

The Harvest

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Henry Moorhouse preached one evening on the love of God. In the meeting was a rough, wicked coal miner who had a vile temper, was a heavy drinker, and when drunk mistreated his wife and children. His name was Ike Miller. Moorhouse was notified that Ike Miller was attending the meeting and that many were praying that he would be saved. Moorhouse preached his heart out, but Ike Miller didn't respond. Instead, he went straight out the door after the meeting and disappeared. Those who were anxious for Miller's salvation told Moorhouse that he had failed to touch the town's biggest sinner.

But what those men did not know and what Moorhouse learned later was that Ike Miller had gone straight home. He had kissed his wife and tenderly gathered his two children into his arms—something he had not done for years—and sobbing, he prayed a prayer that his mother had taught him. It was his prayer of salvation. It went like this:

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to thee.”

It's amazing what the message of the Gospel can do when we faithfully share it with others. There is power in the message of the Gospel. There is wonder-working power in the truth of the Gospel message. It is still “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel can convict, save souls, and change their lives forever! In this study, we want to focus on the harvest of lost souls that is ready for reaping. Jesus compared people to a harvest that was in need of reaping.

There is a harvest of souls that need to be reached!

There are four questions we must answer about the harvest.

1. What is the message of the harvest?



Jesus spoke about the harvest during His earthly ministry and gave us a clear message and outline regarding the spiritual harvest or lost souls.

Luke 10:2-3: “Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but

the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.”

Jesus gives a fourfold message about the harvest.

- a. There is a dire need (harvesting the souls of men).

Jesus said, “the harvest truly is great.” Of course, Jesus was referring to the souls of lost people and how many were not prepared for eternity. We can look around today and see how the vast majority of people are not saved and how they need to express faith in Jesus Christ before its everlastingly too late. The seventy were told to prepare the way for Messiah’s entrance into a city or region by sharing the truth that He was the Messiah and Savior. The dire need was obvious. People are going to hell. If they die without being harvested, they will be burned as chaff in the fires of eternal hell.

Luke 3:17

“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.”

This is the terrible fate of the lost. It’s a horrible ending while at the same time an eternal beginning of misery and suffering in the fires of hell. Jesus

never softened His teaching about hell. Those who are not harvested become like chaff that will be burned or judged by God's righteous wrath and anger.

Jude 1:22-23 speaks of two separate actions with two different people:

"And of some have compassion (those who are saved and somewhat confused about the truth but are still teachable and reachable – they need encouragement – not criticism), making a difference: And others (those who are in more danger are the unsaved who are overcome by their heretical and apostate teachings) save with fear (an attitude of caution so we do not trap ourselves in false doctrine), pulling them (snatching) out of the fire (the fire of hell as in verse 7); hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (despising their personal habits and practices, speech, companions, etc. which can potentially corrupt us)

Remember that angel took Lot by the hand and pulled or snatched him out of Sodom (Gen. 19:16) and in one sense we must always be ready to rescue people from hell by sharing the Gospel with the unsaved. You may be the only hope for some people. You may be their final chance to be saved. Can we really sit back on our chairs of ease and see them go to hell? Where is our heart? Where is our concern?

"Someday you'll hear God's Final Call to you
To take his offer of salvation true-
This could be it my friend if you but knew-
God's Final Call, God's Final Call.

If you reject God's Final Call of grace,
You'll have no chance your footsteps to retrace
All hope will then be gone and doom you'll face.
O hear his call! God's Final Call."

b. There is a desperate void (the laborers for this task are few).

Jesus said, "the labourers are few" (Luke 10:2). This is because we who are Christians are not really listening and obeying God's call. Maybe it is because we want to live in our comfort zones and our ecclesiastical castles. God needs to speak to our hearts once again about greater outreach to

those who are around us and lost. God is not looking for spectators; He is looking for laborers!

“The harvest white, with reapers few is wasting
And many souls will die and never know
The love of Christ, the joy of sins forgiven.
Oh let us weep and love and pray and go!

Today we reap, or miss our golden harvest!
Today is given us lost souls to win.
Oh then to save some dear ones from the burning.
Today we’ll go to bring some sinner in.”

c. There is a distinct prayer (sending forth laborers).

The prayer is that servants would be sent into the harvest as they obey the sending orders of the Master (“that he would send forth labourers into the harvest”). Are we willing to be part of the answer to this prayer? The need is always greater than the supply of workers. In praying for laborers, we must be willing to go ourselves. This is the obvious point. Notice the progression of thought between praying (vs. 2) and going (“go your ways” - vs. 3). Are we willing to go into the harvest today and be part of the answer to our prayers? Our prayer should be this:

“Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,
And love that soul through me;
And may I humbly do my part
To win that soul for Thee.”

What have we been doing in the area of evangelism? Are we witnessing to people in our neighborhood? Have we been talking to people about eternity? What are we doing to bring in the harvest? Our prayer should be that God would lead us to a soul today and that God would open a door for witness.

d. There is a dangerous path (lambs among wolves).

Jesus said that their path would be filled with danger (“send you forth as lambs among wolves” – vs. 3). The disciples of Jesus were sent forth into a hostile environment. They would be like defenseless lambs among wolves. In other words, they would be open to danger. They could not expect to be treated royally by the world (“Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you” – Luke 16:26). Instead of being treated kindly they would rather be persecuted and perhaps even killed.

