

## Confirmed as Harvesters and Confessing Sheep

3<sup>rd</sup> Sun. after Pentecost – Confirmation Sun. – 06/14/26

Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Matthew 9:35-10:20 Pastor Keith Besel

9:37-38, “**Then [Jesus] said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’**”

10:16, “**Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves....**”

10:18, “**...to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.**”

### **Introduction**

- ✘ It always blows my mind when I see how God works to bring a particular text in His Word before us at just the right time that we need it for whatever it is that’s going on in our life, at that time.
  - ➔ So, I don’t believe it was by accident that today, on Trent’s Confirmation Day, the Gospel Reading just happens to be one where Jesus wants us to take to heart the urgency of being a laborer in His Church so that the harvest of souls that are ripe and ready to be brought into His kingdom might not be lost.
- ✘ I mean harvesting has been at the top of what’s going on in the Gabel household this week, hasn’t it?
  - ➔ So the image that Jesus uses in this Gospel Reading today should really make a lot of sense for you, Trent and for many of the rest of you here in this agricultural community.
- ✘ Jesus tells us in verse 37 about a serious problem that is also a great opportunity. The good news that any farmer loves hear is this: “The harvest is plentiful.” But with that wonderful opportunity, there is also a serious problem. Jesus says that “the laborers are few.”
  - ➔ Now Trent, you tell me, because you’re more of an expert about these things than I am, what happens if you have a great crop of hay that is ripe and ready to harvest, but you don’t have enough people to actually get that hay cut, dried, baled and put away in a timely manner? ... It goes to waste, right? The harvest could be lost!

### **I. Urgency to Christ’s Harvest Work**

- ✘ Jesus uses this farming example because He wanted the people of His day, as well as you and me today, to understand something that sadly, so many who consider themselves to be followers of Christ, do not actually understand. And that is that, just as there is an urgency and priority for a farmer to get his harvest in before it is spoiled, so there is still something that is even more urgent; even more important; even more crucial for us all to be about than the various harvests and priorities that we all have here in this earthly life.
  - ➔ That’s why Jesus says in verse 38, “therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” Okay, if Jesus – the very Son of God; the One who created all things and makes it possible for us to grow crops so that we can have food to eat and provide for all of our earthly needs; if Jesus tells us – literally in the Greek, the verb He uses is a command – so, if Jesus commands us to “pray earnestly” for something, we definitely need to pay attention and take Him seriously, right?
  - ➔ And why? because, as He says, there is a severe shortage of laborers. Now, let’s make sure we understand what this harvest is that Jesus is talking about. He’s not talking about actual crops like wheat, corn or some other kind of food plant is He? No, Jesus is talking about the

most important thing ever to Him – human souls; the very reason that He came to this earth in the first place.

✘ Without Jesus, what are the chances of any human soul, including yours and mine, ever being harvested for eternal life with God? Zero! Paul said in Ephesians 2:1, “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...”. But Jesus, in His glorious exchange on the cross, took our sins upon Himself and gave us His own righteousness and life. This unimaginable – and certainly undeserved opportunity for real, eternal life, Jesus now offers for free to every living soul! It’s there; it’s here, ready and ripe for the harvest, for everyone!

➔ But if people don’t take that offer of full and free salvation seriously; if they don’t see it as being all that important; if they see the things in this world – like work and school and having fun with friends or spending time with family or getting more things for the kitchen or toys for the garage or making more money or frankly anything else in this world; if they see these things as being more important than receiving Christ’s gift of forgiveness and salvation; more important than actively taking part in His Christian Mission of *Sharing God’s Word* and *Serving All* people with His gifts of love and truth in and through His harvesting of more souls for salvation; if people don’t see the urgency that Jesus is placing before us here in this text today as THE single most important priority for our lives as Christians, then you and I, my friends, are going to be the ones who are judged at Jesus’ return for allowing His harvest of souls to go to waste.

➔ That’s right, it really truly is that big of a deal for every one of us to be active laborers in Christ’s desire to see as many souls harvested for salvation as possible.

✘ And there are various types of “laborers.” Yes, like the 12 disciples that Jesus called in today’s text, there is a great need for those whom Jesus will send out as missionaries and pastors to be trained, as the disciples were under Jesus, to be dedicated preachers and teachers of God’s Word. Right now, in our Church body, if things keep going as they are, in five years we will have half the number of pastors that we currently have, because men are failing to see the value and importance and opportunity of serving people with Jesus and His gifts in the pastoral office.

➔ But understand, the pastors as harvesters, can’t do the work Jesus intends for them to do, unless the rest of the laborers – that’s each and every other believer in Christ; unless they/you are bringing others in to be harvested by Jesus and His grace. Look, I don’t know even half the number of people that all of you know who need Jesus for forgiveness and salvation right now. In fact, most people, if I were to invite them to consider Jesus; to visit our Church to receive Christ’s gifts, they would hardly take my invitation seriously. But if you, their friend; their family member or colleague – if you were to invite them, statistics show that there is at least a five times greater chance that they would take you up on that invitation and at least come and check Jesus and His Church out.

