

Ripe for Harvest Part 2

Partnering with the Lord in His Harvest Fields

Thesis: Our Triune God-- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit-- is at work all around us. The fields are ripe for harvest (John 4:34-38). We are called to partner with the Lord in his harvest fields (Matthew 9:35-38). May we see what God sees, feel what the Lord feels, pray what the Lord leads us to pray, and go as he sends us in his anointing, empowering, and grace.

Text: John 4:34-38; Matthew 9:35-38

Today we are in Part 2 of our sermon series: *Ripe for Harvest: Partnering with the Lord in His Harvest Fields*.

Our God is at work all around us. The fields are ripe for harvest (John 4:34-38). We are called to partner with the Lord in his harvest fields (Matthew 9:35-38).

I want to begin this morning by sharing testimonies of harvest and what the Lord is doing in and through us. (Read testimonies.)

The fields are ripe for harvest... today! Now, let's read more about the harvest in Matthew 9:35-38.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching 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" (Matthew 9:35-38).

Before we look closely at this passage, I want to introduce John and Beverly Atkins to you. They were a part of Calvary years ago before work moved them to another city. The Lord has given them a story to share. They want to share about their journey to the mission field and encourage people to press into the dreams God has given them regardless of their age.

Now, let's look more closely at Matthew 9:35-38. This passage is very important for us who are called to join Jesus on his mission in this world. Let's consider it together.

1. **As we go, we are to proclaim and demonstrate the good news of the kingdom of God** (Matthew 9:35).

- a. **We have a message to share and it is good news.**
 - i. *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14-15).*
 - ii. *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" 16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17 Consequently, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ** (Romans 10:14-17).*
- b. **And, we have a message to demonstrate.**
 - i. Jesus has a mandate to demonstrate the good news of what it is like when the Lord rules and reigns.
 - 1. *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).*
 - 2. Jesus is anointed to touch our lives with salvation, deliverance, healing, and encouragement.
 - 3. Jesus moves in signs and wonders to the glory of God.
 - ii. We are sent in the authority and power of Jesus to demonstrate the good news of what it is like when the Lord rules and reigns (Luke 9:1-2; 10:1-2; John 14:12; Acts 1:8).
- c. **We proclaim and demonstrate the whole gospel: serving the poor, the marginalized, and those in need (Matthew 25:31ff); working for the common good (Acts 10:38); restoring individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's design (Acts 3:17-21; Colossians 1:20).**
 - i. *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was*

thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the **least of these** brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:31-40).

- ii. "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, **that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,** 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus. 21 He must remain in heaven until **the time comes for God to restore everything,** as he promised long ago through his holy prophets (Acts 3:17-21).
- iii. There is coming a time when God will restore all things. **And, though that final day will be truly wonderful, it can be anticipated with 'times of refreshment' in the present.** This is one way of putting a central truth for which the early Christians had a wide variety of expressions. God would 'sum up all things in Christ' (Ephesians 1:10); through Christ, he would 'reconcile all things to himself, making peace by his blood, shed on the cross' (Colossians 1:20); he will make 'new heavens and new earth, in which justice will dwell' (Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:13); he will overcome every power which destroys and corrupts his good creation, so that eventually God will be 'all in all' (1 Corinthians 15:28); the whole creation will be 'set free from its slavery to decay, to share the liberty of the glory of God's children' (Romans 8:21). Like so much early Christian belief, this is basically a Jewish belief about the future, based on the solid rock of belief in God as both creator and judge, but rethought now around the events to do with Jesus. In this present passage we can actually watch this process going on. **The ultimate promise of verse 21, that there will be a final restoration of all things, is firmly rooted in the Jewish prophets. What has changed now is that the final restoration has already happened to Jesus himself: what God is going to do**

to the whole of creation, he has done for Jesus in raising him from the dead. That is why Jesus now remains 'in heaven', in other words (as we have already seen) in God's sphere. Heaven is the place where God's purposes for the future are stored up, like pieces of a stage set waiting in the wings until they are needed for the final great act of the play. When Jesus finally reappears, heaven and earth will come together as one. That will be the great renewal of all things (New Testament for Everyone - Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12).

2. We are invited to see what the Lord sees, feel what the Lord feels, pray what the Lord leads us to pray, and go as the Lord sends us in his anointing, empowering, and grace (Matthew 9:36-38).

a. We need to see what Jesus sees

- i. He sees the crowds.
- ii. He sees that they are harassed and helpless.
- iii. He sees that they need a shepherd, someone to lead them and care for them.
- iv. He sees that the harvest is ripe.
- v. He sees that the laborers are few.

b. We need to feel what Jesus feels.

- i. Jesus is moved with compassion.
- ii. He loves us.
- iii. He is not angry with us, disappointed in us, nor through with us.
- iv. He feels for us in our condition: that we are harassed, helpless, and needing a shepherd to care for us and lead us.

c. We need to pray what the Lord leads us to pray.

- i. Pray that the Father would send out laborers into his harvest fields.
- ii. Pray for workers for local harvest fields at Calvary, in NW Houston, and in Greater Houston.
- iii. Pray for workers for global harvest fields.

d. We need to go as the Lord sends us in his authority, power, and grace (Matthew 10:1-11).

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. 2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. 5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to

the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. 9 Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; 10 take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep. 11 "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave (Matthew 10:1-11).

- i. **The Lord calls us to partner with him** (Matthew 10:1).
- ii. **The Lord gives us authority, power, and grace to partner with him** (Matthew 10:1-11).
 1. **Authority:** We have the right to represent King Jesus and his kingdom. We have the right to share and proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God and the presence of the Lord (the kingdom of heaven is near) (Matthew 10:7). Jesus has come to put heaven and earth together.
 2. **Power:** We have power: to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to other signs and wonders, to break the power of incurable diseases off of people, and to drive out demons (Matthew 10:8).
 3. **Grace:** We have received freely and lavishly, so we give away what we have received (Matthew 10:8). We don't need to build huge organizations before we go; we just need to go and rely on the grace of the Lord (Matthew 10:9-11). We build as we go. One of the graces the Lord provides is the support from people whom he raises up to help us.

Application: Listen to the voice of the Lord

1. The Lord is calling **all of us** to partner with him where we live, work, and play... **in our spheres of influence.**
2. The Lord is calling **all of us** to partner with the Lord and others **to reach the world** with the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel of the kingdom of Good.
 - a. *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).*
3. The Lord is calling **some of us** to go **full-time into vocational ministry.**

4. The Lord is calling **some of us** to **disciple other nations, either as tent-makers or as full-time missionaries**.
 - a. Like John and Beverly Atkins
 - b. **This can be for the short-term, for a life-time, or for a second career.**
5. **The Lord is calling his people of different ages into various harvest fields right now.**
 - a. Neighborhoods
 - b. Schools
 - c. Businesses
 - d. Sectors of society
 - e. Social systems: breaking the power of injustices
 - f. Or, to serve with or **to partner with existing groups** like mentoring in schools, serving in prisons, caring for the hurting
 - g. Or, **to start new enterprises** like CrossWalk Center, which we will hear about next week
6. What is the Lord saying to you?