

THOUGHTS ON THE HARVEST

Dear Friends,

This week we're looking at Jesus' words and actions in Matthew 9:35-38. He went to all the cities and villages in Galilee with a ministry of teaching, preaching the gospel, and healing. When he saw the multitudes, *"he was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"* (v. 36). *"Then he said to His disciples, 'the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'" (37-38).*

I find it interesting that Jesus:

- Does not ask us to pray for the lost. He asks us to pray for the laborers.
- He does not ask us to pray for the harvest; but rather to pray for the harvesters.
- He does not ask us to pray for the sheep, but for the shepherds (and the sheep dogs!).

Some thoughts: Praying for workers for the harvest is a powerful call to align our hearts with the compassion of Jesus. He is Lord of the Harvest. He sees people through eyes of compassion. He desires for all to hear the good news of the life that is available in his healing, saving love. You and I are called to be willing to serve, as Christ served.

In Christian theology, Jesus' harvest is not limited to the existing Christian community. Instead, it encompasses all of humanity.

- The Gospel message is intended for all people across all nations (Mt. 28:19).
- Jesus refers to the multitudes of people who are seeking truth and spiritual connection (Mt. 9:37). The mission field is fundamentally the entire world.

In John 10:16 Jesus says, *"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd"* (NKJV).

Christians have differing perspectives on whether people who have never heard of Jesus can benefit from his life and sacrifice. While traditional views (Exclusivism, Traditional, Reformed/Providential View) emphasize the necessity of conscious faith, many theologians and believers (Inclusivism, Universal Opportunity, Pluralist, Ecumenical view) propose that God's grace and Christ's redemption can extend to those with no opportunity to hear the gospel.

According to the broad consensus of theological reflection, God is viewed as loving and just, meaning that those who lack the opportunity to hear the gospel are judged by their integrity and response to the light they were given, rather than being condemned for an unavoidable lack of knowledge.

Jesus primarily focused his earthly ministry to Jewish communities. His statement about "having other sheep" is commonly viewed as a prophecy that God's plan is to draw the whole world (including both Jews, non-Jews, and every other person) to Himself.

Sharing joyfully in the harvest certainly means we share freely with others what we have freely been given. Let us learn from Jesus how to see people who are hurting and hopeless, and to be "moved with compassion." And let us pray for God to send workers into the harvest, and be willing to respond when we hear his words: *"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you"* (John 20:21).

With Love,

Pastor Duff