



Lessons From The Field

Matthew 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

I. INTRODUCTION -- MY UNCLE IS A FARMER

When I was growing up, generally at least one Saturday a month, sometimes every third Saturday, my mother would load up Mark and I and we would travel over to a little dot in the road called Ino. It is a tiny little farming community between Enterprise and Opp, Alabama. My mother would work with my Grandmother all day long and they would make her a new dress to wear to church. While they were sewing, Mark and I were left to the devices of my Granddaddy who generally had the ability to make even the duller things seem exciting. Usually at some point during the day, we would load up in his old Ford Falcon and head off down the road to my Uncle John Edward's farm.

He had a huge farm and it was more than just a hobby to him. He had all sorts of crops that ranged from peanuts to soybeans and who knows what else. He had pigs and cows that Mark and I always got to see. He had silo's loaded with corn that my Granddaddy would always visit and take at least a small bucket of corn out of and go down and feed the hogs. He had fish ponds and we would get to feed the catfish some sort of food that reminded me of dog food. That was sort of neat, feeding *catfish* with *dogfood* (I am sure that it wasn't but that is what it seemed like). We would go out to the barn and play on the tractors that were parked there and with the huge imagination of a kid, we would plow thousands of acres without ever going anywhere. My uncle's farm was a real farm. He wasn't one of these dude ranchers, he was the real deal.

My aunt Sue would always make sure that before we left, that Mark and I had a new hat to take home with us. It was either going to be a Ford Tractor hat or some sort of hat that had a fertilizer logo or seed company and they were always brand new, never been worn. Over the years, she probably gave us 50 hats. Then every year at Christmas, my uncle John Edward and aunt Sue would give us those fancy little metal tractors. We would play with those things and now looking back in retrospect, I wish that we wouldn't have played with them but would have saved them so that they could sit on some of the bookshelves in my study.

There are a lot of things that you can learn from life just by visiting the farm. When I go back in my mind down memory lane to my aunt and uncle's farm, those are some of the best memories that I had as a kid. So today, directed toward the fathers and the men on this Father's Day, I want to speak to you about some spiritual things from the eyes of a farmer.

-Our text simply informs us that a sower went forth to sow. He had a job to do and that was to gain a crop from the field. I want to preach on a Father's Day about Lessons from the Field.

II. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SOWER

A. Plowing and Planting

-One of the first things that the farmer will have to do with the ground is to take out the plows and let the biting, cutting edge of the plow to turn the soil over. This soil may have lain unattended for a single season or for a decade but just the same the farmer has to bring the land under his subjection.

-We must plow until the field has been entirely covered. We cannot work a little here and there and spend two weeks or two months trying to open the field. No we must work until we see it completed.

-I will go ahead and tell you now that you are going to get weary plowing.

· Dust will fill your eyes.

- Noise will fill your ears.
- Sweat is going to run down your face and drip onto your clothes.
- Blisters are going to hurt your hands.
- Plows are going to get broken and you will have to repair them.
- Your bones are going to ache with fatigue.
- You will find a certain weariness that stays with you several days.
- You will find frustrations from the mechanical failure of your equipment.

-This is all part of what comes with the plowing.

-There is a certain amount of perseverance that is going to be required of you Husband, Dad, or Brother, if you are going to find a harvest in your family, in your marriage and in your home.

Galatians 6:8-9 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. [9] And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

- Your marriage is going to take some plowing.
- Your children it going to need some cultivating.
- Your mind and attitude will need to feel the bite of the bit.
- Your home will need to have the seed planted and irrigated.

-There will be some pain involved in the planting process of your life. Character is forged in the fire of contention and difficulty.

-The farmer will find that four types of ground will be present in his fields. There will be the good ground, the wayside, the thorny ground, and the stony ground. Yet with work and time, all of three of the wayward soils can be turned into good ground.

- **The Wayside** -- This is the ground that becomes hard and packed down because of the constant traffic along the edges of the field. Busyness, hurry, and sometimes simple responsibilities in life will cause this to ground to not bear fruit. Before the seed ever really has the opportunity to take root, the birds have come by and devoured the seed. Guard carefully against the busy-ness that robs your God and your family.

- **The Thorny Ground** -- This is the ground that comes about by the trappings of materialism. Pursuit of money and the niceties of life at the expense of your God and your family. Do not labor to be rich but rather labor to be saved. The lasting things of this life are the things that cannot be touched by rust, robbers, and moths. There is a huge deceitfulness in the pursuit of riches. . . especially at the expense of your family.

- **The Stony Ground** -- This is the ground that is accompanied by a certain hardness of heart. The stony ground is marked by apathy. Give us men that can cry. Tears are not a sign of weakness but rather of strength.

B. Weeding

It seems as if it was only yesterday. . . . but it was well over 25 years ago. I was in the car with my Granddaddy and my brother, Mark, and we had gone down the road to the little country store in the Fairview community over on the other side of Enterprise. I remember it being incredibly hot and I walking into that little store barefooted. It seems as if even now I can still feel that smooth, cold, painted concrete floor under my bare feet. It was a true country store. It had benches outside and a tin roof with a small covered awning out front. It had one or two gas pumps and it probably had an old dog laid up somewhere around the shade trees out to the side of the store.

We all went in with my Granddaddy, and Mark and I went over to the Coca-Cola cooler that you had to reach down into to get the drinks out of. They were so cold that when you opened the bottle with the bottle opener on the edge of the cooler, ice would form. I recall that on that day, I pulled out one of those orange drinks that back then was called an Orange Crush. When I opened it, ice immediately formed in the upper 1/3 of the drink. I knew that it wouldn't be long before that orange drink would make everything just right for a twelve year old boy.

