

A Plea to the Lord

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to begin our worship this morning by singing to God's praise. We're singing in Psalm 85. And for men to be called into the ministry.

And in that we seek the Lord's reviving power. And this is a psalm that speaks of God's reviving power. The favor of the Lord. In times past, Lord, you showed favor to your own beloved land.

The prosperity of Jacob you restored by your strong hand. You forgave your people's trespass. You were pleased their sins to hide. You withdrew all your displeasure from your wrath.

You turned aside. Then verse 6, the middle there you see. Will you not again revive us that we may rejoice in you? We'll sing from verse 1 to 9. We stand to sing to God's praise.

[illegible]

[1 : 48] You forgave your people's trespass. You have reached their sins to hide.

You withdrew all your dispassion. From your wrath you turned aside.

But our Savior, memory's sure us from the stern of the greater age.

Will your anger burn against us? Will it last from age to age?

Will you God again revive us? That we may rejoice in you.

[3 : 20] Show us, Lord, good love and mercy. Your salvation grant anew.

I will hear what God the Lord says.

To his saints he offers peace. That his people must not wonder And return to foolishness.

[illegible]

We'll bow our heads together in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Our gracious Father in heaven, we do thank you that you are one who is with us, that you watch over us at all times, and that as we gather together anew here this morning, you have promised to be with us, you have promised that you will speak to us through your word, and that you would bless us with your peace, and we ask that we would know that today.

[5 : 26] We pray, Lord, that you will guide us in all that we do in the reading of your word, and in considering it together, both here in the church and also as the young ones go through to the Sunday school and the tweenies and the Bible class, Lord, and we pray that you will be with us all, that you will open up your word to us and open up our hearts to receive it.

Help us to hear it. Help us to recognize who you are, that you are one who is God, who is working in our midst, and we pray that as we have seen and heard of your work in the past, even as this psalm speaks of, as we think of our own island and communities around us here, in the many ways that you blessed our communities and our people in the past, we pray today to know your best blessing on us, Lord, in a day when so much change comes into our midst, Lord, we pray that we would look to the one who does not change, that we would look to you as God and Lord of all, and that we would know the blessing of Jesus with us.

Hear our prayers, Lord, and continue with us throughout this day in all that we do. We ask all the forgiveness of our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen. Before the young ones go out to the Sunday school, I just want to share something with you.

I'm sure you all had something to eat this morning, and perhaps you're already starting to look forward to your dinner. And you maybe have special dinners. You maybe watch people preparing dinner or even making your breakfast for you.

Hands up if you made your own breakfast. Anybody make their own breakfast? Not many hands going up. What about dinner? Will you make your own dinner when you go home? Hands up if you're making dinner today.

[7 : 12] Not many hands going up. Yeah? Not many at all. My goodness, everybody's just waiting for somebody else. Oh, there's one hand going up. That's good. At least there's one person who's helping in the house making dinner.

We get so used to people making things for us, don't we? And you expect maybe that you're always going to have somebody there to help you by making breakfast for you or making your dinner for you.

And it's just going to be there on a plate before you. And all you have to do is come and sit down and eat. But what about when the day comes and you maybe go away to college or university or you go away to work or you have to get a place you live in by yourself?

What's going to happen then? Are you just going to sit down in the morning and expect breakfast to appear from nowhere? Or come home and expect the dinner to be ready and no one's made it for you?

You have to learn how to make it yourself, don't you? And so there's times maybe when you have to start asking for help. Can you help me and show me how to make breakfast?

[8 : 13] Can you help me and show me how to make dinner? So maybe when you go home today and you're with your parents or your grandparents, you can ask them, show me how you're making that sauce.

Or show me how you're making those potatoes. Show me how to cook. And we learn then how we can do it for ourselves. Because we often expect things just to be done for us.

Well, every Sunday here in church, we do something together. And that is we say the Lord's Prayer together. Now, when we're saying the Lord's Prayer, are we just saying it because everybody else is saying it?

Are we saying a prayer because, well, somebody else is going to pray for me? Well, it's good to know where the Lord's Prayer comes from. It comes from the Bible.

