

THE URGENCY OF OUR TASK

MEMORY VERSE: “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: The night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

TEXT: Luke 13:1-5; Ezekiel 3:17-21; John 4:35-38

The task of taking Jesus’ saving gospel to the sinful and drowning world is urgent and important at all times. The consequences of the gospel if preached or if denied the sinner transcend this transient world.

The task of preaching the gospel is urgent because time is running out. The world will soon come to an end (1 Corinthians 7:29-31; 1 John 2:17) and the opportunity for service to the Lord will also close with it. Since God’s revealed judgment against sinners is unchanging, the unending cry of multitudes of people who would have been saved had they heard the gospel from any believers around them should compel us to reach them with the gospel. There is the dreadful reality that the time of God’s mercy may pass when seekers may not find Him (Isaiah 55:6). It is therefore dangerous to delay or fail to preach the gospel.

Every lost opportunity leaves the heart more hardened and makes it more difficult to come into conformity with God’s will (Hebrews 3:12,13). Lost days of grace amount to incalculable loss. Therefore, believers should preach while the opportunity lasts, and sinners should respond and be saved while the Spirit is calling.

Question 1: *Why is gospel-preaching by every believer very urgent?*

BELIEVERS’ DUTY AS WATCHMEN (Ezekiel 3:17-21; 2 Kings 9:17-20; Romans 10:13-15; Isaiah 62:6,7; Jeremiah 6:17; Revelation 3:14-22)

The work of a watchman is to warn others of impending dangers. The prophet is the watchman of God to warn careless evildoers of the dangers of sin (Jeremiah 6:17). Careless souls move about blindly till doom’s day. Scorners may continue jesting till the day of death if no one warns them. Few realize they may be close to death. Many fail to

recognize there is only a step between them and death (1 Samuel 20:3). As there are lots of careless people among those who do not know Christ, so there are careless and negligent people among those who profess to know Christ.

Question 2: *What is the work of a watchman?*

In the church of God, to aid and abet any sinful conduct is to deny both the overseer of the church the knowledge of his flock about which he must give account to God, and the backslider the opportunity to be availed good counsel and correction of his evil way.

Sinners inside and outside the church must be warned of the danger of sin. Everyone should be given the opportunity of hearing the saving gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). If they hear the gospel and by faith repent from sin and call on the name of the Lord as their personal Lord and Saviour, they would be saved, else, they will be damned (Mark 16:15,16). But how **“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?”** (Romans 10:14).

As our lesson today reveals, ours is a God of justice. He does not act indiscriminately. It is the soul that sins against Him that shall die (Ezekiel 18:4). God will not slay the righteous with the wicked (Genesis 18:23-33). When a man sins, the immediate fruit of his action is guilt. He bears the burden of that guilt. What he does with his guilt is very important. He may repent of his sins, call upon God for forgiveness and permit Jesus Christ to wipe away his guilt through His shed blood on the Cross. If he does this, he will be saved. But if he refuses to repent, he will continue to bear the burden of his sins. He risks eternal damnation if no one warns him of the evil of his way and shows him how to be free. This task of warning the careless and guiding him unto salvation is not optional for the believer. We are compelled to warn the sinner and the backslider to repent; else, we too risk our own place with God. Our souls are in danger of eternal loss except we warn the careless sinner in or out of the church.

DANGER OF INDIFFERENCE (Revelation 3:14-19; Ezekiel 34:1-6; Isaiah 32:9; 47:8; Amos 6:1; Zephaniah 1:12; Matthew 22:5; 24:12)

The Laodicean church was indifferent about spiritual things; consequently, it was on the verge of getting its relationship with the Lord severed. The case of the Laodicean church is similar to the state of many believers today. Half-heartedness in the service of the Lord has never pleased God.

Question 3: *What inevitable end faces the sinner in the church who refuses to repent?*

All those who profess devotion to God but are by their lives and desire uncommitted to Him, are condemned in the Scripture. For example, Saul, the first king of Israel, obeyed God in the mission God sent him, but not wholeheartedly. He was judged and rejected (1 Samuel 15:13-19). Jehu avenged God upon the house of Ahab as God had stated, but he **“took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God...”** and consequently, **“in those days the Lord began to cut Israel short...”** (2 Kings 10:30-32). The people of Judah who the Lord had given a great victory in battle were not total in their devotion to Him. They held on to their idol worship and did not prepare **“their hearts unto the God of their fathers”** (2 Chronicles 20:31-33). So too was Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25:2). Needless to mention Judas Iscariot, who for his partial devotion to the Lord and for the reward of his iniquity, fell headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and his bowels gushed out (Acts 1:16-20)

To be indifferent to the cry of dying sinners is to break the already heavy heart of the Lord. He expects that having saved us, He will use us to save the world (John 17:20; 21:15-17). To be lukewarm, indifferent or nonchalant about the urgency of the task of the gospel is to heartlessly damn the world for which Jesus bled and died (Isaiah 53:1-5).

Question 4: *What are the dangers posed by indifference to the urgency of our task?*

Causes of lukewarm disposition to gospel-preaching include absorption in business (Luke 14:18), procrastination (Acts 24:25), and insensitivity (Acts 28:27). But the Lord is calling us to repentance (Revelation 3:19).

THE UNDYING VISION (John 4:35-38; Matthew 18:11; Mark 4:29)

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35)

To the husbandman or farmer, the long days of toiling and sowing precious seed, contrast sharply with the happy and joyous time of harvest. For him, harvest time comes with great expectation. He looks forward to it with infectious enthusiasm and passion. The Lord in this text draws a correlation between the natural way of sowing or planting seed with the spiritual sowing of the seed of the word of God. In either case harvest time is eagerly awaited.

With the right preparations, the seed sown is sure to germinate with the promise of fruitfulness and a good harvest. But unlike the natural seed which usually took about four months to bear mature fruits, Jesus, who a short while earlier had just sown the precious seed of the gospel into the hungry and ready heart of the Samaritan woman, was expecting immediate results. **“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest....”** The Lord knew that the potent testimony of the Samaritan woman would begin to bear bountiful fruit immediately, not till four months.

But looking down, His disciples could not see the already ripe bountiful harvest from Samaria about to be gathered into the Kingdom. **“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields,”** Jesus urged the disciples, **“for they are white already to harvest.”** The field of harvest is all around us today. The readiness of the dying world to be saved stresses the urgency of our task to reach the dying sinners around us with the saving gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It also points at the fact that while we continually look down, too preoccupied with the mundane things of life, we fail to see sinners with wounded hearts, bruised by sins and heading towards destruction. Their desperate plea forbids us to linger. It must be now. They are ripe already for the harvest. We are to immediately put in the sickle, because the harvest is come (Mark 4:29).

THE REWARDS OF SOUL-WINNING (John 4:36-38; Psalm 126:5,6; Daniel 12:3; Proverbs 11:30; 1 Corinthians 9:19)

The labour of soul-winning is not without reward. Jesus says in our text: **“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.”** This reward is partly in the present time and in the future also. As the harvester rejoices when his fruits are gathered into the storehouse, so does the soul-winner when souls are won to the Lord. In fact, the more fruit the harvester gathers, the more his joy, so too the greater number of souls won to the Lord, the greater the joy of doing the will of God; for **“Herein is my Father glorified”** Jesus says, **“that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”** (John 15:8). And this is the primary duty of the believer. Jesus emphasized this when He said, **“ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”** (John 15:16).

Question 5: *What are your rewards as a soul- winner?*

Beyond the present, the reward of soul-winning is largely in the future when the saints shall be gathered home to glory. **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 15:58).