

# A Heart for the Harvest

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[0:00] Matthew 9, the Word of God, from verse 35. I want to talk along the theme of harvest.

Of harvest. Another scripture is Matthew 20, verse 3. And there's many passages where our Lord spoke about harvest and of the picture of harvesting.

Of reaping, of sowing, and of harvest. And Matthew 20, verse 3, it says, the parable there is of laborers being hired to go into the vineyard.

And verse 3, it says, And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace. He wanted laborers to hire, to work in the vineyard.

And it says later also, other standing idle. Verse 6. There's opportunity to enter into the work, into the harvest.

[1:43] And it says, verse 8, that it talks about the Lord of the vineyard. It says too, in that one we first read, Matthew 9, 35 onwards, that we are to pray, ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest.

That he will send forth laborers into his harvest. Note there that it's the Lord of the harvest that we should pray to, the Master of the harvest.

You could think, the word Lord of the harvest, it means the owner, the Lord, the Master, the owner of the harvest. It's his harvest. It's his harvest.

And he wants us to pray. And he wants us to enter in to the work of the harvest. There's so many scriptures, as I say, about harvesting, about sowing and reaping.

We know Galatians 6 talks about, That picture again of harvest, of working, of laboring.

[3:00] And of not being weary in well-doing. For in due season we shall reap if we faint not. Friends, the church is meant to be a soul-winning machine.

A soul-winning force. And the church of God should be about the work of harvest. Moved by God. Sent by God. Mobilized by God.

And friends, we need to have a holy discontent. If we're not about the work of the harvest. That there should be a holy discontent within us.

That we need something more. We need God to use us. To mobilize us. And the harvest message speaks from the heart. It speaks from the heart of Christ.

It says there that he had compassion. And he saw the multitudes. He saw the people all around him. And he was moved with compassion. It's really a telling text there, isn't it?

[4:00] I love that text. That when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion. He described them as like sheep having no shepherd. And he said, Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

Hear the heartbeat of Christ. Hear that heart beating. That heart beating. It's the souls, the souls, the souls beating. Beating.

His heartbeat should be pulsating within us. His heartbeat should be pulsating within us. Does your heart beat for souls? Does it beat? Does it sense the need, the great need?

And his strategy is that we should be praying, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers. That we will be sent at his hand, with his commission, with his enabling.

And the Lord Jesus himself, what an example he was to us. He was about the work of harvest, wasn't he? All the time. In many ways, he was reaching out to the multitudes in the text here, in the context, that he was about the work of reaching the unreached.

[5:09] Of reaching the down and out. Those that were hard done by, he was reaching out to those that had the most need. And he was seeing people saved. He was seeing lives changed.

And shouldn't his heartbeat be your heartbeat? Shouldn't his heart's love drive you? His compassion that he had, shouldn't we share that too? That heartache that he had, as he was moved.

As his heart ached. As his heart broke. As his heart yearned. And we know that his heart took him all the way to the cross where he died of, as some describe it, a heart rupture.

As his very heart was broken, literally. As he gave up the spirit at his final breath. And think of the bravery of his heart.

You know, there's a modern film called Braveheart. Not that I've seen that. But I know that way before that, there was a story, Pilgrim's Progress, that described a brave heart.

[6:14] A brave heart. And that's the picture of a Christian. A Christian should be a brave heart. We should be brave in heart. And have a willingness to reach out when it's not comfortable for us.

And I've seen folk of recent times doing witnessing. And I know for myself, for any of us, it goes against the grain to speak to people of the Saviour.

Sometimes it... Because you know 99% of the time you're going to get rejection. None of us want rejection. And we all can have moments when we feel rejected and hurt.

And we naturally want to avoid that. And as a soul winner, that's what you're going to get 99% of the time. That most people are going to turn you away and say something rude and say something obnoxious and be hurtful to you.

Because they don't want the Saviour. But shouldn't you have his heart beat, his heart ache, his heart break, and his bravery of heart. The heart for the harvest.

[7:20] That's what I want to speak today about. And one preacher has put it this way. He said, The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided.

Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation. And we cannot bear full responsibility for the next one.

But we do have our generation. You have your generation today. You that are alive. Those that are alive around you. They are your harvest field.

God will hold us responsible as to how we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities.

We know in Ezekiel there's a story told of the responsibility. And the picture of a man with blood on his hands of not warning. Of not speaking. Of not witnessing. In effect, you could take that example to apply to the responsibility that we have.

[8:25] To warn others. To reach others. To share. Whether they heed it or hear it or not. That's beside the point. Your responsibility is to give it. To be used by God.

It says in Ephesians 4.32 Of another kind of heart. It says, Believers, And be ye kind one to another. Tender-hearted, forgiving one another.

Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. Have you got that tenderness of heart? But that tender-heartedness to those around you. There could be opportunity even today.

It may not be a witness, but a word of encouragement to a saint, to another believer. Let's have that tenderness of heart. That Christ will put his compassion within your heart.

