

**A Sermon for Dayspring Baptist Church**  
**By Chris Fillingham**  
**“Plowing and Reaping and Plowing”**  
**1 Cor 3: 5-9**  
**November 4, 2018**

We just overheard a little squabble going on in the Church of Corinth. For some, Paul was their favorite pastor, and they're not interested in hearing from somebody else. After all, he is the founder of their church. He was the pastor when they first came.

But after Paul left, a man named Apollos came along... and Apollos was a good pastor and preacher and a lot of folks came to the church and grew in their faith because of Apollos. Folks didn't care who Paul was or what he said or did.

And this early church in Corinth... being what churches are with their tendency to take sides.... got itself all caught up in a fight on whose teaching was more important to them... and whether they were in the Paul camp or the Apollos camp.

It seems kind of petty to us, doesn't it? But truthfully, it's not much different than our tendency to get caught up in who is our favorite pastor or teacher...

or to get caught up in whether we are a Baptist or a Presbyterian,  
a Protestant or a Catholic...

And if you know anything about church history,  
you know wars have been fought over that.

So, the congregation in Corinth really isn't alone. It's such a human tendency. We like to think our favorite experience of God, or our version of Christianity, is really the right one, or at least the only one that matters, and all that stuff that came before us isn't worth the time of day.

But Paul has an important word for us nearsighted human beings. The truth is, both Paul and Apollos played different but important roles. And neither of them gets the credit.

It was all God's doing... because it was God's field, Paul writes. Paul and Apollos, as different as they may be, are just servants of Christ... each one doing their part... plowing and planting in hope that something beautiful and lifegiving will grow.

And they are hoping the next person will come behind them  
and nurture and weed the field,  
and hoping that someone after them will come along  
and take care of the harvest.

Because that's what it takes to make any lasting impact in the world. You can't do it all on your own. But you can be part of a great chain of plowing, and planting, and reaping, and plowing again.

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And on this All Saints' Day, it got me thinking about Dayspring's story... and how that's been our pattern for so long. There have been lots of folks that have planted something, and others that nurtured it, and others that harvested, and still others that planted again.

It is the rhythm of our church's life...

A rhythm that has to keep going if the field is going to keep producing the crops of the kingdom.

So, I thought maybe I should tell you about some of the plowers and planters from our story, because I'd sure hate for you to think that this church is just about what Apollos did and not know a thing about Paul...  
or to think this church is just about what Dr. Dahlberg did and not know anything about Dr. Yeamen,  
or to think this church is just about what Chris has done, and not know anything about Terry or Glynis LaBarre.

So, let me tell you a bit of our story.

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Before 1803... 215 years ago, Protestant churches weren't even allowed in St. Louis. Then a little thing happened you may have heard of called The Louisiana Purchase.

St. Louis became US territory... and just a few years later, a man named John Mason Peck rode his horse across a bridge spanning the Mississippi River... to start the first Baptist church... and really the first Protestant church in St. Louis.

It wasn't easy to start from scratch.

But he believed it was time to do some planting. Before too long, he established the first Baptist community here... That was 1818 and it's where our story really begins...

From there, a few decades passed and there were different people nurturing and reaping what John Mason Peck had planted here in St. Louis. And 60 years later, a group of about 40 people decided to start the church that we all are part of today.

It was Maundy Thursday, March, 1877. Our church started in a small chapel building we bought from another congregation at the corner of Garrison Ave. We bought that little chapel, named ourselves Garrison Avenue Baptist Church, and called Dr. Pope Yeaman to be our first pastor.

Rather than one person, John Mason Peck, it was a group of people that did the planting this time... as our church began. Those 40 people planted, hoping others behind them would come and water, and nourish, and reap, and plant again. For 141 years now, that's what has been happening.

Of course, they could hardly imagine you and me sitting here today, but here we are.

Now along the way, there have been times when folks wondered if this field of our church could keep producing. There have been years of droughts and years of floods and fires. We've had to move and rebuild more than once and change our name twice.

But with each new generation... a group of people plowed the field, planted, weeded, and nurtured because they trusted that ***what they were doing would make a difference not only for them, but for those that came after them.***

In fact, it was exactly 100 years ago next Sunday, November 11, 1918 that a new cornerstone was laid at the corner of Skinker and Washington, down off the loop. [exactly 100 years ago] There's a painting of that building halfway down our stairway.

By then we were known as Delmar Baptist Church... and there we thrived for decades... as you can see by some of the black and white photos on the stairwell.