When we go out into the real world there are wolves waiting to devour us with their criticism, their cantankerous spirits, and their carnal diversions from the Gospel. We must remember that we are going out among the wolves who are haters of Christ and Christianity. Our calling can sometimes be a dangerous one. This is what Jesus is telling His disciples. When we go out, we are invading enemy territory (Luke 10:17 – “the devils”). Any man who takes Jesus Christ seriously becomes the target of the devil. When you set out to do greater witnessing for the Lord you can be sure that the devil is going to challenge you and your ministry. Paul said, “there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9).

Vance Havner often told audiences:

“Most church members do not give Satan enough trouble to arouse his opposition.”

Nevertheless, when we do set out to do greater outreach for the Lord, the devil will be there trying to throw a monkey wrench into our efforts. But let us remember this. We are victors over the enemy! Through Christ we can win the battle and have already won the battle through Jesus Christ. Although we do not possess apostolic authority, the spiritual lesson of Luke 10:17 (“the devils are subject unto us”) is that through Christ we are victors! We don’t have to fear the enemy for “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). We are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37).

f. There is a divine intervention (“the Lord of the harvest”).

As we go, we must remember that God is “Lord of the harvest” (Luke 10:2). God is the true Soul Winner! We are not in charge of the reaping – God is!

1 Corinthians 3:5-7

“Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? (*human vessels that God uses as instruments to share the Gospel with others*) I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth (*when it comes to the actual salvation and transformation of a person*); but God that giveth the increase” (*divine intervention is needed for salvation to occur*).

Apollos and Paul were servants through whom the Corinthians had come to believe in the Lord Jesus. They were simply the agents that God used. The Bible says “even as the Lord gave to every man” which means that somewhere in the preparation for a person’s salvation, someone was used of God as an agent to point them to Christ. Maybe they left a Gospel tract in a bathroom, and someone picked it up, read it, and was saved because of their evangelistic outreach. The Bible teaches that there is always someone that is in the chain that leads to a sinner coming to Christ.

I want us to think of that person who shared with you the simple Gospel message and how you were saved as a result of their witness. Just think back for a few moments. Will you not be eternally grateful to that person who gave you that tract, who witnessed to you, who wrote that book, who stopped by and shared the message of Christ with you? If so, you should be ready to do the same for some other poor lost soul who is going to hell. You should be willing to reach out to them as someone reached out to you.

It’s not too late to witness to those who are lost. The harvest is still ripe. Let us go out into the harvest and be part of the answer to seeing souls saved. We can all do something. We must do something. We can share the message of Christ with others even as others have shared the Gospel message with us.

“What if someone had not shared that Jesus paid for sin?
What if someone has not shared the love grown deep within?
Just for once I met a person who really showed to me,
He cared for my condition, as I faced eternity.

What if someone had not shared with me the simple Gospel plan?
God, please bless that one who shared with me,
Lord, please bless that man.
Please help me now to tell the lost,
To share the Gospel faithfully.
Lord, please help me to speak truth and love with your simplicity.”

Romans 10:13-15 speaks of the importance of human messengers:
“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

God has sent us out to be heralds of the good news of the Gospel message. When doing so, God says we have beautiful feet. This is a figure of speech for those who obey the Great Commission and share Christ with others. Most times our feet are stinky, in need of washing, and they are not the most beautiful part of our bodies. I know that women like to beautify their feet with nail polish, but this is not the type of good-looking feet Paul was talking about. A person is said to have beautiful feet when they take the Gospel to others and invite them to place faith in Christ.

Yes, every lost sinner needs a messenger who obeys the Great Commission to go into the harvest and share the Gospel. But ultimately, we are reminded that when it comes to the salvation of souls, it is God who gives the increase! We are merely the vessels that God uses.

Jesus taught in John 6:44:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

This means that we might plant the seed of the Gospel and someone else may water it, but ultimately and always, it's God who does the saving. Let us never forget this. We might think we have some good soul-winning

techniques, but God is the one who breaks through the blindness of the mind and callousness of the heart.

“He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.”

So today, some of us can preach the word, others can leave a tract behind, and all of us can pray for unsaved relatives and friends, but the actual work of salvation can only be done by the Lord. He is in charge of the harvest. If souls are going to be saved, we need to remember who the true Soul Winner is! We must submit our evangelism efforts to the power of God and the Gospel.

2. How should we react to the harvest?

Jesus spoke about the harvest many times during His earthly ministry. Christ’s reaction toward this harvest of humanity is important for us to see. We need to have the same reaction toward this harvest of lost souls.

- a. We must see the harvest.

Mark 6:33-34

“And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.”

Sheep without a shepherd are lost, thirsty, hungry, exhausted, and exposed to the dangers of wild animals all around them. Jesus viewed lost humanity as sheep without a shepherd, who were spiritually starving and hurting people, in danger of being devoured by false teachers. The lost spiritual condition of people stirred the soul of Jesus Christ. His heart was deeply moved when He saw people who were in such dreadful spiritual condition.

The Bible says that Jesus “saw much people.” Jesus had eyes for the world. He saw people in their lost spiritual condition and need for salvation. We must also see the desperate need of people and have a vision for seeing people saved. Some of us have lost our eyes for the world of unsaved humanity! We do not see the lonely faces of people passing us by. These are people who are in desperate need of salvation. If we want to be more like Jesus, we will begin to see the world as Jesus sees it, through the eyes of compassion and love.

Looking Through His Eyes

“Let me see this world, dear Lord,
As though I were looking through Your eyes.
A world of men who don’t want You Lord,
But a world for which You died.
Let me kneel with You in the garden,
Blur my eyes with tears of agony;
For if once I could see this world the way You see,
I just know I’d serve You more faithfully.

