

**“THE HARVEST”  
Pastor Mike Corwin**

**Text: Luke 10:1-9 God’s Word: Psalm 65:9-13**

**I – THE HARVEST:**

This is time of year when I can almost hear our farmers let out a long sigh of relief. It’s the time of the year when we see more of them in church. This all happens because the harvest is over. They have gathered in their crops and except for tilling and transporting beans or corn to market, they are pretty much done until the spring with the actual playing in the dirt on their farms.

And we should not begrudge them a little down time. I can’t even keep my garden weeded and when I think of what they go through to feed the people of this world it boggles my mind. They have to prepare their equipment...they have to select and order their seeds...they have to prepare the soil...they have to make sure they plant between monsoon seasons...then they have to pray for the right weather to water the planted seed. When that part’s done, they have to fertilize the seed...they have to kill the weeds...and then they wait for the plants to grow and mature so the harvest season can begin.

That’s a whole new process! They have to get their oversized equipment to their different fields...they again have to take care of business between monsoons or snow storms...if they’re smart, they’re still praying God will help with the weather...they have to keep the combine running and fill the trucks or wagons with the grain...which then gets taken to a silo and sometimes needs dried. Then we watch the prices so we know when to load it back into their trucks and drive it to the market.

And if they are blessed, they can sit back a little bit at this time of the year and celebrate what they’ve done...feel rewarded for their hard work and long hours...and, I hope, thank God for the bounty.

**II – PEOPLE HARVEST:**

As I thought about all of that this week, I was saddened that Churches are not as productive as farms. That we don’t have combines to drive through the streets of our community that would pick people up and take them to the church where a chute would spray them into the pews. It occurs to me that we have the silos - we call them churches - but we’re not good at harvesting and filling them with people.

We look out and we see the people. We look out and we know those people need to be fertilized with the Word of God. We look out and see that the fields are full of weeds. But we don’t do anything to gather in the harvest and celebrate the bounty.

I heard a statistic last week that bothers me greatly. The latest research show that 83% of those in our community do not go to church. 83%! I'm guessing if a farmer has 83% of unharvested grain in his field he's going to fill a few silos with it. The law of averages would say so, wouldn't it? So how can we have 83% in our fields and we can't fill a silo? Maybe we need some lessons in people farming.

### III – TEXT:

I see some important information contained in this morning's text. I see some lessons on farming for people. Let's look at it closely. The lesson is from the master farmer, Jesus himself, so I'm thinking it's worth taking note of and learning from as we go about the work of the church.

#### **Luke 10:1-9 (NLT)**

*<sup>1</sup>The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. <sup>2</sup>These were his instructions to them: "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. <sup>3</sup>Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup>Don't take any money with you, nor a traveler's bag, nor an extra pair of sandals. And don't stop to greet anyone on the road. <sup>5</sup>"Whenever you enter someone's home, first say, 'May God's peace be on this house.' <sup>6</sup>If those who live there are peaceful, the blessing will stand; if they are not, the blessing will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Don't move around from home to home. Stay in one place, eating and drinking what they provide. Don't hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve their pay. <sup>8</sup>"If you enter a town and it welcomes you, eat whatever is set before you. <sup>9</sup>Heal the sick, and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now.'*

Luke wants us to know that Jesus himself is commissioning these disciples to go out and spread the Word. It is "THE LORD" himself who calls them together, chooses them, and then sends them out. There's also something else going on here if you know the culture of the time. The number 72 is not an insignificant number in this Scripture. At the time of this event in the day of Jesus, 72 was the number of the nations known to exist. So in effect Jesus is telling them to go to all the people, Gentiles included. And he is sending them to prepare the people for his own coming visit.

He is sending them because the harvest of souls is great and he instructs them to pray for more workers to go into the fields and harvest them for the Kingdom of God. This also gives us the vision that there is an urgency to this harvest.

He's not sending them as an invading army, but as defenseless followers of the faith. All they need is Jesus, all they need is to know and follow his teachings. They are his lambs and he's sending them out into places where people don't know the story. Wolves are the natural enemies of sheep as those who don't know Jesus can be to his followers. And, as you go, you need to be vulnerable. Don't plan for all the contingencies. Don't pack a trunk of supplies. Trust in God to

answer the prayer “give us this day our daily bread.” And don’t waste time along the way. Stay focused and get the job done.

