

Ask the Lord of the Harvest

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 28th of August 2005. The preacher is Lisa Pike.

Her sermon is entitled, Ask the Lord of the Harvest. It is based on Luke chapter 10 verses 1 to 12.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you want to speak to us. Lord, that you desire to speak into everyone's life here tonight.

Father, your word is powerful to transform us. Father, I pray that the words that I speak would be from you. And that everything that comes from my mouth would be something that we can understand.

Something that we can take away from here and live. So we can live more effectively for you in this world. God, we thank you for this awesome passage about the Lord of the Harvest. I pray tonight, Lord, that we would walk away from this place empowered and inspired to just really seek to save people and to see you work in this world for that purpose.

[1 : 0 9] I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if you leave your Bibles open, that will be helpful because I will be hopefully referring to that throughout this talk. When I first read this passage, a few things struck me.

The first thing that struck me when I read this passage was the incredible heart that God has for the lost. I was reading through and I was thinking about this harvest.

I was thinking that the people around us, and you'll see that my data projection was kind of inspired by that. The harvest around us is actually people. And God's heart is to see those people reaped into his kingdom.

If you look with me at the passage at the start, actually flick back onto the page before there. Just before chapter 10, Jesus is talking to a few different people, a few followers of him or people who want to follow.

It's quite interesting because Jesus asked some people to come and follow him, but they all make up these excuses like they have to go do something first or not yet, Jesus.

[2 : 1 5] I'll come afterwards. And Jesus was like, just come now. And they're like, no, I'll go do this. And Jesus makes this awesome statement right at the end of chapter 9. I'll just read it to you. I find it really interesting that after this statement of Jesus talking about discipleship and talking about the cost of following him in some ways, he moves on to sending out 70 people into the harvest field.

See, following Jesus isn't just about doing the right things or being a good Christian person or coming to church on Sundays in any sense. There's a cost of following Jesus. And one of those things is to have the same heart as him for the lost, for this harvest that exists around us so often.

Something else that struck me from this passage is that the harvest is plentiful. I don't know if you think about evangelism and mission and talking to your friends about Jesus much, but when I think about that, I get quite scared because I think, oh, I don't actually think people really want to hear what I have to say.

Or I've talked to them in the past about stuff and they've been a bit standoffish, don't really want to listen to what you're talking about now, not really interested. And I think, oh, that's not great. You know, maybe this message isn't that important or maybe this message isn't something that they want to hear.

But the thing that Jesus says about these people in the world is that they're a harvest. They're ready to be picked. A harvest isn't just a bunch of little plants that are sort of babies and not ready to be picked yet, but it's ripe, it's ready.

[3 : 56] And there's an abundant harvest that's waiting to be picked. And I guess when Jesus is talking about this harvest and in this language and asks people to cry out that the Lord of the harvest would send out people into that field, you really see an insight into God's heart.

You see that he doesn't just desire people to be coming to church on Sunday and singing songs, although that's awesome and I love doing that and it's awesome fun. But he desires us to go out into this harvest field and speak to people who don't know him yet.

Do you mind if I just get my water quickly? Thanks. It's kind of funny because when we think about Jesus and we think about why he came, we'll give all the right answers like Jesus came, died on the cross for our sins so that we can be forgiven and come into a relationship with him.

And that is so true and we accept that and we believe and we follow him. But Jesus didn't just come to save us here. Jesus came to save everyone and he actually wants everyone to repent and turn to him.

The sad thing is that not everyone will, but that's what he longs for. And we read so many Bible passages in the Gospels particularly about what Jesus was all about, all the things that he did on earth.

[5 : 20] He was doing it for one purpose and that's to see his harvest being reaped. Another thing that struck me from this passage, I suppose, is what our heart is like. I think the fact that Jesus has to ask us to or remind us that we need to pray, we need to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out people and actually go out there and do the work.

Just the fact that he has to remind us there sort of sends a few warning bells off in me because I forget to do that and I think we all forget to do that from time to time.