Let me see this world, dear Lord,
Through Your eyes when men mock Your Holy Name.
When they beat You and spat upon You, Lord,
Let me love them as You loved them just the same.
Let me stand high above my petty problems,
And grieve for men, hell bound eternally;
For if once I could see this world the way You see,
I just know I’d serve You more faithfully.”

I wonder what kind of compassion we have expressed toward lost people recently. We live in a “do it yourself” kind of society that is pushing the old principle of “me, myself and I.” Have we lost our eyes for a world that is headed toward a Christless eternity in hell? God would want you and me to be a “world Christian.” No, I did not say a worldly Christian, but a world Christian. It’s the type of Christian that is interested in the souls of lost people who are dying all around him and going into eternity without salvation.

Far too often we are not as people centered as we should be. We move through our everyday life and have our eyes only on the TV screen, cell phone, computer, homes, or our new car or camper. We are only interested in our own agenda in life. We must get our eyes off the material and put them on the spiritual. The spiritual need of a lost and dying world must begin to be noticed by you and me. That is why we need to be active soul winners today in our everyday life. We should be talking to people about the Lord and handing out tracts. This is also why we support missionaries and why we attempt a large evangelism outreach during our annual fair ministry. We need to have eyes for the world of lost people.

Perhaps you recall the story of a man who distributed tracts for many years on a street corner. Finally, seeing no visible results, he gave up. When he returned to the same spot two years later, he saw another individual handing out Gospel leaflets as he had done. Striking up a conversation, he discovered that the man had become a Christian through a salvation tract given him on that corner about two years before. The convert added, "Many times I've come back here to find that earnest worker and thank him, but he never returned. I decided he must have died, and so I've taken his place!" The first man suddenly realized that his work had not been in vain. The problem was that in a very real sense he had died. He died as a faithful witness for Christ.

Mark 6:34

"And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things."

Where are your eyes these days? Where is your focus in life? You need to readjust your spiritual eyeglasses and vision if you are not interested in the lost. Churches that lose their eyes for the world become out of focus and lose their purpose for existence in this world.

Matthew 9:36-37 records the same truth:

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous,

but the labourers *are* few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”

On this occasion, Jesus once again has eyes for the harvest (“saw the multitudes”) but once again confirms the sad reality that “the labourers are few.” The reason we are not going into the harvest is because we are not taking the time to see the multitudes around us, their spiritual condition and plight without Christ, and their need for salvation.

There are many Christians who have lost their vision for seeing people saved and therefore are not willing to go and tell them about the Savior and salvation. This is probably a true assessment of the vast majority in the church today. My friend, are we willing to be part of the answer for a world that is dying and going to hell? Are you willing to walk out into the fields and see that the harvest that is ready to be picked? What have you been doing to help in the harvesting of lost souls? Are your eyes, heart, and compassion extended to the lost? We need to refocus today. There is the desperate need to have eyes for lost people. At one point during His earthly journey Jesus “looked up, and saw him” (Luke 19:5), the sinner Zacchaeus, standing in the tree. Jesus had eyes for the world. He could even see lost sinners standing in the trees!

John 4:35

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”



Jesus said that the physical time for harvest is yet four months away. However, the time for the spiritual harvest of lost souls was right now! The spiritual plight of lost people all around us is like an endless harvest that is ready to be reaped. We are like combines who are to go out into the fields and reap the souls of lost

mankind. We cannot forget the harvest of lost humanity that is all around us.

Once again Jesus is asking us to “lift up our eyes” (John 4:35) or to have our eyes focused on a world that is going to hell. The time of the grain harvest is yet four months away but the time for the spiritual harvest of lost people is right now. Jesus said the fields are white. Apparently, Jesus wanted the disciples to fix their eyes on the great throngs of people that were coming out to meet Him in their traditional white robes (John 4:29-30). A harvest of lost souls was walking towards them in their white apparel, and they needed to have eyes for these people. This was not an agricultural harvest but a spiritual harvest of lost people. Jesus is saying, “Look at them. Look at them coming. Do not pass them by.”

“Everyday they pass me by,
I can see it in their eyes;
Empty people filled with care,
Headed who knows where.

We are called to take His light,
To a world where wrong is right,
What could be too great a cost,
For sharing life with one who’s lost?

People need the Lord,
People need the Lord.
At the end of broken dreams,
He’s the open door.

When will we realize,
People need the Lord?
When will we realize,
That we must give our lives,
For people need the Lord?”

The life of Jesus was absorbed with sharing the message of salvation and eternal life. Jesus wants us to share the same vision today. He is letting all of us know that the time to reach lost souls is NOW! Many of our friends and loved ones that we have been putting off witnessing to may be gone

before we know it. They may be on the brink of going to hell. We must lift up our eyes today and see the harvest all around us. There are people everywhere and like Jesus we must have eyes for the lost. In fact, Jesus had eyes for those people who were far different than He was. Jesus did not bypass the sins of lost people; however, He looked beyond the faults or sins of lost people and saw their need for salvation. That is what Jesus did for me as well. He looked beyond my fault and saw my need for salvation! We too must see the need; we must possess a fresh burden and vision for seeing people saved.

b. We must weep for the harvest.

This builds upon the first point. Jesus had compassion for a lost and dying world and so must we. He wanted to see people saved. He had a passion for the lost. This is seen as Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. As He came near the city Jesus wept over the great spiritual ignorance and plight of the people.

Luke 19:41

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.”