And the Lord's Prayer comes from a time when Jesus' disciples, that's those who are with him and listening to him and seeing what he was doing. They were hearing him praying. And they were amazed at his praying.

[9 : 18] And so one day, one of the disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray. So just like we see food coming on our plate and we think, oh, that looks amazing.

Maybe one day you'll say, will you teach me how to make that meal? Well, as we come to God in prayer, we're really saying to God, Lord, sometimes we feel like we can't pray.

Sometimes we feel like it's only other people who are maybe praying for us. And the disciples were thinking that. And they said to Jesus, Lord, teach us to pray. And the way he taught them to pray was the Lord's Prayer.

And we really have three things in the Lord's Prayer. So that every time we're saying it together, think of these three things. The first thing is we have praise to God.

That's the first thing we have in this prayer. And when we pray whatever way it is, we praise God. We thank him for who he is. The second thing we see in this prayer is the provision.

[10 : 17] How does God who provides for us on a daily basis. So we see the Lord providing for us. And then the third thing we see is the Lord's protection.

We ask the Lord to protect us in everything that we do and everywhere that we go. So we have these three things. Praise, provision, and protection.

Ingredients that we find in the Lord's Prayer. So when you're thinking of getting food made for you and asking, teach me to make that food because it looks so good.

Well, we think of prayer too and we say, Lord, teach us to pray. So it's not just somebody else doing it for us, but that all of us together would have a prayer to say to God.

A prayer of praise. A prayer asking for provision. And a prayer asking for his protection. But we're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now.

[11 : 14] Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Well, we'll sing again together now. We're going to sing in Psalm 86.

This is in the Scottish Psalter version. Psalm 86, page 341. We're going to sing from verse 6 to verse 12.

The tune is Evan. And here we ask the Lord to hear us as we pray. Hear, Lord, my prayer unto the voice of my request. Attend.

[12 : 13] In troublous times I'll call on thee, for thou wilt answer send. Lord, there is none among the gods that may with thee compare. Like the works which thou hast done, not any work is there.

We'll sing from verse 6 to 12. We stand to sing to God's praise. Dear Lord, my prayer unto the voice of my request.

The Lord to hear us as we pray.

With thee, please share us as we pray. With thee, please share us as we pray. And like the works which thou hast done, not any work is there.

All nations soon thou shalt come and worship ever thee.

[13 : 57] Before thy grace stand, O Lord, thy name shall glorify.
Because thou art exceeding great, and earth's high thee are done.
Which thou art to thee, God, my God, art of thy self alone.
Teach me thy way and give thy truth. O Lord, and all will I.
Here I try, heart that I light in. May fear of shame I be.

[15 : 22] O Lord, my God, with all thy heart. To thee I will give praise.
And thy thy glory will us cry. And thy name always.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Matthew 9 at verse 14.

For the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed.

[17 : 09] But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved. While he was saying these things, to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.

And Jesus rose and followed him with his disciples. Behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment.

For she said to herself, If I only touch his garment, I will be made well. Jesus turned, and seeing her, he said, Take heart, daughter.

Your faith has made you well. And instantly the woman was made well. And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players in the crowd making a commotion, he said, Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.

And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went through all that district.

[18 : 22] And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, Have mercy on us, son of David. When he entered the house of the blind men, When he entered the house, the blind men came to him.

And Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to him, Yes, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it done to you.

And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, See that no one knows about it. But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

And as they were going away, Behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. When the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke.

And the crowds marveled, saying, Never was anything like this seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casts out demons by the prince of demons.

[19 : 21] And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. And healing every disease and every affliction.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, And so on.

And may God bless that reading from his word. We'll again bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Our gracious Lord, as we hear your word, we thank you for it, for how it reminds us of the way that you have that great compassion for people all around.

That in the days of Jesus, as we see and have read in this passage, we saw so much going on. So many people whose lives were full of hurt and pain and grief, full of illness, full of sorrow, full of sadness, in so many different ways.

Lives that were so touched by sin. And yet we thank you for those great words of compassion. That when Jesus saw the crowd, he had compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.

[20 : 51] And we thank you that today, you still look down upon us in such a way. For all of these needs are still around us. But we thank that you are God, and that you are the one who we look to.

