

**We should expect to harvest what we plant.**

“Let the one who is taught the word share all his good things with the teacher. 7 Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, 8 because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9 Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.” -- **Galatians 6:6-10** (CSB)

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Planting wildflowers in tree boxes in the city. Bringing beauty into chaos. So wonderful. But what fascinates me, is that when the secret gardeners drop seeds they have no idea what will sprout up.

Imagine a world where you never knew what the seed you planted would become. As if there was no way to know which seed would become an oak tree or a corn stalk. A tomato or a potato! Could you imagine how devastating that would be to our society? Talk about supply chain issues! We would revert to hunter gathers.

Thankfully, planting and harvesting, the cultivation of crops, doesn’t work that way. Seed science has removed much of the guessing game. And I think it is just that seed science has caught up with the spiritual reality of sowing and reaping. Spiritually, in all of life, we know what to expect at harvest depending on what we have planted. You reap what you sow.

Paul, giving final encouragement to those still clinging to the gospel rightly planted, reminds us that where we invest we will see dividends. Life or destruction, flourishing or languishing. And we can benefit from the conversation because each day for us is a decision of what we will sow and where we will grow.

“Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap,” -- **Galatians 6:7** (CSB)

It matters - where you invest, what you sow.

In our text there are three categories of sowing we want to wrestle with and ask what we are willing to sow. Honor; Life; & Opportunity.

## **Honor -**

When you determine to preach through Scripture and to say what the text says, you are occasionally stuck with truths you might not prefer. Those things that we think everyone just assumes and we could skip over it. Lest we be partially formed disciples of Jesus, let's take the whole thing.

Paul is clearly instructing the churches to pay their leaders, specifically their teachers. Those that communicate the gospel through the Word. Pay your pastors.

Who likes preaching on this?! We don't talk about money a lot at Reservoir, truth be told we should probably talk about it more, if we want to see more consistency and more mission unfold around us.

*Martin Luther* "I do not like to interpret such passages, for they seem to commend us (pastors), as in fact they do. In addition, it gives the appearance of greed if one emphasizes these things diligently to one's hearers."

You should know how we do finances at Reservoir. Our budget process is transparent and you can see where every dollar goes that we bring in. We have a finance team that advises the elders (tomorrow they present the 2022 budget). And a big portion of the budget is paying me. The goal is not to become rich but to provide for our family. But that money in the budget comes from somewhere, from Paul's pen, it is to be those that are taught, those that are part of the church.

More than just paying the pastor, I think what is at play here is honor. Honor entails reverence and respect along with adherence to a standard of conduct - a way of living.

The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of honor.

"Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another." -- **Romans 12:10** (CSB) 'Outdo one another in showing honor!'

Not to compare with one another but to give as a testament to what you have been given in Christ.

Baked into gospel culture is an honoring that includes providing for those that teach. And it's not unique to Galatians.

“The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” -- **1 Timothy 5:17** (CSB)

“If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it too much if we reap material benefits from you? 12 If others have this right to receive benefits from you, don't we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right; instead, we endure everything so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Don't you know that those who perform the temple services eat the food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the offerings of the altar? 14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel.” -- **1 Corinthians 9:11-14** (CSB)

“When it is in your power, don't withhold good from the one to whom it belongs.” -- **Proverbs 3:27** (CSB)

But it is always a sticky conversation. Even in these descriptions Paul, who is usually known for being blunt - especially in Galatians - is seemingly hesitant. “Share all good things..”

I share his hesitancy. The Lord has provided for us through your partnership with the church and we are so grateful. We don't always have what our flesh might desire, but we are not naive to the gifts we have been given. I have been stubborn in rejecting increases... and you should know that is because I want to see Reservoir increase in other ways.

I long for us to be able to expand our teaching and training ministry. To serve more of the forgotten in our city - to provide deeper spiritual care to this family of faith. But when we face budget decisions with around a 15% decline in giving compared to last year... we are left to ponder how the vision must change or how we have missed what we are called to as a body.

When it comes to the church we are all socialists - we want all the benefits but we don't want to have to pay for it. Me included!

It is a hard pill to swallow, but here it is - how you spend reveals your priorities. Our giving shows what we value.

