

WELCOME 3rd April 2022 – 5 Lent '22 C

Luke 10:1-11 & 16-17

Welcome! It's great to be together again...*Bible Study Qs* are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We'll also use these for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-up on Friday**. While the restrictions are lifting... We're still doing things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks optional but for some a good choice. Thanks set-up & clean-up folks!

As we move into this week... *"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. Now go; I am sending you..."*

It's no locker room pep-talk or a motivational speech before a club membership drive. He's not rallying the troops before sending them into battle. It's an honest straightforward & genuine call... a real invitation to move from being spectators on the sidelines to workers on the frontline of God's harvest in his mission to all nations.

This is no solo effort, but the communal & relational activity of the body of Christ: called, commissioned, & sent into a world where people are living & dying outside the presence of Jesus, but who were created for life with him forever.

It's often hard work & calls from us trust, obedience, vulnerability, & a determination to bring the peace & presence of Jesus into every circumstance of our lives. It is also to see ourselves as God's answer to that prayer for harvesters and as an agent of his kingdom.

When you say "yes" to this invitation... lives are changed forever... most certainly yours. . How will you RSVP?

We'll explore that today fully aware "...the Kingdom of God is **near!**"

Let's pray & then we'll see...

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, & from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so we might perfectly love you, & properly praise your holy name... Your Son came into the world to free us from sin & death: breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that your gift of new life in Christ would be made real in each of us. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let's sing then we'll hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Where do you spend the most time with folks who are not yet followers of Jesus?
2. Our call is to be agents of Jesus' "harvest" in this world. What things stop you from doing that well... or at all?

5 LENT '22 C – RSVP: INVITATION TO HARVEST

We know what **this** is...& this & this & this... This is what *harvest* looks like from our usual vantage point. When it gets to **THIS**...harvest. **THIS** is the goal...the object of planting anything is harvest. Flourish reproduce harvest...flowers - grass – fruit - veggies - trees. If we don't get **here**...it almost doesn't matter. Bugs blight frost drought flood...Anything short of this...we think failure. If we don't get **here**...we think failure.

Too often I think we (& I also mean *ME*) have that same thought about **this**...& this & this & this... That if we're not bringing in the sheaves filling the seats baptizing the masses... we're failures. If we can't share our faith w/ someone & "close the **deal**" (my Baptist friends in Tx say) get the sinner to repent - lost sheep to baptism - prodigal to the altar ...what's the point? We feel like a failure if our kids/grandkids live distant from worship...flat-mate/spouse is always on the fringe/somewhere else...high school BF neighbour, workmate simply shuts down at the first mention of Jesus... We feel we've failed as Xns. I think we need to get over that...Jesus shows how...

1st... It is unavoidable followers of Jesus are intended to be disciples who make disciples. Mt 28:18-20 is the Great Commission not a good *suggestion*. Our lives are intended to be so overpowered by the Holy Spirit & so infused w/ God's word that the life of Jesus at work in us is visible, real, compelling & at times irresistible... We are to be able to share what Christ has done & is doing in us & not be afraid of opening our Bibles hearts mouths homes hands refrigerators or wallets to make the point clear. But in that Jesus knows what many of us find out: **But if a town refuses to welcome you** ...*Anyone who rejects you*... Sometimes they say "No." Sometimes loudly...forcefully ...ignoringly. But whether they receive you or reject you it is clear one thing has in fact occurred: **The Kingdom of God is near you now.** – *has come near – is near*

Wherever you are that is...you can walk away from rejection dust free but you bear the kingdom wherever you go...Wherever you are that is...

2nd... Equally unavoidable followers of Jesus are agents of God's Kingdom. If you are baptized you are a bearer of the presence & power of Christ risen & ruling over all things. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You have an authority not your own greater than any this earth can muster...**Lord**, *even the demons obey us when we use your name!*" You never have to apologize for publicly living your faith...or w/hold the public expression of your faith because someone might be uncomfortable. Ok fine... what does that look like? **Whenever** *you enter someone's home, first say, 'May God's peace be on this house.'*" ...bearing God's kingdom business?

Jesus did not send the 72 out to conquer, fix or change the towns & places they would go but to bathe those places w/ his peace. In fact Jesus never tells us to fix the problems of this world...certainly not to fix any person. He does however so saturate our hearts w/ his presence power & peace that **WE** are transformed & live w/ the capacity to bring that peace into any & every circumstance of our lives & only his presence power & peace can transform anything. Which means...to love neighbour as we love self...to see this person as bearing the image of God just like we do...to see & respond to them on that basis as people of dignity (even if they live undignified) honour (even if they live beneath honourably) value & worth (even if we can't see it).

