

The Lord of the Harvest

Sermon delivered on October 11th, 2015

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Text: [Matthew 9:35-38](#)

In our texts this morning, Jesus speaks to His disciples of His great concern. He begins by calling their attention to a **great need** and a **great opportunity** - a plenteous harvest. It is ripe and ready for harvest. But there is one problem - **the laborers are few**.

The problem is not that there are few believers, few worshipers, few choir members, few preaching services, few church activities and programs, few conferences and seminars, few gifts and talents, few finances, few church buildings, few Christian books, few sermon audio and podcast, etc. None of these is lacking but what is lacking is, laborers. There is a great need for laborers to work in His harvest and shepherds to gather and feed His flock.

In the time of Jesus, there were several thousand Pharisees. There were scribes, priests and Levites, all over the land; but many of them were not true shepherds, they were false shepherds. They were like the shepherds of Israel of old, described in [Ezekiel 34:1-6](#).

These false shepherds, instead of feeding the sheep they fed themselves; did not strengthen the diseased, did not heal the sick, did not bind up that which was broken and wounded; did not bring back those who were driven away, did not seek that which was lost. Instead of the sheep being gathered and fed, they went astray and were scattered because the false shepherds ruled over them with harshness and cruelty.

Things have not changed.

Many sheep are still lost. Harvest is still plentiful. True laborers are still few. False shepherds are still in abundance. But in the midst of this great need and great concern, **Jesus Christ has not changed!** Our Lord is still concerned and committed to bring His sheep back into the fold. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Two thousand years plus may have passed since He ascended into Heaven, since He is back with His Father, but He still looks after His lost and wandering sheep and He still calls for laborers.

[Ezekiel 34:10](#) Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. [11](#): For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

How is He going to do it? Through laborers. Through ordinary people like you and me. We are invited to be co-laborers together with Him.

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

Before we set out and labor for the Lord, let us look at the Lord of the harvest. What is the Lord of the harvest like? What is His mission? What is His motives? What is His method?

I - His Mission

35: And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

What we just read is a record of Jesus faithfully doing what the Father has commissioned Him to do.

Luke 4:15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. 16: And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. 17: And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath **anointed me to preach the gospel** to the poor; he hath sent me **to heal the brokenhearted**, to preach **deliverance to the captives**, and recovering of **sight to the blind**, to set at **liberty them that are bruised**, 19: To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

In contrast to the false shepherds of Israel, our Lord went from village to village, city to city, entering the Synagogues, teaching and preaching the Gospel, healing the broken hearted, delivering the captives, giving sight to the blind, setting the oppressed free. He went about doing good.

Peter testifying to a Roman soldier named Cornelius ...

Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who **went about doing good**, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; **for God was with him**.

Our Lord did what He was commissioned to do. Oh, may we all do what God has commissioned us to do.

May Grace & Truth BBC be known as a church that ministers to the community in word and in good deeds. May we all be known as people who go about doing good, in word and in deeds.

II - His Motive

36: But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Here we read, when He saw the multitude, Christ was moved. He was touched. He experienced a deep inward emotion that is beyond words and description.

What moved Christ?

1. The Compassion of Christ

As He was going from village to village and city to city, He saw the multitudes and His heart was moved with compassion. Real compassion moves you. Have you ever been moved with compassion?

Compassion comes from Latin. Its prefix **com** (cum) means **with**; **passion** means **to suffer**. Remember the words, The Passion of Christ - The Suffering of Christ. So **compassion** means **to suffer with**. When Christ saw the multitude He was touched with compassion, He felt their pain. This is not like a politician saying, *I know your pain*. No, this is real. When he saw the crowd, He was touched with compassion. He really felt their pain.

The prophet Isaiah said this about the Saviour ...

Isaiah 63:8 For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. 9: **In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.**

Isaiah knows the nature of God; that in the afflictions of His people, He is afflicted also. God is not a dispassionate, unfeeling observer when His people suffer. He suffers with them when they suffer.

This has not changed, our Lord is still moved. He is still touched. His hearts yearns for the lost. He is still touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He is still the merciful High Priest, the Good Shepherd, and faithful Prophet, who is very concerned for the souls of men.

