

## SEEDTIME AND HARVEST

Adapted from a talk by the Rev. Ormond Odhner

*Lesson: Matthew 13: 24-30*

You all probably know about the natural harvest that we experience every year. The time of harvest is when we go and bring in all the vegetables and fruits that we have grown. Most of us may not actually be farmers, but we have all seen farmers hard at work, and we know enough about farms and gardens to imagine how farmers feel. Let us now pretend that we are farmers, long, long ago.

Winter is just beginning. Earlier in the year we ploughed our field and planted our seeds. We watered them and watched them sprout. Then, as the plants grew, we weeded them, cultivated them, and then finally we brought in our food. All our food is now in. Some of it has been put in cans. The roots are stored down in cellars. We have worked very, very hard, but now the hard work of the year is almost over, and we want to sit back and relax. We also want to do two things before we start work next year.

First, we want to thank the Lord for all the good things that He has given us during the year and to celebrate His wonderful blessings—the bountiful crops we have had. That's why many people have a special festival or day of Thanksgiving after the harvest is done. Secondly, we remember that there are some people in the world who are not as fortunate as we are. They may be poor and have nothing to eat, or maybe they are sick in some way. For this reason, we often bring fruit or other food offerings to the harvest festivals or Thanksgiving services. This shows the Lord that we know that all the good things we have come from Him and really belong to Him. It also shows the Lord that we really want to do what He wants us to do with those good things —share them with others, the poor, the sick and the needy.

Did you know that there is another kind of a harvest, a harvest of which the Lord often speaks in His Word? Once He told a parable about a farmer who had sowed good seed in his field; and then, when he was asleep, his enemy came along, and sowed some things called tares in his field. Now the seeds the farmer had sown were wheat seeds, and the tare is a strange plant. When it is growing up it looks just like wheat, but the difference is that the tare produces poisonous grains which make those who eat them very sick, while the wheat is good. Yet when they are growing up together you cannot quite tell which is which.

The enemy, then, had come and planted these horrible tares in the field. As they sprouted, the man's servants realized that these weeds were there. They asked, "Shall we pull up the tares out of your field?" But the man said that they should not do so yet, but should wait until the harvest, because if they tried to pull up the tares, they might pull up a lot of the wheat as well. When the tares were fully grown they would be able to tell the difference. At the harvest they were to take the tares, bind them in bundles, and burn them up. And the wheat was to be gathered up and put into the barn.

Now what is that harvest of which the Lord spoke?

This other kind of harvest is when the Lord gathers us into the other world, into the next life. He does the gathering, but we have to be ready for that harvest. We do not want to be like tares which the Lord will throw away! We want to be like the wheat which the Lord will gather into His heavenly barns. So how do we become like good wheat?

## Family Talk

It is all told in the story of how a farmer works. What are the first two things a farmer needs? He needs ground and seeds. Otherwise, he could not be a farmer at all. Now the Lord has given each of us some heavenly ground and some heavenly seed. He has given us the ground of our minds in which the seeds, which are the truths of His Word, can be planted.

After the farmer has planted his seeds in the ground, what comes next? He must weed the growing plants, for otherwise weeds would choke all his good fruit. He must cultivate, take his hoe and scratch the ground. Cultivating means scratching the surface of the soil, so that the rain will go down to the roots and the ground will be nice and soft. And we must keep scratching our minds! We need to think. We need to think about what those truths mean and how we can live them. Only then will the seeds of the Lord's truth grow and bear their fruit.

What else does the farmer need to do? He must water his plants, or they would die. And we need to water our minds. Water means truth, and all the time as we grow, we need to learn more truth, or else the seeds of truth that the Lord planted in us will wither away and die.

And, if we do all those things, year after year, then on the day of that wonderful harvest when the Lord takes us into the other world, we will not need to be afraid. For then the Lord will say of us, "Gather the wheat into My barns."

Amen.