And this isn't just about Reservoir... It's not ultimately about the one who teaches. It's about God, to whom you and I both will ultimately answer. Honoring and pleasing him ought to be our chief concern.

It isn't a negative thing or even a burden, but a freedom, a gospel-formed generosity because of what we have been given. A responsive way of living recognizing what is healthy and what won't satisfy. Giving back what we have received.

At the base it is about honoring God - his commanded way of life for those that are his. He won't be mocked.

“The point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each person should do as he has decided in his heart — not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.” -- **2 Corinthians 9:6-8** (CSB)

This flows directly from and back into who reigns in our life.

**Life -**

“because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.” -- **Galatians 6:8** (CSB)

Continuing the flesh and Spirit distinction, and pairing it with generosity, Paul is painting a picture of life surrendered to Christ. And when we get this piece right, the generosity will flow, everything else will be ordered, priorities will match Christ's.

The call of the gospel is to live with a new King, instead of self-as-ruler. One way leads to destruction or corruption and one reaps eternal life. You harvest what you plant. Your return depends on what you have invested.

We've encountered the bad fruit already in our study.

“Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things — as I warned you before — that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” -- **Galatians 5:19-21** (CSB)

In a world that says - if you want it, go for it. If you feel it, let it define you. Get yours, run after every desire. And it leads to destruction - read up on the disgusting use of puberty blockers in children based on a feeling... ruinous.

The flesh and Spirit distinction is the trouble of this age, and every age. It is the root of the fad of deconstruction. It is self over God. Self-divinity over the Sovereign of the universe.

Since I have already talked about money, let's talk about sex.

There is a reason sexual immorality is top of the list. And I would argue that deconstruction, departing from the faith, redefining God - all finds its root here.

Sexuality is deeply tied to our view and pursuit of self.

That which is meant to be a beautiful, sacrificial picture of the gospel, has been cheapened to temporary pleasure and conquest. And the voices calling you to run after that are loud and prevalent - increasingly present in the church.

For a couple of weeks I have started the day with two bits of Scripture. One about the Spirit being breathed on us... and this from 1 Thessalonians.

“Additionally then, brothers and sisters, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received instruction from us on how you should live and please God — as you are doing — do this even more.

2 For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, 4 that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God. 6 This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you. 7 For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness. 8 Consequently, anyone who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit." -- **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8** (CSB)

God's will for those that belong to Jesus is sanctification. Being transformed and becoming more like Christ. And key in that is avoiding sexual immorality. Called to holiness. It is about choosing the flesh over God.

The question in following Jesus - sowing to the Spirit - is what are we willing to surrender in our pursuit of Him?

What we sow is either an acceptance or rejection of the grace of God to us. When it comes to surrender, anything less than everything is opposition to the way of the kingdom.

A dear friend's church is doing a series called 1%, an invitation to give just 1% of their lives to Jesus. And though I know it is a bait and switch, it is funny that it would be appealing to so many of us.

Jesus can have my Sunday mornings (at least two a month). He can have maybe even ten percent of my income, and a weeknight for small group. But I draw the line at my fantasy, my greed, my politics, my perspectives on what it means to love my neighbor... and it reaps destruction... it really does.

Listen, Christianity is not a joke or an association to take lightly.

"If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. 20 Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If

they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.” -- **John 15:18-20** (CSB)

“I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.” -- **John 16:33** (CSB)

It is denying ourselves - taking up our cross - for something far better than the flesh’s corrupting fruit. For life, for transformation, for the experience of the presence of God in our lives.

“Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. 17 For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 18 So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” -- **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** (CSB)

**C.S. Lewis**, “The Weight of Glory,” - “The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire.” The desire for life...

Sowing to the Spirit, following the Spirit’s guidance, submitting to His truth, is the way of Jesus, it is meant to be our way. The way of eternal life.

“Don’t be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he’ll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God’s Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life.”

**Galatians 6:7-8 MSG**

Planting to the Spirit, to his leading and empowerment is life. Friends, recognize that is good. It is what our souls most desire and where we will find ourselves complete, whole, thriving in the love of God.

Invest in the Spirit-driven life!

When we understand honor, and give our life to this, then we will see the mission as meaningful and good.

