

Harvest: A Vision for the World

Vision #4 - Pastor Gary Combs - January 25th, 2026 - Philippians 4:10-20

INTRO: Good morning church! We're concluding our sermon series today from the book of Philippians called "VISION: Seeing Your Place in God's Story."

We've talked about the "HEART—a vision for who you're becoming in Christ," the "Home—How God's vision shapes our families and relationships," the "HANDS—how God sees our work and service." **And finally, today we're talking about the "HARVEST—how God wants us to have His vision for the world.**

And what is God's vision for the world? Jesus tells us:

Mark 16:15 (ESV) And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

This is God's vision for the church. It's God's vision for me and for you!

Need: The challenge for many of us is not that we disagree with God's vision, but that we feel overwhelmed by it. We hear the vision, but the world? That's just too big for our minds to grasp! For others it's more a matter of feeling disconnected from it. We hear the Great Commission, yet missions can feel distant, overwhelming, or reserved for a few who go while the rest of us watch. Some wonder, "Do I really matter in God's global work?" Others want to help but aren't sure how their prayers, generosity, and faithfulness fit into the harvest God is bringing in. And when we lose sight of our place in God's vision, we don't just lose purpose—we lose joy.

Trans: So how do ordinary believers like us move from feeling overwhelmed or disconnected from the mission to experiencing the joy of meaningful partnership in God's vision for the world? That's exactly what the apostle Paul helps us see in Philippians 4.

BODY: In the apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians, he expressed his joy for their partnership with him for the gospel, viewing their generous support as a spiritual investment that fueled the gospel's advance and brought glory to Jesus. We can experience the joy of being gospel partners in God's vision for a global harvest. How can we experience the joy of being gospel partners in God's vision for a global harvest? The text gives three essentials for experiencing the joy of gospel partnership in God's vision for the world.

Read text: Philippians 4:10-20 (ESV) ¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

WE CAN EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF GOSPEL PARTNERSHIP IN GOD'S VISION FOR THE WORLD...

1. By cultivating a concern for gospel saturation.

EXP: (10-13) Look at v.10. Paul "rejoiced" because of their "concern" for him. What is "gospel saturation?" It's making sure that EMWC had repeated opportunities to see, hear, and respond to the gospel.

"**Rejoiced**" (10) (*χαίρω, chairō*) - to rejoice exceedingly. Their concern and generosity gave Paul great joy.

"**Revived**" (10) (*ἀναθάλλω, anathallō*) - to shoot up, sprout again, grow green again, flourish again; revive

"**Concern for me**" (10) (*φρονέω, phroneō*) - to direct one's mind on, to seek, strive for; set the affection on. They didn't forget Paul. They just hadn't had the "opportunity" to...

"**Opportunity**" (10) (*ἀκαιρέομαι, akaireomaī*) - the proper season or fitting time, opportunity. They might not have known exactly where Paul was (prison). It was dangerous to send a messenger with money. Or they may have lacked the resources: As a Macedonian church, they were often in "extreme poverty" (2 Cor. 8:2).

"**I have learned**" (11) (*μανθάνω, manthanō*) - to learn, be apprised; to increase one's knowledge.

"**Content**" (11) (*αὐτάρκης, autarkēs*) - sufficient for one's self, contented with one's lot or means. Paul learned contentment by experiencing Christ's provision during seasons of plenty and lack.

"**Secret**" (12) (*μυέω, mueō*) - to give one an intimate acquaintance with a thing; a hidden thing discovered.

"**Him who strengthens me**" (13) (*ἐνδυναμόω, endunamoō*) - to be strong with Christ's strength.

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ARG: Seeing the need is only the beginning. We must allow the Spirit to turn our sight into compassion.

Matthew 9:36-38 (ESV) ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

ILL: Have you ever been driving down the road when you get an **Amber Alert** on your phone? Before that sound, you 'saw' the cars, but you didn't really see them. But the moment that alert hits your screen, everything changes. You're given a description: A silver sedan. A license plate. A name. Suddenly, your awareness has created an 'opportunity.' You aren't just driving; you're scanning. You are looking at every silver car with a sudden, intense concern. The cars haven't changed, but your eyes have. You now have a mindset, a "concern" (*phroneō*) for that missing child.

