

## TEXT: 2 COR.9:6-15

### TOPIC: GOD'S MYSTERY IN SEED AND HARVEST

#### SUBTOPICS:

1. YOUR DEPOSIT IS YOUR WITHDRAWAL VS 6-7
2. GOD THE MOST GENEROUS DEPOSITOR VS 8-11
3. HARVEST UNPACKS THE MYSTERY AND TESTS GENEROSITY VS 12-15

#### 1. YOUR DEPOSIT IS YOUR WITHDRAWAL VS 6-7

When God created the world, he left part of the package shrouded in mystery- And what is this mystery- this unknown and yet to be known? It is that life and particularly in a seed was designed to increase in geometrical and not arithmetical progression. That mystery is unpacked in our getting hundreds of coins from just one seed. But seeds never multiply until they are sowed. The mystery is never unpacked until we demonstrate faith in seed sowing. A step of faith synonymous with a step of risk is a necessary impetus to opening wide and to our woe and pleasant excitement the mystery of God in seed, and seed and harvest. One other mystery is that the sowed seed must necessarily die before it can produce many seeds (John 12:24). This kind of mystery is only found in seed world. No mammal dead, is of any further use for anything and to anybody. The grain of wheat-seed must fall to the ground- then die before it can multiply and be the reason for the continuous sustenance of life. Note that it is not just in the seed falling to the ground, but more in its dying. Implying that the one seed that falls to the ground and does not die, but choose to retained its life, loses its mysterious power, just as it does its life sustaining potency. And as much as this is true for seeds much more is it for you and me. Jesus said the one sure measure of the love of a man for his brother or sister is in laying down his life for such a person. Hear him declare: *"Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends."* (John 15:13). Some form of death needs to take place in our lives if someone must multiply, must grow, must prosper. We must be dead to self if the lives of others must be saved. We must make sacrifices-deny ourselves some things that others may benefit from. *".. What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but a seed-perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he determined. And to each kind he gives its own body."* (1 cor. 15:35-38). Seed sowing is synonymous with life and human existence. One person sows and many live-benefit and survive by it. Here is the mystery chain- a seed is sowed, one and alone, it dies. At sowing it had no body. Everything about it dies, then mysteriously appears something out of the dead, this time around not in seed form, but some tree like shoot, with a God given body. And whatever we sow, that we will reap or harvest. You do not ever sow a seed not expecting a harvest. That amounts to a waste of time, energy and resources. In other words you do not have any business sowing if you are not looking forward to a harvest. Yet such a lifestyle depicts laziness and a contravention of the scripture. So long as the earth carries there will be seed time and harvest (Gen 8:22) paraphrased. The greatest thing the Lord God, the creator has done to humankind especially and the mammal specie in general, is giving the earth at creation, the ability to bring to existence a reproductive vegetation i.e a vegetation that has the ability