2. The Condition of the Crowd

36: **But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.**

When our Lord saw the crowd, He was moved with compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. A sheep without a shepherd is a disaster waiting to happen. A sheep without a shepherd is an easy prey to the wolves. It's just a matter of time before they are devoured.

Because they were like sheep without a shepherd they were fainted and scattered abroad. They were weary, wounded, worn out and wandering. They were harassed and helpless, because of the heavy burden that the religious leaders of the day had put on them. Burdening the people with endless traditions, rituals, man-made rules and doctrines. These false shepherds want to devour the flock for their own purposes, ambition, control, ego, little religious empire.

That is what Jesus sees here. He saw them neglected by those who, for the time, ought to have been teachers. He saw them ignorant, hopeless, helpless, dying, and unfit to die.

It is not different today, there are people who are weary, wounded and wondering, because of false prophets, false teachers and false shepherds. On one occasion our Lord warned His disciples against false prophets.

[Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.](#)

The sheep need a shepherd. We are like sheep, we need guidance, provision and protection.

Jesus saw the need, and He came to be their Shepherd. Later in His ministry He proclaimed Himself as the Good Shepherd.

[John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. 11: **I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.**](#)

People without Christ are lost and are vulnerable to the wolf - Satan and we need to get the lost to the Saviour, to the true Shepherd, to the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep.

III - His Method

What is His plan to harvest the field and to search and seek the lost sheep? Laborers. But how is He going to send forth laborers?

[37: Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; 38: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.](#)

What is the first work that the Lord demands of His disciples as they are ready to go into the harvest?

Notice that **He did not ask them to get out there and get busy**. He did not ask them to drop everything and go.

The first thing He demands His disciples is ...

[38: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.](#)

He says pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. **He did not ask them to go and recruit or solicit or sign up workers**. Why? Because laborers we recruit and made to sign-up to work, may work for awhile, but it will not last.

We don't need just any laborers. We don't need flesh-driven laborers, self-seeking laborers, greedy laborers, empire-building laborers. We need quality laborers, right laborers, Spirit-filled laborers, laborers whom the Lord of the harvest has touched. We need laborers who has a deep love for the Lord of the harvest and deep passion for the lost.

Notice also that our Lord did not ask them to pray for the lost. Though we ought to pray for the lost, the first thing He asked His disciples to do is to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest.

Pray for laborers, not just for the lost. Because we may pray all we want of the lost but if there are no laborers, the field will not be harvested, the lost will not be brought to the Good Shepherd?

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15: And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

What He asks us to do is to pray.

38: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Pray to the Lord of the harvest. He is able to raise up laborers. God must send forth His laborers.

It is His harvest. It is His sheep. This is not the work of man. This is the work of God. Pray to the One who can do it. It is the Spirit of God alone can move us to answer the call to service. When He moves we will be like Isaiah who said, "Here am I, Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).

May this be our heart's desire. Pray, ask, plead. If we see what the Lord sees, if we are eager and if we look with compassion, we got to plead.

Pray to the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers and as you pray attempt to bring others to the Good Shepherd.

Luke 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. 3: Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

As you go, don't forget His promise when He gave the Great Commission ...

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Next Sunday we have an opportunity to bring in the harvest. We have an opportunity to bring our loved ones and friends, who are still lost, to the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for them. Get them to the Good Shepherd who is able to deliver them from their sins and from the power and the penalty of sin!

Two blessings of pleading for laborers

If we devote ourselves to this prayer, I believe two things will happen.

First, the Lord of the harvest will hear.

John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. 24: Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Jesus Christ who directed us pray this way, is willing, ready and able to answer this prayer offered in His Name and interest. He will raise up men and women who are wholly given to His service.

Secondly, if we devote ourselves to this prayer, **it will give us compassion for the lost**. If we devote ourselves to this prayer, it will give us that same compassion that moved Christ, that compassion that led Christ to call us to pray.

Compassion will move us to plead for laborers. Pleading for laborers will move us with compassion.

Would you commit to pray to the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest?

AMEN!