➔ I need you, and you need me as we serve together as Christ’s laborers in His kingdom of grace.

## II. Jesus’ Sheep Confess Him Boldly

✘ But of course all of us are the same in one more important aspect, aren’t we? We all need Jesus to work within us and guide us in His harvest work. Because without Jesus the harvest is lost and spoiled for sure.

➔ In fact, you and I have already been harvested, haven’t we? Jesus reminded His disciples in chapter 10:8, “You received without paying; give without pay.” That gets at the heart of how every single soul that ends up with Jesus in heaven is saved, doesn’t it? There’s only one way! Trent, you know. How is it that you and all of the rest of us are saved? *By grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not by my works!*

- That's what the word "grace" means – Christ's "free gift"; His "undeserved love". You can't buy, earn or acquire salvation by anything you do or say or pay. It's always and forever only about Jesus and His Work for us, in our place!
- ✘ Jesus shows us this in chapter 9:36, "When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were...like sheep without a shepherd."
    - The word that's used in the Greek text there for "compassion" is "σπλαγχνίζομαι" (splanknizomai), where we get our English word "spleen". It literally describes such a deep love and concern that Jesus has for those and all people that He sees who are not yet saved through faith in Him, so that His guts; His insides are turning at the thought of those souls being trapped and lost and wasted unnecessarily in the guilt of their sin and unbelief.
  - ✘ It's the same compassion that compelled Jesus to endure the torture and shame and abuse He did in giving Himself to be crucified on the cross.
    - But now, in this text, Jesus' compassion compels Him to turn to His disciples and to involve them in His compassion for the lost souls scattered throughout that region and all of the world. Look, Jesus could have just done it all Himself – He's God after all. But He doesn't.
    - Why? because He wants His disciples – the people in His Church; you and me to have the same compassion for lost souls that He does. So, just as He charged His disciples in our text, so Jesus charges all of us in His Church today to go out into the world around us; to our friends and to everyone we interact with and share the life-changing news that, as He said chapter 10:7, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." How is God's heavenly and eternal reign over your soul and mine and everyone else's "at hand", meaning close enough to receive it and have it and enjoy it right now today?
  - ✘ The kingdom of heaven is "at hand" in Jesus! It's that simply, isn't it Trent? Why do you have the assurance right now today that you have eternity in heaven? Only because of Jesus!
    - And so, Trent, when is it that your soul was "harvested" for Jesus? Yes, at your baptism! Ever since that blessed day, this young man before us here, Trent Adam Gabel, has had the gift of new life in Christ. When he was young, he was nurtured in his faith by numerous laborers in Christ's Church – his parents, Sunday School teachers, pastors and others in Christ's family. For the last couple of years his education in Christ's truths has been more intensified in Confirmation Class so that now today, in a few minutes, he is going to stand before the Lord and the rest of us as witnesses, and he will confess that yes, the faith that Jesus taught and revealed in God's Word; the faith that the Holy Spirit planted within Trent at his baptism, is indeed the faith that Trent is willing to die for; the faith that Trent earnestly desires to keep until the day he dies and enters into paradise.
  - ✘ But, Trent, and all of the rest of you here as Jesus-believers, this life that we live as Jesus' sheep is not one that we can just take lightly or think that it doesn't require our full attention now that we've been baptized or confirmed. No, Jesus said in chapter 10:16, "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."
    - Yes, we are Jesus' sheep; He has harvested us by His grace and He promises to protect and care for us into eternity. But, the reality is, there are "wolves" all around us; seeking to tempt us; trying to lure us into thinking that we've got it made in our faith now, so we don't need to stay close to Jesus; we don't need to be in Worship or in Bible Study or devotion as Jesus directs us to "live in Him" and His Word. No, this world's priorities and trappings – they are the devil's tricks to make you and me think that we don't need to receive Jesus' true body and blood in Holy Communion "often", as He commands us to do in 1 Corinthians 11:25, so that we receive His godly strength to face the countless troubles and challenges of this life that we live.

➔ But we do need Jesus and all of His promises and gifts, don't we? And Trent, the Bible verse that you picked for your Confirmation Verse speaks directly to the urgency that we tap into Jesus' promised presence every single day. It's Psalm 46:1 that says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

⊗ It's that promise there, the fact that God promises to be present with us every second of every day; to protect us when the wolves attack; to give us strength when we are weak both in body and in soul; and to help and guide us in the face of any, and every trouble we may face until the day that He takes us to be with Him in eternal Paradise; that promise is what gives you Trent, and all of us as Jesus' sheep, the confidence and the desire to "bear witness", as chapter 10:18 says, to all of those souls in this world that still need to be connected to Jesus; that still need to be "harvested" for His grace and salvation just as we have been.

➔ So, I pray – we all pray for you Trent today, that as you publicly confess Your faith in Jesus, you will also see and embrace for the rest of your earthly life, the great joy and the privilege and the urgency that Jesus places in your heart to be a lifelong, confessing harvester and sheep in Jesus' kingdom and Church. To Him be all the glory! Amen.