Jesus was moved with compassion and sympathy toward those who were lost and going to hell. When was the last time we wept for someone who was on their way to hell? Weeping means that we will possess compassion for the lost. Weeping means our hearts are broken and stirred over their lost condition, and we want to reach out to them.

Mark 6:33-34

“And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.”

The word “compassion” in the Greek language speaks of the inward organs of a person, such as the bowels, kidneys, and heart. This may seem odd to us but not to the ancient people of Palestine and the surrounding areas.

The inward organs were used to illustrate the inward emotions of love and compassion that people would express toward others. The organs illustrated the seat of a person's feelings and emotions.

Compassion for the unsaved is what makes a person into a soul winner. There are many times in the Gospels when we are told that Jesus was a man of compassion. In fact, everything that Jesus did was done out of a heart of compassion for people! Christ's whole life revolved around compassion and caring for other people. Loving compassion is what made Jesus so different than many other people. The sins of people and the character and lifestyle of people made no difference to Jesus. He looked beyond their sinful conditions in life and went after their soul! This is because He had compassion for lost sinners. God would want us to cultivate a new heart of compassion today as we live among people in this world. This is the kind of life that Jesus lived while He was here upon earth.

Psalm 126:6

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Let us be faithful. Let us shed a few tears. God will give us some harvest.

Many years ago in St. Louis, a lawyer visited a Christian to transact some business. Before the two parted, his client said to him, "I've often wanted to ask you a question, but I've been afraid to do so." "What do you want to know?" asked the lawyer. The man replied, "I've wondered why you're not a Christian." The man hung his head. "I know enough about the Bible to realize that it says no drunkard can enter the kingdom of God; and you know my weakness!" "You're avoiding my question," continued the believer. "Well, truthfully, I can't recall anyone ever explaining how to become a Christian."

Picking up a Bible, the client read some passages showing that all are under condemnation, but that Christ came to save the lost by dying on the cross for their sins. "By receiving Him as your substitute and redeemer," he said, "you can be forgiven. If you're willing to receive Jesus, let's pray together." The lawyer agreed, and when it was his turn he exclaimed, "Oh Jesus, I am

a slave to drink. One of Your servants has shown me how to be saved. O God, forgive my sins and help me overcome the power of this terrible habit in my life." Right there he was converted. That lawyer was C.I. Scofield, who later edited the reference Bible that bears his name. Mr. Scofield was led to Christ because of the compassion of one man.

Luke 15:17-20 says:

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against



heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

Like the father in this parable, so is the Father in Heaven. He extends compassion toward every lost sinner. The Heavenly Father is full of loving compassion toward the lost. The Father sees our need of salvation and is willing to grant us deliverance from hell in spite of our sinfulness and waywardness from His own holy presence. God does not overlook sin, but He does grant each sinner salvation in spite of their sins. This is one reason why we cannot earn our ticket to Heaven. Nothing we do can gain God's favor since we are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). It's the Father's compassion for sinners that results in their salvation! Jesus was teaching that sin would not be a barrier to acceptance and fellowship with the Father because Jesus would die on the cross to bridge the barrier and gap between mankind and the Father.

1 Timothy 2:5

"For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

For this reason, God the Father is waiting to meet the lost sinner with open arms. The Father has overwhelming compassion for lost people. He looks beyond their fault or sinful condition and predicament in life, waiting to welcome them into His loving arms of salvation.

Jesus taught in John 6:37:

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

The same should be true about you and me. We should have compassion toward the lost and welcome them into our arms and show them the way of salvation and eternal life.

c. We must go into the harvest.

There is a desperate need for us to go into the harvest of lost humanity. People all around us are dying by the truckloads and going to hell. We must go!

Mark 16:15 says:

“And he said unto them (His disciples), Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

If we are going to be a true disciple or follower of Christ, we must do what He tells us to do. We must go and tell others of Christ and their need for salvation. A true follower of Christ’s command will be ready and willing to reach out to a world that is lost and on its way to hell. Christ’s disciples are to invade the nations with the Gospel. We must move out of the sanctuary and into the streets.

Our obedience to the Great Commission involves three matters.

- Understanding the message of missions (the Gospel)

When Jesus said preach or proclaim the “gospel” He was speaking of the message of His death and resurrection. This is the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

The Gospel is not about feeding people or socializing with them. We may do this, but this is not the Gospel. The Gospel is not what we do for others but what Jesus Christ has done for us. Jesus Christ has died upon the cross, paying sin’s penalty for a lost human race, and has risen from the grave. His resurrection proves that He is the Son of God, that the Father has accepted His sacrifice as sufficient payment for sin, and that He can now give eternal life. This is the Gospel. Christ died for our sins (paying sin’s penalty), Christ was buried (proving He was dead), and Christ rose again the third day (providing evidence of His person and completed work). In other words, Christ’s resurrection proved that He was God’s Son, that He had paid for sin’s penalty, and that He can give to us eternal life.

The Gospel message is all about Christ’s finished and saving work. If you are sharing any other message, then you are not proclaiming the Gospel message of salvation. You are proclaiming a false Gospel! The Gospel is not a legalistic gospel that includes a person’s works (Eph. 2:8-9). The Gospel is not about Christ making us healthy and wealthy (a prosperity gospel). It’s not about feeding the poor (a social gospel). It’s not a gospel related to self-esteem.

Robert Schuler, a wolf in sheep’s clothing, once said:

"I believe in positive thinking. It is almost as important as the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

These gospels are “another gospel” (Gal. 1:9). The Gospel is not about people improving their self-worth. The Gospel is not about people trying to live a good life, doing their best, and living by the Sermon on the Mount. The Gospel is about the shedding of Christ’s blood on the cross of Calvary

to save us from hell and Christ rising from the dead to provide us with the salvation He promised. Any other message is the Devil's message, since it takes away from Christ's finished work, which alone can save the soul and prepare a person for Heaven. The Gospel is being compromised today during these pragmatic and perilous times.

