is what happens:

**John 6:66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.**

When you use this method to attract people, it tends to put them in the wrong frame of mind to receive the gospel, because it does the same thing the prosperity message does – it points them to the wrong treasure. Giving handouts can attract a crowd, but it is the wrong crowd. Jesus tells this crowd repeatedly, “**No one can come to me unless my Father who sent me draws him.**” We are not going to have any success with anyone except for those who are drawn by the Father. So that is who we need to attract. But if our method is to offer handouts, that doesn't attract the drawn. It attracts people who treasure the things we are handing out.

They say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. And that's true. Fill up his stomach, and his heart will be won over – but it will be won over to food, not to Christ. Should we be kind and compassionate and help people in need when they cross our path? Of course. But as a strategy for evangelism, it does not work.

## **Come to Christ as Your Bread**

**John 6:54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.**

Salvation happens when you see Jesus as the one who will satisfy the cravings of your soul. Take a look back at verse 35. Believing in Jesus is used interchangeably with coming to Jesus as your food and drink.

**35 He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.**

Faith is when you come to Jesus the way you come to a meal. When you feel discomfort on the inside (things like emptiness, depression, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, boredom, restlessness) – those are all the hunger pangs of the soul. Every human being has them, by God's design. And every human being runs hard after whatever he believes will satisfy those hunger pangs. If you think money will make that pain go away, you will run after money. If your soul thinks relationships will do it, then you will run after relationships. Comfort, success, family, ministry, sex, partying, independence, travel, fun, exercise– whatever your soul thinks is food, that is what the bent of your life will be toward. Coming to Jesus as food means when you feel those things, His presence is the thing you crave to satisfy all your

needs. It is a deliberate movement away from the spiritual famine of this world's treasure with its total inability to satisfy or nourish, and movement toward Christ.

Didn't this crowd out of their way to come to Jesus? Not as food. They came to Him as a tool to get food. Faith is not believing that Jesus can give you earthly treasure; faith is coming to Jesus as the treasure.

### ***Jesus Did Not Use the Philanthropy Approach***

So did Jesus use the philanthropy method for winning the lost? No. Think about it – can you think of any example of Jesus meeting an unbeliever's physical needs apart from His miracles? If He was trying to set an example for how we are to do ministry, why is it that we never see Jesus set up a soup kitchen, or provide disaster relief for victims of Pilate's slaughter in Galilee, or set up a clothing bank, or anything like that? Jesus' miracles showed His compassion – no question about that. But their purpose was not to soften people's hearts by meeting their physical needs. Their purpose was to prove that He was God. And when the people in John 6 got that wrong, and thought it was about the food, Jesus rebuked them and set them straight, and refused to do any more miracles for them – even though they were just as needy as ever.

### ***Point to the Miracles of Jesus!***

Can we follow Jesus' example when it comes to His miracles? Absolutely. What did Jesus do? He constantly pointed people to His miracles and they called them to place their faith in Him. And we need to do the exact same thing – constantly point people to Jesus' miracles and then call them to place their faith in Him.

But when this crowd asks Jesus for *more* miracles down in verse 30, Jesus refuses. Why? Because if the ones He had already done were not enough to convince them, nothing would be enough. That is why miracles are not needed today for evangelism. God might do them for other reasons, but they aren't necessary for evangelism because if people don't believe based on the miracles Jesus already did in the gospels, they won't believe no matter what (even if someone rises from the dead). If you are sharing the gospel and you want to prove your case by astonishing them with miracles, you can do that any time you want. Just open up your Bible anywhere in any of the gospels and start reading. Astonish them with those miracles. You don't need more miracles. You can do just what the writer of Hebrews did – point back to the miracles that have already proved the gospel.

**Hebrews 2:4 God also testified (past tense) to [this salvation] by signs, wonders and various miracles**

### ***Financing Rebellion***

One other thought about the philanthropy approach. According to Romans 1, people who are unbelievers are in rebellion against God. It is not the church's role to finance that rebellion or try to make them more comfortable in their rebellion. If we want to follow Jesus' example, then when people come to the church looking for food, we will tell them the same thing Jesus told these people.

