

Bethel

Pulpit

Seedtime and Harvest

Sermon Number 446

Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 4th July, 2021

Text: *“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126. 6).*

God's ancient people were an agricultural people. They lived close to the land. That is why you have so many references, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, to farming, and one thing that continually comes in: the sowing and the reaping, and the harvest time, and often there is that emphasis that as we sow, so also we shall reap.

Now the verse I have read to you speaks of the sowing and then the reaping, and the divine certainty that with the Lord's blessing, the one follows the other. The seed here is spoken of as *precious seed*, and the sowing time is spoken of as a time of weeping. Many of the poor farmers had very little money, and they had no seed to spare, and when they were going forth sowing the seed, casting it in the earth, it was often a time of weeping. They wondered if they were sacrificing what should have been spent on their families. They wondered if they should ever see any good and gracious results. So the precious seed, and the weeping.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing *precious seed*, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Let me first of all this evening, beloved friends, speak of this word as it was beautifully fulfilled in the Person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He *did* go forth. His goings forth were from everlasting. But in the fulness of time, He went forth in this sinful world, accomplishing the great work of salvation, and He went forth weeping. What a word that is; how much there is in it, the shortest verse in Scripture: “Jesus wept.” O to be led into it by faith, to see the “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

From His birth He went forth as a Man of sorrows. There were the temptations of Satan, the opposition of ungodly Jews and Pharisees. But then you come to the Garden of Gethsemane. “He that goeth forth and weepeth.” When the Lord Jesus left His three disciples and He went forth

alone, and He sweat great drops of blood, the agony, that was the place where Jesus wept. And then in the judgment hall, it is almost frightening to read of those excruciating sufferings He endured. O but how the dear Saviour wept on the cross at Calvary.

“Drop the soft tribute of a tear,
For He shed many a tear for you.”

“He that goeth forth and weepeth.” But beloved friends, He was bearing precious seed. Really, the precious seed that He was bearing: the whole of those His beloved Father had chosen and given to Him, and laid upon His heart. That was the precious seed that He was bearing. And O the tears, the bitter sorrow, the agony, as He bore the sins of many, that He might for ever bear them away. Have you ever had a glimpse of it, the dear Saviour going forth alone and weeping? O but in His purposes of love and mercy, precious seed! O but the glorious fulfilment of it! And there is a *doubtless* laid on it. There was a *doubtless* in His Father’s covenant purpose. There was a *doubtless* in His own willingness.

“Shall doubtless come again.” Of course, there is His glorious resurrection here, and of course, there is that very sacred truth here: “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” “He ... shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.” And I trust we know something of rejoicing with the Lord Jesus as we have been led forth with Him to the cross, there to sympathise with Him, but now to rejoice, because the dear Saviour now rejoices.

“He ... shall doubtless come again.” I suppose in its fulness it speaks of the harvest time in the great day when the exalted Saviour shall say, “Father, behold Me and the children Thou hast given Me; not one is lost.” “He shall doubtless come again.” And you and I through God’s mercy need to be prepared for that great day when the Son of God shall come again. So there is that important reference to His second coming. O but it is being fulfilled all the time. It has been since the day of Pentecost. It was abundantly fulfilled then. It will continue to be fulfilled till the end of time. Blessed be God, over the years again and again it has been fulfilled at Bethel when He has come again in His visits to us in love and mercy and salvation, when He has “come again with rejoicing,” and we have rejoiced with Him, “bringing His sheaves with Him.” What a beautiful application,

then, in these words we have to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May He in all things have the pre-eminence.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” But then secondly, I want to speak of this word as it refers to the gospel ministry, the preaching of the Word of God. “He that goeth forth.” The Lord raises up men of God. He equips them. He appoints them. He supplies their needs. And then He sends them, and they can only go forth as the Lord sends them, and we do not know where they will have to go to. When the Lord first caused me to go forth, I had heard there was a place called Luton, but I had never visited it, and when I heard of it and read about it, it never entered my head that I would ever be asked even to preach at Luton, let alone to settle here. But as we read, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.”

So there is a going forth, and a true-sent servant of the Lord has much to weep about, much to cause him sadness; so many bitter disappointments; those we once thought so well of, and where are they now? So much burden concerning what to speak about, and then what to say about it. O that gospel hearers might truly sympathise and truly pray for gospel preachers! O but this is the blessedness of the work. It is “bearing precious seed.” The gospel minister does not go forth at his own charges or to speak about himself. It is “bearing precious seed,” and this precious seed is the infallible Word of God, and especially this precious seed is the glorious gospel of the grace of God. A gospel minister has to preach it. He has to bear it, which suggests the weight of it. “Bearing precious seed” – to preach the Word of God, to preach it in all its fulness, to preach the doctrine and the experience and the practice. The promise says that it is for exhortation, that it is for comfort. “Preach the Word.”

There is a wonderful promise here, and that is that the preaching of the gospel will have its success. God’s sovereignty is mysterious. Some ministers have more success and some less, and some chapels seem to find more success of the preaching of the Word and some less success. We have been favoured over the years at Bethel. There has been that steady trickle one after another who have been blessed by the Spirit of God and who have been led to testify of what Christ means to them.

“Bearing precious seed.” “We preach Christ crucified” – that is the precious seed – “unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” And isn’t the seed made precious in your heart, especially as “it speaks of pardon, full and free, through Christ, the Lamb once slain,” and it welcomes sinners to His feet. When it “points out the place where grace abounds”; when you are led by the Spirit to venture; when you find that all that was promised of the Saviour is true, and the only thing is you want to know more and more of this precious seed, and you want to know more of it as sown in your heart.