1 Timothy 4:1

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

- Obeying the mandate of missions (“Go ye”)

This is our responsibility as a follower or disciple of Jesus. We must go out into the world and proclaim to lost people the message of the Gospel. The thrust of this command is this: “as you are going.” In other words, this is what God expects of each one of us. The mandate of missions does not involve compromising with the unsaved or unregenerate in our church services by giving them what they want – ear tickling preaching (1 Tim. 4:3) and the sound and perversion of rock and roll music (Matt. 6:8; Eph. 5:7-11). Jesus never gave this kind of mandate to the church.

Where do we find the church trying to impress sinners or compromising with sinners? Where do we find Paul the apostle going into the streets and asking sinners what they want in a church service so he can give them what they want and pleases them? Jesus did not compromise with sinners for he was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26). The seeker sensitive approach to evangelism today is man's mission but it's not God's mission and purpose for evangelism.

The mandate given to the church means we are to go out into the world (not bring the world into the church) and share the simple Gospel message about Jesus Christ. We are not to compromise with the unsaved in our churches. We need to stop making deals with sinners! God has not called us to come down to the level of the world to reach the lost. We are commissioned to go to them as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-14) and share the clear message of the Gospel. How can we be salt and light when we look

like the ungodly, play the same kind of music as the ungodly, and send the message that Christians can live like the ungodly? Today pragmatic and marketing churches are trying to sell the Gospel (market the Gospel message) to unsaved people instead of preaching the clear message of faith, repentance, and salvation through Christ's death and resurrection.

- Seeing the magnitude of missions ("into all the world")

The magnitude of missions extends to the entire world. Since God loves the entire world and Jesus Christ has died for the entire world of mankind (John 3:16; 4:42; 1 John 4:14) we are commissioned, as His disciples or followers, to go into the world and proclaim the Gospel message to the lost. The fact that we are told to go into "all the world" reminds us that sin is a universal problem and the need for salvation is a worldwide. The problem in the United States (North America) is sin. The problem in South America, Asia, Africa, Europe, and Australia is sin. People everywhere in this world need the Gospel message. People everywhere need the Lord. They need to be fished from the sea of lost humanity and captured for Christ.

Matthew 4:19

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Many years ago, I remember going trout fishing after school. I put on one of my trusty fishing lures or spinners and came into a trout hole where some of the old fellows were fishing all day long. They were the experts with all the fishing gear on and the best tackle. As soon as I threw in my fishing line, a trout struck. I reeled him in and put him on a stringer. I once again tossed my line in the water and another trout immediately hit my spinner. I reeled this trout in as well. By now the old experts were wondering what I was using and what my secrets were!

Actually, I had none. I just used the right lure. The same is true for evangelistic outreach. We must use the right lure. We must use the Gospel spinner to attract the lost, and as we use this lure, we will be able to catch some fish and become fishers of men in the sea of lost humanity.

Jesus is calling us to discipleship today. This involves an intense desire to see people saved. In short, discipleship is going fishing for lost people in the world with the intent to catch them for Christ.

It has been said:

“God has not called us to be keepers of aquariums but to be fishers of men!”

Have you gone fishing lately? What are you doing to see people saved? Are you part of the answer to seeing people saved? Are you praying for the lost? Are you witnessing to the lost? Are you reaching out to the lost in ways that will allow you to speak to them about Christ? We need to busy today and at times innovative (not worldly) as we reach out to a world that is in desperate need of salvation from hell.

What does it mean to follow Christ? It means to have a love and burden for lost souls as Christ did. It means to imitate Christ by being evangelistic as Christ was. It means to follow the Great Commission that Christ gave to His disciples. This is what it means to follow Christ. If we truly want to be more like Christ, then we will take the message of the Gospel to a lost and dying world. The Master has called us to be a witness of His saving grace and forgiveness. Have you been talking to others about Christ and His forgiveness? Have you been handing out tracts and sharing Christ with others?

“A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify.
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.
To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
O may it all my powers engage,
To do my Master's will!”

For many today the Great Commission has become the Great Omission! If we want to obey God's command and become a follower of Christ and be like Jesus Christ, then we must go into the harvest and speak to people about their need for salvation. Jesus sets the example for us. He was

determined to go. He was a friend of sinners who reached out to people. He saw their need, where they were at in life, and went to them.

Under this point of going into the harvest, let's review two illustrations of how Christ interacted with unsaved people.

➤ The woman at the well

John 4:4: "And he must needs go through Samaria." Jesus decided that He must go or travel through the forbidden zone of Samaria in order to bring a woman to faith and salvation. We all know who it was. It was the woman at the well. Like Christ, we must go! There is urgency to this matter of going. The Jews despised the Samaritans. They would normally travel north through the Jordan valley to go into Galilee to bypass Samaria.



Although this trip was much longer, the Jews considered it worthwhile in order to avoid contact with the despised sinners of Samaria. As a result of the Assyrian captivity the Jews left in the land intermarried with the foreigners that were established there. Thus, a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles came about who began to follow pagan practices. The Jews hated this race of people. There was a very strong and seemingly unbreakable prejudice spirit against them. But Jesus went into town and broke down the racial walls or barriers that had separated the Jews from the Samaritans for centuries. Jesus sat at old Jacob's well and waited for a poor lost soul to meet him (John 4:6). Yes, it was a Samaritan, a sinner!

