



SONG OF THE HARVEST

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, CA, on Sunday, January 22, 2023

All this month, we're letting the lyrics of Brooke Ligertwood's "Desert Song" guide our study of Scripture and inspire our growing worship of Jesus Christ.

Every life includes some crooked and difficult paths. How to walk them faithfully, without stumbling or being overcome, without losing energy or hope, THAT is what this song encourages.

Sometimes the road we must follow leads through a desert—dry, barren seasons—where reason to hope cannot be seen with the natural mind.

Some paths lead through a fire—burning, threatening experiences—where survival itself is in question.

All along the way, we face battles—small and large—against enemies real, yet invisible, whose aim is to steal, kill, and destroy us, and everything precious to us.

But in Romans 8:37, we read these words:

Romans 8:37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Of course, though at times we *feel* nearly overwhelmed by such circumstances, that is NOT the whole story. Life in Christ (and even life apart from Him) is also replete with beauty and wonder and joys. If we look for it, He will show it to us.

Some people who live apart from Christ have persuaded themselves that the best we might do is be grateful for the good, and endure the bad ("accentuate the positive"). But, oh, beloved... There is so much more! That is NOT a picture of "overwhelming conquest."

With Christ, there is "*joy inexpressible and full of glory*" (1 Peter 1:8). Jesus gives us a reason to sing. He is our reason to worship!

Don't languish in the desert. Don't succumb to the fire. Don't falter in battle.

Find intimacy with the Savior, and victory with the King. Bring Him praise! Bring Him praise!
Declare His greatness. Tell everyone you know!

Here are the lyrics, one more time:

Desert Song

Brooke Ligertwood

This is my prayer in the desert...
This is my prayer in the fire...
This is my prayer in the battle...

*I will bring praise, I will bring praise
No weapon formed against me shall remain
I will rejoice, I will declare
God is my victory and He is here*

All of my life, in ev'ry season
You are still God
I have a reason to sing
I have a reason to worship

[And here is the final verse:]

This is my prayer in the harvest
When favor and providence flow
I know I'm filled to be emptied again
The seed I've received I will sow

*I will bring praise, I will bring praise
No weapon formed against me shall remain
I will rejoice, I will declare
God is my victory and He is here*

Let the good times flow! There ARE seasons of harvest.

This is what we've worked for...
This is what we've prayed for...
This is what we've trusted for...
This is what we've waited for...

When it arrives, it is right to *rejoice and sing and dance!*

But never forget, harvest time is primarily the product of God's favor and providence. Without the sunlight, without the rains, without deliverance from pests and diseases, all of our efforts and prayers will fall short.

Proverbs 19:12 *The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but His favor is like dew on the grass.*

Never forget... Never forget Who to thank. Why not pause right now, and give God thanks for the harvests in your past.

Harvest requires a workforce of its own. Fruit won't jump into your basket all by itself. All the family comes out—it's "every hand on deck!" Neighbors come together. Harvest needs all of you. It needs your strength, your gifts, your effort.

When you see the harvest coming, when you know the time is near, GET READY! Don't wait. If you linger, if you hesitate, it will be too late.

When I harvested apples in Washington, every day a sample was picked and checked for its sugar content. When it reached the peak, everything else stopped and harvesting began, from sunup to sundown, every day, without a break, until every tree was cleaned and all the crop was in.

That's because harvest has a limited timeframe. From the peak of sugar content to the decline of the fruit is a short period of time. The fruit must be picked and transported and cleaned and put into cold storage or it will spoil before it reaches market. Harvest time cannot last.

Just like our mountaintop spiritual experiences cannot last. They cannot be preserved. Every human effort to do so, has the effect of quenching of the Holy Spirit's activities.

Like the manna that fed the Israelites during their 40-year trek through the Sinai wilderness, if you try to retain it, it will spoil and turn into something you won't want to eat again. But, not to worry! God is able to do it again!

In fact, He loves to do just that! He is, after all, the Creator. Creating something out of nothing is notably His thing! *Do it again, Lord!*

Times of refreshing and refilling are vital to us all, because we leak!

Of all people, we are most blessed, because God has showered His grace upon us through Jesus Christ. He has forgiven our sins, cleansed our consciences, cleared our debt, healed our

souls, adopted us into His forever Family, given us the Holy Spirit, planted us in a local church of growing, loving believers, empowered us with gifts for service, filled us with His love, and assured us that He will be our God and we will be His people forever! *What a life!*

But we leak. Assurance weakens, doubts arise, temptations rage, our steps falter. *We need revival.* We need it often. (Please listen:) This is normal. This is not extreme unfaithfulness. This is not hypocritical Christianity. This is human. And God loves humans. And the gift of the Holy Spirit is for humans, to help us in our weaknesses (see Romans 8:26).