Even as Jesus spoke and said to them to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest, we can come today with that earnest prayer. That prayer that as we look around us, and as we see the needs throughout our communities, and our land, and this world, and especially the needs of the gospel to go out in the midst of it, and that the laborers are few.

We thank you, Lord, that we can come to you as the Lord who is still Lord of the harvest, and plead with you earnestly, Lord, for laborers to go out into the fields.

And we do thank you that today is a day appointed for that purpose of prayer, and that it wouldn't just be for today, but that we would pray these prayers going forward as well.

That we would keep it in our minds, O Lord, that there is a need for gospel workers, and especially as we think of our own denomination, for men to be called into the ministry.

[21 : 59] And so we pray, Lord, your hand upon us for that, that we would see you working, that we would see you working in drawing people to salvation, that you would see you working in putting that burden for ministry upon men who would serve you in that way.

And all of that too, Lord, we pray that you would burden us all with that sense of compassion, that sense of looking around us, and seeing the needs and asking how we can help and how we can serve you together.

For we thank you, Lord, that it is not just a ministry of one man, that Jesus himself had his disciples around him who helped. Even though he didn't need them, he used them.

And though he had great crowds who gathered around him, he sent out 72 at one time. And we thank you that today, Lord, we are part of his church, that we are together in the work of the gospel, that we share in it, in the burden of prayer, in the burden of worship, in the burden of witnessing, in the burden of serving you in so many different ways.

And we thank you for that great privilege of prayer. And we thank you that today, as we offer up our prayers to you, you are one who is able to hear and answer according to your will.

[23 : 16] And so we commit these things to you in prayer. And we ask for all that's going on around us at this time, Lord, that you will hear us in our prayers. As we think of what's happening in our town today with the opening of Tesco, and people would say that prayers have not been answered or heard because we have prayed to you for this not to go ahead in many ways.

And yet we see it still going on. But Lord, we know that your will is done. And we know that you are able to teach us through all things. We know that you are able to remind us through it all that you are God and Lord.

And that in the weeks ahead, O Lord, that we would see your hand upon us in that way. That we would see you changing the minds of people, changing the hearts of people, turning them away from their own desires, and going against your word, to longing to honour your word, and to longing to honour all that you are, and your day, and your people, and your church.

And so, Lord, we commit all of these things to you as well. Thankful that we join in with our praying people, not just for things going on around us here, but throughout the world.

when we think of situations in our own land, and the great needs and times of illness, and the times of grief and sorrow, and the times when your cause seems to be so low in many ways, in a world that is full of conflict, when we think of the ongoing conflict with Russia and the Ukraine, and even large attacks, even during the night.

[24 : 56] And when we think of the Middle East, O Lord, and the grief and sorrow that there is there in the midst of war, and so many other parts of the world where your people are persecuted, where people are put down, and looked down upon, and people have no avenue open to them to gather as we do here, and yet they still worship you in their hearts, and in their homes, and in so many different ways.

We thank you that you are God to your people, that you never leave us, you never forsake us, you never turn away from us. And we thank you that as we commit all these things to you, we know that you hear us, and that you know our every need.

Hear our prayers for our people, hear us, we pray for our congregation, for those who are unwell, O Lord, we commit them to you. For those who are going through times of treatment, we ask, O Lord, your hand upon them for good.

For those who are mourning the loss of loved ones, Lord, we thank you that you are a God of comfort, and we pray for your great comfort towards them. For those who are struggling in different ways, be it physically, mentally, financially, there are so many burdens upon our people at this time, Lord, and we just pray for your goodness and mercy to be upon us.

We pray to see your hand upon us for good, as we pray for many to come to salvation, many young, old, boys, girls, men, women, we pray for your spirit to work in our midst, drawing us to love and Jesus.

[26 : 31] We pray for the holiday club and Christmas club that will be taking place soon, and thankful for all the work gone into it, and the invitations that go out, and we pray your blessing upon that.

We ask that you'll continue with us now in our worship, and as we turn to your word, Lord, open it to us, speak to us through it, give us the burden that it speaks of, and give us the boldness and prayer to approach you, that we would know your blessing upon us.

