



## Fields Ripe Unto Harvest Everywhere, But Not a Work Crew in Sight!

Greetings Again In the Name of the "Bread of Life," the Lord Jesus Christ,

Thought you might appreciate seeing this photo of a typical peasant farmer's rice field, located deep in Thailand's Isan or Northeastern region. By the golden hue of the rice, it's in the middle of harvest time here—and it's all done by hand. The Isan people's idea of the "bread of life" is rice, since it's their life-sustaining staple food. Unfortunately, the greater majority of them have no understanding, or felt need for the ultimate, true life-sustaining *Bread of Life*—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some might lament that it's too bad these people don't have any religion. Ah, but they do, you see! In fact, the problem is they have three religious systems, all intertwined into one package deal—giving them a false sense of fulfillment. They have the false hope, dead works, and idolatry of Buddhism; the wizardry, amulets, incantations, and auspicious ceremonies of Brahmanism; and, the constant fear and dread of evoking the menacing wrath of dark spirits, addressed through Animism (*i.e.*, *spirit appeasement*).

None of these can ever bring true peace or happiness to these people, people who are searching for a sense of lasting wellbeing, which is actually the underlying theme of their culture. Yet, those who have heard the Gospel dismiss the only One who can give them that wellbeing for which they seek—the true *Bread of Life*—because they confuse Christ as being just another lesser religion.

Although the Gospel entered Thailand around 200 years ago, amazingly, only a small fraction of Isan's 23-million people are truly born-again. The greater majority (99.9 percent) have no knowledge of God, or the forgiving and saving power of His Son Jesus Christ. This brings to mind the verse where the Apostle Paul upbraided the Corinthian believers, saying, "*Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.*" (1 Corinthians 15:34)

Harvest time in Isan is a tiring and demanding job, yet a very joyous and satisfying occasion. Everyone pitches in to help in the rice harvest in one way or another. Every precious grain is carefully gathered, that none may be lost or wasted.

Where does that leave us, His Church, and each member in particular? Jesus, addressing His followers, directed them to cast their gaze across the ripened fields of grain as He said: "*Why do you say, 'There are yet four months before the harvest'? Listen here, I tell you: Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are already fully-ripe for the harvest.*" (John 4:35—my rendition).

To bring this into present-day focus, it's not too difficult to figure out what our Savior is saying: "*Why do you say, 'Relax, there's plenty of time to get involved in missions'? However, I say, the time for involvement is now, because there are untold masses of lost humanity in danger of being condemned and dying in their sin for all eternity!*"

Ironically, I find that knowing what scripture plainly states is not nearly as difficult as being obedient. As the old hymn reminds us, "*Trust and obey, for there's no other way; to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.*" I also find by personal experience that willingness to trust and obey depends largely on the state of one's heart, and I'm speaking of God's people, yours truly included.

Through reading God's Word, I once said when I came to the realization of His complete watch-care over my life: "*Lord, I now understand that you have the very best in store for me if I would but fully surrender my life. Here it is now; I lay it on the line with no reservations whatsoever. Feel free to use my life where you need me the very most.*" I was sincere, but quite naïve.

Immediately, I put my almost-new 1963 Corvette Stingray Coupe up for sale. Making plans to enter Bible school, I continued in prayer daily that the Lord would reveal His will as to the direction I should follow. A week later, a young Baptist missionary spoke at our church's young-people's group about the primitive tribal work he was involved in, deep in the Jungles of Brazil.

While speaking, the missionary stopped, looked around and asked, "*Who here is seriously interested in serving the Lord? Raise your hand.*" I immediately perked up and raised my hand, as did others in attendance that Sunday afternoon. He continued, "*You don't have to be concerned about America, because the Gospel has been here for hundreds of years, and there is a very large amount of believers. There are many still lost, true, but the difference is they already know the Name above all Names, and can without too much difficulty find someone who can lead them to Christ. So, they are without excuse. If you are truly serious, the Lord needs you most of all in the regions beyond, where the Name of Jesus Christ and the Gospel has never yet gone.*"

That powerful statement impacted me like being hit by a ton of bricks. I knew without question that it was God's direct answer to my prayers for direction. Did I say "*Thank you Lord, I'm ready to go wherever...*"? Not exactly. My response was: "*No, Lord! That's too much! I can't do that! I'll die in the jungles of snakebite or starvation, and no one will know.*"

I immediately cooled off. Three long years the Lord let me wander in the wilderness of my own making, "*spinning my wheels*" until I came to the realization there was nothing as satisfying as serving the Lord. At the moment I surrendered, the peace and joy of my salvation flooded back into my life. The same occurred in the heart of my girlfriend, now my loving wife. We both are pleased that we gave our lives to serve Christ as we have—I can highly recommend it. Come on in: The water's fine!

What about your situation? That's between you and the Lord. I do know that God's desire is that we *all* get personally involved in one way or another in reaching the yet-unreached. Cheryl and I went, as can you. Or, you can stay where you are and help by partnering in prayer and financial support. It all counts, and we all desire to hear the Lord say, "*Well done...*" We realize that Christ's return for His Saints is near. Time is of the essence, and His Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15 remains unfinished. May the Lord bless you as you consider what part He has for you in this, the greatest job on Earth.

In closing, we want to thank everyone who is faithfully involved, whether supporting us or other missionaries.

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Mother's Day at a Thai restaurant