Mark and I wandered around the store and it wasn't long before I remember very well my Granddaddy joining in a conversation with my Uncle John Edward who farmed it seemed like a half of the country around Fairview and Ino. He and my Granddaddy were talking to another man whom to this day I still do not know who he was.

They were in a conversation about mixing some sort of herbicide and were talking about how to get the concentration just right. They talked about how many gallons of poison was to be mixed with several hundred gallons of water. I did not really know what they were talking about as far as the type of chemicals they were using, but I did understand that you could take a tractor and run through those peanuts and soybeans and spray this poison and it would kill the weeds and not harm the crops.

-Farmers understand how crucial it is to make sure that the weeds do not corrupt and stifle their crop. The farmer understands that there is great power that comes from the soil.

-The soil will grow *something*. If it is simply left alone then the field will be overtaken with weeds and thorns. But the man who is diligent with the land that has been entrusted to his care will work with near desperation in his spirit as he farms the land.

-His loyalties lie with the land and he realizes that there is something that can come out of the ground if he will weed the ground. There are times that it appears that the weeds outgrow what has been planted on a ratio of ten to one.

-Things that don't bear fruit will generally rage in the field and the fruit-bearing appears to always be on the trend of slow growth. Our hearts are so much like a tract of ground. There will either be flowers or weeds, fruit or thorns will come up. That is why these Scriptures from the Proverbs mean so much to every man here today:

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

Proverbs 22:5 *Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.*

-No farmer will ever remove the weeds from his fields merely with good intentions nor will the job be completed if he only listens to the other farmers who are in the community. He has to actively take part in the labor of that field.

C. Irrigation

-These are the times that the Spirit may for some reason or another find a withdrawal in life. It is at this point that we learn how to irrigate and bring water to the fields artificially.

-Dry days and dry nights definitely call for our actions to go beyond the ordinary.

- When you feel a burden to fast for your children. . . . you are irrigating the crops for tomorrow.
- When you begin to dig deep in the Word. . . . you are irrigating for tomorrow.
- When you seek wise counsel before making decisions that will affect you and your family. . . you are irrigating for tomorrow.

D. Harvest

-There is a whole lot that goes into the harvest. The farmer watches over the crops daily and he is very intent to any sort of fungus, or broken down fence, or area that needs more irrigation.

I can remember as a kid, getting in my uncle's truck with he and my Granddaddy and we would ride for miles and miles. They were traveling along at 25-30 mph, with the windows down, the wind blowing through the cab of that truck, just looking at the crops. Not much was said, but I am sure that my uncle was making mental notes about his crops and how healthy or unhealthy they looked. He would then know if there were some adjustments that needed to be made.

-There are seven distinct laws of the Harvest (which is a whole sermon or series in itself). They are:

- We reap the same kind as we plant.
- We reap much more than we have planted.
- We reap in a different season than when we planted.
- We reap in proportion as we have planted.
- We reap only if we persevere.
- We reap much that we did not plant.
- We cannot do anything about last year's harvest.

-Come on men, we have harvest in our lives, in our families, in our churches, in our world. . . . and we must see this thing through until the end.

-There is an incredible exhilaration that comes from a spiritual harvest:

- It means that our prayers have been answered.
- It means that we can go the house of banqueting.
- It means that our days in the field have been well warranted.
- It means that God has found our lives useful for His purpose.
- It means that we have conquered the thorns of temptation.
- It means that we have finished our course.
- It means that we have defeated the frost of doubt.
- It means that we have overcome the slough of depression.
- It means that the humbling experience of threshing has brought out the good fruit.
- It means that we have valiantly fought off the enemy of our soul.
- It means that we have made it through the blistering heat of spiritual drought.
- It means that the time has come to kill the fatted calf because the prodigal has come home.

III. CONCLUSION -- I AM STAYING IN THE FIELD

-A few years ago (2002), I read a letter that was sent out by Focus on the Family (James Dobson) and the following story was in the letter from Dr. Dobson:

Finally, I want to share a personal story told by John Cortis. He said when he was 16 years of age he and his younger cousins went to visit his grandfather's farm. They couldn't wait to get there and go out into the fields. They wanted to pitch hay and ride on the tractor. It sounded like so much fun.

But the grandfather was reluctant to let them go. They whined and begged until finally he said to John, "You are the eldest. You can take the kids to the field if you promise not to bring them back early. You must keep them out there until the end of the day."

John said, "I will do that, Grandfather." So they all got on the hay wagon and the tractor pulled them out to the field. Very quickly, the kids got tired, and they started complaining. It was hot and sticky, and they were miserable. They began asking to go back to the house. But John said, "No, Grandfather told me to keep you out here."

At lunchtime, they were exhausted, and most of them were agitated. It was very hot; the hay was down their backs, and it itched, and they wanted to go back. But again John said, "No, Grandfather told me to keep you here."

At about 3:00 in the afternoon, a big black storm cloud came over, and the kids got scared. Some were crying. "Please!" they begged. "Let us go home." Still, the answer remained "no." At about 5:00 John said, "All right, it's time to quit." He got them all on the hay wagon, and they went back to the house. After they had had their baths and been given something to eat, they rested for a while. Grandfather praised them warmly for the work they had done. Then, they became very proud of themselves.

That's when Grandfather told John why he wanted them to stay in the field. He said, "This farm has been successful through the years for one reason. We have stayed in the field when we felt like coming in. We did what needed to be done even when we wanted to quit. That is why I wanted the kids to have the satisfying experience of staying with something through the day."

***2 Timothy 4:6-8 KJV** For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8]Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

-And I don't know about you, but I am stayin' in the field.