We ask it all with the forgiveness of our sins, in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise before we turn back to that reading in Matthew.

We're going to sing in Psalm 67. Let's sing Psalm's version. Psalm 67 on page 84. We'll sing the whole of this psalm, a psalm that is a prayer in itself, asking for the Lord's blessing and the harvest to bear much fruit.

God, be merciful and bless us. Shine upon us with your face at the earth. May know your actions and all lands your saving grace. We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise, and we stand to sing.

[27 : 45] Lord, be merciful and bless us. Shine upon us with your face, that the earth may know your actions and all lands your saving grace.

O God, may the people praise you. May our people sing your grace.

For you judge the nations justly, hurting over every race.

May they sing with joy and gladness. May they all rejoice as one.

O God, may the people praise you. Please, if you pray, God our God will surely bless us.

[29 : 36] All the earth will give our God. We can turn back to a reading in Matthew chapter 9.

And at the end of this chapter, at verse 36, we read these words. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

And then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Well, as we open up this passage here, it reminds us of a great need that there is in every generation. But also it reminds us of the great God who is able to provide in the midst of that need.

So when you look at these verses as Jesus speaks to his disciples, what is the great need that you see here? When Jesus says the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, what is the great need?

[30 : 56] Well, Jesus is seeing large crowds of people all around him. And what he's seeing in the midst of it is that there are so few people who are able to minister into these needs.

And he is saying, pray for laborers. There's a lack of laborers for the work of God's kingdom. And the presbytery to which our congregation belongs, the presbytery of the Western Isles, has appointed today as a day of specific prayer for this matter, especially as we think of our own denomination and the needs that we have for men in ministry.

And it's been a pointless idea of praying for men to be called into ministry. And it's alongside that a day of prayer when we would see the Lord working in our midst, bringing people to salvation, that we would see conversions in our midst.

Now, some of you will maybe know what the presbytery is, but maybe some of you don't know what presbytery is and who is presbytery that's asking for us to do this. Well, presbytery is every minister within the Western Isles, it's the Western Isles presbytery, every minister in congregations of the free church in the Western Isles is a member of presbytery.

It's a group that meets. And alongside every minister is an elder from each congregation. So every minister and an elder from each congregation.

[32 : 28] And once a month, the presbytery, that's the group, meets to discuss various matters to do with our own churches within our islands here, but also why there are issues going on within the denomination.

And it was at a recent presbytery meeting that we were hearing a presentation about the great need that there is for men to be called into ministry. And the great need that we see around us in the Lord's need to work in our midst, that we would see in many ways a day of revival.

And so from that came this burden, this burden that we would set aside a day for prayer on these matters. Because as you look around Scotland today, what do you see?

You see a nation that is very different to what it was 20, 30, 40 years ago. We're living in very different days. You look around our own communities, it has changed dramatically over the last few years.

You look back 10 years, 20 years, it's very different to what it was then. Churches are very different as well. We see less and less people as we're coming out to church.

[33 : 41] Less and less people interested in church. And yet as we look around, we see a field. We see a field where the harvest is plentiful.

Just like Jesus' day. Jesus was seeing people that he describes as this harvest field. And so as we look around ourselves today, we see that same setting.

Just like in Jesus' day, we have a harvest all around us. But just like Jesus' day, the laborers are few. Those who are called into ministry, it seems to be fewer and fewer.

And there's a great need within our own denomination to see more men being called into ministry. It's estimated that with ministers retiring and new churches being planted, over the next 10 years, we're going to need 70 new ministers for our own denomination.

And so we know that there is a great need. We know in our own midst what that need is like because we have a vacancy. We are looking for another man to come in and minister to us in this place.

- [34 : 49] And there are congregations within our own presbytery in that same situation. There's congregations around Scotland in that very same situation where there's no minister and they're looking for someone to call as a minister, but they're not there.

And so we are being asked to come to God in prayer. And that's what Jesus shows us in this passage. The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few.

Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest. That's what we're being called upon today. The concern to pray to the Lord that he might provide.

And I want us to consider three things from this passage that show us we all have a part to play in this need. Prayer is a privilege for us all.