To bear the peace presence power of God's Kingdom is to be more lamb less wolf. You don't have to live in attack mode but in the vulnerability of *loving your enemies & doing good to those who hate you...forgiving 70 X 7...turning other cheek*. To bear the peace presence power of God's Kingdom is that you become the most generous person you know...most hospitable...best listener...most caring w/o taking over someone else's life for them...take care of the log in your own eye ^{1/4} you even think about their speck...you live by mercy & grace not by assuming your own superiority. Offering the peace of Christ is more than a friendly handshake, a warm hug, or a "How are you? It's good to see you." It's to acknowledge/respond to another person seeing their worth/value as a human being, regardless of whether they are family friend enemy or stranger. I reject the very idea of "stranger danger" Not everyone I don't know is a threat to me or those I love. *Stranger is a friend you haven't met yet* – Will Rogers

3rd... The harvest of the Kingdom is a team event. Do you see how Jesus sends out the disciples? **The Lord** *now chose seventy-two other disciples & sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns & places he planned to visit*. If you try to live your faith on your own...apart from the body you will never see anything produced...not in here & certainly not out here. Over/over again Paul writes for the churches to pray for him In Jn 17 Jesus prays, **I am** *praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you & I are one—as you are in me, Father, & I am in you. May they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me*. Jesus prays for the cascading effect of his church generation to generation in a unity w/in w/ Him & w/ the Father until the last day... Why? So that when the world sees us living in unity encouraging praying for supporting uplifting caring for one another together...it will have no choice but to see the work of Christ in us & believe his work on the cross is also for them. If you live distant from the body & distant from your brothers/sisters in the body that distance ultimately hurts your soul...church by computer/convenience is not the same as being part of the body.

Notice this too...Jesus sent them to all the towns & places *he planned to visit*. I find that gobsmackingly amazing...Jesus says "Go...& when you get there you'll find me right alongside you." And if you don't go...you won't experience his presence.

You have to really see today's theme verse in context... *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. Now go; I am sending you..."*

See it? *4th*...You are the answer to that prayer. He says, "pray to the Lord of the harvest for more workers" w/ his finger on your chest, "Oh look! Here's the answer!"

We're often in the "I don't know enough...I could never find the right words...I'm shy..." sort of mindset...Perfect! What does Jesus say? *Don't take any money with you, nor a traveller's bag, nor an extra pair of sandals. Don't stop to greet anyone on the road.*

Maybe there's no harvest until you are completely empty-handed. Maybe there's no harvest until you are free from all the usual distractions. Maybe there's no harvest until all you have is Jesus. Maybe there's no harvest when we have too much doctrine too much tradition too much theology too much moralizing blowing out of our mouths & we really need to jettison all that baggage & focus on the only thing that counts...Jesus who died rose again & rules forever so that every life might be turned toward the Father in his grace...every heart made new in love...every knee bent in praise & every tongue confessing Christ as Lord to the glory of the Father.

"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. Now go; I am sending you..."

Jesus issues an honest straightforward & genuine call...a real invitation to move from being spectators on the sidelines to workers on the frontline of God's harvest in his mission to all nations. This is who we are as the body of Christ: called, commissioned, & sent into a world where people are living & dying outside the presence of Jesus, but who were created for life with him forever. Not about "closing the deal" but about multiplying grace & peace & life & love & joy everywhere you are in the name of Jesus...intentionally specifically daily.

It's often hard work & calls from us trust, obedience, vulnerability, & a determination to bring the peace & presence of Jesus into every circumstance of our lives.

It is unavoidable followers of Jesus are intended to be disciples who make disciples.

Equally unavoidable...followers of Jesus are agents of God's Kingdom...in peace.

The harvest of the Kingdom is a team event. You are the answer to Jesus' prayer.

When you say "yes" to this invitation...lives are changed forever...most certainly yours.

TAKE IT HOME:

Where in your normal "travel" this week, will you be more aware of your role as an agent of and harvester for the kingdom of God?

Let's pray... God of wisdom & eternal saving love, graft your word into our hearts, so we would bear fruit that lasts forever...so you would be visible & obvious in all we are & do. Let life with you be our fervent passion as we live with our families, in our work & study, in our hobbies & finances, in our neighbourhood & this city. Make us a church filled with your love, grace, joy, peace & presence...not for our sake, but for those yet to be called your children... Through Jesus Christ... Amen.