We believe the Gospel and we believe that Jesus is the good news, but we so often forget to pray for our friends around us and actually ask God to send people out into the mission field.

And I suppose by mission field I'm not talking about going overseas, although that is one thing that you can do. But I'm talking about your high school, I'm talking about your workplace, maybe your family who aren't saved, people you see, people who cut your hair or doctors or dentists or whoever.

Just have a quick think for a moment. Think of all the places that you go in a week. Think. Just think. You can trace through your week and have a quick thought.

[6 : 37] I go to the supermarket a lot. I go to the petrol station. I don't like doing that at the moment very much, but I do. Come to youth group, but there's lots of Christians there. I walk down the street, I walk my dog, I go to the park.

I go jogging. I go hang around shopping town. And the strange thing is that most people who are there actually don't believe in Jesus at all. But I just keep walking past them like they're strangers.

And I don't think, hey, you need Jesus. Hey, you need Jesus. This is a massive harvest field that we need to pray for because God desires people to go out into that field.

The harvest field is obviously huge. That's why Jesus asked us to ask God to send out people because there's too many people to be saved and not enough people to actually go out and proclaim this message.

And I'm sure we can think about so many people in our own lives who are like that. When we're thinking about mission and this harvest in our own lives, I suppose there's like so many reasons why we don't tell people more often or we don't share or we don't pray.

[7 : 56] I think it's got something to do with the world that we live in. I think we're a little bit brainwashed sometimes or it's easy to be brainwashed. If we look at the television or we just hang out with non-Christians in this world and talk about what's going on, people are a bit brainwashed into thinking that this is what life is about.

Right here, right now. That we go through school and we get good marks so that we can go to a good university. That hopefully we'll get a good job and become independent from our parents. One day we'll drive a nice car.

Hopefully we'll live in a nice house. We'll have nice things and life will be good. And it's so easy to believe that, that that's what life is about right here, right now.

But it's completely missing the point because we're not here just to have nice things and we're not here to make money or to succeed in our jobs. We're here to be workers for this harvest.

We're here to tell people the good news. That's the only reason we're still here. Otherwise Jesus would come back already. But it's so easy to get sidetracked from that. When we're talking to our schoolmates, when we're talking to our work colleagues, when we're talking to friends, they value these things so much.

[9 : 09] And we look at the television and they've got all those LG ads and you just think, oh, life's good, isn't it? Like I just need one of those refrigerators that has the internet on it and if I open it up, everything's going to be beautiful and life will be fantastic.

Oh, and if I just, you know, buy that, then maybe I can be with the guy who's in that as well and have a nice dog running around the park and it'll just be so beautiful. And it's completely brainwashing.

The gospel calls us though to refocus and it calls us to change our thoughts from life's good into the gospel, the good news.

We believe in the gospel for ourselves but I think if we really believed that the gospel was the good news, then we'd be out telling people a lot more or we'd be praying, God, send out people.

Send out people into this world so that people can be saved. We want to see people save God. So I suppose as we sit here and think about our own lives and the things that we value and the things that we desire, the things that we do will reflect what's in our heart.

[10 : 20] And if we're Christians, the gospel's got to be there. It's got to be right in the centre of that. It's just so important. It's not just the good news for me. It's the good news for everyone else in the world who doesn't know it yet.

And that's why Jesus came. An interesting thing about this passage is that Jesus sends out people and you see, I suppose, what other people's hearts are like, non-Christians who don't know Jesus yet.

Have a look with me at the passage. From verse 5 onwards, it talks about the disciples going out or the 70 people going out and there are different responses that they're going to get when they go out on this mission.

Some people are going to welcome them into their house and the peace can remain on that household. That's from verse 5. But later on, if a place doesn't welcome them, then there's going to be judgement.

And I suppose the people who they interact with, they're not going to be people who are angry with them for coming to be in their midst. They're angry about the message that they're sharing.

