

Keep on Sowing!

Overview

God, in our tears we cling to Your promises. When we can't trust ourselves or how we feel about the situation surrounding us, we trust You. We lean on You.

We keep sowing in tears because the harvest is coming. And everybody said amen.

I'm going to read my notes this morning because if I preach them you'll be here far too long.

I don't know why, David, but every time I'm coming down here I get a brand-new sermon. I mean, I have boxes full of old notes. But I had such a strong feeling that again I was speaking this morning to somebody in particular. I don't know who you are, and it may be more than one person.

But if you'll listen up just for 15 minutes, I'll try to make this brief. The title of my message this morning is **Keep On Sowing**.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth bearing a bag of seed for sowing shall doubtless come again with rejoicing."

Say *rejoicing*. Say it again — *rejoicing*.

"With rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

The Septuagint says, "Let them who sow in tears reap with rapture. They went step by step sowing their seed, but let them come tripping with joy, carrying their sheaves with them."

The Revised English Bible says, "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying the bag of seed, will come again with songs of joy, carrying home his sheaves."

I have a confession to make. Some of you will think it's really strange, but I've read this passage all my life and thought the tears were the seed. Just this last week it dawned on me — tears water the seed. They are not the seed at all. It's the seed that you plant.

This psalm was written after the captivity. It was not a psalm of David, but it was sung by people encouraging themselves and building up their expectations on the way to Mount Zion – perhaps to the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Trumpets. As they climbed the mountains, they sang together, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,” building expectation in their hearts.

It's a great model for our spiritual pilgrimage as Christians.

It brings to mind the words of Paul: “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” That is especially true when the journey is rough.

It's easy to sow in sunshine – to sow in fair weather. But when adversity comes, planting and continuing to sow takes settled faith.

Sometimes we stop sowing because the environment doesn't look promising. Sometimes we're like Elijah – instead of ministering, we're hiding in a cave because we feel like failures. Or like captive Israel, we weep and our song ceases, as it says in Psalm 137: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept when we remembered Zion.”

To Israel's credit, they did not succumb to permanent silence. They toiled through their tears.

Let me talk about Paul. He learned to keep on sowing. He wept over conditions in some churches, but he didn't stop serving. Even from prison, he encouraged others. He led Onesimus to Christ while under house arrest.

Israel may have wept for home, but they did not allow mourning to immobilize them. Jeremiah sent this advice to the captives: build houses, plant gardens, seek the peace of the city. In other words – keep living, keep sowing.

It's easy to think it's no use anymore. But if you set your mind in faith and say, “No matter what circumstances say, God has spoken – and I believe what God has said,” then you keep sowing where He told you to sow.

Think of the victories: Daniel, Esther, Mordecai, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their tears turned into triumph because they refused to surrender to circumstances.

I'm not minimizing your tears. Extreme circumstances may stop you in your tracks. You may lose your breath. You may suffer shock. But Judah did not wait to return home to sow – they sowed in captivity.

Let me talk about praising through pain.

Look at Paul again. He was hunted, imprisoned, beaten, and betrayed. At one point he despaired even of life. But he said, “I have fought a good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith.”

3

If you're in the middle of it and it's hard to sow, someday you'll finish the field. The crop will come in. You will come rejoicing.

In prison with Silas, Paul held a praise meeting. God answered with an earthquake — and the Philippian church was born.

Maybe all you have is a hallelujah. But if you keep singing and sowing, heaven may shake your circumstances.

I'm not speaking to those with clinical depression — they need medical treatment. I'm speaking to those who have checked out because of pressure, injustice, or lack of success. There is grace to rise above obstacles. There is grace to serve with honor and endurance.

Jesus modeled this perfectly. Rejected, despised, misunderstood — yet He kept serving. He healed in the garden. He saved on the cross. He kept sowing.

And even now, He ever lives to make intercession for us.

There will be times of weeping. But that's when the sowing mandate is tested. In spite of loss, we seek first the Kingdom of God.

Trials are not eternal. The afflictions of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed.

Keep sowing. Others may reap your harvest. You have reaped what others have sown. But if you keep sowing, there will be joy.

Some harvests will be thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold. And the Lord of the harvest will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant... enter into the joy of the Lord."

When we see Jesus, life's trials will seem so small.

I don't know who this was for this morning, but I hope you took courage.

Keep on sowing.