APP: Have you heard God's "Amber Alert?" Have you seen the "crowds, harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd?" Seeing and hearing the need is an important step towards cultivating concern for gospel saturation. Seeing and hearing moves us to prayer and to action!

VISION:

- Have you seen the growing number of guests in our church? That's why we're launching a new ministry for welcoming and informing new attenders about our church called the EASTGATER! The Eastgater will help inform and inspire new attenders on it means to be an Eastgate-er! Our first one will be offered on Friday, March 13th. We're going to feed them a nice dinner and share the vision of our church.
- Have you noticed we're looking more and more like our city? People from all walks of life are coming. Would you share our concern that we show love and grace towards people regardless of dress or skin color? God is doing something miraculous in our midst and we want to join Him in His work.
- Because we're growing and because we have a vision for everyone to have an opportunity to serve, we're launching a 2nd service at our RM campus! Starting next Sunday, February 1st at 9:15 and 11!

2. By courageously sharing in the work of the gospel.

EXP: (14-16) Notice the phrase "share my trouble" (14). Everyone wants to share your fortune, but only a true friend, a true brother or sister will share your trouble! What was Paul's trouble? He was in prison!

"Share my trouble" (14) (*συγκοινωνέω, sugkoinōneō*) - From *syn* + *koinonia*: to become a partaker together with others, to be a "joint-participant." They weren't just spectators; they were "co-strugglers."

"Beginning of the gospel" (15) (*εὐαγγέλιον, euangelion*) - good news, gospel. Paul is referring to the beginning of his Gospel ministry not the beginning of the Gospel itself.

"Partnership" (15) (*κοινωνέω, koinōneō*) - Lit., "partnered with." No other church helped Paul at first.

"Giving and receiving" (15) - These are accounting terms. Paul is saying the Philippians opened a "Gospel Ledger" with him. They saw their finances as a spiritual transaction for the Harvest.

"You only" (15) (*μόνος, monos*) - alone, only. No one helped in his early ministry except the Philippians.

"Even in Thessalonica" (16) - a famous and populous city, situated on the Thermaic Gulf, the capital of the second division of Macedonia and the residence of a Roman governor. Paul is stating surprise that little ol' Philippi was supporting him even when he went to a bigger more prominent city. Thessalonica is about 100 miles away on the *Via Egnatia*, the famous Roman highway, a vital artery connecting the Adriatic Sea to Byzantium, used by Roman legions, traders, and early missionaries like the Apostle Paul as he traveled to establish churches in these key cities. This would be a 4-6 day journey one way, this is a 1st century short-term mission trip.



"You sent me help" (16) (*χρεία, chreia*) - necessity, need. Financial help.

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“Once and again” (16) – This speaks to their consistency. They didn't just give a one-time gift; they sent support repeatedly.

ARG: The Macedonians (Philippians included) gave from their lack not their wealth:

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 (ESV) ¹ We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

ILL: In the late 1700s, when William Carey (often called the father of modern missions) was preparing to go to India—a place where the gospel was virtually unknown and the danger was immense—he told his friends: “I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the rope.”

When we think of the “Harvest,” we often think of the person “down in the pit” (the missionary or the church planter). But Paul says the person “holding the rope” is sharing in the trouble.

APP: How can you help? Some of you will “go down into the pit” but even more are called to “hold the rope.”

VISION:

- You can help us “hold the rope” at our upcoming Eastgater. We’re going need to a lot of volunteers.
- Speaking of volunteers, we have a new Wilson Guest Services Leader in Taj Martin.  We’re thankful for the years of service Jeff Webb gave to this role. Jeff is now working to develop our missions efforts. Taj is doing a great job leading and growing our Guest Services team.
- You can help us launch the 2nd service at our RM campus. Again, lot’s of volunteers needed.
- You can give over and above your tithe to our It’s Time generosity initiative. We’re currently at \$364,521.63 towards our \$1.6 million commitment. This money is to strengthen our community engagement, expand our ministry capacity, and fearlessly move into our new home in RM and set aside monies to expand our W campus.
- You can support and/or go on short term mission trips this year to Uganda (June) and Serbia (October).

3. By confidently investing in the gospel for God’s glory.

EXP: (17-20) Notice the words “credit” (17) and “glory” (2x - 19,20). Paul saw their gospel generosity as an investment “credited” to their heavenly account. But not for their glory, nor his, but for God’s glory.

