

Matthew 9:35-10:23

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”



Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in

it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Sermon

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Jesus’ call still rings true today. God has given us a vision of a world where people can live as brothers and sisters. Where equality and justice will thrive under the loving gaze of the Lord. And in Christ, this Kingdom has come near.

We have heard whispers of it in his teaching and the good news he had to share.



We have caught glimpses of it in the way he brought healing into our ill and broken world. We have felt it come close in the compassion that he had for all his beloved people - no matter the color of their skin or their nationality or language or culture or how much money they had in the bank.

The harvest that God has prepared is plentiful. We can smell the wheat, ready to be picked. And we could reap its rewards. We could live in this kind of world if we chose.

But, the question is, how bad do we actually want it? Because the laborers are few and there's still work to do. Jesus has sent us out, just like those first 12 disciples, to do the work. To step into the places where evil spirits of racism and white supremacy still walk our earth, to name them for what they are, renounce their power, and cast them out.

- When we walk through the line at the grocery store or sit to a meal with our friends, and we hear people speak with racist undertones, will we do the work? Will we say something out loud to help them see the error in their words and help them to change?
- When we drive by police officers with their hands on young black men in the street, will we slow down, open our eyes and watch? Will we turn on our cell-phone cameras if something doesn't look right? Will we do our part as citizens of God's kingdom to make sure that God's justice is truly served?

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. And God has called us to work for healing.

- When we spend our money, will we do the hard labor of making sure that we spend it with people who are also working for justice and equality, and not with those who are working only for themselves without regard to God's Holy Kingdom?
- When we mail in our ballots or go to the polling place, will we use the power that we have been given to move our community toward that Kingdom that God has called us to proclaim?

This work seems daunting and we might be afraid to take it up. We might wonder who we are to do the work? We might wonder if we have the skills we will need?

- But Christ has prepared us. He has given us the authority for this work against racism. He has given us power to expel the evil and heal those who are hurt. And there is no authority greater than that which comes from Him.

We might be worried that we don't have the right tools. That we will say something wrong or make an error or hurt someone's feelings along the way. And the truth is, that we probably will.

- But, we are a people who believe in the power of forgiveness - that we are already forgiven for all the mis-steps we make along the way. We don't have to be perfect because we trust in the power of the God who is perfect, and can work good through all we do.
- And what's more, Christ has promised, that if we open our mouths, we will not be alone. But, the very Spirit of God will speak for us. And if we can't trust those words to be understood and effective despite whatever brokenness and ignorance we carry with us, then whose words can we trust?



The harvest of justice and equality stand ready to pluck from the vine. So what are we waiting for? Why would we delay it any longer? Why should we move toward the fields little by little, when we can jump all the way in today? We have seen what this

harvest will look like in the life of Christ our Lord. We don't need to dream another dream. We need only raise our hands and volunteer to do the work.

So let us work together, because this harvest is worth the labor. It will be good and rich, ripe and sweet. It will nourish us all with a new life to live together in peace.

Amen.

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