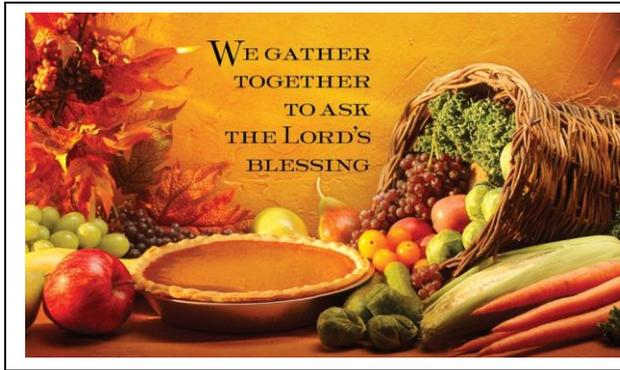


'The Prayer 20/20 Impact' - Come Ye Thankful People, Come and Pray! November 15th, 2020

Dear Praying Friends, and Partners In Prayer Team, and whole Church Family,



*“Do not fret because of those who are evil
or be envious of those who do wrong;
for like the grass they will soon wither,
like green plants they will soon die away.
Trust in the Lord and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
Take delight in the Lord,
and He will give you the desires of your
heart.”*

Psalm 37:1-4 (NIV)

So, what are the five ways to get rid of your pastor? You may be wondering if this really is a sincere question. I assure you it is! I am going to give you the answer to this question at the close of my Partners.

Last week I shared that I had a moment when I was talking to a friend in Bedminster who farms his property. When I asked him what he needed most and how I could pray for him, he replied, “Just pray that we have dry enough weather to finish harvesting the crops of corn and soybeans.” I marvel that God has been giving us a wonderful trend for the last week of good warm weather. I was struck by the fact that it would be so hard to be a farmer. Why? Because you don't have a constant monthly salary. You have to invest your money on buying, planting a crop, and then tending those fields until you get to harvest. When the crop is reaped and taken to the mills and markets, you finally get your whole years' salary in that one bounty. What if you have a bad year of weather? What if there are floods, or drought? What if there are pests and the fields are attacked by blight? It would mean one must be a praying man or woman of faith to have to depend on the Lord for a profit and payoff enough to support your family, and replant for the following year. Would we have enough faith?



This caused me to look for various biblical lessons from farming this week. I just want to share three of them with you, and then make an application to prayer as a church.

1. Learn the value of generosity. Galatians 6:9 cautions that what you plant you will someday reap. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:7-9). If you only cast a small amount of seed, you can’t expect the harvest to be huge. We need to remember not to give up. We don’t just start praying for our church and then give up. Like a farmer who continually works the land, and reseeds, we need to be people of prayer and committed to dependency. We must be looking to God to give us our “daily bread.” We need to be generous in our prayer for our church.

Farming teaches us that in every task, be it be big or small, once it has been started we should give our best and not leave the task undone. Working around the farm requires us to give our 100% since we work around living things that require care and attention that in turn nurture and sustain us. When you put seed in the ground, you’re still a long way from harvest. Different crops take a different amount of time to come to fruition. Different conditions, like weather, affect the time of harvest. But harvest is always the goal. Why do you keep planting seed, the seed of Scripture in the fields of evangelism or the seed of service in others’ lives or the seed of spiritual fruit in sometimes infertile fields? Because harvest time is coming and the Lord will sort things out then (Mat. 13:30, 39).

2. Stay grounded and humble, remembering to keep praying and working. Touching the soil and witnessing life grow from it grounds and humbles us. We may already be successful individuals with shinier shoes and taller heels, but farming always reminds us to remove our shoes and be one with nature – the source of all life. There’s always that great feeling of humility when we touch the earth. Jesus said in Matthew 13:1-9, “That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then He told them many things in parables, saying: ‘A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear’” (Matthew 13:1-9). What was Jesus doing? He was reminding us that when we sow any number of events can occur. We must humbly rely on His working. We can’t stand over people

whom God has planted his “Word” in, and try to make it grow. The Holy Spirit can only do that.

Also according to Matthew 9:37, “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.’” We must be willing to work. That takes humility. Notice that the Lord didn’t ask us to be missionaries, but He did ask us to pray for workers. So we need to pray continually that God will work in hearts at our church.

3. Great things take time! As with all things about life, there are many circumstances that just seem to be beyond our control. Farming teaches us that there may be better things in store after the storm, after all, every season yields different results. But as we learn to accept little disappointments in life and be patient, we realize that there may be a bigger reason as to why the original plan did not work out and that maybe, a bigger outcome is in store for us.



Farming teaches us patience. Patience to accept what was, what is and what will be. And if we ever fail, patience also teaches us to start and wait all over again. In James 5:7-8, he writes, “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.”

It’s interesting that James is urging us to be patient with each other as fellow Christians. Just read the rest of the chapter and it reads like an instruction manual for dealing with the internal problems we can have as a congregation of God’s people. This patience has duration—until the coming of the Lord. Stay patient as long as you live or until Christ comes again, whichever comes first.