He will fill you again. And again, and again. Drink of His favor. Be filled with the Spirit, as Paul urged.

Ephesians 5:18 Be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹ and give honor to one another in the fear of Christ.

We are filled in order to give something away. If I fill my mug with hot coffee... I suppose the mug is in some way fulfilled in its purpose for being, but the real objective of filling my mug is not just to hold coffee, but to drink the coffee.

When God fills my heart with His presence and power, it is not just for me to have a thrilling experience (which won't last, anyway), or to put a notch in my religious belt. I have been filled in order to have something to give away.

2 Corinthians 9:10 For God is the One who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, He will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. ¹¹ Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous.

This is beyond harvest! This is reproduction. This is multiplication.

When I am filled, I will be (must be) emptied again. That is the way it is meant to be.

If you give something away, you haven't lost it; you've passed it on. You've extended its life and increased its value. That's why we strive to be generous. That's the way you truly multiply what you have.

Have you heard the story of the Mount of Transfiguration?

Mark 9:2 Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, ³ and His clothes became dazzling white,

far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. ⁴ Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter exclaimed, “Rabbi, it’s wonderful for us to be here! Let’s make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶ He said this because he didn’t really know what else to say, for they were all terrified.

Poor Peter! Star-struck and tongue-tied. All he could think of was, “Let’s camp here!”

But they didn’t. Jesus took them back down the mountain, where He set a demonized boy free.

We’re not meant to camp on spiritual mountain tops. We must return to the valley below, where there is work to be done, and needs to be met. The hard work of everyday life happens in the valley below. And that’s also where the fruit is borne.

What did you receive in the harvest, or on the mountaintop? It’s not (ever) just for you. Prepare to be emptied again. You’ve been saved in order to serve. You’ve been gifted in order to enrich others.

Missionary Jim Elliot, who lost his life trying to reach a remote tribe of natives in the jungles of Ecuador, wrote these words in his journal: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

You will not lose what you give away in Christ’s name. That’s actually how we invest in the Kingdom of God. God will be made a debtor to no one. He will not withhold what is good. The Lord will repay, generously.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

“Pressed down, shaken together, AND running over.” Do you want to receive that? And are you willing to GIVE that? *“For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”*

What do you think is an appropriate tip for a server in a sit-down restaurant? 10%? 15%? 20%

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“The seed I’ve received I will sow.”

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John 20:21 “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

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And we will bring praise! We will bring praise!
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What have you done with the good seed you’ve received?

What will you do today with what you’ve received from the Spirit of the Lord? Find someone, somewhere, to whom you can give it away. Share it. Sow it. Invest it. So that it may multiply. That it may bear fruit and not wither.

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And we will bring praise! We will bring praise!
No weapon formed against us shall remain.
We will rejoice! We will declare:
God is our victory and He is here.

What have you done with the good seed you’ve received?

What will you do today with what you’ve received from the Spirit of the Lord? Find someone, somewhere, to whom you can give it away. Share it. Sow it. Invest it. So that it may multiply. That it may bear fruit and not wither.

This works with spiritual things, and it works with material things. Don’t be a hoarder. Be generous. Like your Father in Heaven has been generous with you.

Let’s make it our song today!



SONG OF THE HARVEST

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, CA, on Sunday, January 22, 2023

All this month, we're letting the lyrics of Brooke Ligertwood's "Desert Song" guide our study of Scripture and inspire our growing worship of Jesus Christ.

Every life includes some crooked and difficult paths. How to walk them faithfully, without stumbling or being overcome, without losing energy or hope, THAT is what this song encourages.

Sometimes the road we must follow leads through a desert—dry, barren seasons—where reason to hope cannot be seen with the natural mind.

Some paths lead through a fire—burning, threatening experiences—where survival itself is in question.

All along the way, we face battles—small and large—against enemies real, yet invisible, whose aim is to steal, kill, and destroy us, and everything precious to us.

But in Romans 8:37, we read these words:

Romans 8:37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Of course, though at times we *feel* nearly overwhelmed by such circumstances, that is NOT the whole story. Life in Christ (and even life apart from Him) is also replete with beauty and wonder and joys. If we look for it, He will show it to us.

Some people who live apart from Christ have persuaded themselves that the best we might do is be grateful for the good, and endure the bad ("accentuate the positive"). But, oh, beloved... There is so much more! That is NOT a picture of "overwhelming conquest."

With Christ, there is "*joy inexpressible and full of glory*" (1 Peter 1:8). Jesus gives us a reason to sing. He is our reason to worship!

Don't languish in the desert. Don't succumb to the fire. Don't falter in battle.