**John 6:27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.**

## **Go and Tell Them to Come and See**

So, if our objective is to call disciples, then the philanthropy method won't work. What will work? What did we learn from the parable of the banquet? God wants us to go out and compel them to do what? No, we are to compel them to *come in*. In where? Into God's household – the church. We don't just go tell them some information. We are not just reporting news to them. We are inviting them to become a body part in the body of Christ.

And again – this really helps us understand what methods we should use. If it is only a matter of getting them to say, “Yes, I’ll accept Jesus,” then hit-and-run evangelism will work fine. Get them to pray the prayer to invite Jesus in their heart, and off you go to the next prospect. But that pesky second half of the Great Commission – teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded – that is so much harder. It requires decades of ministry on a weekly basis from all the various parts of the body of Christ (all the spiritual gifts), countless sermons, hundreds and hundreds of hours of prayer, fellowship, one-on-one exhortation – all the various things that go on in the church. That requires the whole church.

It has been said that in the Old Testament it was more of a “come and see” religion, whereas now in the New Testament Christianity is a “go and tell” religion. That is true, but I think a more accurate statement is this– rather than “come and see” or “go and tell,” what we are called to do is “Go and tell them to come and see.” We need to go out and compel them to come into God’s house and participate in the banquet. Our task is not over when we just get them to accept Jesus. You haven’t finished evangelizing a person until that person is a functioning part of the body– a brick in the temple, a priest offering acceptable sacrifices, a steward in the household. Don’t tell me how many baptisms you have. Tell me how many steward/brick/priest/body parts have been added to the church.

So when it comes to methodology, any method that does not get people into church, we don’t support. If you are preaching on the street corner, that’s great if you are effectively getting people into the church. Otherwise, how is it accomplishing the Great Commission?

Same thing with missions. If we are trying to decide which missionaries to support, and one missionary is doing revival meetings moving from place to place, and another missionary is planting churches, we support the one planting churches, because churches are where disciples are made.

### ***Show Them the Glory***

So we are to go and tell them to come and see. Come and see what? Come and see how nice we are? Come and see our cool band? Come see how much free coffee we have? When we invite people in the world to come here, what are we inviting them to come and see? What is there to see in the sanctuary of God? Only one thing – God. The only thing there is to see in the sanctuary is the glory of God.

### **Psalm 63:2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.**

So we need to get them in church so they can see the glory of God. And that is another thing that tells us a lot about what methods we should use. The church-growth movement has tried to attract the world by making their services entertaining and amusing. Get a stand-up comedian as a pastor and show lots of movie clips and have a killer band, and you can fill a lot of seats. But filling seats is not our mission. Our mission is to fill seats with true worshippers. And how do we do that? By making sure that when they come here they have fun? No. We do it by making sure when they come here they are able to meet with God. Showcase the glory of God for them in an undistracted atmosphere. Our God-given mission is to be a temple – a place where a more profound encounter with God is available than anywhere else. If you want to solve the problem of church being boring, don’t go the direction of entertainment. Become a temple where the glory of God is present. The undrawn will still be bored, but those the Lord is drawing to Himself will be drawn all the more.

## **4) Go Fishing**

After last week’s message a couple of you asked about the urgency of this. If it is just a matter of the Father drawing people, does that mean we can adopt a relaxed, indifferent attitude about the lost?

“If God is drawing them – if the elect are predestined to be saved, they will come to Christ one way or another, so my involvement doesn’t really have any impact on whether anyone ends up saved or lost.”

Is that the attitude Scripture teaches us to have? Does our hard work make any difference in who is saved or lost? Paul sure seemed to think it did.

