TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Bobby Rader

#881 Mansion Over the Hilltop
#778 Be With Me Lord

Scripture Reading by: Pierce Balch
#382 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

Communion Devotional by: Ken Coleman
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#678 More About Jesus
Sermon: "Work in the Vineyard"
Matthew 21:28-32

#948 I Am Resolved
#869 We're Marching to Zion
Closing Prayer by: Zach Arthur

Our small groups will meet tonight.
Ken Coleman's group will meet at 5:00 p.m.
at the building.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Sept. 8, 2024

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

How Does Your Garden Grow?

I passed by the field of a sluggard,
by the vineyard of a man lacking sense,
and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns;
the ground was covered with nettles,
and its stone wall was broken down.
Then I saw and considered it;
I looked and received instruction.
A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
and want like an armed man. – **Proverbs 24:30-34**

There is no book in the Bible that has more to say about the importance of work, industriousness, and ambition versus laziness than Proverbs. And with Labor Day this past week, it seemed to be something worth considering. The story here is all about neglect. Whenever neglect takes place, decay automatically sets in. That raises some questions for us to think about.

Why was he so neglectful?
Let's concentrate specifically on this man's vineyard. I imagine that if we were to ask him about his neglect, he would probably have a variety of excuses. Perhaps he would say "I don't have enough room." We might point out the space that could be used if he would. "Well," he replies, "I know, but it is not as big as my neighbor's, so I didn't even bother." He had an entire field, but he never utilized the potential that was there. That applies to our lives, too. God has given each of us a metaphorical field: our lives. We can plant good seeds or bad there; it is totally up to us. But the open field is there for us to use.

Or maybe he would say, "Well, yes I do have room to plant, but my ground just isn't fertile." Back in the Hill Country where we used to live, you practically had to have a jackhammer to dig a hole. Maybe his soil was like that; he felt it would be a waste of time to plant, so he decided not to try at all. But if that is true, how do you explain the tremendous crop of weeds? Ground that will grow thorns and nettles could also grow flowers and vegetables. The same minerals that produce a healthy crop of weeds can also produce something worthwhile. That too is true in our lives. The same soil can produce either evil or good. There is a real need for Christians to plant good seed and so bear good fruit.

Well, the man might say instead that perhaps it could grow a crop, but the environment is bad; animals could get in and ruin it all, so he never bothered But that is not a good excuse either, because Solomon says, *the stone wall was broken down*. Why was the wall there in the first place? To protect the garden and keep wild animals out. By neglecting the wall, he himself made it possible for his environment to turn bad and destroy his garden. Sometimes people say something similar: "I would like to live for Christ, but the world we live in is just so bad." Don't you realize that God has provided all we need to live a Christian life? Paul tells us, *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil* **(Ephesians 6:11).** Make sure that you are

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Rickey Lucas is having pain throughout his body. The Dr. will be trying some form of blocker to reduce/control his pain.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Dr. Hugo Thomas, Veronica Valant, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Yalonda Jackson, Cassandra Valent, Linda Frank

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting , Monday, Sept. 9th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, Sept. 19th at 8:-00 a.m.

We will be having a blood drive on Monday, Sept. 9th from 4-8 p.m. in the fellowship room.

Food Bank

We served 136 families on Tuesday, Sept. 3rd at our food bank. That equals to 433 individuals. We had 15 volunteers.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

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protected from the flaming missiles of the evil one. You will be able to live victoriously for Christ even in a bad environment.

So once we sift through all of the possible excuses, why did this man fail? It is not because it was impossible: he had plenty of room, fertile soil, and a stone wall. No, he failed for a simple reason: pure, unmitigated laziness. Solomon calls him a "sluggard"—that's a fancy word for lazy. And Solomon says that he considered it and learned a lesson.

What did laziness do to this man's life?

There are at least three things worth noting. First, his laziness contributed to the fact that he was never able to bring in a harvest. He never knew the joy of going out at harvest time, after he had cultivated the ground, planted the seeds and watched them grow. He could have grown grapes that would have fed hungry people. He could have grown flowers that would fill the air with perfume. But he raised no flowers, no wheat, no vegetables – not because he could not, but he would not.

Maybe we wish the church would grow more, that it would do more, that it would have more programs. But have you ever considered what we do accomplish? We regularly help feed literally hundreds of hungry people in our community. Through missionaries, we have helped establish churches in far-flung parts of the world. We just contributed a sum to disaster relief in India.

And think then of the potential. Jesus started with 12 men and one of them quit, but they turned the world upside down. Think of the victories that can be won through the work and witness of people reading this. We never know what we might yet do! But we never will if we aren't willing to get our hands dirty.

The second thing that his laziness did was that it caused the weeds to grow. He never made a decision to grow weeds. The only decision he made was not to plant anything. Nature took care of the rest. The moment you decide not to plant something positive in your life, look out! The negative takes over. You can raise a fine crop of weeds with flabby muscles and soft white palms. They just grow on their own.

And there are some people just like that. They don't want to be unChristian, but they're unwilling to put any effort into being a Christian too. We have asked like the jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" Turn that around: "What must I do to be lost?" Nothing. Do nothing and you are automatically lost. Nature abhors a vacuum. The moment we decide not to cultivate the soil, not to plant good seed, the weeds automatically begin to grow. They will grow and they will blight your life.

That is the final thing that his laziness did. The wall was neglected and the weeds grew. And the picture of total disintegration shows nothing left of his garden. It has been totally ruined because the man decided to do nothing.

Our lives are the same. When we do nothing for the Lord, the weeds begin to grow. Soon the walls that protected us from the evil one come tumbling down. And without God's presence, evil comes rushing in…and then there is nothing left at all.

If we are going to live for Christ we must become workers. We must build up the walls and cultivate the soil. We must make sure that the seed of the Gospel is planted in hearts and lives, so that people may be changed from producing evil to producing good. That is our task. How does your garden grow?

Bryant Perkins