to reproduce itself. Giving the mammal class all green plants and fruit bearing trees – thus perpetuating seed sowing as part of humankind’s working of the earth. And the apostle deeply rooted in the belief that God’s supply of seed will never cease, writing the Corinthian church declared, *“He who ceasesly provides seeds for the worker or sower, will grant it to you also.”* (2cor 9:10). And he who gives seed to the sower also has control over the times of sowing and harvest or reaping. In his mystery of seed and harvest, God blesses the sowing of the righteous a hundred fold. And so long as the individual continuous along the path of righteousness, his seed times and harvest continues to prosper until he gets to be so prosperous (26:12). And while he looks with favour on the seed and harvest of the righteous, he on the other hand brings the expectations of the unrighteous or wicked to nothing. He defeats their expectations (Isa 5,10;10Mt 6,15). These as described by Isaiah are the self centered, greedy, gluttonies, extortionists and accumulators of just everything material and everything that represents wealth and give boost to their identity as the rich and powerful in society. It is good to note scripturally that every true and genuine wealth comes from God. The writer of Genesis gives us an insight on how the Lord honours the seed of the righteous, ‘And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundred fold. The Lord blessed him and the man became rich, and gained more until he became very wealth.’(Gen 26,12 &12). While Isaac prospered, his prosperity was closely marked by persecution from the wicked. They wanted him dead, but the Lord kept him. If you deny a person water, you would denied him life. His dug up and high yielding water flourishing wells were block one succeeding the other, until finally he relocated, probably to a place that they least expected had any prospect for life. In such an assumedly obscure location he was left alone and found respite. Abimelech and his cohorts having observed overtime as revealed by their comments knew that the prosperity of Isaac was beyond man – but a blessing from God- for hear their conclusion, *“we see plainly that God has been with you... you are now the blessed of the Lord.”* (Gen 26,28,29). Is it no wonder then that the Psalmist says, *“The Lord is my shepherd I shall not suffer want... He prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemies.”* (Ps23:1,5).Note also that Isaac more than a man of peace, was generous, ‘So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.’ (Gen 26, 30). It is important that we make distinction between today’s depraved definition of prosperity and the biblical one. Today’s idea of prosperity and wealth may imply a wealth which source cannot be accounted for. A wealth that is gathered by swindling what belongs to the people through denial of the services that are due to them. Wealth that no single seed was sowed, but harvested accumulated through corruption, embezzlement, theft, drug trafficking, oil bunking, pen and arm robbery, overcharging of interests, cheating, or generally taking advantage of others. Biblical blessing however is linked to righteousness. The one who right from the onset understands righteous living and practices it or the penitent sower – who has crossed over from darkness to light because he has jammed Christ and is now lives in fulfillment of the scripture which says, *“whoever is in Christ is now a new creation, behold old things are gone, and all things have become new,”* (2 Cor 5,7). Christians are a new people. They are not the same old people any longer because the old life has gone and new life has began. And as new people their view points, opinions and understanding are shaped by the bible – the word of God. And biblically any fruitfulness, any blessing by an individual is a product of some sowed seed – the harvest – therefore and this is always linked to the sowers faithfulness to the covenant, rewarded by the master who sees and is interested in what his children do. That humankind sows the seed and God brings increase and in abundance – beyond measures is a mystery that can only be cracked open and explained by him alone.

Critical to what harvest anyone comes up with, is the choice of seed and choice of ground – or soil type. To any serious farmer, these who are not items for joke. For they certainly determine the yield and the harvest. A poor seed and poor soil or ground, ends up in a poor harvest. A good seed and a good ground, undoubtedly produce a good yield and good harvest. As true as this is for the farmer. So it is for the business man, the artisan and the various vocations we are into. Not neglecting the most critical sowing type – what we sow, how we sow and where we sow in our lives as Christians. This is most critical and is of interest to God and with enormous implication for life there and now and there and then. Jesus knew the most natural inclination of the human heart left without guidance. He therefore took time to counsel his disciples, *“ Do not lay up treasures for yourselves one earth, where rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there your heart will be.”*(Matt 6,19-21). Here we have the option of only two grounds from which to make our choice for sowing- earth which goes easily as our pull or heaven which most often than not is not as attractive of our attention. Most times, the plain and certain insecurity and risk notwithstanding, our hearts normally leap and fall for the earth. Therefore contrary to scriptural injunction, we look to things on the earth and not to things in heaven. And so we sow and store so much treasure here on earth in deliberate negligence of the fact that both we and the treasures we store or hoard and heap up on earth can overnight be stolen by the greatest thief – the devil- who comes not only to steal, but to kill and destroy. Ironically however, we desire to be in heaven – and eternally for that matter, yet do not find it a worthy place to post and deposit our treasure ahead of our arrival, rather the place where we are definitely certain we will leave someday- and that day unknown, yet may be now or then is where every sowing is done, and where every treasure is stored. In this situation, note that your treasure can not be here on earth and your heart away to heaven –Jesus Said, *“where your treasure is there your will be.”* Your heart is inseparable from your treasure. Sow in earthly treasures and reap death or destruction. Sow in heavenly treasure and reap eternal life.