That we would pray for conversions. That we would see the Lord's hand working in salvation in our midst. And that we would pray for laborers, for ministers to be called into the work of the harvest field.

- [35 : 56] And three thoughts to guide us in this. The burden that we see in it all. The boldness to approach. And the blessing that we seek.

So we're going to begin by looking at the burden. The burden in all of this. And we first want to see the context of these verses. Where Jesus is speaking to the disciples here.

Out of what context is he speaking to them? Well if you look in the preceding chapters in this gospel. We see the burden of God first of all towards his people.

When you go right back to chapter 1 of Matthew. You see the beginning. The genealogy. The way God was already working long before Jesus was born into this world.

The way God had a burden for his people. That the Lord would send a savior into this world. And his burden was there. That the birth of Jesus.

- [36 : 57] We see Jesus coming into the world. Given the name Jesus. Because the name of Jesus it says. He will save his people from their sins.

His sins. So we see the great burden of God towards his people. That he would provide. And then as you go through the following chapters. After the birth of Jesus.

Up to this point. You see the great burden that Jesus had. As he was in this world. You see the many different ways. He is ministering in their midst. The great miracles that he performed.

The great preaching that he gave to them. The great teaching that he gave to them. It was like nothing else. The people had heard or seen. There was something remarkable about Jesus.

And Jesus had this burden for his people. The burden that he ultimately gave his life for. That he would give his life as a ransom for many.

- [37 : 55] That Jesus would die for the sins of his people. And so we see the great burden that there is. And you see it. You know just look at chapter 8 and 9 here.

It jumps from one thing to another. Where Jesus heals a leper. Where Jesus sees the faith of a centurion. Jesus heals many. Jesus heals two men.

Demon possessed. He heals a paralytic. He calls Matthew. Matthew. And then you see the girl restored. And the woman who was healed. The healing of the two blind men.

It goes on and on. Jesus' burden towards all the people. And it gets to the point at the end of chapter 9. Where it's not that he couldn't help everybody.

But he's just seeing this crowd. And he sees the crowd. And he has this great compassion upon them. In verse 36 that's what you see.

[38 : 53] It's like a culmination of everything that he's seeing around him. And he comes to this point in verse 36. When he saw the crowds. He had compassion for them. Because they were harassed and helpless.

Like sheep without a shepherd. If there's one verse I would keep going back to. And thinking well what is important in ministry.

This is definitely one of the verses that would stand out for me. Because it's about people. And that is what ministry is about.

It's about people. The harvest is there. The people are there before Jesus. He sees this great crowd. And he had compassion. He wanted to help them all.

He wanted them all to have a shepherd. That would look after them. That would guide them. That would help them along the way. But they were like sheep without a shepherd. And so the prayer then comes.

[39 : 55] This burden then comes. And he says to the disciples. Look the harvest is plentiful. But the laborers are few. There are these people all around us.

And there's no one to help them. They're like sheep without a shepherd. And so there is this great burden here.

Jesus saw. And he had a burden. And that is where this call for a day of prayer has come from as well. It's come from looking around and seeing the great needs that are around us.

The great needs of the harvest are all around us. There are people all around us. And they are just like the people that Jesus saw. Harassed.

And helpless. And like sheep without a shepherd. They are just wandering around lost. And so there is a great burden in the midst of that.

[41 : 00] That our presbytery, our denomination is speaking about these things. Because we see a nation around us of people who are burdened in these ways of being harassed and helpless.

And that we would have a burden for them. That the gospel would be in the midst of these people. Going out to these people in the cities, in the towns, in the villages, all across our land.

That we would see the gospel be going out. Because it is the gospel that can help. It is the gospel that they need. To hear about this saviour.

The one who can save them from their sins. The one who is Jesus. Jesus had compassion. And if Jesus had compassion.

If Jesus had this burden. Then it falls on us to ask, do we have that same burden? And is that what will burden our prayers?

[42 : 02] J.C. Ryle. The Bishop J.C. Ryle, as he is often known, who wrote books and was a great preacher himself. He once said, a person who does not feel for souls of all unconverted people.