John 4:9

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

I will tell you how. Jesus loved sinners. He had compassion upon those people who were considered to be the outcasts of society. It's interesting

that Jesus did not override the sin issue because every lost sinner must repent of their sin in order to be saved.

John 4:16-19

“Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.”

Jesus did not bypass the whole issue of sin. This woman was a very immoral woman. She needed to know that her sin was a stench in God’s nostrils. Sin must be inwardly dealt with within the heart. There must be repentance before salvation can be granted to a person. Jesus wants the woman to have deep remorse over her sin so she can sense the need to turn to Him as her Savior. However, let us not miss the important lesson that Jesus gives to us. Jesus was not afraid to approach the woman and look beyond all of her sinful past in order to lead her to salvation. When witnessing to people we cannot bypass the sin issue, but we can look beyond all of their sins and point them to the only One, who can free them from their bondage of sin.

Apparently, the woman came to Christ and accepted Him as her Messiah and Savior. In fact, she went to tell others of what Christ had said and done for her (John 4:28-29). She accepted the refreshing drink of eternal life that Jesus offered to her.

John 4:14

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

But the reaction of the disciples to this encounter which Jesus had with the woman was very unloving and showed no compassion.

John 4:27 says:

“And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?”

The disciples just didn't understand, and many times we do not understand either! We are to be a friend of sinners. We can be a friend of sinners without becoming a compromiser with sinners! Jesus was a friend of sinners (Luke 7:34) but He was still "separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26) as we already seen. This means that Jesus did not participate with the sins of sinners while He talked with them and associated with them in life. I think many of us as Christians have the idea that we should never go into the home of an unbeliever, or we should never invite unbelievers into our Christian home for fear that they might corrupt us.

We sometimes have the mentality that we should try to stay as far away from unbelievers as we can. Where do we get this kind of idea? We did not get it from Jesus. The doctrine of separation from sinners does not mean isolation from sinners. We separate from their corrupt practices, but we do not isolate ourselves from them. How can we ever win people to Christ if we do not get to talk with them or get to know them? We must be willing to reach across the barriers of color, race, status in society, and different interests if we are ever going to win people to Christ.

There are multitudes of people who have a different standard of lifestyle and existence than we have. They may engage in practices that are very wrong and distasteful. They may be people that are very different than you in their nationality, color, and culture. But Jesus looked beyond all these barriers and went to people throughout the harvest because He saw their dire need. Every lost man and woman have the same need. It is the need of salvation. Like this woman, there are millions in this world who are seeking for things that cannot satisfy. Only Jesus can fill up their cup with the living water of eternal life (John 4:13-14) which alone can satisfy.

"Like the woman at the well I was seeking
For things that would not satisfy.
And then I heard my Savior speaking:
Draw from My well that never shall run dry.

Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord!
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul;
Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more.
Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!"

Let us remember that Jesus was a friend of sinners. He was not afraid to go into a home to be able to present Christ to people. Paul assumed that we would meet with lost people in this way.

1 Corinthians 10:27 says:

“If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast*, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.”

➤ The woman at Jesus’ feet.



Jesus also went into the home of Simon and it’s here that He would reach out to a lost woman. This is a very touching incident.

Luke 7:36 says:

“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat.”

Why a Pharisee would invite Jesus into his home that had a reputation of hanging out with sinners is not known. Perhaps he was trying to trap Jesus or maybe he was interested in what Jesus had to say. I think Simon wanted to meet with Jesus and hear Him out. However, Simon did not have the feet of Jesus washed when He came into the home or provide the kiss of friendship to Him or oil His sun parched brow. These were the common customary courtesies of the day (Luke 7:44-46). Apparently, this Pharisee tried to maintain his reputation of not treating sinners with kindness. He wanted to remain a loyal Pharisee.

What happened next is an unbelievable and dramatic event! A lost sinner off of the street, who was probably a prostitute, came barging into the home of the Pharisee. You may think this sounds strange. However, it was a custom to permit uninvited guests to come into a home, sit along a wall and listen to a rabbi, when he was there. This woman came into the home

and expressed her repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. She stood behind Jesus for a few moments wondering if He would accept her and give her the time of the day.

Luke 7:38

“And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”

As she stood there, she began to weep. Why was she weeping? It was because of her sin. She was evidently touched with the sorrow of her sin and was deeply convicted before Jesus. The wonderful thing is this. I believe that the woman recognized that Jesus accepted her within His presence and that He would offer forgiveness for her sin and give her salvation. Feeling no embarrassment, she dropped to her knees and began to shed tears upon His feet and repeatedly kiss His feet. There was no towel, so she unbound her hair and kept wiping His feet with her long flowing hair, as she wept and kissed His feet. Then she broke open a vial of perfumed oil and poured it upon the feet of Jesus as she continually kissed His feet and worshipped Him.

Imagine this scene. The Pharisee stood dumbfounded and shocked as he witnessed this scene within his own home! And what was his response to this woman? It was a typical Pharisee response.

Luke 7:39 unfolds the scene:

“Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.”

Simon concluded that Jesus must be a sinner as well because He associated with this type of people. And that is what the Pharisees believed. They did not associate with any bad people. They would never go into their homes or invite them into their homes. You know, some believers want nothing to do with unbelievers! They try to avoid any contact with known sinners. This is not the way Jesus conducted Himself in life. He was a friend of sinners. He took time to talk to lost people from all kinds of backgrounds and who were considered to be the outcasts of society.

