



## The Principal Wheat

**Isaiah 28:23-29** Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. **24** Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? **25** When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place? **26** For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. **27** For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. **28** Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. **29** This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

### I. INTRODUCTION -- EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY. . . .

-The philosophy of this world hasn't changed much in the last 6000 years. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow, ye may die. . . . or so it goes.

Apparently that was the motive that fit perfectly and sums up the worldview of one of America's corporate giants: Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric. News reports on his most recent divorce have shed light on Welch's lifestyle.

Even after he retired, General Electric provided Welch with a luxury apartment on Central Park West (worth \$86,000 per month) and free travel on company jets, and it continued to provide him with the good things of life: flowers, furniture, season tickets to the Knicks and Mets sporting events, opera tickets, and even stamps.

These disclosures about sticking GE with the tab for his lifestyle embarrassed Welch, who agreed to reimburse the company. But there's no evidence that Welch is rethinking his idea of the good life.

Quite to the contrary, during an appearance at a public forum, Welch was asked what he had learned from a brush with death seven years earlier: Had he had an awakening during his heart surgery? His answer: "I learned I didn't spend enough money." When pressed—they thought he was joking—he added that, after his bypass surgery, he vowed never again to drink wine that cost less than one hundred dollars a bottle—and he was completely serious.

What a sad answer. What's even sadder is that Welch is hardly unique in this regard. The past decade was characterized by a frenzied consumption, in which your choice of olive oil, kitchen gadgets, and cars became a "spiritual" matter.

Consumption as spirituality is the product of a purely materialistic understanding of the universe. After a century and a half of Darwinism, materialistic worldviews have deprived people of any sense of purpose to life. For many Westerners, chance does govern the universe. We are simply products of forces that did not have us in mind. (Chuck Colson, Breakpoint, and CNN Moneyline)

-Jack Welch would do well to become acquainted with the farmer that we will meet in this message.

### II. THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH

#### A. The Farmer

-The royal prophet, Isaiah, finds under the inspiration of God to bring us a lesson from the fields. He introduces us to the farmer who is very careful about his actions. He is a man of discretion, of judgment, and of character. Therefore, he places the most important of his crops in the front and will lavish them with his care.

-He arranges his affairs in a logical manner. There is something within that tells this farmer that what he does today affects tomorrow. The same is true with our service to God or for that matter the world, what happens today affects tomorrow, with the potential to reach into the decades that follow.

-The Church is not free to lose this carefulness in the hustle and bustle of life. There must be order to our lives and to our worship. Do not live out a life in a sense of muddled confusion but rather give careful inventory to the things of life and define them. There are choices on every hand: One will be precious and the other will be vile.

-There is a principal thing for which we all must live.

***Philippians 3:13-14*** *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

-The great question facing every man, (those in past generations, those in present life, and those who will live in the future) is this: How shall I spend my life?

- Will the pursuit of pleasure and happiness hold me by the heart?
- Will the pursuit of money and status wrap its web around me?
- Will the hunger for recognition of men grasp at the soul?
- What will be the principal aim of life?
- Will life be spent only reaping a field of thorns or will life bend with the heavy burden of fruit?
- Will life be spent scouting out the wayside or tending the precious soil of the soul?
- Will life be spent productively or wasted foolishly?

-Paul gave himself to the one thing of pressing toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God. Something never apprehended or realized in this life but still pursuing as he vacated his earthly body.

-This is a radical concept for our society to accept. The majority of those in this world are fearful to embrace something so spiritual and transforming. To have a “single eye” focus is to much to ask.

-The farmer, mentioned by Isaiah, discovered that wheat was to be his principal crop and he was willing to let the task of farming this field consume him. Others would pursue lesser crops, or even more spectacular crops, but this farmer found his focus on the principal wheat.

## **B. The Wisdom of This Farmer**

-There was a vast array of wisdom in this man’s mind. Several points set him aside as a wise farmer.

### **1. He was wise because he established the priority of his crop.**

-The question was not, what are others doing, but rather, what do I need most? What crop yields do I need from this field?

-Perhaps his family desired for the farmer to bring home the fitches (dill) and the cummin. Both of which were nothing more than seasonings. However, the farmer knew that once the cold fingers of winter began to rattle the shutters and the cold rain began to beat against the roof and the little ones were crying for bread that spices would have little effect on hunger.