Surely does not have the mind of Christ. Who does not feel for the souls of all unconverted people.

That is a burden. And that's what he's saying. He's saying that those who belong to Christ are to have the same reaction as Christ here. To look and to see and have that great burden.

That burden for compassion and concern for those who are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. And you see at the end of this chapter into chapter 10, it's like a transition here.

From where we're seeing Jesus doing it all, as it were, to Jesus using his disciples in the work as well. He called to him, it says in chapter 10, his 12 disciples and gave them authority and cast them out.

[43 : 17] He sent them out. To cast out and to heal every disease and every affliction. So he sent them out with that great commission, as it were, to go out into the midst of all of these people.

And that is our prayer today. That's the heart of our prayer today. A prayer for a burden for those around us. And that we would pray for others to come into the ministry.

And to serve the Lord in this way. So the people around us would have a shepherd over them. One to lead them and show them the way of Christ.

One to reach out to the lost and to help bring them to Christ. We know the Lord does it, but he uses his people in it. So that's the first thing we see here.

This great burden. He sees the crowd. He sees them in all their different needs. He has compassion and he's burdened. And what he does then is show them, this is why we need to pray.

[44 : 18] He said to his disciples, look, the harvest is plentiful. The laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest.

A burden leads to this boldness in prayer. If you have your car and you're driving along and the engine management light comes on, do you just ignore it?

Or if you're sitting at home and you're sitting by an ice open fire and you hear this roaring sound in the chimney and you realize, hold on, the chimney's on fire.

Do you just sit there and think, well, hopefully it'll go out? Or if you suddenly develop serious chest pains, what do you do?

Do you just think, oh, well, I'll go and lie down and hopefully it'll be better in the morning? You may expect the answer to all these kinds of situations to be that action will be taken straight away.

[45 : 24] A warning light in the car isn't to be ignored. You need to do something about it straight away. And yet how many of us will just drive on? It'll be fine. The car seems to be working okay, but it's there for a reason.

If the chimney's on fire, you may sit there and just say, oh, well, hopefully it'll settle down. Many people do. Instead of calling the fire brigade straight away. Or chest pains or any pains in our body, we're afraid to go to the doctor.

And we say, oh, well, it'll get better. It'll settle down. That's almost our immediate reaction. Instead of doing something about it straight away. And you say to yourself, well, what about when it comes to prayer?

Why appoint a day of prayer for conversions and calling into ministry? Are we not praying for that anyway? Is that not part of our ongoing prayer?

It is. Of course it is. But there are times when we see a specific need. At times when we feel a specific burden.

[46 : 28] There is a serious issue before us. And it reminds us here, as we think of boldness in prayer, that it's a prayer that we are all to share in.

And Jesus here says, don't just pray, but pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest. There is this great burden.

There is this great need. So it's time to pray earnestly. We do something. We see a need and we do something. We don't just sit back.

Well, hopefully the Lord will call people. Hopefully something will change. We think to ourselves, no, let's come and plead with the Lord.

Let's come and see this great need and come to him today and continue to pray for this great need and to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

[47 : 31] Because there's times maybe when we think we've lost sight of this. We've lost sight of the urgency of this need. Maybe it's a burden that we're just ignoring.

And maybe our compassion has waned for people around us. We're caught up in our own lives or in other things. And our vision of the people around us is lost. Maybe we think, what's the point?

I've been praying for years for this and nothing's happening. But it's good to think, well, we're all coming together to think of and pray for this particular need on this particular day together.

If you're someone who's a regular who goes home and maybe goes to tune in to other congregations and listen, well, what were they preaching on today? I'm sure you'll find that in different places today, this very same text will be preached on.

Because it was this text that was brought to our forefront of our minds as we spoke to it. So I know for a fact that there's others preaching on this text today. But it's just something to bring our focus, our minds focused on this.

[48 : 45] And maybe there's even some here or tuning in online who don't want to hear this text preached. Because it's a burden on their hearts. Maybe it is a burden on your heart that you're being called into ministry and you just want to push it away.

Well, the prayer today is that earnest prayer that the Lord will burden you further. And that you would pray yourself, Lord, if this is your will for me, make it clear.