[11 : 31] They're angry about this good news. This passage is a great insight into God's heart. It's a big insight into our heart, but it's a big insight into the heart of this world because some people are going to welcome this good news in freely and peace can rest on them and they will accept it and there will be other people who will not welcome it.

And I suppose us as the messengers, we cop a bit of that. So when people listen to what we say and they get really excited and they actually become Christians, they think, wow, that's so awesome. But it's not about what we've said and it's not about what we've done.

It's about spirit working in God in their hearts and then accepting the message of Jesus. At the same time, there's going to be people who will oppose. And I don't know if you've been at school before or work or something where you've had a conversation with someone and they're just, they're not even uninterested, they're just really quite angry with you.

I remember when I was working at St. Jude's, I had a sort of a disciple I was looking after and she used to come home from school each day and just almost cry because she'd been beaten up so much emotionally from people saying things to her about being a Christian.

She'd be sitting in English class and even the teachers used to pick on her for being a Christian and sometimes deliberately steer conversations that way so she would have to respond and then people would sort of tease her at recess.

[12 : 55] And it's so hard not to take that personally because we all want people to like us but it's people who are rejecting the message of Jesus and we cop that because we're his ambassadors and we're on this mission.

So I suppose as we walk out into this field the harvest is plentiful. There's so many people out there who need to hear Jesus and are going to accept him. We don't know who they are obviously but there will be also people who will reject what we have to say and it's not a personal attack against us it's a rejection of the gospel.

I was thinking about our response in this. This passage is awesome because it shows God's sovereignty in mission and it shows our responsibility in it as well.

God is the one who sends out people into the harvest field and it's God's harvest. He's the Lord of the harvest. These are the people that he's created. And I suppose for us all he's asking us to do is participate in that.

He just wants us to step into that I suppose sort of procedure with him and if we ask him he's going to send people out he's going to make more people Christians and they will be sent out as well and we will be sent out as well.

[14 : 10] As we pray we can participate with God in this work. So I suppose the first part for us is thinking about our own prayer life and how are we actually praying to God.

Are we asking him for these things? Is our heart in the same place as his in desiring what he desires to see people saved? Because if that's what's deep inside of our heart then that's going to be the things that we pray for.

Just think for a moment about your own prayer life and think just think what are the things that you pray for most. I pray for people who are close to me and I pray for my friends and I pray for the youth ministry in this church.

It's all very close to home but it is a constant reminder to go life isn't just about right here it's about out there as well and God desires us to participate with him in this mission to ask him to send people out into the mission field into the harvest.

And I suppose the second part of what this passage is saying to us crying out and getting out ourselves. If this is something that Jesus values so much to go out and save people to go out and tell them the good news so they might have eternal life as Christians and that's something that we should be passionate about as well.

[15 : 33] And it's easy to sort of sit back and think oh it's okay we've got missionaries in our church and we support them and that's great or I don't really have the gift of evangelism so I don't really need to do that that much or it's not really my responsibility.

Someone else might tell my friend about Jesus. I was at a seminar a couple of months ago with Jonty and it was being run by a fellow called Wicco Tice some of you might know him he's written a few evangelism things that tracks that people use and programs and he's just a fantastic passionate speaker about evangelism you can see the passion oozing out of him as he speaks and he tells this story if anyone's listened to his talk and I get this wrong I'm sorry this is how I heard it he tells this story that he had a friend and this is before he became sort of really into the whole telling people about Jesus thing he has a friend and he was a close friend to his and eventually over time he didn't really share the gospel with his friend it didn't really occur to him he should do that his friend became a Christian and this friend who had just become a Christian came up and said to him you're not my friend anymore or you're not my friend and Wicco's like what do you mean