As you come upon the people, give them the traditional greeting and blessing that they expected in that century. If they are receptive, they will receive God’s blessing and they will take you in and host you while you are there spreading the faith and building the Kingdom of God. It’s okay to accept this hospitality. You are the Lord’s servants and will be taken care of by the Lord’s people. You may not always get a proper meal but don’t be picky. Eat what they put in front of you and thank them and God for it.

Above all, touch their lives and let them know the Kingdom of God has come to the earth.

#### **IV – HARVEST LESSONS:**

As we continue to move forward in our attempt to spread the light and defeat the darkness, as we put God’s love into action, as we obey the call to join in the harvest, there are lessons we need to learn that are contained in this passage.

**#1** – Just as he did the 72, the Lord himself has called us to go to the people. In his last directions to his disciples, his church, he said that we are to go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel, making disciples and baptizing people into the faith in the name of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**#2** - We need to have the same urgency that Jesus was telling them to have then. If 83% of the people who live our community have no faith then hell will be overcrowded and heaven sparsely populated. Just think of those people you know. Of your family and friends and realize that statistics are that only 17% of them will make it to heaven. I can’t live with those odds...can you? The harvest truly is great and we all need to be working in the fields.

**#3** - Just as those early workers were sent to the places Jesus planned to visit, so are we. We are being called to prepare the world for his coming. We need to make sure those who will listen are prepared for his visit.

**#4** – We are called to do the work with what we have. As Jesus sent them out without a bunch of provisions so he expects us to trust him too. He doesn’t call us to have unending studies and committee meetings. We don’t need to have a comprehensive strategic plan. We don’t have to wait until we have a certain balance in our funds. We don’t need to wait until the congregation grows so someone else will do the work. We need to all grab the combine (Bible) and go out into the fields and help bring the harvest into the silos (church).

**#5** – And though we may be among wolves, among those who will not take kindly to our words, those who are weeds among the harvest, we must do it all as the Lambs of God and give them his greeting and his blessing.

There are other lessons I could pull from all of this but when I boil it all down to the bare essentials there are three lessons you need to see and remember here. So if you don't grasp these five, remember these three:

- **GO.** Jesus sends them out. He doesn't gather them in and tell them to just come Sunday morning and then go home to their meals and football games. He says (Vs. 3) Now Go. You can't gather the harvest if you're not out in the fields. Farmers don't get their work done by staying in the barn and you won't get yours done by staying in the church.
- **ENGAGE.** You have to meet and talk to the people. If you don't build a relationship with them, they'll never leave the field. They have to know you, they have to trust you before they will believe you and follow you to the silo. You can't just put up a billboard, hand them a track, or pass out candy canes. These are all good ice breakers, but to make disciples you have to get beyond that. You may have to help them get rid of the weeds in their life, may have to water or fertilize them a little with friendship. But if you do it right they'll be happy and receptive to see the combine that will harvest them.
- **STAY.** It takes more than a brief encounter to harvest God's fields. You have to stay in the field and follow the plan/program until it bears the fruit of your labor. Farmers don't just spend one day in the field. They return over and over until the plants are ready for harvest. We need to do the same. Stay – never give up.

#### **V – TIME TO HARVEST:**

It's time to harvest. The fields truly are ripe and, if we don't get them harvested, they'll end up rotting.

Farmers stay up all night and sleep in their tractors to get the harvest done. They are willing to spend large sums of money on the equipment to get the harvest in. They will work long hours and neglect everything else to get it done. They will sweat, be sore, and push their bodies, minds, and equipment to the limit and sometimes beyond to get the job done.

Don't you think we should be willing to do the same for the harvest Jesus was talking about? I like to eat, I enjoy the food the farmer puts on my table but I think a person's soul is vastly more important than corn or soybeans.

It's time the church breaks a sweat and pushes itself to the limit to spread the Good News of Salvation and bring in God's harvest.

AMEN