

THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL!

June 18, 2023

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The First Lesson; Exodus 3:1-15

Psalm of the Day; Psalm 119c

The Second Lesson; 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Sermon Text; Matthew 9:35-10:8

Our sermon text is taken from Matthew, chapter nine, verse thirty-five through chapter ten, verse eight.

Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching The Gospel of The Kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were troubled and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into His harvest.”

Imagine you walked into this room, and it was not a church. When you walked in here, imagine you looked around, and saw it was filled with people who are going through terrible, physical trauma. Off in one corner you see a little baby, with a high fever who has gone into convulsions. Mom is holding her little baby, with a fearful look in her eyes. The mom sees you, looks at you, and says, “*Help!*”

Your heart goes out to that mom, and the little baby.

In another corner you see somebody who has been mangled in a terrible accident. Their bones are broken, and there are gashes in their body. They are moaning in pain, and look at you, with tears in their eyes, and say, *“Help!”*

Your heart goes out to them.

Somewhere else in the room you see an elderly man clutching his chest, because he is having a heart attack. His wife is looking around helplessly, and wants to do something. She sees you, and says, *“Help!”*

If you saw a situation like that, if you walked in to a room full of things like that were happening, I certainly pray to God your heart would be a heart that would want to do something about it.

Now, let's imagine you see that happening, and then you look up here to the front of the room, and you see everything necessary to help everybody here. You see hospital beds. You see medical monitors. You see medical equipment, and you see all of the pharmaceuticals. You realize, *“Everything those people need is right up here in the front of this room!”*

Your heart would have hope. So, you would see this deep need.

Your heart would feel for them, feel with them. You would see this, and think, *“There is the answer. There is the solution to all of these problems in the room.”*

But, let's imagine you could not find a doctor. The doctor is necessary. Let's imagine there was no doctor. There is nobody to walk up to that mom, with that little baby that is convulsing, and diagnose what is going on, so that little baby can get the right medication that is up here in the front of the room.

There is nobody to go over to that person who was mangled in an accident, no one who knows how to fix bones and use sutures for the gashes, and use all of the equipment to fix that person who has been broken.

What if you saw that situation, and there was no doctor? Would

you put your hands in your pockets, and just say, “*Oh well. Too bad*”, and leave?

I pray you would not do that. I pray that in your heart you would say, “*We need to find a doctor. Let's get a doctor to help all of these people.*”

Jesus describes a similar situation.

Let's imagine this is not a room, but it is an open field, an open area. And, there are sheep all over the place.

Over here in one corner there are little lambs that have strayed away, and they have fallen down a deep cliff. They are laying there, with broken legs. They are “*baa*”-ing, trying to get somebody to help them, because they are in pain.

We see other little lambs headed toward the same cliff. They don't even know what danger they are headed toward.

We see other sheep over here that have gone through briars, and they are all torn and bleeding. They are hurting, and need somebody to help them, but they don't know how to get help.

We see other sheep that are hungry. They are eating the wrong thing, the wrong food.

Here we see a wolf in sheep's clothing just waiting to get the sheep. So, we see all of these sheep that need all of this help.

Let's imagine up here is everything they need. There is green grass. There are quiet waters. There is a pen for them to be in at nighttime so they can be safe. There is a staff to drive away all of the enemies that are coming after them.

You have all of this need, and you have the solution right up here, but let's imagine there is no shepherd. There is no shepherd to go, and find the lost sheep. There is no shepherd to pick up the sheep, and bring it to safety. There is no shepherd to bind up the little ones that have the broken legs, and carry them close to his heart. There is no shepherd to lead the flock to a place that is safe, where the wolf can't get them.

The Bible tells us Jesus looked over the crowds and it says,

“...He was moved with compassion for them...”

In other words, He was deeply moved. It says *“They were like sheep. They were harassed, and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.”*

Now, what The Bible is describing there is a spiritual condition. The spiritual condition is a condition the Lord sees, (*and I pray all of us see*), as we look out over this world, and also over this room. Every one of us, is struggling with sin, and its effects. It is painful, difficult, and hard to see.

But, the Lord sees over in one corner of this room a child who has disobeyed Mom and Dad, and now has a very guilty conscience, and wishes that guilty conscience would go away.

