



President Walton's November 2020 Message

Faithful Servants, Reaping and Sowing



Happy All Saints Day, saints of God! Before you get too big a head, our sainthood is not achieved by anything we've done, but solely through the merits of Jesus shedding His blood on the Cross for us. We celebrate the fact we have been made His saints in Jesus. He has made us His faithful servants in the harvest! He calls us to reap and to sow for the eternal harvest. In fact, Jesus said, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."*

As we enter into November I think about the harvest all around us.

Last month I learned election day was set in November because of the harvest. Encyclopedia Britannica states, "A November election was convenient because the harvest would have been completed but the most severe winter weather, impeding transportation, would not yet have arrived, while the new election results also would roughly conform to a new year. Tuesday was chosen as Election Day so that voters could attend church on Sunday, travel to the polling location on Monday, and vote before Wednesday, which was usually when farmers would sell their produce at the market." It's fascinating how traditions of the past inform our present and impact our future. The role of the harvest was well known to our forebearers. I grew up in farming country in New York and even worked for a time on a farm, and I remember so well watching the combines at work, bringing in the sheaves, the corn, and the barley. Currently I have several friends who own vineyards, and it is always intriguing to listen to the stories of collecting a harvest. Of course, the harvest is difficult work, but what joy is found in the fruit of the harvest.

[A favorite harvest hymn](#) from my childhood has these words:

"We praise You, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring;
We lay it before You; we kneel and adore You;
We bless Your holy name: glad praises we sing."



We are so blessed to recognize and praise our great God, who provides for all our needs. As far back as I can remember this hymn was part of my family Thanksgiving worship tradition. In my mind's eye I can see images of places and people with whom I shared this special hymn. The final verse reads,

"With voices united our praises we offer,
Our songs of thanksgiving to You we now raise;
Your strong arm will guide us, our God is beside us,
To You, our great Redeemer, forever be praise!"

If there was a time to unite our voices, it is now. All around us we find the seeds of discord that tear at the very fabric of our unity as God's people. In many ways the church simply reflects the surrounding culture. We find divides in regard to politics, to race, to lifestyle issues, to reaction to the pandemic. I've actually heard about churches battling over issues like requiring wearing masks versus no masks in worship. Even in the church we find ways to divide and destroy what God desires to build among us. All the while, as Satan continues to stir up strife and distract us, Jesus continues to say to His redeemed, *"The harvest is plentiful..."*

This is such an opportune time to be God's Church and make disciples of all nations. There is a huge harvest all around us. It all begins with living and loving as disciples. Knowing about Jesus, going to church, whether in person or even online, is only a part of God's plan for you. Jesus drew His disciples into a daily relationship to deepen their faith. Faith without deeds is dead according to James, the brother of Jesus. What I believe James is saying here is discipleship will always lead us to actively live out our faith in love as we continually grow in God's Word. It isn't a matter of trying to impress God or somehow earn His favor, but is the natural response to a life touched by grace. Recently my wife had surgery, and during her recovery I did the cooking and some cleaning. I didn't do it because of any obligation. It was an action caused by my love for her. My concern about connecting people to Jesus isn't driven by fear or trying to score points with God. It is based on my love for Him in gratitude for all He has done for me. Our love for Him is what motivates and sends us into the harvest field for Jesus!



Recently the Church celebrated the Reformation, when Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the Castle Church Door in Wittenberg. There he sought to reintroduce the Church to God's grace and the power of His Word. The Church at his time had strayed from its foundations. Luther wasn't saying the Church is not valid, it just needed to recalculate, as my GPS will sometimes tell me. When I take a wrong turn, it will tell me how to get back on track. God was using Luther to reform His Church and get it back on track.

It wasn't that the grace and power of His Word were missing from the Church, just being overlooked, misapplied and often ignored. It is really no different for any of us in our personal life. In our hearts and minds we want to keep God's Word and trust His grace. On our own, apart from His Spirit, we will surely fail. We are, after all, same-time saints and sinners. It is far too easy to complicate what God has made so simple. God offers us His grace freely. This is why Luther called us to daily repentance, drowning the old nature, mired in sin, and remembering the baptismal promise of being His redeemed children, purchased and won by the righteousness of Jesus by grace on the Cross.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, as He has redeemed you, with great purpose. We have been chosen—chosen to be His children, and chosen to be the laborers in His harvest field as faithful servants, reaping and sowing hope and peace in His name. Paul tells God's mission for us in 1 Timothy 2. Simply put, God *"desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* You and I are the bearers of truth to the world all around us. We have such good news to share!

This Thanksgiving Day is likely to be a bit different for many people. With health officials warning about the dire consequences of family gatherings, potential restrictions on travel, and all the fears of the unknown. While we cannot predict what the future holds, be confident in the One who holds your future! Perhaps this Thanksgiving will be a quieter, more reflective time, perhaps gathered in smaller groups, perhaps with other challenges. On the other hand, this is an excellent time to really stop and give thanks for God's blessings. Even though we may not be able to attend a church service in some places, we now have greater options with how we might worship. We can find blessings in His Word anytime and every time. Among these blessing are the opportunities God has granted each of us to reach people, who are often fearful, lonely and hurting, with His love. Maybe it is by dropping off a meal, or



sending a card, making a phone call, a FaceTime or ZOOM call. We can all find some way to share the love of Jesus. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few. Won't you step out as a faithful servant, to reap and sow in the Lord's harvest? It will certainly fill your heart with thanksgiving!

In Jesus,
Greg

Registration remains open for the
President's Equip Conference
to access the conference register through this link:
<https://flgadistrict.org/pecregistration/>

Daily Advent Devotions begin soon!
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