

We Reap What We Sow (Video)

by Matt Brown

This sermon emphasizes the importance of sowing our lives into the gospel, regardless of our vocations, to be part of God's work in our generation. It encourages attendees to be open to God's movement globally, to be overwhelmed by His greatness, and to be inspired to take action in sharing the gospel with love and joy. The speaker highlights the need to focus on the goodness of the gospel, to trumpet the stories of God's work, and to reflect the fruits of the Spirit in our lives.

Scripture: Romans 4:1, Psalms 105:5, Galatians 5:22, Habakkuk 2:14, John 21:25

Topics: "Sowing into the Gospel", "Reflecting the Fruits of the Spirit"

Description

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Transcript

In the last year and a half, this thought struck my heart. And it's become a theme for this gathering on evangelism, on global evangelism, on what God could do in our generation. And that's that if we reap what we sow, what if we sowed our lives into the gospel? What if we sowed our whole life into the gospel? And what does that look like? For some it may not mean this weekend a vocational call to missions or to evangelism, but it may mean to a housewife, as she raises her children, what does it look like to sow your life into the gospel? It may mean for the preacher, who's gifted in many ways, what does it mean to sow my life into the gospel? What does that look like? And so that's our prayer.

That's what we want to consider this weekend, all the many leaders who are sharing, and I'm so excited for you to hear from all of them. And we're praying that God drops burdens on your heart, as Will Graham shared. And he drops visions on your heart for your nation or your community to know the gospel.

That there be a new wave of evangelism that only God could do as we gather and as we pray. So it's all about God, and I'm going to talk more about that as I share with you tonight. And he's doing something special.

And so two quick notes as I kind of close just my introduction to this conference this weekend, is how to make the most of this weekend. I want to just give you two points to make the most of this weekend. I would encourage you, you may have a busy schedule.

We're all busy, aren't we? Aren't we busy all the time? Isn't that just our credo? I want to challenge you to come to as many of the sessions as you can make it to. And you may have, there may have been a speaker who you just admire, who is just on your heart. You just, you've been impacted by their ministry and you wanted to hear them this weekend.

I want to encourage you to listen to as many of the speakers as you can. It's a lot of people, it's a lot of scripture, it's a lot of preaching. Thankfully there are many of us in short TED style, short talk snippets.

So it's going to be fun, it's going to be engaging. But I want to encourage you to hear many of the leaders that you've never heard of before because I believe that God has given them a message for your life. I believe that you're here for a reason this weekend.

And I want to encourage you, number two, to take notes, maybe not even what I'm saying tonight or the different leaders, but what is God speaking to you as people preach. So you can take your iPhone or maybe the old-fashioned paper notepad, if anyone has that, and take notes as God puts things on your heart. And it could be something that's inspired by the scripture.

It could be something, a quote that a preacher says, a quote that a leader says. Or it could be something that the Holy Spirit is speaking into your life about how you could sow your life into the gospel. As Pradeep and I shared, I came out with a new book that I've been working on for several years called Awakening, stories of how God is moving.

And you should have, when you arrived tonight, received a card with the first two chapters, and I hope that that will be a blessing to you. In one of the stories that I share in there is that about a year and a half ago, my wife and I were invited to San Francisco. I don't know if anyone's ever been to San Francisco.

It's a beautiful city. And we were invited there by a Christian publisher who invited us to go see one of their author's works. And he was a Chinese immigrant who, several decades ago, had moved to San Francisco with his family.

He had a hard life. But God has done much in his life. His name is Roger Hong.

And he spent the last 30 years working with one of the most homeless areas of our nation. In San Francisco, it's known as the Tenderloin, and where there's 6,000 homeless people in a single city street block. And so we went to that place.

We thought we were just going to see his work, but we ended up, you know, we ended up going street witnessing, and we ended up going door-to-door in these apartments where people can only afford a night at a time. And we don't know what's going to be on the other end of that door as we knock on that door and offer some free meals and offer a prayer and attempt to share the gospel. So we go from this incredible experience, and this is actually this area where for several years Francis Chan worked with Roger Hong, and he introduced the publisher to this work and this incredible thing.