In another corner of the room the Lord sees a young person who has fallen into the addiction to pornography. They feel awful, and wish they could get rid of it. They are longing to be rescued from what they have fallen in to.

In another corner of the room the Lord sees someone who doesn't even realize how harmful and hurtful they are being with their words to the people in their family, and what destruction that is bringing to the family.

In another part of the room He sees someone who has lost a loved one, and death has fractured that person's heart.

The Lord sees all of that.

Right up here in the front of the room is the solution to all of it. It is all right up here. Here is the cross.

The cross is the answer to all of that.

On the cross Jesus reconciled sinners to God, and God to sinners.

On the cross Jesus took every sin any one of us has ever committed.

There He bled for you. He suffered for you. He shed His precious blood for you. He died for you.

The Bible tells us He has forgiven you, because of what He did on

the cross. He defeated sin, and having defeated your sin, He has defeated your death, and He defeated the devil for you.

That all happened two thousand years ago on the cross. There is the solution to every problem we have, every guilty conscience, every sin, every straying away from God's Word. That happened two thousand years ago. The Lord knows you find strength, when you believe that.

But, He also knows you can't come to faith on your own. So, look what else He has provided up here. He has provided all of the tools that are necessary to distribute faith, strength, and guidance. And, what are those tools?

We call them Word and Sacrament.

-So, we have **The Word**. Through The Word, He convicts us of sin. He shows us our Savior. He guides us in the way we should go.

-Through **Baptism**, He brings little ones to faith, to believe in Jesus.

-In **The Lord's Supper**, He comforts hearts.

So, here we have a room full of people who need spiritual help, a room full of sinners, and we have all of the solutions right up here.

-It is right here, but what if there is nobody to do the baptizing? It is all up here. You need it. But what if there is nobody to baptize?

-What if there is nobody to administer The Lord's Supper? It is all here.

-What if there is no one to teach and preach The Word?

What if there is no pastor? What if there is nobody who has been assigned to go after somebody who is straying away in the congregation? What if there is nobody to comfort a troubled conscience with The Lord's Supper? What if someone is struggling with a teaching, and being led astray, and there is no pastor to lead them correctly in The Word of God?

The Bible tells us Jesus looked over the crowds, and it says He had compassion on them, because they were harassed, and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, so Jesus instituted this office called *The*

Office of the Public Ministry.

He said to His disciples,

**“The harvest is plentiful,
but the workers are few.”**

In other words, there is a problem. There is a problem. Jesus paints this picture, **“The harvest is plentiful...”** Imagine you are a farmer. You have this massive crop that has grown out in the field, and it is ready to be harvested. There it is. You have everything you need. You have the tractors. You have the combines. You have the trucks. It is all there, but you are just missing one thing. You don't have anybody to drive the tractors. You don't have anybody to drive the combines. You see the great need, with the harvest. And, you have what you need, but you don't have the drivers.

Jesus said,

**“The harvest is plentiful,
but the workers are few.**

**Therefore pray that the Lord of the harvest
will send out workers into His harvest.”**

So, here the Lord calls us to have hearts of compassion where we see we need pastors.

Now, I think it has been very healthy for Holy Cross, this past almost eight months now, that the Lord has put us in a situation where we have gotten to see, to some degree, what it feels like when we are lacking in pastoral ministry. We have been trying to call a pastor for eight months. As a result, because we have been only half staffed, I will tell you, there have not been as many calls on home-bound people that should have been made, or could have been made. Sick people have not been comforted, as often as they could have. The straying have not been reached out to, as much as they could have.

