



⁴⁴ Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. ⁴⁵ And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. ⁴⁶ I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. ⁴⁷ And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. (John 12:44-50)

In the morning mail, I received a letter from CARE requesting aid for children of poverty throughout the world. I do not support CARE because they do not teach the morality that should accompany a satisfied stomach; however, the letter contained a small packet of seed. The seed were of squash - reputedly almost growing itself. But there were instructions on planting and harvest of the squash on the back of the packet. I understood those instructions to parallel the planting of the seeds of the Gospel in the world.

Our Lord delivers His final public discourse before His Passion. He has preached for at least three years to a stone-hearted Jewish nation with little signs of fruit; however, only decades later, that same Gospel has borne fruit manifold times its first delivery, and even upstaged the Emperor-worship of the Roman Empire. The time of our Lord Jesus' final public preaching is all that He has left. It is time now for the Promise and Desire of the ages to come to fulfillment. Knowing the harsh and horrific torture He is about to face, He nonetheless takes this last opportunity to send out His message and purpose ere the sound of His Voice is silenced by the Tomb. Our Lord Jesus taught and preached in a timely manner and season. I was reminded of that fact by those planting and harvesting instructions on the seed packet I have received.

PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS: *"For optimal germination, soil needs to be between 70-90 degrees."*

ITS PARALLEL TO THE GOSPEL: There is a time that is optimal to preach the Gospel, but the heart needs to be prepared for it. The season must be right. The season must be when the child is able to comprehend some meaning from God's Word. The season must be before the failing faculties of the mind loses capacity to reason and understand in old age. *"A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!"* Prov 15:23 (KJV) *"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I*

should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." Isaiah 50:4 (KJV) Preaching the Gospel to a wild mob after a unjust lynching will garner few proselytes. Perhaps the best season is when the fires of emotion have sunken into the despairs of hopelessness.

PREPARATION: "*Work in plenty of organic matter to prepare the soil.*" Before one can preach the milk of the Gospel to the unbelieving, he must have fed on the organic meat of the Gospel through study and practice. Continuing, "*Plant seeds one-inch deep, about eighteen to thirty inches apart in the bed.*" We must know how deeply we go into the Word of God without losing the listeners in obscure perceptions. The seed-bed is a fitting place to plant seed, and the venue and environment of our preaching must be conducive to moral teaching. Though some claim to do so, I do not believe going to dives, bars, and houses of prostitution will avail in the salvation of many souls.

CARE: "*Once plants begin to blossom and set fruit, a side dressing of balanced soluble fertilizer is beneficial.*" Once we have brought a soul to the threshold of faith by our seed-planting, we must continue to nurture and teach so that the child (of any and all ages) is brought to full flower in faith. So often, the only objective has been to get a confession and testimony of faith from a seeker - then leave the person at that stage without continuing to teach them in the deeper things of the Gospel. This is why we have a catechism in our Prayer Book - for the continual teaching and edification of children or unchurched adults.

Daily weeding and hoeing is needed if the plant will grow up strong and healthy. We are FAMILY in Christ! We need to love and care for each other regardless our stage of maturity in the faith. We visit regularly, and we keep abreast of the personal problems and illnesses of members of our family. But there is something else we have yet to address that is absolutely essential - WATER! "*Water deeply once a week, applying at least one inch of water.*" We do have Bible studies and prayer meetings throughout the week, but the Lord's Day is a day of the deeper elements of worship and the preaching of the Word of God. We need to satisfy that obligation if we are to grow and not be stunted. We need total submersion in the Word of God on this day.

HARVESTING: "*Like most vegetables, yellow squash is tender and tastiest when harvested young.*" The approach to the Throne of Mercy is not limited by age. A young soul, as well as an ancient one, is invited to come alike to Christ for His redeeming love and forgiveness. My Korean father-in-law, who is now deceased and with God, was reluctant to come to Christ seeking forgiveness out of shame for feeling it cheap and presumptuous to live his long life apart and then, at the last minute, to seek the benefits of Heaven and of Christ. But he came nonetheless in old age, and realized immediately that there is never cause for shame to come to Christ at any age. However, consider the great advantage of coming to Christ at a tender age when the sins of the world have not worn one's conscience to a calloused and hardened one! The child is never a challenge to bring to faith, but the elderly are far less disposed to admit that they have traveled the wrong path over a long life.

"He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." Here begins our Lord's benediction to His earthly ministry. It came perhaps at a season when He felt it most appropriate for effect. At every opportunity He had preached in simplicity and often by parables; but now, He places a seal of authority on all of those treasured moments by Jordan Waters, by the peaceful shores of Galilee, along the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and in the most hateful of venues - the Temple at Jerusalem. In this charge, Christ places the Will of His Father above all else. In fact, the will of Christ was in complete accord with the Will of the Father. But the will of Christ was BASED solely upon the Will of the Father. Just as Christ and His will is One with the Father, so must our wills be One with Christ and, therefore, One with the Father.

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." That Light that Jesus brought into the world became the catalyst for our own Light which we reflect from His Beacon Light of Love. His Love and Mercy are the fire of that Light, and the Holy Spirit abiding in our hearts is the fuel. Why abide in darkness when a great Light is at hand? But many prefer the darkness because they are wicked and wish the cover of darkness for their sinful deeds. Have you noticed how most sins of adultery, prostitution and drunkenness occur during those hours of darkness? He did not come as a light in time past, or presently only, or in future. He is the *"I AM come a Light."* (forever glowing)

Profoundly, our Lord Jesus makes a statement that many misinterpret as license to sin: *"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."* The sinner (both in and out of the pulpit) will hang onto these words of Christ and claim there is no judgment since Christ does not judge. (But, in reality, He does!) So what do these words mean? If we would read the whole and not selectively take verses out of context, perhaps we might have our eyes opened. Those who do not believe in Christ are judged already. Without belief in Christ, there remains only the yawning gates of Hell at the end of the Broad Way they are traveling. *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."*

"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." The Commandment God gave to His only Begotten Son was the whole Word which Christ is. We, too, who teach and preach the Word had better be mindful that it is not OUR word that we preach, but the Word of God.

"And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." The Commandment of God - His WORD - leads to eternal life. That Commandment of God is subsumed in one element - LOVE! Love never intends harm or ill will. Love leads to the obedience of the whole Law of God. *"Hatred stirreth up strifes: **but love covereth all sins.**"* (Prov 10:12)