People ask, why aren't we seeing men coming into the ministry? Maybe part of the reason is that men are pushing away that call.

And saying, it's for somebody else. But you can't push it away. This is something that cannot be ignored.

It's something that we cannot leave to one side. In prayer we're showing and seeing our dependence on God. And we're praying today earnestly that people would be burdened in this.

[49 : 55] Burdened to prayer. Burdened to come to the Lord and see and know their need of salvation. Burdened to come to the Lord and say, Lord, can you use me in the ministry?

There's no hiding place from God. Looking back over a week of remembrance, it often reminds me of a poster I first saw when I was in primary school.

And there was a poster that went out in the First World War. I'm sure many of you are familiar with it, of that man. And the poster pointing the finger and saying, your country needs you.

It was a poster there to encourage and promote people to be enlisted to fight in the army. I was standing here today and implying the saying, God needs you.

God doesn't need you. But I can say God wants you. Because that's what the scriptures say. God wants you.

[51 : 00] Because God wants his people to repent and to believe the gospel. God wants you because he wants sinners to be saved. God wants you because God wants his people to serve him in many different ways.

Not just ministers of the gospel, but God wants us all to serve him in different ways. And God wants some to be ministers of the gospel.

Jesus here shows us that he uses people as he sends the twelve out. Are we being obedient to him in these things?

Do we have the obedience of Isaiah of old? In Isaiah chapter 6 verse 8, Isaiah says, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us?

And then I said, Here am I. Send me. If you're burdened in this way, the response should be, Lord, here I am.

[52 : 17] Send me. We are to be obedient. And that is our prayer today. Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.

Because the Lord can do it. We are praying to the Lord to send out. The word there for send out has behind it this thrusting out.

It's like an explosion that comes and just pushes everything away. And that is our prayer today. That the Lord would work in this way.

Where he thrusts out laborers into the field. Wouldn't it be wonderful that as we pray today together as a congregation, as a presbytery, that we would see an explosion in our midst.

An explosion of conversions. An explosion of people serving God in every way. An explosion of men coming to answer the call to the ministry of God's word.

[53 : 28] The harvest is plentiful. The laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out.

May we come boldly to God in that way. With that earnest prayer for laborers. The third and final thing we see here is the blessing that we seek in it all.

Even when you think of Jesus saying to the disciples here, Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Do you think you see this prayer answered?

Well as you look at the list there of the disciples, you see all the names before you there. And one is Simon who is called Peter.

Now we know of Peter. How the Lord called him from his own background. In fishing he called him to serve the Lord. We know Peter who was so often impulsive in many ways.

[54 : 33] Feisty temperament at times. We know Peter and the bitter disappointment that he had as he turned his back on Jesus. As he denied him three times.

And the pain that that caused him. But we know Peter who was restored by Jesus. And we were looking recently at the baptism service. Acts chapter 2.

And who was preaching there in that sermon? But Peter. Peter at the day of Pentecost. He stood in their midst and preached. A large crowd.

And it says 3,000 were added to the church in that day. It's amazing the power of the Lord. That he can do great things through ordinary men and women.

We see the Lord blessing those who are obedient. Jesus looked and saw the harvest as plentiful.

[55 : 39] He didn't see a field that was full of stones and weeds. He didn't look and see even just a field that was waiting to be plowed. He looked and he saw potential everywhere.

The harvest was ready. The harvest was ready for picking. And today as we look around us. We see there is a harvest there.

There's no need to wait. The harvest is there. It's ready for picking. And so we are to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest.

To send out laborers into this harvest. Because it's there. And what we want to see is the Lord's blessing. Jesus had compassion for the lost.

That they might be saved. And if we have that burden ourselves. We should pray more boldly and more earnestly. To see the harvest brought in.

[56 : 46] Psalm 67 is a prayer. We've sung it already. And it's a prayer that begins with that cry. Lord bless and pity us. Shine on us with thy face.

That the earth thy way. And nations all may know. Thy saving grace. That is a prayer. But it ends with blessing.

The earth's fruit shall yield. Our God shall blessing send. God shall us bless. Men shall in fear. And to earth's utmost end.

