

Second Sunday after Pentecost, June 14, 2020, Year A

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Matthew 9:35-10:15

***"The Workers for the Harvest"***

Jesus told us in today's Holy Gospel, "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.*" There are people to reach; there is a work to be done. And the danger of the church today is that it is not seen as the most important work. People are involved in so many things of this world - instead of reaching out to people with the Word of God. His answer is this - "*Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*" (Matthew 9:38) He didn't say "take your backpack and go out and do it yourself." First - go to God and see who He wants to send. Maybe you are going to say, "here I am, send me."

Jesus saw the real potential in the harvest. And He focused on one thing - hope. Jesus said get the sickle and harvest them. Jesus saw them being transformed and He saw the lost being saved. Jesus saw sinners becoming saints. He saw the guilty being set free. He saw the unforgiven being forgiven. He saw those deserving hell - instead getting grace. Instead of moaning and groaning about the bad state of affairs - Jesus stressed the expectancy and hopefulness that is anticipated in the harvest.

Here is an interesting question - do we see people around us as potential saints? What do you see? Isn't it true that many of us are busy doing our thing, that we never see the potential in the world. It is so hard! I want to suggest to you that where there is a lost soul, grace still reigns supreme. Not one of us here in this church, or in any church, can give grace. Grace only comes as a free gift from God. We cannot do it! There is hope and there is a potential saint. We cannot let the past fruitfulness cause us to not see the hope in this harvest. What a harvest - over half of America, over half of Coffee county is available to harvest. What an opportunity! Now that is potential! So many of us have a heart to rescue a pet, myself included, - so I have got to ask - why is it so hard for us to rescue a lost soul? Facebook is filled with preserve this pet, get this pet to safety. God bless them, it is a wonderful thing. I have a heart for pets, but I also have a heart for the lost soul - and there are so many!

Jesus said that "*the harvest is plentiful.*" The problem of people not being harvested is not God, He still saves. The problem is "*but the workers are few.*" Sadly, not many people are interested or involved in gathering the harvest. Jesus' play on words is wonderful: plentiful, or large versus few or small. Do you know why workers are few? Let's face it, it is hard work. Jesus does not say witnesses are few, but he says workers are few.

Have you ever planted a garden - and I think many here have planted gardens, and then one morning all the beans in that garden had jumped off the vines and were piled up on your porch? You would be saying - "what a miracle!" Have you ever planted a garden and one morning all the kale was neatly bundled on your porch? The harvest does not come on its' own, it must be reaped and there's the problem. It appears that the harvest lies waiting - but the workers are few.

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Now notice what Jesus says, “*Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*” So how do we do that? We need to pray. Why? Because this is the Lord’s work. What is impossible with men is possible with God. If there is going to be a great reaping of the harvest it will have to be because of God. The harvest we want is impossible with us. Only God can heal the lame, only God can raise the dead, only God can heal sickness, only God can cause dead ears to hear, only God can cause dead tongues to speak, it is His power and we must pray for Him to use that power – by preparing the soil.

Through prayer we will gain the compassion we need to see the harvest as they truly are and it is through prayer that we will see that there is great potential in the harvest and it is through prayer that we will ask for the Lord of the harvest to send workers. But let me ask you this - how can we ask God to send out someone else without first saying, Lord, send me?

Jesus says pray because while you are on your knees seeking a change in those that are lost, God will be changing you, so that He can use you to change those that are lost and to gather a great harvest. You might be saying to yourself – I am not qualified to do that. No, but He is – and He will give you what you need. Moses told God – I can hardly speak – I am a stutterer, and God told him – OK – I have your brother coming already and he will speak for you. Don’t put God in a box – let God be God, and you pray for His will to be done.

Ironically, right after Jesus speaks of the harvest, we are introduced to the workers that He has chosen, that He has called by name to lead the way into the fields. “*These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*” (Matthew 10:2-4) Each one of these men, except for Judas, would be given power by Jesus and His Holy Spirit.

Jesus sent these men out to the lost sheep of Israel, to tell them that the “*kingdom of heaven is near.*” (Matthew 10:7) I find it extremely interesting that Jesus sends them with explicit instructions. They are to rely on the hospitality of others, and to not bring money or extra clothing with them. God will provide for them, and He also gives them the power to “*heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.*” (Matthew 10:8) I think that would have gotten the attention of the townsfolk, but they were not to use those blessings to bring people to them, but to take care of the people who have taken care of them. “*Freely you have received, freely give.*” People who were willing to receive the message that Jesus had given them to share would be blessed.

What about those who didn’t want anything to do with what the Apostles were bringing? Jesus was very clear – He said, “*If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.*” (Matthew 10:14) In other words, you gave them a chance to hear the Word, to hear the invitation to eternity through Jesus, and if they refuse – the choice is theirs. God gave mankind the freedom of choice – to accept His

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invitation or not. I think that through our lives, we are given opportunities to accept – but we cannot say how many times God will take rejection by the people that He created. Let me make it even clearer. Jesus had this to say about the invitation – which is for everybody, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*" (John 3:16-19) God loves us so much that He sent His Son to suffer and die for us, He wants to spend eternity with us – He want the harvest to be full of saints – but on His terms. People can either accept His gracious invitation – or not. The choice is clear, and He needs workers to reap the harvest.