

## Reap a Harvest of Peace

- ✦ Sowing to please the Spirit (vv.1-8)
- ✦ Boasting in Christ alone (vv. 7-10, 14-16)

In the name of God's Son our Savior, dearly loved of God:

Have you noticed how the Hollywood barrage on heaven continues today? Since the birth of the silver screen, movies and TV series keep trying to reveal what's on the other side. Lately it's two angels, supposedly one from heaven, one from hell, teaming up to save the world from some worse enemy. Underneath is the premise that people are basically good enough to overcome all adversity to make the world a better place. Now a *What-if* type series explores, "What if you were getting text messages from God?" In all of these the goal of a better life could loosely be called, "peace."

And yet, when the dear Holy Spirit reminds you of God's Word in hymns and spiritual songs, it's like text messages from God. We have a Book of Books brimming over with letters from God. Why don't people get excited about the Bible? Check out the first verses of our text. God is an artist who begins His masterpiece with dark colors. Novices like us can't see past the dark lines and shadows to imagine the beautiful sunrise yet to be. But look closely and realize God's beautiful portrait is your own personal life. God's masterpiece of you? How about this? **Reap a Harvest of Peace.**

### ✦ Sowing to please the Spirit (vv.1-8)

Despite a world of denials, every drama rides on moral absolutes. Beneath shocking scenes and frightening twists lies a knowledge of good and evil in the human conscience. What's missing is the final scene where all this is headed. We need someone to reveal the whole picture. God is bringing you under the shelter of His grace to **Reap a Harvest of Peace** in heart and home, congregation and country.

Coming to the end of Paul's letter to the Galatians, that problem of selfish work righteousness gathers storm clouds just before the end. Trying to get God on your side by your own self-chosen good deeds can drown you in pride as you try to help others. It can also blow away the seeds of peace in your life leaving you with painful tears and so much drama you can't sleep. Let's face into the wind together.

Sadly, sin always hurts someone. Where thoughts, words and deeds disagree with God, there is no such thing as "harmless fun," or "I didn't hurt anyone." Sin is as attractive to us as peanut butter on a sticky trap for a mouse. Just a little...a little more...maybe a little more.... With one paw in the peanut butter and three stuck on the trap – "***There is no peace for the wicked,***" says Isaiah. Then you see someone's problem and want to help. Only you get four paws stuck without a lick of peanut butter!

"***Carefully watching yourself so that you are not also tempted,***" keeps Christian love from diving in too shallow. How often have married couples suffered from one accusing the other, both committing the same sin? As if angry words weren't bad enough, twin sins of resentment and bitterness grow like deep weeds in asphalt. Only God's Word can kill them at the root in hearts where sinful pride died.

***Bear one another's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ.*** <sup>3</sup>*For if someone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* <sup>4</sup>*Let each person test his own work, and then he will take pride in regard to himself and not his neighbor.* <sup>5</sup>*For each man will bear his own burden.*"

How does that square with verse 2, where it says, "***Bear one another's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ***"? When we stop comparing ourselves with others, we realize we have plenty of personal problems to correct in your own heart, sins to confess, gratitude to express for God's kindness in

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<sup>1</sup> Scriptures EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2017. NPH: 800-662-6022; Amazon-Kindle.

forgiving all your sins. Instead of turned-in selfishness, you enjoy turned out love like Jesus for you. His forgiveness strengthens you to bear your own burdens, then help others with theirs. That's **Peace!**

When I think back on the kindness of pastors and teachers, fellow called workers today, I'm so grateful. God's guidance turns my creeds into deeds: ***"Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with his teacher."*** Giving my offerings generously, like God for me, sets me free from crippling greed and materialism. As Jesus says in today's Gospel, ***"Whoever listens to you listens to me."*** (Luke 10:16) Nothing beats loyal support of listening ears with hearts **Sowing to please the Spirit.**

***"Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. To be sure, whatever a man sows, he will also reap. <sup>8</sup>Indeed, the one who sows for his own sinful flesh will reap destruction from the sinful flesh. But the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit.*** Giving firstfruit gifts to God is like sowing choice seeds in the field of your life. Without faith in Jesus as our Savior, none of us can give that way. Instead we give to get – at least some recognition or a little extra love from God. But God is not like that at all. He gives His very best, His all-in-all in the sacrifice of His own Son. He does not hold back even a tiny bit of His love from you. His blessed Sacrament of the Altar keeps growing God's **Peace** as long as you live. Your Baptism keeps bubbling up in living water for a **Harvest** from worship services: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And here's the key:

### ✠ **Boasting in Christ alone (vv. 7-10, 14-16)**

***<sup>9</sup>Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the household of faith."*** See the key? Don't give up. You feel weak and weary at the end of a long day, but remember the David's picture: ***"Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."*** (Psalm 30:5 NIV84) God keeps putting opportunities in front of us to exercise your spiritual muscles with the joy of children running and jumping and having fun because they can. Children know what happens if you run too fast down a hill. You can't keep your feet under you. That's how boasting pride gets us into trouble. Yet there is a kind of healthy pride. It's called **Boasting in Christ alone.**

***"Far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. <sup>15</sup>In fact, in Christ Jesus circumcision or uncircumcision does not matter. What matters is being a new creation. <sup>16</sup>Peace and mercy on those who follow this rule, namely, on the Israel of God."***

Remember the composer of that favorite hymn, "When Peace Like a River"? Philip Bliss was traveling by train with his family back from Christmas vacation to Chicago. About 8:00 pm, December, 29, 1876, a railroad trestle collapsed, plunged 75 feet into the icy river and caught fire. His family died with 100 others. A suitcase sent on another train had his last hymn: "I will sing of my Redeemer And his wondrous love to me. On the cruel cross he suffered From the curse to set me free." Bliss was 38.

The hymn's author Horatio Spafford lost everything in the Chicago fire. He put his wife and four daughters on a luxury liner to sail to France until Chicago rebuilt. He even moved them to a different cabin in hopes of better safety. Early morning November 22, 1873, the ship collided with an iron sailing vessel and sank. Nine days later Mrs. Spafford wired a telegram: "Saved alone." Their four daughters were lost. The grieving lawyer sailed to comfort his wife. Crossing the mid Atlantic, the captain told him they were over the spot where his wife and daughters sank. In his cabin all alone he meditated on God's Word: "It is well; the will of God be done." Later he wrote the hymn based on those words.<sup>2</sup>

Both author and composer illustrate the truth of God's promise: ***"Let us not become weary of doing good, because at the appointed time we will reap, if we do not give up."*** For Jesus' sake we still **Reap a Harvest of Peace** from their work today. Take pride in Christ alone for you. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Morgan, Robert J. *On This Day*. Copyright © 1997 by Robert J. Morgan. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved. DailyReader Copyright © 1999-2001 by Jeff Wheeler and Craig Rairdin. Laridian. For *The Preacher's Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at [www.wels.us/newlife](http://www.wels.us/newlife) . 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126