Find intimacy with the Savior, and victory with the King. Bring Him praise! Bring Him praise!
Declare His greatness. Tell everyone you know!

Here are the lyrics, one more time:

Desert Song

Brooke Ligertwood

This is my prayer in the desert...
This is my prayer in the fire...
This is my prayer in the battle...

*I will bring praise, I will bring praise
No weapon formed against me shall remain
I will rejoice, I will declare
God is my victory and He is here*

All of my life, in ev'ry season
You are still God
I have a reason to sing
I have a reason to worship

[And here is the final verse:]

This is my prayer in the harvest
When favor and providence flow
I know I'm filled to be emptied again
The seed I've received I will sow

*I will bring praise, I will bring praise
No weapon formed against me shall remain
I will rejoice, I will declare
God is my victory and He is here*

Let the good times flow! There ARE seasons of harvest.

This is what we've worked for...
This is what we've prayed for...
This is what we've trusted for...
This is what we've waited for...

When it arrives, it is right to *rejoice and sing and dance!*

But never forget, harvest time is primarily the product of God's favor and providence. Without the sunlight, without the rains, without deliverance from pests and diseases, all of our efforts and prayers will fall short.

Proverbs 19:12 *The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but His favor is like dew on the grass.*

Never forget... Never forget Who to thank. Why not pause right now, and give God thanks for the harvests in your past.

Harvest requires a workforce of its own. Fruit won't jump into your basket all by itself. All the family comes out—it's "every hand on deck!" Neighbors come together. Harvest needs all of you. It needs your strength, your gifts, your effort.

When you see the harvest coming, when you know the time is near, GET READY! Don't wait. If you linger, if you hesitate, it will be too late.

When I harvested apples in Washington, every day a sample was picked and checked for its sugar content. When it reached the peak, everything else stopped and harvesting began, from sunup to sundown, every day, without a break, until every tree was cleaned and all the crop was in.

That's because harvest has a limited timeframe. From the peak of sugar content to the decline of the fruit is a short period of time. The fruit must be picked and transported and cleaned and put into cold storage or it will spoil before it reaches market. Harvest time cannot last.

Just like our mountaintop spiritual experiences cannot last. They cannot be preserved. Every human effort to do so, has the effect of quenching of the Holy Spirit's activities.

Like the manna that fed the Israelites during their 40-year trek through the Sinai wilderness, if you try to retain it, it will spoil and turn into something you won't want to eat again. But, not to worry! God is able to do it again!

In fact, He loves to do just that! He is, after all, the Creator. Creating something out of nothing is notably His thing! *Do it again, Lord!*

Times of refreshing and refilling are vital to us all, because we leak!

Of all people, we are most blessed, because God has showered His grace upon us through Jesus Christ. He has forgiven our sins, cleansed our consciences, cleared our debt, healed our

souls, adopted us into His forever Family, given us the Holy Spirit, planted us in a local church of growing, loving believers, empowered us with gifts for service, filled us with His love, and assured us that He will be our God and we will be His people forever! *What a life!*

But we leak. Assurance weakens, doubts arise, temptations rage, our steps falter. *We need revival.* We need it often. (Please listen:) This is normal. This is not extreme unfaithfulness. This is not hypocritical Christianity. This is human. And God loves humans. And the gift of the Holy Spirit is for humans, to help us in our weaknesses (see Romans 8:26).

He will fill you again. And again, and again. Drink of His favor. Be filled with the Spirit, as Paul urged.

Ephesians 5:18 Be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹ and give honor to one another in the fear of Christ.

We are filled in order to give something away. If I fill my mug with hot coffee... I suppose the mug is in some way fulfilled in its purpose for being, but the real objective of filling my mug is not just to hold coffee, but to drink the coffee.

When God fills my heart with His presence and power, it is not just for me to have a thrilling experience (which won't last, anyway), or to put a notch in my religious belt. I have been filled in order to have something to give away.

2 Corinthians 9:10 For God is the One who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, He will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. ¹¹ Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous.

This is beyond harvest! This is reproduction. This is multiplication.

When I am filled, I will be (must be) emptied again. That is the way it is meant to be.

If you give something away, you haven't lost it; you've passed it on. You've extended its life and increased its value. That's why we strive to be generous. That's the way you truly multiply what you have.

Have you heard the story of the Mount of Transfiguration?

Mark 9:2 Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, ³ and His clothes became dazzling white,

far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. ⁴ Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter exclaimed, “Rabbi, it’s wonderful for us to be here! Let’s make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶ He said this because he didn’t really know what else to say, for they were all terrified.

Poor Peter! Star-struck and tongue-tied. All he could think of was, “Let’s camp here!”

But they didn’t. Jesus took them back down the mountain, where He set a demonized boy free.

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