Why must you make offerings, give tithe and do thanksgiving for the devil, when you will not give to the church – heaven but go giving to gambling, to beer palours, harlots, sugar fathers and sugar mummies and sweet she and he teens. To Boka, Babalawo and all the high places and mediums you consult. That is a contribution (adashe) without a profit. It is adultery and idolatry. It is ingratitude to him who supplies the seed and orders the increase. It is an indication of godlessness. Make it your resume that it is in Christ that we live, move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Friends, brother, sister, uncle, auntie, what is your worth materially or treasure wise. Where is it stored? On earth or in heaven, in the things of the Lord or the things of the world? Worldly treasures are good, but only so long as they are released and generously so to serve God’s purpose and his church. Who is the financier of the church? Its endowed, rich and wealthy members. God is never mistaken in raising and blessing you as a member of his congregation. He is deliberate in keeping and blessing you here. He blesses you here that you may in turn bless his church and his work. Therefore you make the mistake of being known as generous outside when your congregation is wallowing in abject poverty. God will consider you irresponsible and this in line with the scripture that says, *“Anyone who does not provide for this family is worse than an infidel.”* Not supporting your home church is not understanding why God has blessed and kept you within her.

## 2. GOD THE MOST GENEROUS DEPOSTOR VS 8-11

God is a sovereign being. He has no beginning and no end. He is ever living and never sleeps nor slumbers. He is a divine being. He speaks to his children and desires and demands specifics from them. He is a holy being who demands and desires holiness of his children. He is a holy being who demands and desires holiness of his children. He is a jealous God – with a jealous zeal who will not tolerate his worshipers serving another god. He is God and not man. He is absolutely different from man – man is only an image and likeness of God, and not God ever being the likeness and image of Man. God is spirit while man is flesh, fragile and perishable like the grass (Isa 3:3;40:7f). The difference between God and man is so radical that man is always misinterpreting it. The writer of Numbers told us that, “God is not man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and not act? Does he promise and not fulfil? (Num 23:19). God is a being of his words. And Isaiah likening God’s word to the rain and the snow beautifully puts it thus,

*“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth, and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater; so is my word that goes out from my mouth; it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*  
(Isaiah 50:10-11).

God is a speaking God. About this, the bible has not left us in doubt. He accomplishes his purposes through his speeches. When he commands, whatever he wants comes to pass. He never hesitates to do so. And giving allusion to the passage of our consideration is this portion in Isaiah that says, *“As the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it, without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed to the sower and bread to the eater.”* (Isaiah 55:10). The Lord through the power of his words commands fruitfulness on humankind commands blessing and abundance on them and it comes to pass. His godliness makes manifest on a daily basis only in the power of his word as spoken to our situations either overtly or covertly. And this equally reflects our obedience or lack of it to these spoken words. The apostle Paul quoting these words, speaking to Corinthian Church to assure them, having demanded of them to finish the work of their generosity, said, “Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion.. it is not in contention and never has it ever been that God is the one who supplies seed to the sower and bread to the eater that is why in the Lord’s prayer, we make a request to God to provide our daily bread and indeed God has hardly failed anyone who says this prayer meaningfully. But here we have the apostle Paul saying that God goes beyond giving us the seed and bread, to multiplying the seed and increasing the bread that we may be rich in every way wise, but for a purpose – so we can be generous in every occasion and our generosity may result to thanksgiving to God. It is note worthy that the one and only source of our supplies in cash and kind, spiritual and material is God. He makes the initial token deposit into our hands and as well causes the increase. And so as he does this, we are expected to realize and own and never reject the responsibility that goes with it. Much as you desire the seed, take pleasure in its sowing and enjoy its harvest and abundance. Our God requires that we enjoy and not endure generosity. God brings blessings and increase your way,

brings prosperity your way, brings protection your way not because you are more righteous than your neighbor who does not, but it is yet another mystery that only he can explain. Humanly however, we can say that it is because he is sovereign. Equally good to mark is the fact that there are rich godless people, and poor godless people, just as there are rich godly people as well as godly poor people. The story of Lazarus and the rich man gives us a very good example of the attitudinal divides. It is only when we do not allow God his rightful place in our lives that his wealth in our hands, shifts ground from being custodians to being owners. We lay claim to the fact that they are ours and refuse to be generous in giving. We take our eyes off the needs of the church and the needy and poor of its membership.

