

# Luke 10:1-12, 16-20

Pentecost 7, Supplement Series C, July 3, 2016

Theme: Ask the Lord of the harvest

I. For people to meet

II. For power from his Word

INJ If you look at the world as a project where we should help people do their best, it is a mess! Violence and hatred increase. Our country is overrun with depravity. Political advantage seems to be more important than reality. Here we stand in our nation at its 239<sup>th</sup> birthday. What can we do to make the USA better?

I think that is not such a good question to ask when we are at church. As individual citizens, we can and should participate in the political process. We can and we should advocate for better laws. We pray for safer cities and a stronger nation. We do love our country! But if the church works for social and political goals, we have gotten off track. The church is not politics and it is not social experimentation. The church is about Jesus. We work with God's Word to save sinners, for judgment is near!

Jesus teaches us to look at the world not as a project, but like a wheat field. If you have noticed, those fields have been green and lush since the snow melted. The plants grew taller and developed heads. Just recently, though, they have started to dry up and turn yellow. The wheat will soon be dead, but the harvest is ready to be gathered. Probably this week, combines will separate the grain from the chaff and the field will be cleared.

Look at the world like that wheat field. It is drying up and dying. Harvest time is almost here. The precious grain that God will harvest is people. Apart from Jesus, they will perish. Connected to Jesus by faith, we will inherit eternal life. Jesus says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you ..." Did you notice? Jesus tells us to pray for harvesters, then he sends us to go. We don't stand idle on the sidelines, but we get to work! Pray, asking the Lord of the harvest for people to meet and for power from God's Word.

Jesus sent a large group of his followers out to the villages he would soon visit. The 72 disciples paired up and spread out. Their job was to talk to people about Jesus. The instructions they received can help us as we go into the harvest field. We ask the Lord of the harvest for people to meet.

The first thing I noticed about Jesus' directions was that these disciples were not to take extra things along with them. I just sent my

daughter to the WELS International Youth Rally. She packed a lot of extra things! The disciples were not to take an extra bag, purse, or sandals. They were not to be chatty along the way, but were to get to the destination and talk to people. They focused on pointing people to Jesus. That focus came with a good perspective and with patience.

The perspective is seen in something else Jesus told them: "I am sending you out like lambs among wolves." When we talk to people about Jesus, it isn't always easy. Lambs are juicy treats for hungry wolves! Don't imagine that everyone will like what you have to say about Jesus. It isn't unusual for the reaction to be negative. Yet don't lose your focus! Even when they are rude or if they laugh at you, the point is to find some who will listen. Ask the Lord of the harvest for people to meet!

When the wheat field is harvested, only the grain is kept. A whole lot of straw and chaff is thrown away. Focus your energy on the people who do have ears to hear. Leave the rest behind. Keep your perspective.

Then also have patience. Jesus told his followers to go to a house and stay there. Don't move around from place to place. Let your peace remain there, and be patient while you meet people.

It would be great if when we spoke about Jesus, people would immediately come to church, attend the Bible Information Class, and integrate into the congregation. Once in a while that happens, but usually it takes time. Time to show that this is an honest confession of faith, not a scam. Time to explain difficult concepts and time to show genuine care. Time that reveals concern for the soul and not just for external issues. Patience and perspective help us keep focused when we speak with people.

The Lord has answered our prayer for people to meet! We want our family and friends to see Jesus. For that to happen the message must be clear. Jesus said, "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'" It is nice to be polite. It is really good to take care of physical needs and such. But the main point is that God's kingdom is near. We so easily get distracted. We can talk sports and hobbies. There isn't much discomfort when we help with daily bread issues. But it is hard to bring up sin. Call for repentance? Speak forgiveness? Those are important for the eternal welfare of each person we speak with!

Jesus gets to the point with us. We have sinned in so many ways. Look at the devastation in our own lives! We are not better than anyone, but thoroughly corrupt. "Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner." And the Lord has had mercy on me! "His mercy extends to all those who fear him." The kingdom of God is near because Jesus came to pay for all

sins. He draws close to you through his word and sacraments. He proclaims peace to you – the forgiveness of sins, through the shedding of his blood on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead and heaven is your home. God made the point clear with us. We want to proclaim it to all the people we meet!

