

“And Jesus went through out all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He 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 vineyard.” Matthew 9:35-38

- It begins with prayer!
- It includes compassion for people.
- It is completed by the Lord doing His work and us doing ours.

Jesus saw the mission field, lives that lay before Him. He urged the disciples to pray – pray earnestly. Today we should also pray for the Lord to send workers into the vineyard, the harvest is ready, it is time. The Bible tells us, “Today is the day of salvation!” Our work begins with prayer!

The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. The U.S. is the third largest mission field in the world. Fewer than 1 in 5 Americans attend worship on any given week. That means that more than 80% of your community skipped church last weekend and to make this really personal, the LCMS is losing approximately 30,000 members annually. Yes, Jesus’ words today are alarmingly true...“the harvest is plentiful...” and the **laborers are few**.

Thom Rainer, a church researcher, found in his studies on the American church;

1. *We* are steadily losing *interest* in evangelism over time.
2. *Church members* are losing interest in evangelism.
3. *Pastors and staff* are losing interest in evangelism.
4. *American churches* are among the worst in evangelism.
5. Churches *not doing evangelism* will *decline* in health.
6. *Church members* are much more likely to criticize than evangelize.
7. The evangelism problem begins with *me*.

So, “what does this mean?” Jesus urges us to be people of compassion and action towards the people in our daily lives. In the text, we see that He had compassion, He cared for and was moved to action because they were people who were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. As stewards of God’s gifts we have been given the awesome privilege of managing all that the Lord gives us, so that it flourishes. How can our time, talents and treasures be leveraged as we put into action, compelled from the heart, to help and reach out to our fellow man? By employing Jesus’ strategy of

- prayer
- compassion
- action

Remember, God will do the heavy lifting. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to create and sustain faith we are simply vessels of His mercy and grace. As you live your life, walk with your arms outstretched - touching as many lives as possible along the way!

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