And so he spent a lot of time there and was deeply impacted by that ministry. And we're in San Francisco, so after this is over, happily we take a few extra days, and we go around the Bay and we see the sights,

and they have really good restaurants there and coffee shops. And we go down to the Bay area, where just so happens that weekend that there was an event going on called America's Cup, which is this huge yacht race put on one of the wealthiest guys in the world, Larry Ellison, founder of Oracle.

It's put on this yacht race. So we go from homeless, total, you know, total hardship, where you see things you didn't think you'd ever see. I mean, seriously, in the Tenderloin.

And we go down to the Bay area, just, you know, however many blocks away, where as we're walking down leisurely strolls, just enjoying time together, and we're watching these massive yachts just parked there for the big event. And there's, you know, men and women kind of cleaning the deck while the wealthy guy sits there and he's sipping his cocktail. And we're just, it's a staggering amount of wealth, right? Like, you just travel around the world in your yacht.

And there's people who do that. And so we're watching this yacht race. Well, they had this veranda out there where you could sit on these big huge beanbags and watch these big screens with stories about yacht racing.

And it was there that we heard this story about this man by the name of Alex Thompson, who is a, if I can say it right, solo, non-stop, around the world yacht racer. And he's actually endeavored into this arena that has so few people who've been able to do it. To put it into perspective, 3,000 people have climbed Mount Everest.

500 people have been to space. And that may be about to change soon. But less than 100 people have sailed solo non-stop around the world.

It's this feat of mental strength and just brutal weather and just this undertaking that is just unheard of. He's been a part of this race called the Vendee Globe. In this video, as we're sitting there in the bay in San Francisco, watching on these beanbag chairs, just relaxing and enjoying time together, he shares this incredible story about how he did the Vendee Globe.

It's an 80-day non-stop solo around the world yacht race. And here's what it is. Racers cannot get more than 20 minutes of sleep at a time for the duration of the 80 days, if they make it.

And these racers are racing such a large boat, it typically takes at least 16 people to sail it. And they're sailing it by themselves. They consume more than 5,000 calories of freeze-dried food per day and endure a test of will, strength, and stamina that is unheard of and unparalleled in the sports world.

If their boat capsized out in the southern oceans, in the frigid waters, kind of like our Chicago waters or our Minneapolis waters, if they capsized, they would virtually be dead. It's just... And Alex told CNN this when he was telling them about the race. He said, you know that when you're out there on your own in the southern ocean, when you're there going to spend five weeks in windchill factors of minus 20 and there's no one to help you, your brain is telling you you're going to die, and you've got to learn to control that emotion.

You've got to be able to sleep for 20 minutes. And you've got to be able to eat. And you've got to be able to do your jobs and sail the boat.

That takes some mental strength and also some mental instability. And he said this when we're watching this video on the bay in San Francisco. I just happened to see this interview.

He says that when he's out there by himself in the middle of the southern ocean and as the waves, higher than you can imagine, are pounding on every side of his boat, he says that he realizes he's overcome with this feeling of smallness. That he's overcome with how insignificant he is in the midst of the surging awe-inspiring waves. And as I thought back to that story over the months following that trip, I had this kind of moment that I thought to myself, that is what every single one of us needs.

That is what every single Christian needs. We need to go out from the shores of the churches and denominations and movements that we know of and we need to see what God is doing around the world. We need to get out there and we need to be overcome with a feeling of smallness and insignificance in the midst of the story that is much bigger than God is writing.

That we need to get out there. That we need to be overcome. This is what we need.

And that's what I want for you this weekend. I want you to be overwhelmed and in awe and a little scared with joy by what God is doing around the world. By what Will Graham shares, by what the other leaders share, by what you hear from the people you connect with at the conference as we share mutually stories with each other of God's goodness, of God's greatness that is active in ways that would blow our minds on the earth today.

Habakkuk 2.14 says, just as the waters cover the sea. And I believe that's a time yet coming where it will be literally full of the glory of the Lord and yet it is full and yet the glory of the Lord is moving through the church and through believers in ways that are like waves around us that inspire us and that surge around us and that excite us. John 21.25 breaks it down and he says this, None of the things that Jesus did was written down, the amazing things that he did.