-When the family cried for bread, only one thing could satisfy the craving. . . . . the wheat. Only the wheat could make the bread. Thus the farmer could not plant for today, he had to look into tomorrow. It was only then that he discovered that the most needful thing for him was the principal wheat.

-What if we were to sit down and discover the whole scope of our calling, to really assess the value of the things of the Kingdom? We would immediately discover the needful things.

-Some would ascertain that the needful things of life would be:

- A good source of income.
- A secure place to live.
- A place of respect among those around us.
- A degree of health.
- A measure of freedom.

-But all of these things are merely the flavorings of life. They are not THE LIFE. The life that the greatest among saints long for is the place where we are brought into the very presence of God both here and in the future.

-That is the needful thing. The words from the Lord to Martha stir our hearts toward the “needful things” of this life:

***Luke 10:42*** *But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

-The needful thing, the one. . . . needful thing. . . . is the part chosen by those like Mary and this farmer of Isaiah 28.

-The good part is:

- **A Place** -- At the feet of the Lord.
- **A Nourishment** -- She heard His Words.
- **A Choice** -- She has chosen.

-There is a force that comes from choice. Mary beckons to us to make the same choice she made hundreds of years ago.

- Mary’s choice delivered her from Martha’s burdens.
- Mary’s choice delivered her from Martha’s carefulness.
- Mary’s choice delivered her from Martha’s trouble.
- Mary’s choice delivered her from Martha’s many things.
- Mary’s choice delivered her from Martha’s divided heart.
- Mary’s choice delivered her from Martha’s competition of things.
- Mary’s choice delivered her from Martha’s greed of the unnecessary.
- Mary’s choice delivered her from Martha’s pressures of the littles.

-We must choose the right portion. It was not Martha’s serving that was the problem. It was the being “cumbered” about the serving. The serving impeded the progress toward Heaven just as a heavy garment hinders progress toward the finish line.

-Once the good thing has been settled upon, there is no remorse, there is no removing it from our possession.

-Isaiah’s farmer knew the priority of his crop and was willing to give the wheat the best place in his fields. The barley would be set in a small plot. The rye would be placed among a few acres. But the principal wheat would be planted in the richest, darkest, best field that he owned.

-The lesson for us, is that we stop looking about, up and down, and determine that the field that we are in now is going to have the highest yield. The principal wheat must be planted in the principal place.

***Proverbs 4:23*** *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

-The heart is the principal place. Therefore. . . .

- Give the Lord your most intense thought. . . Be transformed by renewing the mind.

- Give the Lord your most earnest love. . . Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind.
- Give the Lord your most fervent desires. . . . Ask, Seek, Knock and it shall be given to you.
- Give the Lord your strongest actions. . . . For me to live is Christ.
- Give the Lord your most earnest labor. . . . Pressing for the mark.

*Charles Spurgeon -- A Christian man ought to lay himself out to serve Jesus Christ. I hate to see a professing man zealous in politics and lukewarm in devotion; all on fire at a parish vestry and chill as winter when he comes to a prayer meeting. Some fly like eagles when they are serving the world, but they have a broken wing in the service of God. This should not be. If anything could rouse us up, and make the lion within us roar in his strength, it should be when we confront the foes of Jesus or fight in his cause.*

-We should be as Mary, once the good thing has been settled upon, there is no remorse, there is no removing it from our possession. We gain much wisdom by establishing the priorities in our lives. More frequently than not we discover the most important wheat is right under our nose.

#### **a. Acres of Diamonds**

There once lived not far from a river a man. This man owned a very large farm with orchards, grain fields and gardens. He was a contented and wealthy man -- contented because he was wealthy, and wealthy because he was contented. One day there visited this farmer a man of the hills, and he sat down by the fire and told that farmer how this world of ours was made.

In the course of the conversation, they began to talk about diamonds and how they were made. You all know that a diamond is pure carbon, actually deposited sunlight -- and he declared that a diamond is the last and highest of God's mineral creations. The old man said that if he had a handful of diamonds he could purchase a whole country, and with a mine of diamonds he could place his children upon thrones through the influence of their great wealth.

The farmer heard all about diamonds and how much they were worth, and went to his bed that night a poor man -- not that he had lost anything, but poor because he was discontented and discontented because he thought he was poor. He said: "I want a mine of diamonds!" So he lay awake all night, and early in the morning sought out the old man.

