

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest."

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I remember July days, alfalfa lying in windrows, just ready for the Baler. Sweat mingled with dust and ^{and lots of alfalfa} small pieces of alfalfa leaves as the sun beat down making hard work harder. Bale hook in hand, I pulled the bale from the baler and struggled to swing it to the top row of bales on the wagon. No time to rest or for bale followed bale as the hay that would feed the steers next winter was harvested. I remember the clouds growing, darkening, our pace increasing trying to beat the rain. Now not so tired as before, going harder and harder, the end in sight, we're going to make it.

I remember standing in the garage, looking out at the rain coming down in sheets, ~~feeling~~ with the hay crop safely in the barn.

~~Whether it be wheat or wheat or wheat~~

The harvest Jesus called it. Men and women and children waiting out in the cities and towns and countryside for the harvesters to arrive. Crowds of people, ~~like today just as they were then,~~ harrassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. The harvest. And the clouds grow darker in the west threatening the harvest, bringing rain and hail and wind. And all the brittle ones and will snap under the strain if they are not reached in time. And some will rot and mold if the rain reaches them one more time. And others cannot stand any more sun and drying, like alfalfa where the leaves turn to dust. The harvest is plentiful but the time is now, it can't wait. The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.

I saw Karl a week ago. He's been a campus pastor for ~~some~~ ^{several} years ~~ago~~. The students are different now, he said, They are living expecting not to see old age. When talking of nuclear war they don't say if, but when. They are harrass-

ed and helpless, sheep without a shepherd.

Hunger, we've ~~grown~~ used to hearing the word. In our prayers, in sermons,
in the ads that come into our homes along with pitches for new cars and computers
Sometimes its just a word like war and death, terrible to be sure but far away.
And too big to worry about. And as long as it has no face it is just a word.
But children conceived in love and born in pain die and mother's and father's
grow numb when the heart can bear no more. Harrassed and helpless, sheep with-
out a shepherd.

We gathered one night to talk. Widows and I. They told of their pain,
of a world suddenly changed where nothing is as it was. They said, "How hard
it is to come to this place at first, to come along to communion, to kneel
without that other one beside. To sit with an one close by to share the hymnal,
to share the worship. How hard it is they said to go night after night without
sleep, knowing he will never return yet strangely watching, waiting. Wary,
helpless, shephxsheepxwithoutxaxshx

When Jesus saw the crowds he had compassion for them, because they were
harrassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

It is no different now. Our Lord looks upon his creation to see a world
of people seeking something solid, sure, some ground that will not shift and
give way beneath them. ~~I want to know that I can prepare my children for a~~
~~is more~~ But sickness and war and inflation and debt and interest and techno-
logy and death all weary us and scare us. Rich or poor, young or old we are
helpless over tomorrow.

Seeing us, Jesus has compassion.



Pray for laborers for the harvest, Jesus told the disciples. Then he sent them out. Into the towns and villages, across the countryside they went to spread Jesus work of love and healing. Urgently they went to people in need, lifting the fallen, a friend to the lonely, they lived the compassion of Jesus for the helpless and harassed. Fisherman, taxcollectors, common folk they went with the message of the kingdom of God calling every one to faith and hope and love. After them came others and others still spreading the compassion of Jesus to every weary one. Until now it is your turn and mine. Laborers, sent out into the Lord's harvest.

Sometimes I've wondered at this. Who am I to be a pastor, a shepherd? How can I give when I still have so much need? How can I pass on faith when doubt so often sneaks around in my heart? How can I heal when I am so often in need of healing, love when I need so much to experience love?

I read the text for this morning, I thought of people harrassed and helpless. *of the weary, of those who thought of themselves as the primary of the message of the gospel.* I thought of us, the ones called to be laborers. Jesus looks at us, church people, trying to help and do our part, and he has compassion. He knows that we the laborers need his healing, need faith and hope and love every bit as much as those we are sent to help.

~~I do not think the world understands this. They see church people and think we say that we are so much better than others. We are not God.~~

It was true of the disciples. Jesus sent them out as his ambassadors, where they went he went to touch and love and heal. Were they super men of faith, strong, secure? No, ^{quarrelers} afraid, doubters, they would continue to be at times.

So a woman is a source of strenght for many, visiting those in need, supporting, encouraging. Yet when her husband dies she must walk the same hard road as others, tormented by anger and gears and doubt.

Or the pastor visits the sick, prays with them, helps them to believe, until one day he is sick and those whom he has helped share their faith and hope and love with him.

Our Lord gives to each of us two roles. We are the harvestors, we are the

harvest. We are the ones who need the compassion of Jesus, we are the ~~snasxx~~
~~whax~~ vehicles for that compassion. We are givers and receivers, always.

The giving we have understood. Our money, our time, our talents these
we give to spread the kingdom of our Lord. We teach the young, we comfort the
mourners, we send money for the hungry. We give. But sometimes we do not know
how to receive. Just as ~~xxx~~ he sends us to others with his love so Christ has
provided these brothers and sisters to bring his love to us. That love we need,
everyone of us.

This is how our Lord works, making us laborers, making us the harvest,
that we might know and share his deep compassion for us. The time is now.
The clouds gather, the harvest is threatened. Now is the time for you to
give to those people who need you to touch them, now is the time to seek the
help and the comfort you need for others.

One day the harvest shall be completed. The rains will all have come, and
we shall look back on the work our Lord accomplished in us with satisfaction
and joy. And in that day as St. Paul teaches, when ^{everything else} ~~everything~~ else has passed
away, faith and hope and love shall abide, ~~amen~~ ^{amen}