## Our Work Matters

**Romans 15:20 It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known ... 21 as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."**

That is very clear. He is saying, "I want to go tell them so they will see and understand." Implication: If I don't go, they won't see and understand. Paul acted like his work mattered. So did Jesus. Up before dawn, laboring hard at the work, and when He did finally decide to take a day off, when he got to His retreat area He saw the crowds, and saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd, and it moved His heart so he cancelled His day off and ministered to those people all day long. Any theological belief that you have that makes you less energetic and earnest about winning the lost is a perverted belief. Jesus said to His Apostles, "I will make you fishers of men." And when you think of a fisherman, don't think of someone kicking back on a lawn chair chewing on a piece of grass watching his bobber out there in the lake. These were commercial fishermen. They didn't use a rod and reel. They used nets, and it was a hard, labor-intensive, exhausting job. If you have ever seen the TV show "Deadliest Catch" – it is more like that kind of work than Andy Griffith and Opie walking down to the pond with their fishing poles. From the perspective of eternity, yes, it is all predestined. But from our human perspective, Scripture presents a picture where eternal destinies really are riding on what we do or fail to do.

## Be Persuasive

We need to be as persuasive as we can possibly be.

**2 Corinthians 5:11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men.**

The implication is clear – if we don't try to persuade them, they are less likely to be persuaded. So when you share the gospel, be as persuasive as you can. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. What is it like to be them? That is a great principle for those of you who love winning debates. Sometimes a Christian will get into it with an unbeliever and the debate turns really ugly. Especially when it is online. When you are not looking the person in the face, it is so easy to become caustic or sarcastic or biting in your words. And you find that all you are doing is trying to win the argument. You are saying things that might score points with a debate judge, but they do nothing to actually win the person over. All they do is anger the person and provoke him to dig in his heels. Remember, the goal is to win the heart, not the debate. We need to care about the person's soul. When people have a "take it or leave it" approach when they present the gospel, it is usually a sign that they really don't care that much about the person's soul.

Paul was not like that. He had an attitude that said, "I'll do whatever it takes to persuade them to believe."

**1 Corinthians 9:19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law ... so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law ...so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. 24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.**

When Paul went to Jerusalem he took a vow with some other men and paid all their expenses – just so the Jews would not see him as anti-Jewishness. He circumcised Timothy – just to avoid the possibility of people being needlessly offended. And again, the clear implication is that if he did not do those things, not as many people would be saved.



So one important principle for winning the lost is to become all things to all men. We don't want any unbeliever to be offended by anything but the gospel. Missionaries should operate as much as possible within the culture they are reaching. If dressing like them and speaking their language and eating their food and following their customs will make them more inclined to listen, do it. Now, if something about their culture is ungodly, obviously we can't adopt that. That would be compromise. And we do have an article in Resource Library on TreasuringGod.com about where you draw the line between contextualizing the gospel... (becoming all things to all men), and sinful compromise with the world. Some of our missional friends, who want to use foul language and hang out in bars, etc. in order to win the lost – they have crossed the line into compromise. But if it is not a moral issue, let's not put any stumbling blocks out there that aren't necessary because we need to do everything we possibly can to persuade them to come in.

**Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."**

If you have ever been in a farm town during harvest you know that the word "harvest" brings up one dominating feeling: urgency. If you don't work as hard as you can, you won't get the crop in in time. It can be destroyed by severe weather, it can be eaten by pests, or if you take too long it can go bad. From the moment that harvest gets ripe, the clock starts ticking, and it is a mad, frenzied rush of activity until it is all safely in the barn. That is how Jesus taught us to think about the harvest of souls. It is urgent.

Richard Baxter: "If you have the hearts of Christians, let them yearn toward your poor, ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Alas! There is but a step between them and death and hell. Many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate they are lost forever. Have you hearts of rock that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the Word of God and the danger of sinners then why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourselves to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned as long as you are saved? ...Doest thou live close by them or meet them in the streets or labor with them or travel with them or sit and talk with them and say nothing to them of their souls or the life to come? If their houses were on fire thou wouldst run to help them, and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell?"

**Benediction: Romans 16:25-27 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him- 27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.**

## **Application Questions (James 1:25)**

- 1) A Christian is one who comes to Christ as food and drink. When your soul is thirsty (empty, depressed, bored, restless, unfulfilled, dry), what earthly things are you most tempted to run to as water?
- 2) Our goal is to persuade people that Jesus is the greatest treasure. What kinds of things are most persuasive to your soul?