He awoke the old man out of his dreams and said to him, "Will you tell me where I can find diamonds?" The man said, "Diamonds? What do you want with diamonds?" "I want to be immensely rich," he answered, "but I don't know where to go." "Well," said the old man, "if you will find a river that runs over white sand between high mountains, in those sands you will always see diamonds." "Do you really believe that there is such a river?" "Plenty of them, plenty of them; all you have to do is just go and find them, then you have them." The wealthy man said, "I will go." So he sold his farm, collected his money at interest, left his family in charge of a neighbor, and away he went in search of diamonds.

He began very properly at the Mountains of the Moon. Afterwards he went around into Palestine, then wandered on into Europe, and at last, when his money was all spent, and he was in rags, wretchedness and poverty, he stood on the shore of that bay in Barcelona, Spain, when a tidal wave came rolling in through the Pillars of Hercules and the poor, afflicted, suffering man could not resist the awful temptation to cast himself into that incoming tide, and he sank beneath its foaming crest, never to rise in this life again.

The story goes that the farmer's successor led his camel out into the garden to drink, and as that camel put its nose down into the clear water of the garden brook the new owner noticed a curious flash of light from the sands of the shallow stream, and reaching in he pulled out a black stone having an eye of light that reflected all the colors of the rainbow, and he took that curious pebble into the house and left it on the mantel, then went on his way and forgot all about it.

A few days after that, this same old man who told the farmer how diamonds were made, came in to visit his new neighbor, when he saw that flash of light from the mantel. He rushed up and said, "Here is a diamond -- here is a diamond! Has Al returned?" "No, no; Al has not returned and that is not a diamond; that is nothing but a stone; we found it right out here in our garden." "But I know a diamond when I see it," he said; "that is a diamond!"

Then together they rushed to the garden and stirred up the white sands with their fingers and found others more

beautiful, more valuable diamonds than the first, and thus were discovered the diamond mines of Golconda, the most magnificent diamond mines in all the history of mankind, exceeding the Kimberley in its value. The great Kohinoor diamond in England's crown jewels and the largest crown diamond on earth in Russia's crown jewels, which I had often hoped she would have to sell before they had peace with Japan, came from that mine, and when the old guide had called my attention to that wonderful discovery he took his Turkish cap off his head again and swung it around in the air to call my attention to the moral.

There is a moral to each story. If Al had remained at home and dug in his own cellar or in his own garden, instead of wretchedness, starvation, poverty and death -- a strange land, he would have had "acres of diamonds" -- for every acre, yes, every shovelful of that old farm afterwards revealed the gems which since have decorated the crowns of monarchs.

-You have some wheat right under your nose, it is just a matter of looking at it. It is the great matter of seeing what you have. If you are waiting for the wild, blue yonder. . . . if you are looking for somewhere to make a mark, do it here. Settle the issue now. . . . Work the fields where you are. . . as they are full of "diamonds."

## **2. The farmer was wise because he knew the value of the wheat over the fitches, cummin, rye, and barley.**

-This farmer knew that the value of wheat far superceded the worth of barley and rye. Many nations around the world have managed to live on barley and rye and are none the worse for it. But this wise farmer knew the precedence that the wheat had over the other crops.

-This farmer did not say:

- The principal barley.
- The principal rye.
- The principle oats.
- The principle grain.

-This farmer did not want substitutes, he was willing to pursue the highest. It is notable that some farmers were willing to travel long distances to secure the best seed for their farms. No price is too high once the value of the harvest was reckoned with. He made the right choice.

-The Lord's entry into this world forced Him to have to use a stable as a substitute. The problem with Bethlehem is that it had an inn full of lesser guests. The innkeeper was willing to substitute things far inferior to what he put in the barn that evening during the time of the census. Too many in this life settle for a heart full of lesser guests while the Lord stands and knocks gently awaiting us at the door of our heart.

-Should this farmer have substituted with something less than wheat it would have ultimately brought ruin to his farm. The value of the wheat consumed him.

-Scattered throughout the parables of the Lord were characters who knew the value of the highly prized.