We need that. We need pastors, and we need another pastor here at Holy Cross. Our need has caused all of us, (*I hope all of us*), to

pray. Jesus says,

**“...pray that the Lord of the harvest field
will send out workers into His harvest.”**

We have been praying, and I know I have been praying and praying. Now, the Lord has answered our prayers! Last Sunday was a joyful day for me to be able to announce that the Lord has called Piet VanKampen to come, and be our pastor. We are thrilled about that! But now, now I really want to make application here. Why did you pray for a pastor? It is because you needed one. You wanted one. I am going to take you back a year ago. A year ago, at Synod Convention, we heard about a situation that is going on all across America, and across all denominations. There is a problem, and here is the problem. Did you know there is a pastoral shortage, and there is what we call '*an aging out*' of pastors? Let me give you an example from our synod. Last year we were told forty percent of the pastors in our synod, forty percent, (*which is almost half*), forty percent of the pastors in our synod are over sixty years old. Now, I want you to 'wrap your head around that number' for a second. Almost half the pastors in our synod are over sixty years old. What are the implications of that? The implications of that are...do you think it was hard for us to get a pastor, these past eight months? Imagine ten years from now, when almost half of our pastors have retired. Imagine your kids, your grand-kids needing and wanting somebody to be the pastor, to baptize, to commune, to preach and teach The Word.

So here is where I want to draw your attention. We prayed for a pastor these past eight months, because we felt a personal need for a pastor. I don't know if you remember this, but last year, at almost this exact time, after Synod Convention, we came back, and Pastor Tweit had a sermon. He spoke about this very text, and he said basically the same statistics I am telling you. Then, he said,

“Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest

field.”

He exhorted all of us to pray for pastors.

Now, we did it for ourselves, when we saw we needed one. But, The Bible tells us,

**“Love your neighbor,
as yourself.”**

Did you pray last year? Did you add that to your prayer list? Is that something you regularly pray the Lord for, that the Lord would move people to be pastors? Grandpas, and Grandmas, are you on your knees praying that years from now, the Lord will be moving men to be pastors, and minister to your grand-kids? Moms and Dads, are you doing the same thing? Kids? Are you praying that twenty years from now, thirty years from now, the Lord will continue to move people to be pastors? Jesus wants us to have hearts of compassion that see the need for all of the souls out there who need to hear the Gospel. We have the Gospel. We have everything we need, but we need pastors. So, Jesus says, “...pray...” Really, the heart and core of this sermon is that all of us will be moved. Thank God we have a Savior, who forgives us for the fact that we probably have not prayed about that the way we should. (*I have not prayed about it the way I should.*) But, I am telling you the Gospel. You are forgiven. I am forgiven. Now, let's be moved to pray for pastors, that God would move people to be pastors. What kind of people does He move to be pastors? There are young men in this room, right now, who would make great pastors. Certainly, we pray God would move them to be pastors. But, sometimes God moves people who we would not expect, either. Like the two people we read about in today's scripture reading. Moses. You know, Moses was very reluctant. He was called to be a prophet. And, he came up with every excuse why he was not capable, and why he was not qualified. But, the LORD laid His hand on Moses, and He basically pushed Moses into the role he was

called to.

The LORD has His way of calling people into the ministry. Now, I am going to tell you, I really relate to Moses. You can ask Sherri. I very, very reluctantly went into the ministry. And, for years, and years, and **years** there were many reasons I thought, *“This is not for me. I am not capable. I am not qualified.”* I came up with every excuse in the world. And yet, somehow, the LORD heavily laid His hand on me, and when He does that, He also gives us strength.

So, we pray the LORD will lay His hand on those He calls. And, I believe it is because people are praying. They are praying,

*“God,
We need a pastor. We need pastors.”*

And the LORD answers. He puts His hand on people, and He calls them into the ministry.

The same in today's scripture reading. We see St. Paul. Nobody in the world would have thought St. Paul was ever going to be a pastor. Before he became a pastor, he hated Christ, and he hated Christians. He was a terrible sinner. In fact, he says he was the worst of sinners. And yet, the LORD laid His hand on Paul, brought him to faith, caused him to see his deep, deep need for a Savior, and caused him to see the deep, deep mercy God had for him, in Christ. That is the very thing that really enabled Paul to be a good pastor. He saw his own sin, and his own deep need for a Savior, and the great comfort he found there. And then, he wanted to share that with everybody. That is the type of people God calls into ministry. Sinners. Sinners who know they need a Savior. Sinners who have been comforted by a Savior, and want to share that with others.

So, we pray. And, let's pray hard. Let's make it a regular part of our prayer life.

Jesus said,

“The harvest is plentiful,

**but the workers are few.
Therefore, pray that the Lord of the harvest
will send out workers into His harvest.”**

Amen

Now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep
our hearts, and our minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.