The farmer waits. Patience almost always involves waiting. Delayed gratification without the delay is something completely different. Sometimes waiting is necessary and it helps us develop character, if we let it. We have to fight that part of human nature that makes us impatient. These brethren in verse seven were being mistreated by rich, unfair brethren, and it apparently was hard on them to wait for justice to be served. But James says, “You just need to wait.

God will ultimately make things right.” That is sage counsel for us in so many areas of life, to “hang on and let God work in His time.”

The farmer waits for what brings harvest. There are necessary conditions. James mentions the early and latter rains. In Palestine, farmers counted on the autumn and spring rains. Both were essential. There are going to be necessary conditions throughout our Christian lives. In the short-term and long-term, we will endure and experience things that help get us to harvest. See the blessings and the challenges of life as necessities which can help us go to heaven.

Since we are studying and praying for a spiritual harvest to our prayers during the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving, we have been calling our people back to worship in the presence of the Lord. We need to pray for the salvation of souls. We need to pray for the seeds of the Gospel to be sown at all times. We need to pray expecting Christ to come!

4. When you do receive a harvest, don't forget the thanks! It's common to think that life is a series of hills and valleys, filled with good times and bad times that don't intermix. But that's not how life works—and it's not how ministry works either. There will never be a time in the life of your ministry when everything is good or everything is bad. No matter how healthy your church is, you will always have an area that needs to grow. And no matter how stressful ministry gets, you will always have something to thank God for.

The Bible tells us, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NKJV). Notice the Bible doesn't tell us to thank God for everything. We're told to thank God in everything. There's a big difference between the two. You don't need to thank God for everything. You don't have to thank God for cancer or someone's death.

But you can be thankful for something at all times. You can always find a blessing in your ministry—and in your life in general—to be grateful for. In fact, God includes gratitude in the Bible's classic text on overcoming stress in Philippians 4. When we're stressed and worried about something in life, the Bible says to “ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart” (Philippians 4:6 GNT).

Grateful people are less stressed. It's hard to be stressed and grateful at the same time. Gratitude gets your eyes off of yourself and puts them onto others. Instead of looking at what you don't have, look at what you do have. That choice always leads to less stress and greater joy.

Each week I've been looking up an old hymn that would inspire us to the prayer harvest. I love learning the story behind those songs. When I looked up

the song: “We Gather Together”, I was shocked to find out that it wasn’t originally a song about harvest or Thanksgiving. Look at the words:

***“We gather together to ask the Lord’s blessing;
He chastens and hastens His will to make known.
The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing.
Sing praises to His name; He forgets not His own.”***

I have always thought of “We Gather Together” as a Thanksgiving Day hymn—a harvest festival hymn. However, when I learned its history, I wondered if I had misread it—perhaps I was the only person who thought of it that way. So I googled it and found that others associate it with Thanksgiving Day too. But its origins are hardly harvest festival. And while it is a hymn of praise to God for blessings received, the words “Thanks” and “Thanksgiving” appear nowhere in its verses.



The story begins with Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor. He had been born in The Netherlands (Holland), and his empire included The Netherlands. Charles and his son, King Philip II, considered it their duty to eradicate Protestantism, which had established a strong foothold in The Netherlands. In 1556 (two years before his death), Charles gave Philip II rule over Spain and the Low Countries (Holland and Belgium).

In 1566, Dutch Protestants staged a minor rebellion in which they stormed Catholic churches to destroy statues, which they considered to be idolatrous. Philip responded by sending the Duke of Alba (Don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo y Pimentel) to restore order. The Duke proved both decisive and violent. He executed a number of Dutch Protestants for fomenting rebellion, and even executed Catholics who had been guilty of tolerating Protestantism. This provoked further rebellion, to which the Duke responded by executing many more people.

In 1568, William of Orange, a Protestant leader, led a revolt against the Duke of Alba in the hope of ridding the Low Countries of this scourge and setting the stage for reconciliation with Philip. However, his effort failed. Heavy taxation led to further rebellion. Philip replaced the Duke of Alba with Luis de Requesens, who took a more moderate approach. However, Spain had overextended itself and was unable to pay its soldiers, which led to mutiny and chaos. In 1576, Spanish soldiers captured Antwerp and killed 8,000 citizens.

Then in 1585, Spanish soldiers re-captured Antwerp, executing large numbers of people and sending many thousands into exile. But Spain was weakened by the loss of many ships in a disastrous campaign against England in 1588, and

that led to a period of relative peace in Holland—a peace that ushered in Holland’s Golden Age.

This hymn was written near the end of the 16th century (some say 1597) to acknowledge that turbulent past and to look to a better future:

- “We gather together to ask the Lord’s blessing” acknowledges their need—a need made apparent by the suffering they had undergone.
- “He chastens” alludes to the events just past.
- “The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing” alludes to the violence of the Spanish soldiers— a violence now stilled.
- “He forgets not his own” is a tribute of praise to God for allowing them to emerge triumphant from their turbulent history.

