

Putting Christ First in Times of Joy

Dear Friends:

October 18, 2007

With the fall harvest in full swing, and with Thanksgiving not that far off, our thoughts turn to the joy and elation that a plentiful harvest inspires. As Psalm 126:6 says, "Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves."

That Psalm verse inspired the old time hymn, "Bringing in the Sheaves." It expresses an experience common to us all: the anxiety we feel at the beginning of a major venture (especially if lives depend on it, like with raising crops), as we wonder, "Will it all work out? Will there be a good outcome?" Of course, then, there is great joy and celebration when it *does* turn out well - when there is a plentiful harvest.

This happens with any important effort, when we give ourselves to it without holding back. Entering into marriage, or raising children, come to mind as powerful examples. When these commitments bear good fruit, there is such joy - often even tears of joy.

How can we put Christ first in such joyful times? The answer is, through *gratitude*. By prayers of thanksgiving for our joyful times, we put Christ first. And this increases and multiplies the joy, as Christ himself celebrates with us.

Finally, let us remember that harvest times on earth are temporary joys. When we celebrate, let us bear in mind those neighbors who are enduring sorrow; and let us remember that we too will yet have sorrows to bear. That doesn't mean we shouldn't celebrate when we have the chance - not at all. Rather, by putting Christ first in celebration, we will remember to call on him also in times of sorrow. And one day will come the final, heavenly harvest, and all sorrow will pass away.

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor Carl L.M. Rasmussen