

Title: Good...Works!**[Slide 1]****Text: Galatians 6:7-10****Planting and Harvest****How did your garden grow?****[Slide 2]**

September: this is the time that tells how well our gardens grew. Did the zucchinis take over the world? Did we get lots of green beans, beets, carrots and tomatoes? Or did the weeds win?

Our little garden experiments were enlivened by an ambitious chipmunk who gathered up sunflower seeds from under the bird feeders and then buried them in our garden. That explains a massive sunflower plant rising like Jack's beanstalk out of the green beans.

You can't fool September. If you forgot to plant pumpkins in the spring, you aren't going to have pumpkins in the fall. It's as simple as that. Think of it as the Law of Planting and Harvest.

The Law of Planting and Harvest:

Paul, in finishing his letter to the Galatians, reminds his readers of this same law as it applies to our thoughts and actions:

[Slide 3]*Galatians 6:7 The Message**Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest.*

The mark we make on our world is determined by the things that we *plant* into it – good or bad. Things we do, or fail to do, today have consequences in the future. *What a person plants, he will harvest.* It may not seem to matter today, but September always comes around.

Planting and Harvest:

We saw a few weeks ago that we decide what kind of mark we will make on our world. We can allow our default human nature to run the show and leave our world in worse shape than when we started. Or we can allow God's Spirit to grow His fruit in our lives – His love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). When we do that, we leave God's mark on our world.

What are you planting in your world? What will God's September say about your efforts?

Two Outcomes

Susie and Maggie Creek:

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The Nevada ranchland around two streams called Susie Creek and Maggie Creek tells an amazing story about the difference between two kinds of "planting." Back in the 1980's the creeks were muddy streams running through a denuded wasteland. Cattle trampled through the streams in the summer. The soil around the streams was compacted and bare. Bad land management practices had sown a legacy of neglect and ruin, dust and sagebrush.

But someone came up with the idea of seeing if it would be possible to restore them to their original beauty and function. The streambeds were fenced off to keep the cattle out, and by 1996 willow saplings had taken root along their banks.

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Then something unintended and unforeseen took place. In 2003 beaver began showing up on Susie and Maggie Creeks. They came for the willows, and immediately began doing what beavers do: building dams, impounding the stream, slowing down the water. Within 10 years or so there were 271 beaver dams on a 20 mile stretch of Maggie Creek!

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The beavers turned what had been a mostly seasonal, fast-flowing stream into a "slow-moving lake." Water now flows gently from one pond to the

next. The water table in the area is risen 1-2 feet. And the beavers are moving out into the side tributaries.

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This little piece of desert has come back to life.

Planting selfishness:

What happened to Susie and Maggie Creek when the cows over-grazed the land and trampled the stream bed is a picture of what happens in our lives when we live for ourselves – planting those old behaviors that bring a harvest of ruin.

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Paul writes:

Galatians 6:8a The Message

The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds!

When we invest our lives in nothing more than our own gratification, we harvest nothing of value. We're like the ranchers who only thought of immediate profit, instead of investing in the long-term health and vitality of the land. The word Paul uses to describe that harvest carries the meaning of "ruin, destruction, deterioration, corruption."

Think of what Susie Creek and its surroundings looked like after decades of neglect! It was a land that had been ruined, destroyed, allowed to deteriorate into desert. The same is true when we "plant selfishness." At the end of our lives – in that ultimate September – we'll have nothing to show for our efforts but lost and wasted opportunities.

A crop of real life:

What a difference when we join God in what He is doing in our lives! Paul writes:

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Galatians 6:8b The Message

But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life.

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When beavers turned up in Susie and Maggie Creek, no one was more surprised than the scientists working for the Bureau of Land Management who were trying to rehabilitate the stream. Carol Evans, a fisheries biologist with the Bureau of Land Management, says: "I didn't know it would turn out the way it did." All the beavers needed was a chance to do what they do best. Put up a fence to keep out the cows; the beavers will do the rest.

Isn't that what God is asking of us? He knows we cannot create a garden in the middle of a desert, but He tells us to do is *put up a fence to keep the things that destroy His Life in us!* His Spirit does the rest. When we make room for the Holy Spirit, He comes and brings God's *real life, eternal life.*

You were made to grow, experience real life to the full. Those creek beds in Nevada always had the potential to be thriving, well-watered environments. They didn't *have to be desert.* In the same way, you weren't put here on this earth to fail, to grow a garden full of weeds, or have your world turn into a desert! God put you here to be His reflection in the world. He put you here to turn deserts into gardens. But you must make the choice: what will grow in my life?

Good...Works!

No turning back:

So what do you think would happen if the Bureau of Land Management took down the fences protecting those restored creeks in the Nevada rangeland? Would the cows instinctively stay away from the streams on a hot summer's day out of respect for the environment?

It doesn't take a rocket scientist or fisheries biologist to know that no fences = same old desert in a very short time.

Paul writes that we need to maintain the same vigilance and commitment to the new things God is doing in us and through us:

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Galatians 6:9 The Message

So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit.

No turning back! The easy path is always the one that takes us back to the old behaviors and ways of thinking that got us in trouble in the first place. No one gets *fatigued* by giving up! The challenge is to *keep going* when it doesn't seem to be worth it, or when we feel tired and unappreciated. That's when we need to remember that we will "harvest a good crop if we don't give up or quit."

No turning back!

Good...works!

We were put here to do God's work – the work of healing and restoring His world. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus:

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Ephesians 2:10 The Message

He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

We're God's fence builders, God's willow planters. We help build the dams that creates pools of life-giving water where there once was only desert.

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Watch a beaver build a dam: it carries one stick at a time. What difference could that one stick make in the grand scheme of things? Not a whole lot. But keep putting those sticks into the dam and you'd be amazed at what beavers can do.

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Beavers in northern Alberta began building a dam in the 1970's. Now, generations later, the beaver dam measures 2800' long – and is visible from space! How did they do it? One stick at a time.

How do we do God's good work? One good word, one good act at a time.

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Galatians 6:10 The Message

Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.