Remember that sowing in the things of the Lord is not optional but a godly mandate to his children. And this sowing is not to be done carelessly but carefully, lovingly and choosing the best for the best of givers. As the scripture records, *"But Abel brought fat portions from some of the first born of his flock."* (Gen 4:4). The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering. And king David in hearty recognition of the Lord said, *"I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God, burnt offerings that cost me nothing"* (2 Sam 24:24). Dear church of God, unless our offerings, sacrifice and giving to the Lord cost us something, unless they are fat portions from our choice and reserved treasures, they may not attract the Lord's favour. They may not in the words of Paul result in thanksgiving to God and neither will they touch lives to welling up in expressions of thanks to God. The one antidote to a heart in psychological pain and under emotional torture is a tune over to thanksgiving. For a heart given to thanksgiving is a healthy heart. A heart given to thanksgiving is a sorrowless heart. A heart given to thanksgiving is highly appreciative of the Lord. A heart given to thanksgiving is a merry and joyful heart. Paul while in prison wrote to the men and women of the Philippian church saying, *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again rejoice"* (Phil 4:4). A heart given to generous thanksgiving is a heart that is confident in the Lord Jesus, the inexhaustible source of everything good and is a heart relaxed and not anxious.

### **3. HARVEST UNPACKS THE MYSTERY AND TESTS GENEROSITY VS 12-15**

What is harvest?

The Holman illustrated Bible Dictionary defines harvest as a festive occasion for gathering the crops, usually marked by important religious festival. From the beginning right to the end of the harvest. All members of the family are expected to work and work hard. Harvest is marked by significant events such as we have put together here. It is the time when all sorrow is gone and joy picks up and fills the hearts of men. It is when hunger gives way to abundance. It is a time when haggard and frowning faces give way to plumpy and smiling faces.

In the Old Testament times, several laws govern the harvest. One of this is that part of the crop was not harvested and this was done out of concern for the poor. The first fruit of the harvest was given to non but God as an offering. A good number of figurative expressions are made of harvest in the Old Testament. A destroyed harvest is said to imply affliction (Job 5:5; Isa 16:9). The "time of harvest" sometimes represented the day of destruction (Jer 51:33; Joel 3:31). Whenever it was said that "harvest is past," it meant the appointed time was gone.

In the New Testament, Jesus often spoke of harvest in terms of the harvest of souls (Matt 9:37; Mark 4:29; John 4:35). When Jesus gave the parable of the tares, he looked at harvest as the end of the world (Matt 13:30-39).