Someone has said:

“Too often we view unbelievers only as they are, not as they can be by God’s grace.”

Jesus recognized that lost people can be found! He looked beyond their fault and saw their need. He did the same for you and me “in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). This is truly amazing grace and it’s grace (kindness) that we should express toward all lost sinners.

“Amazing Grace shall always be my song of praise
For it was grace that bought my liberty.
I do not know just why he came to love me so;
He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.

I shall forever lift mine eyes to Calvary
To view the cross where Jesus died for me.
How marvelous the grace that caught my falling soul;
He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.”

If we are going to be like Jesus, we will have to learn to be compassionate to a lost and dying world. We must face their sins as we talk to them, but we must be able to cross the sin barrier and reach them for Christ. Their lifestyle and different character should not keep us from caring for them and sharing Christ with them. As a result of Christ’s warmth, friendliness and acceptance of her, this particular woman ended up placing faith in Christ. And Christ forgave her of all her sins and saved her.

Luke 7:48

“And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.”

Luke 7:50

“And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

This woman expressed a repentant heart and faith in Jesus as she washed His feet with tears and dried them with her beautiful long hair.

Robert Falconer tells the story of his witnessing among destitute people in a certain city and of reading them this very story of the woman who wiped

Jesus' feet with her tears. While he was reading, he heard a loud sob and looked up at a young, thin girl whose face was disfigured by smallpox. After he spoke a few words of encouragement to her, she said, "Will He ever come again, the One who forgave the woman? I have heard that He will come again. Will it be soon?" Falconer replied that Jesus is going to come again someday and it may be soon. After sobbing again uncontrollably, she said, "Sir, can't He wait a little while? My hair is not long enough yet to wipe His feet."

I find this incident rather cutting to the heart. It demonstrates the child's faith in the Savior. When will we realize that we cannot find people if we are not looking for them! We have been sitting idle too long. We must get up and do something about it. Invite an unsaved family to your home. Start witnessing to someone on the job. Invite someone who is lost to church. Plan on sitting with them and become a friend to them. Ask them over for coffee one day at your home. We must do something. We cannot win the world, but we can win some. You should seek to gain the confidence of some unsaved people and win your right to be heard by them. We cannot just sit here and watch multitudes around us go to Hell. Or can we?

Richard Strauss has said:

"It would be easier to avoid them and let them spend eternity in hell, unless we want to be like Jesus!"

Yes, the Pharisees were right. Jesus was a friend of sinners! Their strong voice was heard on several occasions murmuring about this well-known fact (Luke 5:30, 15:1-2, 19:7). Yes, it was true! Jesus was a friend of sinners. Thank the Lord! Where would we be if Jesus was not a friend of sinners? Jesus befriended us when we were lost and going to hell (Romans 5:8). He invited us to salvation.

"Jesus what a friend for sinners!
Jesus lover of my soul;
Friends may fail me, foes assail me,
He, my Savior, makes me whole."

3. How can we reap the harvest?

Jesus has commanded us to go into the harvest. But there is another reason why we should go into the harvest and share the Gospel with lost people. It's because God has empowered or energized us to get the job done.

Remember:

“God’s requirements are God’s enablements.”

Jesus gave this promise to His disciples in Acts 1:8:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will provide us with His super abounding and abundant power to help us in our witnessing for Christ. We need not fear the enemy and the conflict that is against us. We simply need to have compassion for people and take the Gospel to them in the power and help of the Holy Spirit. God is with us, God is in us, God will go before us, and God is on our side.

Jesus said in Luke 4:18:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

If Jesus during His incarnation needed the Holy Spirit’s power to preach the Gospel to lost people, then certainly we need the Spirit’s power operating in our lives as well. Many times we step out the door and we have not availed ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not relying on the Spirit’s filling ministry. Ephesians 5:18 says “be filled with the Spirit.” We have the greatest resource in the world. We must learn to use the personal presence and power of the Holy Spirit that has been given to us to evangelize. We are often scared to evangelize because we are not relying on the Holy Spirit’s work in our hearts and lives.

Acts 4:31 records these words:

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

The filling of the Spirit means that the disciples were controlled by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and as a result they could receive of His power and speak the Gospel very plainly and confidently. The power of the Spirit gave them boldness in their witness. Our idea of boldness in the English language means to be rude and exhibit aggressive and unacceptable behavior. But this is not what the Biblical word for boldness means. Boldness does not mean rudeness and lack of tactfulness. It means to exhibit confidence in your witness and an unreserved manner of speech.

Joseph Grigg wrote:

“Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?”

We often say today, “People won’t listen. People are too hard. We live in a different day.” Let’s stop all of the excuses and remember that God’s power is greater than anything. It takes the power of God to take us to souls (Acts 1:8) and the power of God to save souls (Romans 1:16). Everything involved in evangelism, both the proclamation of the Gospel (Matt. 28:18-20) and personal salvation of people (John 6:44) involves the power of God.

In another Great Commission found in Matthew 28:20, Jesus taught that we need to be: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” What we need to do is believe in God’s power and expect God to work through our lives today.

William Carey said:

“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.”