Yet it is painfully true that some will reject God's message. The disciples were not to dwell on those who did not listen. "When you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.'"

Notice that the rejection of the hearers did not keep the message from being clear. The kingdom of God is still near, whether you listen or not. God's law is all that is left when the gospel is not received. That law hurts, because it cuts to the heart. Sinners know their guilt even if they prefer to hide it. Let the sting of the law remain, and walk away. Who knows? Perhaps some day the law will hit home.

God has sent you into his harvest field with his law and his gospel. Ask the Lord of the harvest for people to meet! Pray that there will be those who listen and those who rejoice with you in the forgiveness of sins. The harvest is plentiful! Knowing there will be opposition enables you to be prepared and to be persistent. More importantly, Jesus reminds you that you don't go alone and you don't rely on yourself. Ask the Lord of the harvest also for power from his Word.

We get scared to talk about sin and grace with people. Even with those we regularly see in worship we hesitate to open our mouths to call to repentance, to encourage with the gospel, to freely speak God's Word. The fear increases when we don't know the person well. What if they disagree? What if they get mad? Jesus assures us that we are not speaking on our own. When we communicate God's words, then God is working. "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

When you pray to the Lord of the harvest, ask him for the power he promises in his Word. Go with confidence, for you speak God's message, not your own. Sin is sin because God says so, not because it makes me uncomfortable. Forgiveness is true because God declares it in Christ, not because I have anything to do with it. Speak the message, and let God change hearts by the working of his powerful word.

He does it. Isn't it amazing that you sit here in church today? These people all came to hear what Jesus says, just like you. They don't like to be called sinners any more than you do, but they also know the peace of Jesus. He washes away all your guilt! God's powerful word has brought you here,

and it fills you with joy.

God's power is present even when people reject his word. Hard hearts do not make the Lord of the harvest powerless. Don't take it personally when they won't listen. Jesus sent you. They are not rejecting you, but Jesus. And without Jesus, they will not rejoice in God's harvest.

They bluster and murmur. They are not happy with you. Consider another of Jesus' promises: "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." You are safe under the Lord's protection. Not that you should look for snakes and scorpions, but you can trust Jesus to be "with you always, to the very end of the age." His word "will not return empty, but will accomplish what he desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it." God's Word is powerful!

Those 72 disciples who went in pairs to all the villages were amazed at the response they received. Many people actually believed! Demons were driven out. The sick were healed. It was amazing! Jesus gave the disciples a warning not to get distracted by the miracles God works through his word. Spectacular things might happen, but they are not what really matters. Splashy statistics and amazing stories are nothing compared to this truth which you know and hold dear: Your name is written in heaven.

It is by grace that you are saved. Jesus washed your sins away in baptism. He declares you forgiven in the Lord's Supper. You are an heir of eternal life. The heart of the Christian message is personal. Your activity in the harvest field isn't what matters. None of the other people even matter as much as the truth: Jesus calls you by name and gives you peace. Wow!

Go with the message of salvation that is so great that it even has been given to you. You have peace with God through Jesus Christ! Ask the Lord of the harvest for power from his word. You have that power. Pray for the harvest to be brought in, one person at a time. Rejoice that it includes you, for you are a child of your heavenly Father.

The harvest is plentiful. Look at how dry the wheat fields are getting! Pray for people to proclaim God's Word in our community, in our nation, and in our world. Go, doing the work that is before you. Ask the Lord of the harvest for people to meet. Pray for the power of God's Word. Nothing could be better for our nation than to have more faithful, practicing Christians in it. We are citizens of this beloved nation, the United States of America. It is no model of spiritual truth. Jesus sends us out into his harvest field. We have opportunities to meet people. God's Word is powerful. The fields are ripe. The harvest is plentiful. Ask the Lord of the harvest to use you in his harvest field. SDG Amen.