And that you can be led by his spirit. We know the word of God talks about a change of heart. In James 4.8 Draw nigh to God, and he shall draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.

[9:26] A change of heart. That's really where it starts for us as believers. I know. I remember a time when my dad was not saved. I remember a time when my family were by no means Christian.

And there's a change happened. And it was a dramatic change. And it was a witness to all of our family. And my dad first got saved. And the rest of our family saw the change.

They saw the witness of his life. And it's a change of heart. That can be a witness in itself. Your very life is a witness to those around you. And think of your heart today.

Is it clean? God wants you to be a clean vessel. Clean heart for him to use. We know we've got car washes. And I know I was driving along lately and I saw a pet wash too.

Someone was putting their dog in this little machine thing to have a dog wash. A pet wash. But what about a heart wash today? Shouldn't you want to have a heart wash? There's only one place you can go to get that.

[10:28] There's only one who can give you that heart wash. That heart washing. As Psalm 51 of David in his time of sin in the Bible he says, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

There was that yearning, that longing for that cleansing. And friends, it's when we've got a clean heart, a changed heart, that then God can use you and fill you and mobilize you to have his heart for the harvest around about you.

It says in the word that now is the time for harvest. I think that's later on. I'll get to that later. But you know, we know now is the time, but there's also a Bible verse that says harvest is past.

One day it's going to be over. The opportunity to be harvesting. Now I went about trying to find something that looks a little bit like some wheat. Now this isn't wheat. It's probably a tear.

But if you could picture this today as being wheat. And you know, if you could see a whole field of this wheat, that's what the Lord Jesus wants you to see today.

[11:33] When you go out and look around about you in the streets of Elizabeth, of Salisbury, of Smithfield, of Adelaide, you see the people all around you. You see those people are like wheat.

There's a harvest that is ripe, that is ready, that is waiting for you to go out into it. And I want to issue you a challenge, to urge you, to implore you, to beseech you.

God is looking for a people that will lose their lives. Similar to what was earlier said, that we would be willing to be crucified for Christ.

Now, I wrote in fact in our newsletter here, something I read just this last week, the going rate to kill pastors. You could make some money if you want to knock me off in there.

If I was in another country, I know I'm using somewhat of humour, but really it's nothing to laugh about at all, is it? This is reality, brothers and sisters. If we're in India, if I was your pastor and this was your church in India, and you were the believers in India, every one of you would be a marked man.

[12:42] But especially the pastor, the preacher, would have a price on his head, \$250. Now, in India, that's probably a lot of money. I guess it's probably a year's wages or something, I'd imagine, over there.

If not, well, probably double a year's wages, I'd imagine, in India. And they're of high value targets. The preachers, and they want to burn their houses down, they want to destroy churches, there's rewards to kill, and to destroy churches and Christian properties.

People are being given all of these incentives to kill Christians. Friends, we don't know how good we've got it. We've just got it so good here. And we know in other countries, in the African nations, in other nations, in other continents of our world, in South America, I know that Catholics kill Protestants.

There's a lot of anti-Christian element in the world today. And we just don't know how good we've got it. And yet God is looking for a people that are willing to lose their lives.

But if that was true for our nation, that it wouldn't matter to you. It wouldn't matter to you that you're going to face the death penalty. It wouldn't matter to you that you're going to face a judgment of capital punishment for preaching the gospel, for being an outright aggressive, out-and-out Christian witness for Christ, that you wouldn't care that your life was going to be laid on the line because you love Jesus too much to stop you from doing it.

[14:13] And we need to put the go back into the gospel. Put the go, the G-O, back into the gospel. We've lost our go, brothers and sisters. And friends, it's time for aggressive evangelism.

For aggressive evangelism. This is what it's called for. A boldness, a frankness, a confidence to take the initiative, to step out and to speak out. The gospel is crucial, it's urgent, it's vital, it's needed.

And the souls around us, like ripened grain, waving around, waiting for you to speak to them. The gospel. Satan wants to have them, but Christ wants them.

And you are his instrument. An angel's not going to come and speak to them. He is using you. He is waiting for you to open your mouth and to speak it out. To give it.

And the word of God, the gospel, this is God's word, it's power! The gospel is power! The power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

[15:15] The word of God. And it's confronting. The word of God is confronting. Witnessing is confronting. But we are fuelled by God, by his power.

Now, an illustration about evangelism, there was a sign on the beach. And it said, it was a sign for the lifeguards.

You know, the people that would have manned the, I guess, the platforms they stand on and scour the waves and have a look for those shark fins and the people caught in the riptides and so on.

And the sign said, if in doubt, go! If in doubt, go! Now, we know, if in doubt, if it's about sin, if in doubt, don't. But if it's about God's work, if it's about the gospel, if in doubt, go!

We need to get the lifeline and throw it out into the dark waves. Okay? Rescue the perishing. They need the lifeline. Send out the lifeline into the dark waves.

[16:21] Someone is crying. Someone to save. Throw out the lifeline. Someone is calling today. We need to throw it out, brothers and sisters, the lifeline.