There is confidence. Confidence. Confidence that God is able to bless. That he is able to yield that harvest.

The harvest is there. The laborers are few. We pray earnestly for those to come in. Who will serve and shepherd the people around us.

[57 : 44] Prayer is a wonderful privilege. And God can do great things through prayer. I'll leave you with a little story from New York. Back in the 1850s.

It was a time of a recession and depression in the city. Many businesses were hard up against it. Suffering in so many different ways. And there was one man.

He was called Jeremiah Lanfire. And he had this great burden for prayer in the midst of it. And he decided that he would start a prayer meeting at lunchtime.

In the middle of New York where businesses were all around. He was sending out an invitation to businessmen to come and join at this time of prayer.

And the first prayer meeting took place on the 23rd September 1857. The invitations had gone out. And he came to the place where they were to come and pray.

[58 : 44] And he sat in himself. And there was nobody else. Five minutes went by. Ten minutes went by. Fifteen minutes went by. No one was coming.

And yet he was still praying. After half an hour, he heard footsteps. And someone came in and joined him in this time of prayer. Before the hour was up, another four or five had joined him.

And the first prayer meeting they had was few. And yet they prayed together. But from there, it began to grow. The following Wednesday, there was 40.

And from there, it grew and grew. In the first week of October, it was decided to hold a daily meeting instead of a weekly meeting. So that every day, they would come and join in prayer.

And within six months, there was thousands joining in for prayer. Not just in this one place, but in other places as well. And a great revival had begun in the city of New York.

[59 : 51] Because one man was burdened to call for prayer. We are being called to pray. We are to have that burden to pray.

And we remind ourselves that in prayer, the Lord is able to bless. The Lord hears his praying people. We don't always see answered prayer straight away.

We don't always see prayer answered the way that we would want it. But we trust that God knows best. That God is working in strange ways.

In amazing ways. We looked at Habakkuk recently. We were thinking of how God was doing in a work in their midst that they wouldn't believe. Because it seemed so absurd in their midst.

Because a nation was going to come and invade them. And take them over. And they seemed to make no sense. And yet through that, God brought great blessing.

[60 : 51] He brought people back to himself. And so when there are things going on that we don't understand. When there are things that we are praying about that we don't seem to be answered.

We never lose heart. But we ask the Lord for his blessing in it all. That the Lord would bless us. That the Lord would revive us.

That the Lord would show us his favor. And bring a great harvest into our midst once again. May he burden us in this way. And may he give us boldness to come.

And praying especially earnestly for laborers into the harvest. And may he show us his blessing in amazing ways.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are one who hears and answers prayer. And we thank you, Lord, for the burden that you give to your people.

[61 : 50] To always pray and never give up. And we pray that you will help us to be not just prayerful, but earnestly prayerful. Prayerful for all the needs that we see around us.

And above all, as we've been thinking today, to pray for the salvation of your people around us. To see the harvest fields all around us. And to pray to the Lord of the harvest.

To bring that harvest in. And to send out laborers into it. We pray, Lord, that we would see those who would answer the call into ministry. And serve you with all their hearts.

May we all do so. In whatever aspect of calling that you have in our lives. May we all be earnest and bold in prayer to you. To know your blessing upon us.

As we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 126.

[62 : 48] It's in the Scottish Psalter version. The tune is Denfield, Psalm 126. Psalm that reminds us of the burden of seeing the Lord working in our midst.

When Sion's bondage, God turned back. As men that dreamed were we. And filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody. That man is, in verse 6, it says, A man who bearing precious seed and going forth doth mourn.

He doubtless bringing back his sheaves rejoicing shall return. The picture there of the harvest coming in. We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.

When Sion's bondage, God turned back.

As may the dreams were we. Then filled with laughter was our mind.

[63 : 58] Our tongue with melody. They mocked the heathens, said the Lord.

Great things for them hath brought. The Lord hath done great things for us.

Whence joy to us is brought. As streams of water in the sun, The Lord hath done great things for us.

Whose soul and tears are reaped in time. Of joy and joy they shall.

That man who bearing precious seed, In going forth doth mourn.

[65 : 22] The darkness bringing back his sheaves, Rejoicing shall return.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.