It's there that Gloria and Gene Netherton first visited our church as a young couple around 1947, I think. Gloria was just telling me about that when I was visiting with her the other day.

It's there that Carolyn and Bob Harmon first met.

And several decades later, it's there where Chuck and Marsha first met...  
and began their journey of plowing and planting so many gifts among us...

It's there that Jerry and Shirleen, Nancy and Bryant, Toni and Margo, Vi and Newton, Marylee and Kenneth, Joan and John, Chuck and Carol... and so many others still here, first came to our church and made up the 101 class and the M&M class that I've heard stories about.

We're lucky to still have some of those folks around. But most of them that plowed and planted in that season of our church... you and I will never get to meet. What we do have from them is the legacy of their nurturing the field of this church in their time... so that we can have a church like this in our time.

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In fact, I want to read to you what someone wrote about our church back in 1977 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dayspring.

*"For 100 years [this] Church has held out the hand of Christian hospitality to those seeking a place to worship. It has been the church home, the spiritual solace and inspiration, through good times and bad, of all who shared this fellowship of love and search for [God] in their lives....*

*Above all, [this church] has always been known as a congregation that cared, a warm and friendly people, everyone willing **'to rejoice with them that rejoice... and weep with them that weep.'***

*"The church has faced many problems in its 100 years and has been witness to much history. Its members have known the suffering and deprivation of wars and depression. It has also prospered as its members have prospered.*

*It has faced great decision during periods of social and cultural change... Many times, the congregation struggled to survive, but it did—and more.*

*"In its warm friendliness and caring for each member,*

*in its concern for social justice and education...*

*[In its leadership in the ecumenical movement]*

*[this church continues] to be known as... a place to seek [and to come to know] God."<sup>1</sup>*

That was written over 41 years ago... and I have to say, it sure sounds familiar to what I hear people saying about us today. You see, many of the gifts we have here at Dayspring are part of a great legacy... and it's especially important that we recognize that today on this All Saints' Day.

Paul planted, Apollos watered.

John Mason Peck planted...

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<sup>1</sup> Elva Norman, *Biography of a Church*, 58-59.

60 years later, a community of 40 people watered.

And the pattern continued.

Dr. Dahlberg, and Larry Loughhead, and Sam Binch planted, and so many of you from those years ... watered and nurtured... and eventually had to plow up the field again.

In 1990, after a long season of asking hard questions, you decided to take the brave step to sell your beloved building. It was a hard decision for our congregation, but it was a recognition that “we are just servants, but the field is God’s,” as Paul puts it.

**So, we sold the beautiful stone building to an African American congregation... and that decision, that plowing up, is still bearing fruit today.**

**That congregation is still using the building you cared for to minister to the community in that neighborhood. They are ministering in ways we simply couldn’t... and you made that possible.**

Then, for 8 years during the 90s, we wandered in the wilderness (so to speak), not having a home of our own... until October of 1998... it was almost exactly 20 years ago that we plowed and planted here... under the leadership of Pastor Glynis LaBarre... who I think was the first woman pastor of a Baptist church in Missouri. (I love that part of our legacy!)

And for 20 years now, more and more of us have been planting and harvesting... and plowing again... with adding a labyrinth and prayer garden to give people a place to pray and worship outside in the great cathedral of earth and sky.

There has been the start of a playground, which helped for a while, but is no longer adequate for our growing ministry.

There has been the community garden, offering literal land for our neighbors to grow produce that they can then share with their friends as well as the hungry at Circle of Concern.

Do you see how the pattern keeps going?

And how it’s a pattern that is not at all just about buildings, but about ministry that’s possible because of the things that were built?

Terry Minchow-Proffitt, and I after him, have done some planting. Both of us planting the seeds of a more contemplative spirituality, helping us to become a church that is in touch with the deep mysterious longing of the soul. So many of you have been watering, and nurturing, and planting new things yourselves...

**Like Margarett Ann who planted a new prayer ministry that has been nurturing the life of our church.**

**Like David Privott who is planting the idea of a men’s retreat this spring, that I’m really excited about.**

**Like Sarah-Kate Sullivan who planted the seeds of a new approach to children’s Sunday School, that Trisha and Gale are now watering.**

**Like Hannah Allee who planted our Manna ministry that Angela Smith is now watering and nurturing.**

Like Lyndsay Williams who is plowing up and replanting the foundations of our youth ministry to make it more effective.

Like Steve Lorberg and our building team, who, three years ago, helped plow and plant our new addition, that you all have been watering with both your generosity and new ministries... and already we're harvesting the fruit of all that....