If in doubt, go! I saw this other really challenging thing. I thought, wow, I don't think I've, I'm not sure, being very selfish, I thought this would be something I probably wouldn't want to see happen. But this thing, it was talking about missions, about world harvest, and it said that the church should really have about one third of its members overseas on the mission field.

I thought, you know, we don't want to lose people from our church, but there's a mission field all around us. But what about the local mission field? Have we won our Jerusalem yet? Friends, we're not even reaching our Jerusalem yet.

That's the problem. And we need a strategy to mobilize for harvest, to reach out, to win souls, and really, I'd like to, in time, over God willing, the next few weeks, to kind of draw up a bit of a strategy, maybe a map, that we can have targeted, strategic, organized witnessing, that we can have a blitzkrieg, you know, have a concentrated effort, in certain pockets, or certain streets, or certain subdivisions, or suburbs, that we can be an aggressive witness, and organized witness, by the Bible.

We need an organized witness to give out the tracks, to give out the message, while we can, while it's still legal to. We need to fall in love with God. Fall in love with Him.

[17:48] Then He shall give you a love for what He loves. Now this is following on somewhat, from what was said earlier. Psalm 37, for delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee, the desires of thine heart.

Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee, the desires of thine heart. If we love Him, His desires will become our desires. We'll fall in love with Him, so we'll want to have His compassion, we'll want to have His heart, we want to have His heartbeat, His heartache, His heart's bravery.

And John 4, verse 30, we see that passage that I referred to earlier, that familiar one, and the context here of John 4, I'm reading from verse 30, the context is, of our Lord Jesus, He's just spoken to the woman at the well.

He's just demonstrated how to witness to people. And it goes on from verse 30, as this woman went out and told people of her Saviour that she had found.

Verse 30 of John 4, Then they went out of the city and came unto Him. In the meantime, while His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

[18:59] Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat, my food, is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.

Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest. Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are light already to harvest.

He says, Don't wait. Do it now. Now is the time for harvest. There's so much more we could say on that. Friends, faith sprang up because of the word declared.

The woman declared her faith, and the people were receptive in the context there, and others received Christ from verse 41. And many more believed because of His own word, and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

So not only was the woman reached at the well, but there was community reached through the witness of the woman, through the testimony of the woman, as well as the Saviour. And notice the harvester, the Lord Jesus.

[20:14] He demonstrated how to be a harvester at the well. Our very Lord's example. A man called Walter Martin, who wrote some books about how to witness to Christian cults, said, I quote, How can a person say he believes in hell and not take time in his week to go out and share his faith with others?

End of quote. His point was, How can we say we believe that heaven and hell are an absolute reality and not warn our fellow men in love for the wrath to come unless we are not really believers? It's true, isn't it? And I know, I saw a man Friday, and he was an atheist, and I just looked into his eyes with love for him, as I tried to share Christ with him.

And yet, there's all these barriers he was putting up of his evolutionary concepts, of his doubt of the Bible, of all of these things, and yet, it's the love of Christ that prompts us, that urges us, the compassion that he had that presses us to go.

Another quote, Men who do not know Jesus will go to hell forever. Because of this reality, taking time in our busy week to go and share our faith with others is the greatest act of love we can show anyone.

[21:34] Evangelism is the responsibility of all Christians. You don't have to have evangelists in front of your name to be evangelising. Every one of you, go ye. That is you, plural.

That is us, plural. Make a conscious effort. Every one of you have got places you go, people you mix with, of all kinds.

I heard one lady just today saying how busy she was, going so many places and doing so many things, something on every day of the week. There's so many people that you rub shoulders with that you might be an influence upon and be a witness to as you go about your lives.

And think about, make a conscious effort to develop that passion, to refresh that passion. For the Lord, think about the judgment of hell, of the great white throne judgment, of the judgment seat of Christ, of his well done, of the crowns of Revelation 4.

There's so many reasons why, but most of all, his heartbeat, souls, souls, souls. The heartbeat that took him to the very piece of wood to bleed and die and shed his life's blood for you.

[22:47] I'm going to quote William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, when he was talking along the line of people saying it wasn't their job, so to speak.

Not called, did you say? Not heard the call, I think you should say. Put your ear down to the Bible and hear him.

Bid you go and pull them, the sinners, out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the burden, agonized heart of humanity and listen to its pitiful wail for help.

Go stand by the gates of hell and hear the damned entreat you to go to their father's house and bid their brothers and sisters and servants and masters not to come there.

Then look Christ in the face whose mercy you have professed to obey and tell him whether you will join heart and soul and body and circumstances in the march to publish his mercy to the world.

[24:02] Friends, every one of us has a responsibility. Everyone. Be spent for him. Be spent for God. Make an investment of your life.

Be a living sacrifice. You know, every one of us we can occupy ourselves with things. And yet, wouldn't it be best to have your life a living sacrifice?

That your life is a sacrifice. That you're willing to sacrifice time, effort, resources, energies to be spent for Christ.

A missionary who died for Christ, Nate Saint, said this, and people who do not know the Lord ask, why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries?

