

A Parable of the Harvest

*"All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled" (Ecclesiastes 6:7).
"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you..." (John 6:26).*

The short loans on the farm machinery would be due at harvest's end. Pat Shaughnessy had not been worried about the pay-off because, like his father before him and the farmer's around him, he banked on the reaping to pay off their debts, meet their family's needs and have enough to set them up for next year's crops. This year was different, far different from other years; he had not seen it like this in all of his life, nor had he heard anything like this since the stories that were passed down from his great-grandfather. I guess it was easy to put famines in the past, not just back to Great-Grandpa's days, but back to the book of Genesis when Pat could just barely remember the stories of Joseph told to him in Sunday School. It seemed even further in the past than it really was since it had been better than five years since he had been in church and that was when he married Kathy, his high school sweetheart.

Pat had not seen the need to further his formal education beyond high school since he believed all that a farmer needs to know was taught to him by his dad and grandpa. On the other hand, he felt like he could keep up with the high tech cutting edges from his brother-in-law who majored in agriculture in the state university. But now his small but wonderful world of farming was approaching a sad end if things didn't change.

The only farm that seemed to be heading for a great harvest was the massive farm owned by a corporation that supplied the wheat for a major cereal and breakfast foods maker in America. There was always more than enough money on hand supplied by the corporation to afford the latest irrigation systems to keep the fields watered. It was hard for Pat and his boyhood friends to handle hearing the boastings of workers of that massive farm, especially in the midst of their greatest hardship.

Everybody loved Paul Felding, the high school band director. Many believed although he contributed much to the love and appreciation of music in the community, he may have missed his calling. The man had an insatiable desire to learn and teach the Bible. So, the consensus of a few who knew him was that he should have been a preacher. He scratched the itch to communicate God's Word by having the most successful Sunday School class in the church where Pat's parents still attended. People would travel from surrounding towns to be under his "on fire" teaching.

The great loss of the generational business of family farming was now at stake. Pat and his fellow un-churched friends now helped fill the rest of the largest room dedicated to the Sunday School class of Paul Felding. The band director was happy to see them, even though he knew why they were there. He knew their worries about the future brought them to their realization they needed supernatural help. Anyway, to Felding's opinion, there was not a wrong reason for being in Sunday School.

After three weeks of faithful Sunday School attendance by the prodigals, a catastrophe hit the already drought-afflicted community. A hailstorm. It did not affect the already doomed crops of Pat and the family farmers. What the hailstorm did was to bring the massive corporate farm to its knees. The local boys couldn't believe it when they saw the foreman from the lucrative corporate farm show up in Felding's class on Sunday morning. He was even there early to introduce himself to the music man who loved the Bible.

Most of the class was very satisfied with Paul Felding's exposition of the Word with little or no comment from the class members. But this Sunday was different. Paul read his Scripture, prayed and looked at his jam-packed class and opened up with "That was quite a storm, wasn't it?" That's all it took to fuel the class up for open discussion. It was great to get to know each other again and even get to know the foreman from the corporate farm that the young men had been jealous of, because everyone

presumed that he and his family were going to make it. Now that was about to become only something they presumed. The foreman explained the situation. The wheat was not ruined, not yet anyway. The hail had broken off about half of the crop that could be measured in square miles rather than acres. The other half was bent, but not quite broken. The unusual thing was the harvestable wheat was almost fully intact, but the machinery could not go into the wheat filled rows, nor could it capture for harvest the bent and half-folded stalks of wheat that remained.

Paul asked the class full of farmers, "Could the harvest be saved if done the way your great-grandparents did, by sickles and big knives?"

"You mean by hand?" Paul questioned.

"Yes, by hand," replied the band teacher.

The foreman said, "We don't have enough time and we would not be able to find enough experienced field hands to take this kind of a giant undertaking."

The teacher said, "I'm glad you used the term "giant," because most of you remember the story of David and Goliath. Just like in the Bible days, God allows us to face-off great giants to nurture and build our faith. And God did not put the giants in your pathway to bring you to a losing position; He did this to bring you to His winning side."

Pat's cousin, Ted, spoke up and said, "We were all taught how to hand-harvest the wheat when we were little and there's better than two hundred of us on this prairie that could do it."

Pat replied, "The ability is there, but that would take us off our farms and besides, I'm not sure we are in that much of a hurry to help the biggest cereal farm in America."

The foreman, whom they now knew as David Lyman, spoke up quickly, "There is a way we could make it worth your while. It may even end up being beneficial to you as well as us."

Pat continued, "Even with two hundred of us, it would be day and night long shift-working to be able to bring this 'giant' down."

Paul Felding couldn't resist saying, "But David did it with a sling, a stone and above all the power of the Living God! When he was up against the giant he said in I Samuel 17:45, '*Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts....*' Then a few verses later David said in I Samuel 17:47, '*And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.*'"

Pat supposed, "That would take a lot of motivation."

The band teacher spoke up, "I've got an idea that will save the one last remaining harvest, keep the family farmers from going out of business and could actually help bring this community together like she has never been before." In the back of Paul Felding's mind, this would be something that would bring the community together in spiritual renewal, which was desperately needed. It had been over sixty years since this community had a real revival.

Before they knew it, the Sunday School time was gone. Their old high school teacher and now friend said, "Can you meet over at our place after the evening service to talk about this further?" Everyone heartily agreed. Paul continued, "Great. Let me share these words from Jesus with you before we pray, '*Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest*' (Luke 10:2)."

*note: This story is to be continued in next week's edition of *The Pastor's Word*.

- Pastor Pope -

[Back to Pastor's Word](#)