And all of this recent plowing and planting and harvesting...  
all of it... is possible... because **70 years ago this year, in 1948**, our church decided to plow and plant something unique... that could harvest beautiful ministries for generations.

***They created a lasting legacy of ongoing ministry by developing an Endowment.***

That's what the Endowment is. It's not just a slush-fund.

***It's a lasting legacy... that creates ongoing ministry,  
ministries that we can't even begin to imagine today but will be needed in the future.***

And so many people from that generation 70 years ago decided they wanted to create that kind of legacy, the kind of legacy they couldn't imagine. They didn't want their planting and reaping to end when they died. Instead, they wanted to be part of creating a legacy just like Paul and Apollos created.

A legacy that God could take and make new things grow, as Paul describes it. "Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."

It is God who makes fruit come from the ground, and it is God who takes the work of your hand, and the power of your dollars

to heal broken hearts

and open closed minds,

and to build sacred community and friendships,

and to fill the deep longings of our souls with everlasting life.

It is God who does that beautiful transformational work with whatever it is we're willing to sow. Saints from our past have trusted and know that this is true.

And so, 70 years ago, people started to say,

*"I want to leave a lasting legacy in God's field.*

*Because the truth is, the stuff and the wealth that I've accumulated in my life,*

*could add up to so much more than a dusty old garage sale*

*that my kids will be left with.*

*It could add up to new and creative ministries*

*that I cannot even begin to imagine now...*

*for people I will never meet."*

Those people are us.

And this year, you and I are being invited to think about our legacy and consider planting seeds in that field as well.

That's part of what our Generation to Generation Campaign is really about.

Besides the \$300K that we hope to raise in the next two years, each of us is being invited to join with the community of saints who left us a great legacy and great example with their last breath.

I don't know what that might look like for you.

It will probably be different depending on your current stage of life... and whether you have young dependents... or how self-sufficient your dependents are.

**But here's what I do know... we are all part of God's field, as Paul puts it.**

**And the gifts of the church... the beauty that has touched and healed us in some important moments... is something we are all called to share and to pass on to future generations.**

And so, I want to challenge you today... to think seriously about what you might do with your last breath... however big or small...

and to think seriously about marking the box on your pledge card that you'll be returning in two weeks that says, "Sometime in the next year, I will add Dayspring to my will or estate plan."

For some, that gift might need to be small because you have other pressing responsibilities. That's OK.

For several of you, that gift could easily be the largest gift of your life...  
planting the greatest seeds of ministry  
you've ever been able to plant.

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When you came in this morning, you should have picked up a colorful tile. I want to invite you to take it out now and look at it. If you didn't get one, raise your hand and our ushers will bring you one.

For the next two weeks, I want you to keep that tile somewhere you'll see it and be reminded of it every day...

Maybe carry it in your pocket throughout the day and put it on your bed-side stand each night. That's what I plan to do with mine.

But I want you to have it close for 2 weeks. Whenever you touch it, or you see it, I want it to be a reminder for you of the beautiful/ colorful life that God has planted in you.

***When you see that tile, see it as... the beautiful seed of life  
planted in you.***

Remember, your life is a gift. One of the greatest questions we have to ask ourselves is how will we nurture and grow the seed of our lives? Or as the poet Mary Oliver puts it, "What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

There are lots of parts to that question...

It's a question that would be good to ask each new year we are given breath.

It's certainly a question that is much bigger than this one campaign,

and much bigger than who or what we designate in our wills...

but it also includes it... because it's a question about our legacy, and what we are leaving behind.

And so, as we think about sacred plowing and planting...

and as we think about what the saints before us did with the precious and beautiful divine life planted in them,

I want to invite you to look at this colorful tile and ask yourself each day, “What am I going to do with what has been planted in me? With what has been given to me?”

And then in two weeks, I want you to bring your tile back here on Commitment Sunday. Because that day you’ll be invited to bring it forward and place your tile with all the other tiles... on the communion table...

the table where we remember our communion with one another,  
our communion with the saints,  
and our communion with God.

And we’ll keep those tiles gathered as a communion of saints and use them to create a mosaic for our playground.

It will be a reminder for us of all the beautiful lives plowing and planting for generations... in God’s field here at Dayspring.

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“You all,” Paul writes to the church, “are God’s field”.

So, may you have the vision and imagination to see how God can take the field of Dayspring, mixed with the seed of your life, and produce everlasting fruit.

Amen.

Silent Reflection:

*Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?*

~Mary Oliver, “The Summer Day”

Hymn of Preparation “These Alone Are Enough”

Communion