

6. Seeing the Harvest

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Matthew 9.35-10:15

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The late Colonel Sanders (of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame) was on a flight one day when a baby started crying in the seat behind him. The crying turned to screaming, and the baby wouldn't stop even though the mother and flight attendants tried every trick they could think of. Finally the Colonel asked if he could hold the baby. He gently rocked it to sleep.

Later a passenger said, "We all appreciate what you did for us."

Colonel Sanders replied, "I didn't do it for us, I did it for the baby."

PAUSE

Have you ever had one of those moments of realization when you see something from a fresh perspective? When you look at the world through a different lens and things become clear all of a sudden?

In our Bible passage today, Jesus helps us to look at the world through a different lens. To see things with a fresh perspective. To see the world the way he sees it...

So what is it like to see the world from Jesus' perspective? Stick around and we'll see what the Bible says in just a moment.

[INTRO]

Well good morning! My name is Dan Bidwell, Senior Pastor here at Yountville Community Church. As always it is so great to have you with us and we pray that this morning you will draw near to God as we spend time in the Bible, as we hear him speak, and as we lift our hearts in prayer to the God who is with us, wherever we might be this morning.

We'd love to know that you've been with us, so make sure you fill in our Connect Card. You can find the link on our website **Yountvillechurch.org** or in the comments below on Youtube. If you like what you see today, please hit Like and Subscribe. Better yet, if you're someone who lives in the Napa Valley or nearby, we'd love to catch up with you personally to talk about joining us when our historic chapel reopens in the next few months.

Because we are a church on mission. Here at Yountville Community Church, we have a mission to share the hope of Jesus in the Napa Valley and beyond, and we are praying for people to join us in that mission. It's the same mission that Jesus describes in our Bible passage today, so why don't we ask God speak to us today through what we are about to read.

Our heavenly Father, you see the world from a different perspective than we do. As we read your word this morning, will you show us your perspective, will you help us see with fresh eyes. And will you change our hearts to pursue what is most important to you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen

Seeing The Harvest

We jump back into the story today with a reminder of all the things that Jesus has been doing throughout the last two chapters:

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. (Matthew 9:35)

Healing every disease and sickness... Can you imagine what that must have been like? As stories spread, as news travelled, as word got out, as lives were changed. We read that people came from everywhere to see Jesus and to be healed. Wherever Jesus went, crowds followed, a sea of humanity clamoring for help...

³⁶ When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)

This is our first look at the world through Jesus' eyes. Jesus looks at the world and he sees the brokenness in people's lives. He sees our helplessness. He sees the way that we are wronged by others. He sees a world that needs hope and healing and protection and leadership.

Jesus sees our brokenness and his heart breaks for us.

³⁶ When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them...

Brothers and sisters, I feel like that's a message that somebody needs to hear this morning. You might be feeling harassed and helpless, but Jesus sees you. He has compassion for you, the same as he had for the crowds back then. He loves you and he longs to make you whole again. And if that's something you'd like to talk about, please get in touch via the connect card and we'll do everything we can to help you connect with the hope of Jesus.

But come back to the way that Jesus saw the world. Because I want to ask if we see the world the same way? Do we share Jesus' compassion for a world that is lost without him? Do we look at the world through God's perspective?

When I've traveled to Africa to teach, in Tanzania and Rwanda, it seems so much easier to look out at the crowds with compassion, compared to when I look down the street in Yountville, or St Helena, or Napa. Why is that? Are we fooled by the fancy cars and pristine houses? Do we kid ourselves that everyone inside is doing ok? Do we kid ourselves that they are ok without God?

So that's mind shift number one. When we see the world from God's perspective, we'll see the brokenness and it will break our hearts, just like it did to Jesus. We'll share his compassion for a helpless and harassed world.

The second big mind shift comes when we understand that God has a plan to undo the brokenness, and we are part of that plan.

³⁷ Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Harvest is a big thing here in the Napa Valley. If you haven’t been to the Napa Valley before, you should definitely plan a visit. Essentially the valley is 30 miles of vineyards from south to north, punctuated with a few small towns – Yountville is the smallest and prettiest of course! But as you drive through the valley, with vineyards on either side of the road for mile after mile, you start to imagine the scale of harvesting the grapes from all those acres and acres of vineyards. Every vineyard has dozens of workers picking fruit while it is at the peak of its ripeness.

What if you drove through the streets of your town, and instead of seeing rows of grapevines, you saw rows of houses where God is raising a harvest – a harvest of people who are ripe to hear the good news of Jesus?? What if you looked the same way at the aisles of the supermarket, or the bleachers at the ball game, or the cars at the traffic lights, or the crowds in Home Depot? What if we saw the harvest?