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth.” May we be able to water the Word preached with our tears, especially for the backsliders who have gone away; especially for those who seem to have little or no interest; especially for our children and young people; especially for ourselves. “Bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.” And,

“Who can describe the joys that rise
Through all the courts of Paradise,
To see a prodigal return,
To see an heir of glory born?”

Over the many years here at Bethel, we have known that rejoicing when at times we have seen someone who seemingly had been completely uninterested, creeping in at a prayer meeting, silently to the back of the gallery, slipping away before everyone noticed them. There have been times when I have announced that someone wishes to join us in church membership, when I have seen a husband and wife look at one another and say, “Did he really say So-and-so?” There have been those times when I have said, “I think I saw So-and-so at the prayer meeting.” They said, “You must have been mistaken.” That is the answer I often get, but I was not mistaken. These are the times of rejoicing.

“Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” I remember many years ago – it must have been well over forty years ago – I got quite downcast at one time. I was a young pastor. We had come to a time when we did not seem to be seeing much effect. There did not seem to be any special blessing, not much following the preaching of the Word. I remember in that state of mind I was taking the anniversary

services down at Rotherfield, and there sitting in the congregation was the venerable Stanley Delves. I did not know him too well, but I had heard what a man of wisdom and grace he was. After the afternoon service, I told him what was really concerning me, and he did not speak. He seemed to bow his head for a moment, and then he lifted up his head and looked at me. He said, “You are covered: ‘In due season you shall reap, if you faint not.’” How that word soon afterwards was fulfilled! “In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Beloved friends, may we be enabled to pray on.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Thirdly and finally, I want to speak of this word as it refers to all the Lord’s people in their prayers and in their exercises. “He that goeth forth.” When the Lord begins His work of grace in your heart, there will be a going forth – a going forth in your feelings, a going forth in your desires, a going forth in secret, a going forth in your prayers, a going forth out of the world, a going forth to the house of God, a going forth after Christ. “He that goeth forth.” The Lord will separate you. The Lord will make you different. There will be that precious seed of real prayer that God Himself has put in your heart. You will pray in providence; of course you will pray in providence. You will pray especially in grace. You will know that “one thing is needful.” These things that are put in your heart as living, longing desires, they are precious things.

You are all familiar with Peter’s two Epistles. He begins to speak of precious things. There is precious faith. “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” You are “not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” So there will be these precious desires in your heart, and these precious desires will be after precious things, and that will be the great thing. You will want to be made ready. You will want to be made right. You cannot be easily satisfied.

“Rest in the promise God has spoke,
In all things ordered well for thee;
Whose sacred words He’ll ne’er revoke,
Nor alter His profound decree.”

“He that goeth forth and weepeth.” Now I need to speak carefully. I have heard ministers when I was young say, “If you have never been awake

all night, if you have never wept all night long, then you are out of the secret.” That is unwise. I think you will find some people weep very easily, and there are some people sadly here and there with not much reality in them, but they know how to weep. And then there are those who find it hard to weep, but there are the inward tears. The point here, beloved friends: it is the inward sadness, the inward sorrow, the inward concern, and it is deep sorrow, deep concern – deep sorrow about your soul, deep sorrow lest you should be lost, deep sorrow concerning what the dear Saviour suffered. So there will be a going forth, and in the spirit of it, in the sight of God, it will be with weeping, and especially that inward weeping, that inward sadness.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed.” You do not feel it, but you are precious in the Lord’s sight. You do not feel it, but it is a precious exercise. You do not know it, but your prayers are precious in His sight. So beloved friends, keep going forth, keep weeping, keep bearing that precious seed of prayer. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” That is in the exercise of prayer.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed.” Now there is a promise here, a yea and amen promise in Christ, and it is not just an ordinary promise. It is confirmed with this word *doubtless*. So it is a double promise. I believe with some of you, this has been a good, gracious word to you over the years, and it is something you have had to hold fast to, this promise: “Shall *doubtless* come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Have you known what it is perhaps to visit a place – perhaps you have not visited it for many years, and you think how when you were last there, you were not bearing any precious seed, you had not any real concern? But now, as you go back, you think what the Lord has done and you can go back with rejoicing, and you can say, “He hath done all things well”; “He is faithful that promised.” O the precious promises of the Lord!

Of course, you must never exclude providence. If your religion is real, you want more than providence, but a great part of our religion *is* providence, and it is very difficult to separate grace from providence. So keep on going forth weeping, bearing precious seed in providence as you are praying concerning your troubles, your loneliness, your fears, your anxieties, the unknown way, and as you pray for others in the church, as you

pray for the children, and as there is so much affliction with us and abounding in our chapels, that your heart might be poured out as you seek to pour forth this precious seed in real, wrestling prayer.

Sometimes your case is dark, and feelingly dead, and difficult, and at times impossible. But there is this *doubtless*, and that is found in the Person of our Lord Jesus. He is almighty to fulfil the word, and He is full of compassion. He will not let those prayers of yours all fall to the ground, on stony earth. You feel sometimes these prayers are not precious seed. Well, they are not in you, and they are not in me. Sometimes we are ashamed of our prayers. But when you see the glorious truth of the intercession of the incarnate Son of God now glorified, how He takes your prayers, and how He presents them to His Father, and with such delight, then it is precious seed.

So it is providence, and it is grace, and it has got this *doubtless*. Come again to the place where you were so troubled and you thought you never would rejoice, you never would be set free. Satan told you you never would be delivered. But you come there again, and it is with a happy heart because of what the Lord has done in answering your poor prayers.

“His every word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.”

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

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Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone;
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed;
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
All in all in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy name;
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace;

Plenteous grace with Thee is found;
Grace to pardon all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the Fountain art;
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.

Charles Wesley