“Not that I seek the gift” (17) (ἐπιζητέω, epizēteō) - to enquire for, seek for. Paul didn’t have to ask.

“Increases to your credit” (17) (λόγος, logos) - Usually “word,” but here it means account, regard, consideration, score or credit. Paul wants them to get the credit.

“Received full payment ... well supplied” (18) (πληρόω, plēroō) - to make full, cause to abound. Prisoners had to provide for their own meals and needs while in prison.

“Epaphroditus” (18) (Ἐπαφρόδιτος, Epaphroditos) - “lovely” from *epi* + *Aphrodite* (Goddess of love and beauty). An associate with Paul in the ministry. He nearly died on the journey to bring Paul aid:

Philippians 2:25;30 (ESV) ²⁵ I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need ... ³⁰ for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

“Fragrant offering...sacrifice” (18) - “The apostle uses imagery of an Old Testament sacrifice being offered by the priest on the altar... the sweet smelling fragrance pictured the pleasure that such a sacrifice brought to God. Here is the ultimate purpose and the greatest motive for our financial giving to gospel ministry. More than meeting the needs of God’s ministers, the highest aim is the pleasure it brings to the Father” (Lawson, Steven J. *Philippians For You*, 222).

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"God will supply" (19) (πληρόω, *plēroō*) - same word from verse 18. God will make you full and abound.

"Every need" (19) (χρεία, *chreia*) - same word from verse 16.

"According to his riches" (19) (πλοῦτος, *ploutos*) - riches, wealth; abundance

"Be glory forever" (20) (δόξα, *doxa*) - splendor; magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, grace.

ARG: **God will make your investment multiply and abound for His glory.**

2 Corinthians 9:8 (ESV) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

ILL: Imagine you have 2 bank accounts: One is a local account that you use for groceries and bills. It fluctuates with the economy and your paycheck. The other is a "Global Harvest Account."

APP: Most people spend their whole lives trying to build a "balance" on earth, but Paul says the greatest joy comes from seeing the "fruit that increases to your credit" in eternity. You can't take your local account with you when you die, but you can transfer it on ahead!

VISION:

- Some of the heavenly results of the faithful investment of your time, talent, and treasure in 2025:
 - 37 people followed Jesus in believer's baptism.
 - 93 people officially joined our church family as members.
 - 334 people used their God-given gifts to serve on our volunteer teams.
 - 330 people found community and care in our Community Groups.
 - 236 people committed to deep spiritual growth through Life on Life Discipleship.
 - 187 children heard the Good News and experienced the joy of Christ at KidzFest.
 - 17 mission partners (local, regional, and international) were empowered to share the love of Jesus because of your support.
 - \$11,451.33 was given to our Benevolence Fund, providing a lifeline to members and neighbors in the midst of financial crises.
 - \$9,744.85 was given to our 2025 Christmas Missions Offering, (IMB, helped Castro's buy car)
- For 2026, we've joined the Mercy Hill Collaborative, which is a network of gospel-centered churches working together to make disciples and plant churches. We plan to give 2% of our general fund to plant churches, emphasizing our desire to make disciples and plant churches in Eastern NC.

CONCLUSION: Today, we've seen that we can experience the joy of the Harvest. It starts when we (1) **cultivate a concern** for the lost, it grows as we (2) **courageously share** the burden of the work, and it's sustained as we (3) **confidently invest** in what matters for eternity.

For four weeks, we have been looking at **VISION**. We saw that God wants your **HEART** to be satisfied in Him. We saw that He wants your **HOME** to be a lighthouse of His grace. We saw that He wants your **HANDS** to be busy with His purpose. And today, we see that He wants you to have a heart for the **HARVEST**.

Church, the world is big, but our God is bigger. The mission is vast, but our partnership with Christ is strong.

- Next Sunday, as we launch that **2nd service in RM**, we aren't just adding a service; we're opening a new door.
- As you consider your **"It's Time"** commitment, you aren't just writing a check; you're holding a rope.
- As you sign up to help with the **Eastgater** on March 13th, you aren't just helping to launch a new ministry; you're stepping into a gospel partnership!

Paul ends this entire letter not by praising the Philippians' bank account or his own preaching, but by saying: *"To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."* Let's be a church that lives for that glory. Let's be a people who find our place in God's story and stay there until the whole world hears. Let's pray.