## **Opportunity -**

I was going to label this category as obedience but I know how that rubs some of us wrong! This has been severe enough!

“Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up.” -- **Galatians 6:9** (CSB)

There is reward to be had, a harvest at the proper time. And it will all be worth it.

And we will experience it as we live into the opportunities we are given to honor God and others, to stay in step with the Spirit. Sticking with it because it is what we are meant for.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.” -- **Galatians 6:10** (CSB)

Jason Sedekis on SNL: Expressing alarm at the success of Ted Lasso because it is about two things Americans hate, soccer and kindness...

The ultimate kindness, working for the good of all. Being a redemptive influence wherever the Lord has put us. Longing and living for the renewal of others and all things. That people would meet and believe in Jesus, that the least would be cared for, that our neighbors and enemies would be loved. This is the mission of the church.

...correct teaching enabled by the Spirit produces life and good works. A true understanding of grace working through faith will result in good works.

This is us jumping on opportunities to give ourselves away for the good of someone else. This might even be harder than giving away money! It is our time, our energy, our experience. But it is exactly what the gospel produces in us.

“Of all” here is broad on purpose. But it is also paired with priority.



“The local church, then, must be our top priority. Why? Because it is our primary family; it is, the apostle says, “the household of faith.” It is where we find identity and security, receive nurture and nourishment, get encouragement and support, benefit from teaching and training, modeling and mentoring, discipline and discipleship. The local church is our spiritual home, and those who gather week by week are, Biblically speaking, our true brothers and sisters... Here’s the bottom line. We’ll prioritize giving to the local church when we’re convinced the local church is the one-of-a-kind institution it truly is. Remember, Jesus is the head of no other institution and claims no other institution as his body (Colossians 1:18). No other institution serves as the dwelling place for God or the residence of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:21,22). There is no other institution that has so remarkable or far-reaching a history, tracing its roots back to before the foundations of the world (Ephesians 1:4). Nor is there any other institution with the church’s future, extending as it does into eternity. Nor is there any other institution as global in scope or diverse in membership. We won’t find any other institution that’s easier to enter, yet so impossible to forsake once we’ve truly joined. And let’s not forget the spiritual benefits of belonging to this unique institution: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” Todd Wilson

“As Jesus made clear (Matt. 6:33), the Christian’s primary allegiance is to the kingdom of God, with God as our Heavenly Father, rather than to friends, the workplace, school, sports, or to anything else, even earthly families.” It’s not a rejection of those things or relationships, but a commitment to something higher.

It is where the Spirit leads, it is for the good of the family Christ has bought with his own blood.

We are not at a loss for opportunity and we are given this family to prioritize. It paints the picture the world will see. It is the image of humanity remade for the glory of Christ and for our good.

We do it all because we are headed somewhere - and this is the way we travel home. Those who trust in Jesus for salvation, live to honor, give their lives, and meet opportunities with obedience for the good of all. Becoming graciously generous because we have been lavished with grace and this way of living looks like Jesus.

Remember Jesus. His entire life was devoted to sowing to the Spirit and not the flesh - indeed, every single moment of every single day. And he was sustained by constantly keeping his eyes fixed on “the joy that was set before him” (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus honors, gives his life, and takes the ultimate opportunity to do astonishing good.

Christ is the great burden bearer who out of his own wealth shares all good things with spiritually impoverished sinners like you and me. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.” -- **2 Corinthians 8:9** (CSB)

His love is not poured out as a return on investment. It is poured out to motivate our investment. Be free of guilt today. And come with renewed determination to live the way of Jesus. No longer for self, but for his sake.

Because he gave his life for us, we can live into new life by the Spirit. Because we are approved of in Christ, we can extend care to others in need of rescue. Because we experience wave upon wave of grace in life we can pour back all of who we are in the sowing.

**We should expect to harvest what we plant.** May it be honor, life, and opportunity.

‘For we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up...’

What a glorious day that will be! When we discover that what we reap is completely out of proportion to what we’ve sown. The sacrifices we’ve made in this life will appear small, even to the point of insignificance, on that great and majestic day!

If you plant corn you will not reap watermelon. If you plant potatoes you will not harvest tomatoes. Thanks be to God!

Take the risk, trust God, for the good of all and his glory.