

Harvest Work Is Urgent Work

The Harvest of People

- **Vs. 37-38.** Urgent work, any farmer will tell you. After intense work of prepping soil, planting seed, fert., irrig., waiting, once harvest time comes, urgent task. Livelihood growing in field. They know only certain window of opp to harvest crop in. If fields are large, need large crew, lots of workers to get job done. Otherwise crop die, harvest lost. For farmers, highest priority at harvest time is bringing crops in. Urgent work.
- Today, Jesus: **vs. 37-38.** Not talking harvest of hay, wheat, corn. Talking harvest of people. Looking at earth, sees field, massive field of billions of people. We're not simply his livelihood; creation! Made us, formed us, cares for, grows us. Jesus wants us harvested to faith; to bring us into silo, barn of his Church, so that someday harvested home to heaven. Jesus knows only certain window of opp for us to be brought to faith, harvested into God's Church – our lifetime. So during lifetime he sends workers in this massive harvest field to bring crops in. Otherwise, without faith, crops die, harvest lost. For Jesus, highest priority to harvest as many people to faith in him as possible. Urgent work.

Jesus' Compassionate, Urgent Harvest Work

- Today in gospel we see Jesus busy at this urgent harvest work: **vs. 35.** When Jesus preached good news of kingdom, when performed miracles (like healing leprosy, calming storm, raising Jairus' daughter), people were harvested to faith in him.
- And experienced compassion. **Vs. 36.** Compassionate: when he looks over field of humanity, sees people harassed by Satan, sin every day, helpless to save themselves, harvest themselves to faith. Breaks his heart. Sees sheep without shepherd. Moved him to action (compassion – not just sympathetic emotion; desire to do something to fix problem). So Jesus, filled with compassion, did something to fix problem of Satan, sin: became Shepherd that laid down life for sheep. Looked out over field of people, said "I want them in heaven." So suffered and died, shed blood to wash away our sins, rose from dead to seal our salvation, became our Good Shepherd, so that everyone who believes in him not perish but have eternal life. This is Jesus' compassionate, urgent harvest work.
- Now, in order to continue his compassionate, urgent harvest work, Jesus sends workers out into harvest field. And through these workers, who point harassed and helpless sheep to their Good Shepherd, harvest work continues. Today in this lesson Jesus sends 12 apostles (Peter, James, John, etc.) – ordinary men with an urgent task. Today in this service we have unique opportunity to thank God for two harvest workers among us – ordinary men whom Jesus called to an urgent task – PR & PP, who for last 25 years have been busy at this urgent harvest work of sharing the Gospel.

Mr. Rehberger & Pr. Prange – Harvest Workers

- PR, PP, & I all came to St. John's in summer 2009; but I met each years beforehand. When Rehberger family moved from Mt. Zion in Kenosha to Trinity, Aberdeen, SD, Phil asked Sem guys to help move. I was at Sem, helped them load moving truck. Didn't know any of them; just remember young Rehberger kids getting ready to make big move across country. Little did we know years later that Phil, Claire & I would work together at same cong.
- With PR & I coming to St. John's at same time, we had opp to get to know each other and cong at same time, just as you were getting to know us. Since we knew we'd be working closely together as brothers in min, we promised each other to always work together as a team and not let things come up that would hinder min at St. John's. Over last 5 years, St. John's has been truly blessed having PR as our principal. I personally feel blessed, learned many things, benefitted professionally and spiritually, from working with my colleague PR.
- Not only has our cong benefitted from his harvest work; also the members and students at 5 other schools and congregations have benefitted. Whether as instructor, staff minister, or principal in WI, MI, CA, or SD, think of all people blessed through PR's harvest work over last 25 years.

- Met PP in 1997. President Prange of MLS. High school principal and Doctrine teacher. So when I found out my former principal would be member of my first cong as a pastor, naturally my first thought: “Oh great!” (Hope he’ll tell you: some mature after high school.)
- Meal in cafeteria for MLS faculty and incoming freshman and parents. PP with my family at table. Back then I didn’t know word “layman” was term for someone not clergy (lay person, layman). Never heard “in layman’s terms.” PP picked up on pun: “You know, Kirk, if you become pastor, *Pastor Lahmann.*” I didn’t get. Thus began what over the years become hundreds of jokes on irony of me being a pastor with last name Lahmann.
- When freshman, I was elected. PP invited us to house for supper. Met Leanne; homemade pizza. Prange kids little: toddles or preschoolers.
- Going to MLS was good for me; there Pres Prange taught me about Jesus. My Bible: notes and passages – from his class. Even though I may not remember all his classroom stories and illustrations, the doctrine of Scripture he taught me became a part of me, made me Christian man I am today, played major role in my becoming a pastor.
- Here at St. John’s PP occasionally preaches, teaches, plays organ; directed musicals, served on Council. In 2012 served as vacancy pastor with me for 6 months. But some might not know his fulltime job. Serves church body as admin of min ed: oversees 2 high schools, 1 college, and 1 Sem (WLS); helps these schools train future pastors and teachers. In addition, recently he’s been helping synod be more organized connecting Christians across world with fellow Christians of their same culture. Travels a lot to foreign mission fields. He could tell you about fellow Lutherans who share our same faith in countries all over world. For last 25 (actually 26) years, whether as pastor, president, or administrator, countless students, parents, church members, synod members blessed by PP’s work.

Thank God for, Encourage, and Support Harvest Work

- But today isn’t Rehberger/Prange Sunday. This ann service isn’t meant to highlight their academic or administrative work. This ann service is way to thank God for their harvest work. Lord Jesus called PR & PP to be harvest workers, Jesus proclaimers, Gospel teachers, faith sharers. He sent them out into a field full of harassed, helpless people that Jesus wants with him in heaven. For last 25 years they’ve been working, teaching, preaching, sharing, counseling, comforting, helping bring God’s harvest into the kingdom of faith. That’s ministry. That’s harvest work.
- Urgent work. Jesus wants no one left in field; wants his people brought home to heaven. That’s what’s important to him; what he died for; what he sends workers into field for; what makes harvest work urgent work.
- **Vs. 37** – still true today. Billions still need to know about their Savior. We’ll never say, “We have enough people sharing Gospel.” **Vs. 38**, workers who have compassion of Christ and understand urgency of task. Christians, I call on you: to pray for ministry, for your ministers, for future ministers. Ask God to bless his church will faithful harvest workers. Members of St. John’s, I call on you: to support the ministry. God uses your offerings to send harvest workers into the fields. Support ministry of St. John’s church & school; of WI Synod and the schools that train harvest workers. Parents, I call on you: to not only share Gospel with your children, but also to share with them possibility that they could be harvest workers, too. Maybe your daughter or son could serve as teacher, staff minister, missionary. Maybe your son could someday become a pastor. Parents, the encouragement starts with you. Help your children to see importance of ministry, and encourage them to consider the ministry for a career.
- **Vs. 37**. Harvest work is urgent work. So today we thank God for the harvest work that brought us to faith. Today we thank God for the 25 years of harvest work of PR & PP. Today we ask God to bless this harvest work with more harvest workers, so that barns may be filled and God’s name glorified.

Matthew 9:35-38 (NIV 1984)

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he 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.”