Harvest in the context of thanksgiving festival, is a feast enshrined in the biblical harvest practice. The biblical times had agriculture predominantly as the main economic activity of the people. But in our days, one has lost count of the myriad of diversified economic activities we are engaged in. Harvest in our time is meant to be more assorted than it was in those days. Where we bring in our harvest sincerely and generously, the church of God should not suffer need. But when we stock away the main resources- cash and kind and get the crumbs gathered for the house of the Lord, then we make God a cheap beggar while ourselves expensive, insensitive, ungrateful and self centred bigots. When our harvest all ends up in our personal barns and not taking honestly the first fruit to the house of the Lord, the Bible describes us as robbers – people who have forcefully taken from the Lord and yet not willing to identify with him and his course. In this, we deceive ourselves. And hear what Paul the apostle said to the Galatian Church, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will reap or harvest.” (Gal. 6:7). Your sowing then will be your reaping. If you think you are smart in your dealings with God, you will be out smarted by your smartness. When you are given to cunningness you will reap cunningness. When you sow to the flesh, you will reap or harvest in flesh corruption, but if you sow to the spirit, you will of the spirit reap or harvest eternal life and in the words of 2 Corinthians 9:6 we need to have stick to our memory the fact that, “whoever sows sparingly, will harvest sparingly, and whoever sows generously, will harvest generously. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable, according to what one has, not according to what he does not have (2 Cor. 8:12). Therefore giving should be from the heart willingly and honestly so. There should not be any compulsion in your giving thanks to God and neither should there be any reluctance, for both coercion and reluctance rob us of the joy of serving the Lord, especially, by way of cheerful giving. They sweep away our cheers and place upon our faces frowns. The Lord wants us to make good harvest through the course of our lives. That is why the supply of seed is timely. It is also deliberately done to enlarge our harvest- not just of the material things, but of righteousness – doing right and doing good in serving the Lord and serving humanity through blessing their lives. Knowing that man in his greed, has the tendency to hold his wealth on to his chest, God in his graciousness supplies all grace to us so that in all things and at all times, we will abound in every good work. Note that wealth is synonymous with responsibility and service. Unfortunately there is so much of wealth harvest going on among our members but very little and incommensurate amount of good works. There is a lot of barn breakage and rebuilding of new and larger ones with great plan for pleasures, but with very little thoughts and plans for eternity. Like the man whose farm produced a great yield, may we not build houses all over the world, ride all the cars in the world, only to miss your mansion in heaven. May you not harvest and store so much in your earthly treasury, only to miss out on the grand harvest that awaits all who have looked to and prepared for the life beyond this to the life eternal – with Jesus. Remember God knows about our short cuts, and where our hearts are. Brothers and sisters, always remember that there is God and he remains mysterious in seed time and harvest. And as we receive the seed, sow and harvest, we must never forget he who supplies the seed – the Lord in his Son and our Saviour Jesus Christ when the harvest is done. Whenever he gives you good harvest in whatever endeavour of life, do come back to him in generous thanksgiving.

Do not be deceived, whatever you sow that you will harvest or reap. For everything you want to do in life including giving some voice will come to you in the form of counsel. You are wise when you listen to the voice that speaks the truth, for by it you will be set free by it you act righteously, by it you will give from your heart and generously. But are doomed when you listen to the voice that pets and deceives. Two voices – the voice of God or of Satan. If the voice of God you do not then listen to, the words of men and even of the devil you must listen to. And when you refuse to give to God, you must give to men and to the devil. And if you refuse to give to God honourably, you must give to men and the devil dishonourably. Just picture an instance where an arm robber pounces on you. When that happens you are dishonoured no matter who you may be and you may keep giving without holding back for as long as you remain under his mercy. When the gentle and soft word of God through the voice of your pastor does not convict and convince you, the persuasive and enticing words of men –wordsmiths, words crafts and motivational speakers in the pulpit will confuse and compel you to your peril. Jesus comes into your life to enrich it while the devil comes to steal, kill and destroy. Therefore choose Jesus and live, hate the devil and be saved, come to Jesus and flee from the devil. Live to Jesus and his course and deny Satan to starve him. Reject his voices which persuades you to store up treasures here on earth and accept Christ’s counsel that points your treasures to be safest place ever –heaven , where the safety and preservation is guaranteed and not only that but place an assurance of you getting back to them someday and eternally. Do not waste God’s grace made available for good works in your seasons of bountiful harvest in your refusal to do every good work. For much as he is deliberate in generously supplying your seeds causing increase, so also is he in supplying grace to you for good works. The opportunity to give to God to touch humanity may always have been there and around us, but we have never bring grace too bear. We neglect and before we know, it already too late. We then tune to that bad comforter Mr. ‘Had I known.’ Let us remember that for every seed God prospers or grows tremendously through us, there is a responsibility that goes with it. And may we also know that it is a biblical truth that we will only be remembered by what we have done for Christ through our touch on humanity and his household. (Matt 25:31-46)