The hymn was published and Edward Kremser discovered it in 1877, translated it into Latin, and published it in Vienna in 1877. The hymn tune usually associated with this hymn, Kremser, is named in his honor. In 1894, Theodore Baker translated the hymn into English for his employer, G. Shirmer, Inc., a major New York music publishing house. It came to America and was published in 1908 as a “Thanksgiving” song. In many hymnals, “We Gather Together” appears as a Thanksgiving hymn. Perhaps this is because of the opening line and the general idea that God is with us regardless of our circumstances. However, the hymn speaks more about God’s providence throughout the trials of life. The story behind this hymn clarifies its text.

The United Methodist Hymnal has placed this hymn in the “Providence” section rather than with other traditional Thanksgiving hymns, broadening its use for thanksgiving during any difficult times. So we have ourselves witnessed difficult times. We are hopefully in the last days of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and we have yet to see what will happen as a result of the recent elections in our country. But what better time to come to church and regather with other believers. Are we praying for a harvest?

So, how does one get rid of your pastor? I found this in the August 18, 2020 issue of *Fishwrapper* on page 9. I didn’t create it, but it really is a wonderful and telling message. So what are the five ways to get rid of your pastor?

1. Sit up front, smile and say “Amen” every time he says something good. He will preach himself to death.

2. Pat him on the back and tell him what a good work he is doing. Encourage him so much about the good work he is doing in the church and in the community. He will work himself to death.

3. Increase your giving and offering to the church. He will suffer from the shock.

4. Tell him you've decided to join the visitation group and help win souls for the Lord. He will probably suffer a heart attack.

5. Get the whole church to band together and pray for him. He will get so efficient that some other church will hear about him and give him a call. That will take him off your hands.

Seriously, that would be the greatest way for you all to get rid of a pastor. Try it sometime. Do know I love you all and wouldn't take any of this personally. Or would I?

Pray with me,

“Father, we say kneeling before You today, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing’ (Eph. 1:3). We come as a people who desperately need to see You with clear vision. We need to behold Your majestic glory and feel our smallness; we need to gaze upon Your awesome holiness and feel our sinfulness; we need to see Jesus’ humble self-offering at the cross and feel how truly loved we are! O, how You love us! O, be our delight! Help us live out our love with cartwheels of action and obedience. Help us expect and plant seeds of Your word, and pray for a spiritual harvest these days before Thanksgiving at PCBC. How free and generous is Your grace. Even in our weakest moments, or facing our hardest trials, You support us with Your righteous right hand! Holy Spirit, hold fast to us. Melt our hearts with the powerful love shown to us at the cross. Fill our minds with its glory and attach our souls to the truths that we’ve heard today. Hold us up, so we don’t fall time and time again. Give us faith. Transform our hearts by the renewing of our minds. Have Your way within us according to Your own good pleasure, as a potter shapes the clay for His own purposes. We thank You! We ask in the Name of our Only Wise God and Savior, to whom be glory forever and ever, we pray, Amen.”

***Delighting in my heart with cartwheels,
Pastor Corvin <><***

Quote: "O daughter of Zion, for the Lord is King forever and ever, hallelujah, hallelujah! Every attribute of God should become a fresh ray in this sunlight of delight. That He is wise should make us glad who know our folly. That He is mighty should cause us to rejoice who tremble at our own weakness. That He is everlasting should always be a theme for our music, when we know that we are grass, and wither as the

green herb. That He is unchanging should always give us a song, since we change every hour and are never long the same. That He is full of grace, that He is overflowing with it, and that this divine grace in the covenant He has given to us, that it is ours, ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to heaven—all this should tend to make us delight ourselves in Him! Oh, believers, you stand today by a deep river; you perhaps have waded into it up to your ankles, and you know something of its clear, sweet, heavenly streams, but onward the depth is greater, and the current more delightful still. Come, take a plunge! Now, plunge into the Godhead's deepest sea! Lose yourself in His immensity. Let His attributes cover up all your weakness, and all your folly, and everything else that can make you groan, and fill you with despondency. Rejoice in Him, though you cannot rejoice in yourselves! Triumph in the God of Israel, though in yourselves you have cause enough for despair! Oh, brothers and sisters, time would fail us, eternity might fail us, indeed, to catalog all the different points of holy delight which believers, when they are in a spiritual frame of mind, may find in the Lord their God! You should delight yourselves in God the Father, in His eternal love to you when there was nothing in you to love, in His election of your soul, in His justification of you in Christ, in the giving up of His only begotten Son to redeem you from hell! You should delight yourselves in Jesus, you should— 'Tell what His arm has done, What spoils from death He won! Sing His dear name alone, Worthy the Lamb!' (Hymn) ... You should delight yourselves in God the Holy Spirit, in His quickening operations, in His illuminations, in His consolations, in the strength which He gives you, in the wisdom which He imparts to you, in the faithfulness with which He attends to you, and in the certainty that He will ultimately perfect you, that you may be met to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light!"

Charles Spurgeon, "Sunshine in the Heart" Sermon #454 pg. 4)