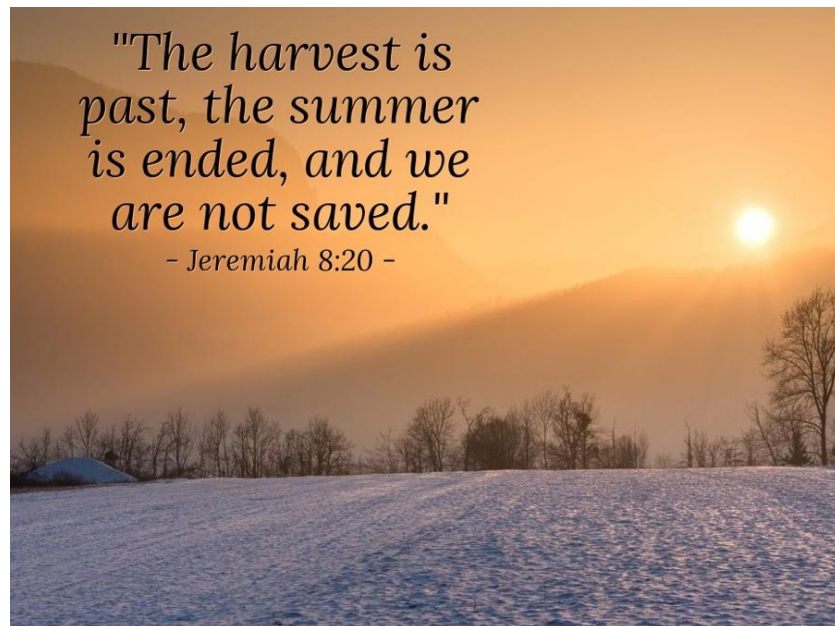
Friend, it takes the power of the Holy Spirit to produce courage in our lives so that we might witness for the Lord and accomplish His tasks. Sometimes we forget about the Holy Spirit within us and how powerful our witness can be as we rely upon Him. It has been said that the Holy Spirit is the greatest unused power in the world.

4. When will the harvest end?

Someday the harvest time will end and all those who have not been harvested will be lost forever. Those of us who are following Christ's command to witness to the lost must remember that the window or door of opportunity will not be open forever. Furthermore, lost sinners who have not yet received Christ's provision of salvation must know that their opportunity to take part in the harvest will also come to an end. There comes a time when the door is shut ("and the door was shut" - Matt. 25:10) and when mankind must face his sins in judgment.

Hebrews 9:27

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."



The opportunity for harvest will come to an end when a soul dies without Christ's salvation and ends up being judged for his or her sins. Jeremiah

8:20 records the saddest words in the Bible: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

I heard an old Plymouth Brethren brother weep as he meditated and prayed through this verse in a closing prayer. Do we weep when contemplating the condition of lost people? God gave Judah every opportunity to repent, but she continued to rebel. Jeremiah 8:20 records the mournful cry of those who learned the consequences of sin too late. The harvest, which is representative of God’s opportunities for the nation to repent and get right with Him, was now past. By not taking advantage of God’s provision for deliverance from judgment when it had been available, the people (the Jews) were now without hope (“we are not saved”). In this case, the people could not be delivered from their enemies which were the Babylonians. They could not be delivered from God’s physical judgment upon their nation. It was too late. Opportunity had passed. Judgment was impending.

What was true for the nation of Israel physically is true for many spiritually today. When the time for their harvesting (salvation) is past and their summer of opportunity is ended, they will find themselves still lost, unsaved, and in the fires of hell. What an awful fate this is. What a terrible predicament to find oneself. Many people will die the way they have lived—lost! We cannot fool ourselves about this. The opportunity for harvest is ended at the time of a person’s death. There is no second chance to be saved. Every unsaved person will find themselves in the judgment of hell for their unforgiven sins. Dear friend, there comes a time when you can no longer be harvested and when the summer of opportunity is gone forever!

For many people it will be this year, this month, this week, this day, or this very hour, when their opportunity for harvesting will end. In other words, it will be too late for many to be saved after this year, this month, and perhaps even this day, for when they die in their sins and go to hell all hope is gone. Jesus said, “in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments” (Luke 16:23). Yes, it will be too late!

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

Sad, sad, the bitter wail of the unsaved. Yes, the ending of the harvest opportunity will be sad for those we have come in contact with, those we've rubbed shoulders with during this life, but have failed to witness to and point to Christ. The ending of the harvest will be sad for those relatives and friends we have not shared the Gospel with and sought to win to Christ. God's final call will pass them by and never be heard again.

“Someday you'll hear God's final call to you,
To take the offer of salvation true -
This could be it, my friend, if you but knew:
God's final call, God's final call.

If you reject God's final call of grace,
You'll have no chance your footsteps to retrace.
All hope will then be gone,
And doom you'll face!
O hear His call!
O hear His call!”

The summer of opportunity will pass and those who are not saved will be lost forever. They will die in the harvest field as grain that has never been harvested! Dear friend, we have a job to do. We have a commission to obey. We have sending orders! A mission field exists all around us.

Think of spending eternity in hell. Not one hundred years, not one million years, not one billion years, not one trillion years, but eternity! Can we stand by and see them die in the harvest field? Can we sit back on our chairs of ease and watch them taken by the grim reaper of death and the devil down into the eternal fires of hell, damnation, judgment, brimstone, blackness, smoke, terror, and untold misery? Jesus taught that the unsaved “shall be cast out into outer darkness” where “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12) in pain and agony. The Bible says that the unsaved will be “cursed, into everlasting fire” (Matt. 25:41). Do we really care?

“Somebody's down to their last start,
Somebody's running out of time,
Not too far from here.

Somebody's got nowhere else to go,
Somebody needs a little hope,
Not too far from here.

Somebody's never heard of You,
Somebody's searching for the truth,
Not too far from here.

Somebody wants to hear you speak,
And somebody's ready to believe,
Not too far from here."