I suppose not even the whole world would have room to hold the books that could be written. That was in three years of Jesus' earthly ministry. He did so much, you could not write it down in all the books and paper of the world.

And how much more so with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father and awaits that second coming, how much more through the church and through his people by his Holy Spirit is there to be stories of the work and the glory and the majesty of Jesus Christ and what he's doing on the earth today. We need to be overcome and we need to be inspired this weekend. So few Christians know of it, but there's many waves of God's movement around the world.

We get so inward focused on what we see in front of us, but God is moving around the world today in ways unparalleled in church history. I mean, I'm telling you. And I say that as really a church history nerd.

I love church history. My first book that I ever wrote about six years ago, I read 100 church history books to write it over five years as a young guy who just really loves history and especially the stories of God at work through history. Psalm 105 verse 5 tells us, keep your eyes open for God.

Watch for his works, be alert for signs of his presence. This weekend, you'll be introduced to some of the signs of God's work, some of the amazing things that he's doing. And we need to hear the stories of God moving so bad.

We need it. You need it. You need to hear about God moving.

There's something that only when you hear about God moving, does things move inside of you. And I want to just share two reasons tonight quickly about the great need that we have, the gaping need that we have to hear about God moving. And the first one is that the stories of God's moving point us to the bigger story, which is God.

The stories of God moving, when we hear about God moving, when we hear about Awakened, when we hear about the church that is alive, when we see other believers that are excited about their faith, when we hear Will Graham preach and our heart is burning within us as he reads the word of God to us, when we hear our friends praying in the campus dorm across the hall from us and we're stirred within us for God, when we hear the stories and we see God moving in real ways around us, it awakens us to the most important story, the gospel, God. God's story and his word. Romans chapter 4, starting with verse 1, says it this way, if Abraham, by what he did for God, got God to approve of him, he could certainly take credit for it, but the story we're given is a God story, not an Abraham story.

What we read in scripture is Abraham entered into what God was doing for him and that was the turning point. He trusted God to set him right instead of trying to be right on his own. If you're a hard worker and you do a good job, you deserve your pay.

We don't call your wages a gift, but if you see that the job is too big for you, that it's something that only God can do and you trust him to do it, and that you could never do it for yourself no matter how hard or how long you worked, well that trusting him to do it is what gets you set right with God, by God, sheer gift. The story that we're given this weekend, the story that we're given in the church is a God story. It is not a wave story.

What we want you to see this weekend is we don't want you to get awe-inspired by one of the waves. We want the waves of what God is doing and the stories of what God is doing to point you to the bigger story, which is God. Which is God's gospel.

Which is God coming down to meet with us. God coming to commune with us. We want you to just be drawn to Christ and drawn to God and his goodness.

We're not trying to point you to one wave. That would leave me broken-hearted this weekend if you came and you just got excited about someone's ministry. Or you just got excited about a leader.

That's not our heart this weekend. We want you to see how God could use your life. We want you to see who God is and that he's moving in our generation.

How many believe God is moving in our generation? I mean, here we could spend hours sharing the stories of what God has been doing in our generation. You could share and I could share and we could just get excited together. And that's my hope for this weekend.

We want you to be overwhelmed by the waves all the way it's God's moving so you're filled with a new trust in the greatness and in the glory of God. In the practical ways God is literally doing something now and awakened for his purposes for you to be a part of it. For you and the calling and the purpose that God has you for this weekend.

And the second piece is that stories of God moving somehow have the capacity to move us to action. When we hear about God moving, when we hear about the stories, we are moved, right? And here's the example. I mean, you don't have to go far to hear about a godly leader who's been used so greatly of God.

You want to know what was the turning point in their young days? They read a missionary's biography. They read a story. Oh man, something ignited in their heart.

They are lit on fire for the gospel. They spend their life. They sacrifice.

They give of themselves and they preach the gospel because they heard the stories of God moving. The stories of God moving move us so that we could see God move even more. They inspire us like nothing else.

