

The Harvest Is Great, but the Workers are Few

Last week we talked about unity in the church. In that, we talked about how church leaders are there to equip every-day people to do the work of the ministry. We often talk about the work of the ministry as being the hands and feet of Christ. This includes tasks like feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, housing the homeless, clothing the naked, freeing the captive, and so on.

The real point to the message last week is that we are all part of the Church of Jesus Christ, and we all have tasks to perform. We all have a place and a purpose. It only takes willing people to stand up and say, "Yes" when Jesus asks us to do something.

Did you know that Jesus spoke about this when he was walking around Israel ministering to people and teaching his disciples? 2000 years ago, things were not much different than they are today with respect to this.

Let's start by reading Matthew 9:35-38.

(35) Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. (36) When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on 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 workers are few. (38) Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Jesus was walking from village to village with his disciples and his followers and he saw something. He saw people with needs. He did not see just a few people with needs, he saw a great many people. These were people that needed healing from sickness and disease. He saw how they were treated by their Roman occupiers and also their leaders. He saw they had no way to defend themselves or take care of themselves. He said they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus then turns to his disciples and those following him and says what is recorded in verses 37 and 38. "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Jesus saw that there was far more work to be done than he or anyone else could do alone. He instructed his followers, which includes us today, to pray to the Lord of the harvest and ask him to send out workers.

You and I, friends, are those workers. It does not take Bible school to feed someone. It does not take special training to encourage someone. A special calling is not needed to share what Jesus has done in your life with others. We all have been called. We all have been asked by God to share what he has done in our lives with the people we come in contact with.

When Jesus shared the great commission, as recorded in Matthew 28:19-21, he commissioned us all. He gave us the authority we needed to share the good news of the Kingdom with people. We read in Acts 1:8, that the Holy Spirit comes on us and gives us the necessary power to be witnesses of all God is saying and doing in our villages, communities, regions, nations, and the world.

Let's step back a moment though. Let's go back to the prophet Isaiah. Let's read Isaiah 6:1-8



(1) In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. (2) Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. (3) And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." (4) At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. (5) "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." (6) Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. (7) With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." (8) Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah lived about 700 years before Jesus. He was a prophet speaking for the Lord to his people while in captivity. There is so much we could share from this great passage of scripture. We want to focus on the call Isaiah accepted. We read in verse 8 that Isaiah, after having been purified by one of God's attendants, heard the Lord ask who he could send and who would go for him. Isaiah rightfully said, "Here am I. Send me!"

This same Lord that Isaiah saw and heard is the same Lord Jesus asked us to pray and ask him to send workers. The harvest is great, friends, but the workers are few. The same Lord, God the Father, is constantly asking who can we send? As the faithful people of God ask him to send workers, he asks, "Who can we send? Who will go for us?"

When we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and savior, a cleansing happens to us. We are washed clean by the sacrifice Jesus made for us. Our sins are washed away, and we are made holy by the spilling of his blood. Much like Isaiah, who was purified by the coal, we are purified by the blood of Jesus. Once we are purified by the blood of Jesus, we can hear the Lord. We can hear him asking, "Who can we send? Who will go for us?" Do you hear him?

There is only one correct response when you hear the Lord's call. We must answer with our whole heart, and answer just as Isaiah did, "Here am I. Send me!" What we are asked to do is not always glamorous and it will rarely make us famous. That is okay. We are to give God all the glory anyway. None of the glory is for us. We must always point back to Jesus.

Sometimes the tasks the Lord gives us will cause us discomfort. Again, that is okay. We must rely on what the Lord asks us to do and trust the Holy Spirit will equip us and give us the necessary power to complete the task.

Let's go back to the New Testament now and read more about the harvest and the need for workers. Let's read Luke 10:1-12.

(1) After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. (2) He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. (3) Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. (4) Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. (5) "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' (6) If someone who



promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. (7) Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. (8) "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. (9) Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' (10) But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, (11) 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.' (12) I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Luke shares more about Jesus' teaching on the harvest. He ties it together with Jesus sending out the 70 disciples to prepare the villages for his ministry. In this passage, just after Jesus instructs the disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers, he turns to them and says, "Go!" He is telling us the same thing. Go! We are the workers. We are the Body of Christ. We are the saints that Paul refers to in Ephesians 4:11-12 when he says the Lord gives church leaders as a gift to the Church so they can equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

Jesus warns them before they go, though. He tells them he is sending them out as lambs among wolves. He instructs them to let their peace rest on people who will promote peace. He tells them to heal the sick, and stay ministering where they start, don't hop around here and there. He also tells them that if they are not welcomed in a place, to shake the dust of the place from their feet and move on.

We have the same instructions. Our job is to prepare people to hear the gospel and meet their needs. We are to be agents of peace in this world. We spread the gospel and serve others where we can. Do not take it personally if someone does not want to hear about Jesus, or accept the service you offer. You are not the one being rejected, it is Jesus.

We encourage you to go and make disciples. Go where the Lord leads you. Speak the words the Lord shares with you. Pray for those in need. Be the hands and feet of Jesus to the people you meet and share what he has done in your life.

We have all been called. We are all members of the family of God and part of the Church of Jesus Christ. We are the bride of Christ. Yes, the harvest is great, and the workers are few. As we ask the Father to send workers, be ready to go when he asks, "Who can we send? Who will go?"