- The Treasure Hidden In the Field -- Matt. 13:44
- The Merchant Man and the Pearl of Great Price -- Matt. 13:45-46
- The Dragnet -- The Good and Bad Separated -- Matt. 13:47-50
- The Marriage Feast and the Garment -- Matt. 22:1-14
- The Faithful and Wise Servant -- Matt. 24:45-51
- The Five Wise Virgins -- Matt. 25:1-13
- The Invested Talents -- Matt. 25:14-30
- The Good Samaritan -- Luke 10:25-37
- The Parable of Impertunity at Midnight -- Luke 11:1-10

- The Lost Sheep -- Luke 15:1-7
- The Lost Coin -- Luke 15:8-10
- The Lost Son -- Luke 15:11-32

-All of these parables demonstrate to us that the things of the Kingdom are to be highly valued and can never be traded for weak substitutes.

-Just as the characters of the Lord's parables demonstrate to us those who were willing to risk all to gain all. There are other figures in the Word that are anemic in their faith and chose to live with the substitutes of this world.

- **Cain** -- A substitute for worship.
- **Esau** -- A substitute for his birthright and blessing.
- **Reuben** -- A substitute for his birthright and blessing.
- **Saul** -- A substitute for his kingdom.

-No matter how great the substitute may look, there is no real substitute for wide-open revival, for seeing our loved ones praying through to the Holy Ghost, seeing people being baptized in Jesus Name, seeing sin being repented of, and of a church that is having problems getting everyone a seat. There is just no substitute for the things of the Kingdom.

### **3. The farmer was wise because he knew what was most profitable.**

-Three lessons we now discover with this farmer's actions:

- He understood the priority of his crop, wheat was what he needed most.
- He understood what the best choice was, everything else was inferior to wheat.
- He understood what the most profitable choice was, wheat would sustain him tomorrow.

-The farmer would perhaps plant in September, the early rains would come in October, but he final harvest would be late February and early March. That was a long time to wait. But the farmer had confidence in his seed.

-The farmer carefully marked out what was planted and he would water, weed, fertilize, and water, weed, fertilize, and water, weed, fertilize, and water, weed, fertilize, and water, weed, fertilize, and water, weed, fertilize, and water, weed, fertilize. . . . .

-Some are afraid that what is planted today will have no return for tomorrow. In the spiritual sense we do not live for the immediate but for the delayed.

#### **a. Keep On Working**

Sometimes it is very hard to keep on when we do not seem to be getting anywhere. When Thomas Carlyle had finished the first volume of his book, *The French Revolution*, he gave the finished manuscript to his friend John Stuart Mill and asked him to read it. It took Mr. Mill several days to read it and as he read, he realized that it was truly a great literary achievement.

Late one night as he finished the last page he laid the manuscript aside by his chair in the den of his home. The next morning the maid came; seeing those papers on the floor, she thought they were simply discarded. She threw them into the fire, and they were burned.

On March 6, 1835--he never forgot the date--Mill called on Carlyle in deep agony and told him that his work has been destroyed. Carlyle replied, "It's all right. I'm sure I can start over in the morning and do it again."

Finally, after great apologies, John Mill left and started back home. Carlyle watched his friend walking away and said to his wife, "Poor Mill. I feel so sorry for him. I did not want him to see how crushed I really am."

Then heaving a sigh, he said, "Well, the manuscript is gone, so I had better start writing again."

It was a long, hard process especially because the inspiration was gone. It is always hard to recapture the verve and the vigor if a man has to do a thing like that twice. But he set out to do it again and finally completed the work.

Thomas Carlyle walked away from disappointment. He could do nothing about a manuscript that was burned up. So it is with us: There are times to get up and get going and let what happened happen. (*The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart* -- Charles Swindoll -- pp. 441 from William Barclay)

***James 5:7-8*** *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8 Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

-Before you conclude that the harvest is never going to happen. . . consider the fact that you have planted the principal wheat.

-I have a feeling that a lot of God's greatest thought the harvest had been wasted. . . .

- Joseph probably questioned the harvest in his brother's pit and Pharaoh's prison.
- Job probably questioned the harvest in the misery of his loss and pitiful pain.
- Moses probably questioned the harvest after he murdered the Egyptian.
- Joshua probably questioned the harvest after the defeat at Ai.
- Nehemiah probably questioned the harvest after he saw the flattened walls.
- David probably questioned the harvest after his terrible sin.
- Peter probably questioned the harvest after his dreadful denial.
- John probably questioned the harvest in the pot of boiling oil.

-But no man can stop the harvest. No man can prevent the seed from pushing through the earth. No season can hinder the harvest. No situation can cause a crop failure.

-So what do you do? ? ? ? ? . . . .

***Isaiah 40:28-31*** *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

-Weed, Water, and Worship. . . . . while you wait.