And I'll just leave you with this thought this evening. When we are moved to action, we have a choice. When we're moved, as our friend Will shared, with a burden and with a spiritual eyes to see the spiritual loss that's around us, we can go one of two ways when we're moved to action.

We can spend our life focusing on the negatives of the culture or the negatives of the church or the challenges of our generation or we can focus on the stories of God moving and on the goodness of the gospel. We really can go either way. There was a gentleman who wrote me on Twitter and he said, Matt, we just need the church to speak louder and we need to speak together and we need to tell the culture that it's wrong.

I was like, that sounds really good. And as I thought about it over the day, 1 Corinthians hit my heart. You guys know 1 Corinthians is not just for marriages and weddings, right? 1 Corinthians, which is to love, is for the church.

It's for the community and the relationships that we have throughout our lives as well as a great, great, great wedding chapter to read. And what it says is, it says if you speak loudly without love, you become literally just an annoying noise. There's no influence, there's no effectiveness to impact the culture for Christ.

So we do speak truth but always with love. In fact, we don't need to speak louder, we need to love louder. And out of that, to proclaim the goodness of the gospel.

Amen. So what I'll ask you is, don't trumpet every problem you have with the culture on Twitter, on Facebook, anymore. I don't think people trumpet that on Instagram too much.

They just share pictures. But on all these ways that we are negative, I want you to consider this instead. Trumpet the gospel, the great love of God in Christ for failing and struggling and desperate sinners.

What if we preached the goodness and the hope of the gospel for the rest of our life? What if we trumpeted the stories of God moving on the earth today? What if we made the gospel with the stories we shared, we showed the saltiness of the message of Christ and people became thirsty as we shared and they were hungry for what God had already put inside their soul because eternity's in their heart and they're lost and there's a gaping hole in all of us without God. What if we drew them to it with the goodness and the glory of the gospel? So I wanna ask you this question in closing prayer, what do people know you for? What do people know you for? I want you to really think about this this weekend. Do they know you for the good news or for always touting bad news? Think about it for a bit because God may be ready to do a change in the direction of your life.

The truth always in love. What emotions do people pick up from you when you share online or when you share with a neighbor or when you share with a coworker? Do they pick up anger from you and frustration

with everything? With always feeling like you need to be right? Are they feeling coldness or are they seeing the fruit of the spirit of God in your life which in Galatians 5, 22 and 23, one of the most underrated, wonderful passages of scripture. Do they see a whole lot of love? Do they see a whole lot of joy? Because it goes against our selfish nature but it's what the spirit of God wants to do in our life.

What does it look like in your life when God is moving? What does the spirit of God produce in you? Does it produce anger? No. No. Love.

Does it produce frustration? No. Man, you should be in the middle of a culture that's raging against God. You should have a joy.

You should have a joy. We need a joy. And it's God that can produce it in us.

It's not us that can produce it in us. We need to, as Will shared, we need to pray and ask God this weekend, please, Lord, that people would see kindness which is the fruit of the spirit. They would see gentleness.

You can't be too gentle. The spirit of God in us. So do they see that you're cold? The emotions they pick up? Or do they see that you're warm? Are you warm with the gospel? And I'm telling you, I need this more than anybody.

I love talking about this. For two years I've been thinking about it more than I ever have and just hungry for it. God, that you'd produce these fruits in my life and it's going to be a lifetime journey.

Amen? Because I can sit and preach up here but then with my family, God, would you produce it in me that I would love? That I would have joy? And in the midst of the frustrations and the busyness that can come, that I'd have joy. So let me close in prayer with you. Will you stand with me this evening? I want to pray a simple prayer.

I think it would be fun to stand because we've got a lot of things happening tonight and I'm so excited for the people you're going to hear from next. Lord, open our eyes this weekend to the stories of your move all around us. Open our eyes.

And help us, God, to build our lives around the greater story. You, God, and your gospel. And Lord, help us to run as carriers of the gospel.

Help us to run with the gospel in this generation by the power of the spirit and in the characters, characteristics of the spirit that you produce.

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