I'm not your friend how can I not we've been friends for a long time and he was like you're not my friend because if you're my friend and you knew about this good truth this good news and you didn't tell me how can you say you're a friend of mine and it just when he said that I was just like because I often think that you know I don't tell people because you know they don't really want to hear it they don't really want to know it's not that important that our friends who don't know the gospel and don't know about this they're missing out on the best thing ever think about how important Christianity is to you how important is Jesus in your life don't you want your friends to have Jesus in their life as well it's just something that should burn inside of us to see our friends saved we want to party with them in heaven forever so I suppose as we pray to God send out people into the harvest send out people we should be praying God send me out as well I will go I will go for you and I suppose when Jesus is talking about the cost of following him in the previous passage about he's like come and follow me and they're like oh I'm making excuses oh let me go bury my father let me go do this all this sort of thing he's like you've just got to come there's an urgency here there's no waiting there's not going to be time forever to do this your time is now while you're here on earth your time is now to do this and it's so important there's a few other little parts in this passage where Jesus says in verse 3 go on your way say I'm sending you out like lambs in the midst of wolves carry no purse no bag no sandals and greet no one on the road

I read that and thought oh that's a bit grumpy you don't want to say hi to the person who's going down the road with you and welcome and I was thinking that's a bit not very nice Jesus but I was reading a bit more on this and thinking about it and it's not that he wants people to be you know grumpy to the person on the side of the road there's just an urgency to this message that they're carrying and my understanding is that in that time they used to do some kind of you know quite long winded greetings of sorts I don't know hugging and kissing and stuff it would have taken a long time and Jesus is like you're on a mission go don't stop just go don't greet people on the side of the road go to this place that I'm sending you and there's an urgency there with Jesus I'm sending you out like wolves like lambs amongst wolves shows just the danger I suppose or the environment that this is going to be in but there's such an urgency in his voice and I can understand why because Jesus is going to come back soon he is he could come back tomorrow we don't know this obviously but he's going to come back soon if Jesus was going to come back tomorrow or next week what would you be doing today what would you do tomorrow if Jesus was coming back next week would you run around and hug all your

Christian friends and say goodbye or you know until we're in heaven together or something or awesome you'd be like running to every single person that you knew who didn't know Jesus and just go you've got to believe this good news you've got to believe it it is the good if you don't believe it now it's going to be too late that's what I'd be doing if I knew Jesus was coming back next week but we don't know when he's coming back and it could be tomorrow and that's the same urgency that's in this passage I'm sending you out go it's an important message and you don't have much time we don't have much time on this earth and there's so many people in the harvest field to tell just want you to spend a few minutes now just having a think about I suppose our own lives like think about your prayer life think about your non-Christian friends we're going to spend some time praying for our friends later and praying that the Lord would send our people into the harvest field but just examine yourself just be honest with God for a few minutes and just be real with him and say this is me you know tell him how you've been going with all this stuff because he wants to help us and he wants us to actually value these things as well so yeah just spend a couple of minutes thinking about this and then I might close in prayer vid to

[21 : 20] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Father, your heart beats to see these people come back into a relationship with you, to hear the good news and be saved.

Father, we really want that to be our own heartbeat as well. Father, give us eyes to see this world as a harvest.

Lord, give us eyes to see that our non-Christian friends need you. Lord, just remove all the lies, I suppose, that fool us into thinking that life is about right here and right now and just being part of this world, Lord.

[23 : 09] And give us a heart that's so in line with you that really desires to see people saved and has that urgency that the gospel calls us to have.

Father, we ask you that you will send out people into the harvest field, workers who are keen to follow you no matter what the cost. Lord, the harvest is so plentiful.

The workers are few. Please send out more people. Please make more people Christian so that we have more people to be workers. Lord, we pray for our own non-Christian friends and we pray for our own environments, Lord, that you would work powerfully in those places.

And that you would use us to share your love and your good news and your message of hope and life with them. Lord, we long for the day when you come back and you set things right.

But in the meantime, Lord, while we're here, may we do your work, the work that you've put us here for. May we set aside our own dreams and our own goals and our own desires and the things that we would like, Lord.

[24 : 32] And I pray that you'll change those into dreams that are in line with you. God, thanks that you choose to use us in this mission.

I pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. amen.

Amen.