

## Ripe for Harvest Part 6

### 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, I want to **celebrate what the Lord is doing in and through Calvary** Community Church to send people into the harvest fields inside and outside of this body. *The kingdom of God is righteousness* (God sets your life and the world right), *peace* (God puts your life and the world together in wholeness, well-being), *and joy* (God completes your life and this world with celebration) *in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17)*.

The Lord has told us that this is a season of harvest. The fields are ripe for harvest. There are harvest fields all around us and throughout the world. And, there are harvest fields here in our church.

And, I want to talk about the impact that Calvary is having here and elsewhere. We want to **celebrate what the Lord is doing from here to out there**.

At the Union Baptist Association's Quarterly Meeting last Thursday, Senior Consultant Keelan Cook talked about how churches measure success. Most churches measure nickels, noses, and numbers. However, in the book of Acts, the Scripture talks about the gospel or the word of God increasing, multiplying, and prevailing in different areas of culture and geography. The advance of the kingdom of God resulted as the good news of the kingdom of God was expressed in various ways in the cultures and cities of their day.

**Let's consider a brief summary of the first few chapters of the book of Acts and how the church acted and reacted in a time of harvest.**

#### **Acts 1 and 2**

In the context of corporate prayer (Acts 1:4, 14), there is a corporate outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). In the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Peter and the other disciples gave bold witness to Jesus and the fulfillment of the word of God. Many lives are transformed by the Lord.

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 **Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day** (Acts 2:36-41).

**In the context of corporate discipleship, corporate signs and wonders, corporate care, and corporate spiritual practices, the Lord added to their number daily.**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. **And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved** (Acts 2:42-47).

### Acts 3 – 5

In Acts 3:1-10, Peter and John demonstrate and proclaim the gospel. The Lord uses Peter to heal the crippled man at the Gate Beautiful of the temple. The man is walking, jumping, and praising God. The people are moved with wonder and amazement.

**The healing of the lame man, which demonstrated the good news, necessitated an explanation (Acts 3:11-16) and gave the opportunity for people to respond to the good news (Acts 3:17-26).**

"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).

That same healing event also stirred up opposition and persecution (Acts 4 – 5).

#### **Acts 4:1-12**

But resurrection always was a radical, dangerous doctrine, an attack on the status quo and a threat to existing power structures. Resurrection, you see, is the belief which declares that the living God is going to put everything right once and for all, is going (as we saw in the previous chapter) to 'restore all things', to turn the world the right way up at last (NT Wright, New Testament for Everyone— Acts for Everyone, Part 1, Chapters 1-12).

*Acts 4:1 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. 2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. 4 But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. 5 The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone'. 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. 14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. 15 So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. 16 "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. 17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name." 18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. 20 For we cannot help speaking about what*

*we have seen and heard." 21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old (Acts 4:1-22).*

### **Acts 4:13-22**

Where God's power is at work to bring real change, real healing, real new life, there the people who are naming the name of Jesus to bring it about can stand up before judges, whether political or religious, and say with integrity that they are speaking for God. **It will be costly; that's part of the deal. But it will be true** (NT Wright, New Testament for Everyone— Acts for Everyone, Part 1, Chapters 1-12).

### **Act 5**

*Acts 5:41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. **In those days when the number of disciples was increasing**, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." 5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 **So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith** (Acts 5:41 - 6:1-7).*

**The word of God spread in the face of persecution, in the presence of growing pains for the church, and in the context of mobilizing people to serve the purposes of the Lord in their lives and to express care in the congregation.**

**As we move through the book of Acts, we see that the church was multiplying the manifestation of the good news into every cultural and geographical nook and cranny of their cities, regions, and world.**

Keelan Cook said, "In our day, the church in our culture uses the language of multiplication and sending; the church has adopted that language. Right now, it is rhetoric. Here is reality: the church in our culture exists in an addition paradigm, not multiplication."

What will it take to move into real multiplicative sending, where the good news is manifested in many different ways throughout our culture and geography?

What does a sending church look like?

**The sending church develops people from within and deploys them outside. Here are four tasks for the church. The sending church:**

1. Disciples people from within the congregation
2. Equips them for their works of service
3. Sends them (affirms, blesses, and releases them) to express the gospel in various ways
4. Supports them in the tasks they were sent to do

When Keelan Cook shared this model, I got excited. He was describing who we are at Calvary. We have lot more to learn and much more to do; but this is a picture of who we are.

I thought about what we are doing locally and globally. I thought about the impact and influence that we have had. We are discipling people and equipping them for works of service. Then, we are sending and supporting them.

**I want to celebrate what the Lord is doing in and through Calvary Community Church to send people into the harvest fields outside of this body.**

In our mobile culture, **some of this sending and supporting has taken place as people have moved to other churches or communities.** A whole list of people come to mind who have shared, and are sharing, with their new churches and communities out of the DNA of what they learned and experienced here at Calvary. In recent months, some of these friends have asked for permission to use our small group materials, prophetic materials, and Ministry Team Training Materials in various settings.

**The Lord has also identified and raised up people to go intentionally from our midst through the years, again, both locally and globally.** Here is a current list of some of those people:

1. Eric and Wendy Eldridge working with Beyond Missions.

2. Joseph Jordana, YWAM London
3. Ana Graves, working among refugees in Europe
4. Chase and Megan, working among refugees in restricted access countries
5. Daniel and Marlene DeJesus, working in the prisons locally and the Philippines internationally
6. Angela Petry and Olivia Buckles, and many others, with the International House of Prayer in Kansas City
7. Gene and Rene Haub, Family Life Ministries
8. Kathy Vosburg Miller, Crosswalk Center
9. Hairgrove Partnership Team
10. Prison Ministry Team
11. Missions Teams going to nations like Latvia and Myanmar

**The list of people whom we have disciplined, equipped, sent, and supported increases when you consider what **you** are doing in **your spheres of influence**.**

**That is worth celebrating!**

**And, I want to celebrate what the Lord is doing in and through Calvary Community Church to send people into the harvest fields inside of this body.** We want to celebrate what you are doing to touch people whom the Lord is bringing into this harvest field at Calvary.

1. You are sharing with neighbors, friends, and family, inviting them to experience the presence and power of the Lord here in our services, small groups, and ministry activities.
2. You are welcoming and loving people who are showing up in our services and ministries as the Lord draws them through the web site, banners, invitations, or divine reminders.
3. Our Children's Ministry is reaching children on Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights, and through special events. For example, we are running about 50 children on Wednesday nights in our Kids Club ministry. Most of those children are from the community. Kids club is the primary place where they are learning about Jesus.
4. Our Youth Ministry is reaching between 35 and 50 youth on Wednesday nights. For most of those young people, Wednesday night Youth Ministry is the primary place where they experience the love of Lord and his people. Youth are coming to Jesus and getting disciplined through our Youth Ministry.

What you see on Sunday mornings is just a small part of the impact and influence we are having in the harvest fields for the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Doug Stringer was here in September, he talked about the impact and influence of Calvary in his life, in partnership with Somebody Cares, and in relation to Greater Houston and beyond. We have much to celebrate.

And, Doug said that in this season, we would reap what we have sown through all the years. We have cast our bread upon the water, and it is coming back to us in this season (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

### **Action**

1. Let's acknowledge and celebrate what the Lord is doing in and through Calvary Community Church to send people into the harvest fields inside and outside of this body.
2. And, let's continue to partner with the Lord in his harvest fields, trusting God that we will see an awesome harvest for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Ministry Time**