What would that change about us? What would it change about our church? What would it change in our day to day priorities, if we knew that God was doing something amazing right here?

Jesus wants us to look at the world and see the great harvest that God is preparing.

Because this is not a little harvest. It’s a huge harvest. *The harvest is plentiful, says Jesus, but the workers are few.*

There are lots of people ready to meet Jesus, and so we need lots of workers who are ready to go out and do the work of introducing them to Jesus. Sharing Jesus. Making conversation about Jesus. Inviting people to talk about Jesus. Inviting them to come to church, or to our Explore group, or to Bible Study. We need workers who pray for others, workers who disciple, workers who care, workers who are good at connecting, workers who love to walk alongside others, workers who are good at showing compassion.

There are so many jobs when it comes to bringing in the harvest, and there is a job for each one of us.

Because I’m praying that harvest work will be at the heart of everything we do at Yountville Community Church – reaching people with the hope of Jesus, and seeing lives transformed. I’m praying that will be our greatest priority, and I’m praying that you join me in that mission.

Because it’s not something I can do alone.

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Every month at our monthly prayer meeting, we pray for God to provide. We have been asking him to bring 20 families to us, 20 families who will help us anchor our ministry for the next generation. Some of you watching today are answers to that prayer already, and I praise God for sending you into the harvest field alongside those of us who were here before.

But as we reopen again in just a few months, we’re praying for *even more* co-workers in the gospel. Brothers and sisters who are willing to put their shoulder to the plow for the sake of Jesus and the

gospel. And so right now I'm asking each of us to put our shoulders to the plow in prayer, and to join us in praying for God to send workers into the harvest.

I love what theologian Don Carson said about prayer:

I am convinced that the really great issues before us will be settled on our knees. This does not mean that we should do nothing but pray; it does mean that we should do nothing without praying.¹

So please pray for church. Please pray for workers for the harvest. Please put our next whole-church Prayer Meeting in your diary – the first Tuesday of the month, the 7th of April. Please hear Jesus' call to pray, because I want us to be the kind of church that settles the great issues before us on our knees...

That was our first big idea – Seeing the Harvest.

Instructions For The Harvest

Our second big idea for today is Harvesting 101, or instructions for the harvest.

Because now that we see the harvest, how do we bring it in? What are the principles we need to follow when we share the hope of Jesus with the Napa Valley and beyond?

Conveniently for us, Matthew chapter 10 is Jesus' training manual for mission. Jesus goes from *praying* for workers, to *preparing* his workers. Here at Yountville Community Church we're in a preparation phase, as we prepare to reopen our church building, as we prepare to relaunch our mission, and as we ask God to send **us** out as harvest workers. So there is lots we can learn from chapter 10. We'll look at the first section today, and continue with the rest next week. But these are foundational verses for us.

The first thing we learn is that ***Jesus authorizes the mission.***

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them *authority* to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. (Matthew 10:1)

True mission comes with the authority of Jesus. In this very first mission, Jesus himself was able to commission his 12 disciples before sending them out. He authorizes them to act as ambassadors on his behalf, his envoys – that's one meaning of the word apostle, which is there in v2. Jesus' ambassadors speak with the same authority as Jesus. And in this first mission, Jesus gave his ambassadors the authority to perform the same signs and wonders that Jesus himself had been doing, perhaps as a way of confirming that their message came with the same power as if Jesus himself were there.

Jesus delegates his authority for mission.

The same principle remains in force for us today. Because Jesus delegates his authority to carry out his mission to every believer. We see that in the passage that we call the Great Commission, from Matthew 28:18-20.

¹ D.A. Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World* (p117)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

That first commission to the 12 is echoed in every generation. Jesus has all authority on heaven and on earth, and he delegates that authority to the church to go and make disciples of all nations. Jesus commissions *us* and sends *us* with his authority just like he did in the very first mission.

This is something important to remember when the mission is difficult, which will inevitably happen – and we’ll talk more about that next week. But there is comfort in knowing that we are sent into the harvest with God’s backing, and with God’s authority delegated to us by Christ.

The second thing we learn is that ***mission multiplies the message of Jesus.***

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. (Matthew 10:5-8)

Do you remember at the end of the last chapter, when Jesus looked out at the crowds? Do you remember that he was filled with compassion because there was just so much need. By sending out the twelve, Jesus multiplies the effect of his ministry. Like the old adage, many hands make light work. The world is a big harvest field, and Jesus shares the work with his workers.

So exactly what work does he send his workers to do? In Matthew 10, Jesus sends the disciples to replicate the work that he himself had been doing. Firstly proclaiming that ‘*The kingdom of heaven has come near.*’ the same message that Jesus had been preaching since he began his public ministry back in Matthew 4.

¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matthew 4:17)

You see, the message of Jesus is the message of the kingdom of God. The message of a kingdom that is coming, and the kingdom that we have already glimpsed when Jesus was walking on earth. I’ve said before that the signs and wonders that Jesus performed were like a preview and a promise of the kingdom to come, a window into the future for all who become subjects of the kingdom. And so when Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, cleansed the lepers and drove out demons, he was giving a powerful demonstration of what life in the kingdom will be like.

And I just want to dwell on that for a moment. Because the heart of Jesus’ message is about a world where the effects of sin are undone. Where the corruption in our world and the brokenness and everything that is bad will disappear like a bad dream when you wake up. That is the kingdom that Jesus has brought near. That’s the amazing and wonderful news that we have for the world, a message where God promises to right every wrong, to bring justice, and to restore the goodness of creation, for all who turn their lives back towards God.

You can't separate the message from the mission. Our mission must always proclaim the coming kingdom, and the lordship of Jesus.

But we also want to show the way that the kingdom is *already* making a difference in our lives, and as we reach into the community with kingdom love.

Because we may not see the same instances of healing every disease and raising the dead that the disciples saw, but we do see the gospel changing lives. Healing minds, healing wounds, restoring dignity, bringing forgiveness, extending mercy, rejecting evil and sowing love where there was hate. The kingdom has powerful implications for the way we live in the world today, and it is our job as the church to keep praying, *'Your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.'*

So that's the second big idea. When we join the mission of Jesus, we multiply the message of Jesus as we help people experience the kingdom that is to come. And we multiply that first little mission which was restricted to 12 missionaries visiting a select number of towns, to joining a worldwide mission that comprises of thousands and millions of harvest workers sharing the gospel *'to the ends of the earth'*, as Jesus commanded in Acts 1:8.

So *mission multiplies the message of Jesus.*

The next thing Jesus teaches us is to remember that ***the gospel is all about grace.***

We first see that when Jesus says to the disciples:

Freely you have received; freely give. ⁹ "Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts—¹⁰ no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. ¹¹ Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. (Matthew 10:8-11)

Jesus sends his disciples out just in the clothes they are wearing so that they learn dependence on God for the mission. They are literally to rely on God for their daily bread, and to trust him with to provide.

I remember when I was at Bible college, and we went on mission every year for a week. I remember in my freshmen year turning up to the church where we were doing mission, and it was only then that I found out who would be hosting me for the week, and only then that I met them. Even for an extrovert, it was pretty nerve-wracking. Looking back I can see it was an exercise in learning to trust God.

When we go out on mission into the Napa Valley, or wherever you live, essentially we go out trusting God to look after us as we go. We won't deliberately put ourselves in harm's way, but sometimes mission pushes us out of our comfort zone. For the sake of the harvest, we need to push ourselves outside of our comfort zone. For some of us that means accepting our responsibility as a worker in God's harvest. For some of us that means prioritizing this mission in the middle of other priorities. For some it might mean putting significant time or resources or training into being prepared for the mission field. Because Jesus needs every one of us on mission. There was none of the twelve who decided it wasn't for them. I read somewhere that perhaps only two of those twelve disciples ever preached a sermon, yet they all trusted Jesus to go out with the message of the kingdom, even in their weakness.

Because our weakness is no obstacle to God's mission. Moses was nervous about speaking, and so God provided Aaron for him in his weakness. And the Apostle Paul, probably the most influential of all the apostles, speaks about learning to minister out of his weakness, rather than his own strength.

Because the gospel is not about our power, or our eloquence, it is about God's grace. This is what Jesus said to Paul:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

As messengers of Jesus, we go out with a message of grace, delivered as those who have been saved by grace. We bring a message of salvation and redemption and hope. And we bring it so that Jesus will be glorified, not us. We're not trying to build a church so that we become famous, we're building it for Jesus' fame. And so that on the last day, hundreds and thousands will meet the King as their Lord and Savior, rather than their Judge.

Because that's the last thing Jesus teaches us about the mission. ***Not everyone will listen.***

Jesus said:

¹⁴ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. (Matthew 10:14-15)

If you've ever spent much time evangelizing, then you'll already know the truth of this statement. When we share the hope of Jesus, not everyone is interested. There was a time when I used to try to argue and persuade and convince the people I was talking to with all kinds of apologetics and ethical and philosophical perspectives.

But the truth is, not everyone will listen. Sometimes people will even express understanding of what Jesus has done, and still they choose to walk away.

And what Jesus teaches us here is that there is a time when we can walk away as well, with a clear conscience. Because we aren't responsible for the decisions other people make. Our job is to keep focusing on the harvest, to keep focusing on the ripe fruit, and to keep extending the mission field out to the ends of the earth, wherever God has placed us in it.

Because the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

Will you join me in asking the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest field?

