

HARVEST TIME - WORKERS NEEDED!

I. Matthew 9:35-38

A. Harvest time here in Ohio is upon us. Wheat has been out of the ground for weeks. The second cut of hay is happening. Corn will be next. Then soy beans. Produce for your table is already abundant at area fruit & vegetable stands. It looks to be a bountiful crop and hopefully dry enough this year so nothing's left standing in the fields like last year. Today we'll talk about another kind of harvest.

B. Our text today has Jesus ministering in his home region of Galilee. There were no major cities there but over 200 small towns. The Galilean population is estimated to be around 300,000 people, twice the current population of Fairfield County. Despite us being 2,000 years down the road and all the obvious cultural differences, the Galileans were rural folks much like us.

C. Matthew 9:35-38 (ESV) is our text for today...

1) **V35: 35** *And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel (**Good News**) of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. (The miracles affirmed Jesus was not only the promised Messiah but also God! Therefore His words are to be heeded!)*

2) **V36: 36** *When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (These were neglected sheep--harassed and helpless people. NJKV: **weary & scattered**; NASB: **distressed & dispirited**; NLT: **confused & helpless**; VOICE: **deeply distraught, malaised, & heartbroken**. Do you get the picture? Are people like that still around? Do you know any?)*

3) **V37:) 37** *Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; (Jesus switches metaphors but He implies the harvest exists now and is ready for reaping. Further, He says the harvest is plentiful. He then tells them more workers are needed. Has this changed at all since back then? If that was true in the rural regions of Galilee, is that not true in rural central Ohio or anywhere else around the planet, rural, urban, remote, or otherwise?)*

4) **V38: 38** *therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (He doesn't say, 'Pray for the harvest,' He says pray for additional harvest workers! Who might Jesus have in mind?*

E. Let's ponder over a few pertinent questions:

1) Are people today still harassed and helpless, weary & scattered, distressed & dispirited, confused & deeply distraught, malaised & heartbroken?

2) Would you say the harvest remains plentiful? Are there any blind ones out there who God wants to see the light of Christ? Any lost ones out there that He wants to rescue? Any dead ones out there who He wants to awaken to life?

3) Has the Gospel of the Kingdom of God changed? Is it the message still that Jesus is the enthroned and reigning King of kings who died but lives again? Is the Good News still that fallen man has been restored to God because the wrath against mankind was absorbed by the One and Only Son of God? Still true that the Maker of all things seen and unseen is bringing forth His rule and reign one soul at a time which will fully culminate in the new heaven & earth?

4) Is the issue too few *existing* laborers or too few *willing* laborers? As we pray for the Lord to send out harvest-laborers, who might Jesus have in mind?

F. When the Bible talks about fruit, the meaning varies, depending... If we talk about the fruit produced by "good trees" or the fruit of the Spirit, we're talking about Godly character, Christlike attitudes, and love-driven actions. Luke 6:43-45 (ESV) from a couple weeks ago, Jesus said: *"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. In Galatians 5:22-23* (ESV) Paul writes: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."* **Praise and Thanksgiving freely offered to God for who He is and all He's done is yet another form of fruit. Hebrews 13:15** (AMP) affirms: *"Through Him (Jesus), therefore, let us at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confess and glorify His name."* **But in our context today, regarding the harvest for which Jesus speaks, we're talking about the type of fruit that refers to people, i.e. reaping a people-harvest!**

G. Let me ask a multifaceted fruit-filled question: Is it possible to be a "good tree" that bears good fruit, one who bears the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and does all that with worshipful lips of praise and thanksgiving unto Almighty God but all the while neglects those to whom they're commissioned to proclaim the Gospel and make into disciples of our Lord?

H. Jesus denounced the religious leaders because they neglected the people whom God had sent them to help. God's people were sheep without a shepherd because the shepherds had abandoned those they were supposed to care for and make ready for the coming Messiah-King. The harvest was ripe (truthfully there's always a ripe harvest close by) but the workers were few. Either few in number or far too few actually willing to wade out into the fields.

J. So who was it that God used to wade into your life? God gets all the credit for preparing you for harvest, readying you to hear and respond to His call. But who'd He use in your apprehending? Who were those vessels & voices that came into your life at just the right time? Maybe it was your parents or a family member. Maybe a classmate or coworker. Maybe it was a stranger. Maybe a coach or teacher or pastor. No matter who they were, it's fair to call them *laborers*. God wants us all to be one of those! You may be a tiller. You may be a planter. You may be a waterer. You may be a picker or a shucker. One person mans a plow, another a watering can, another a sickle or scythe and the harvest gets worked. Have you told God you're available? Are your boots and gloves and baskets ready!

K. Psalm 126:5-6 (NIV) will take us to our barns next to fields that we're all called to work: 5 Those who sow with tears (and tears are aplenty in this life!) will reap with songs of joy. 6 Those who go out weeping, (Weeping with grief, loss, and disappointment in the midst of trials and difficulties!) carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Matthew 9:35-38 (ESV)

35 And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. **36** When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for 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 laborers are few; **38** therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Psalm 126:5-6 (NIV)

5 Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. **6** Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

Quote by John Piper

"So, what is *"the gospel of the kingdom"*? The gospel of the kingdom is the good news that in Jesus, God's kingly power and authority is breaking into the world like never before: He is ruling in a new way to save His people from their sins and deliver them from their enemies and reveal His glory and establish peace and righteousness in the earth."

Bonus Stuff

The Gospel of the Kingdom - R.C. Sproul (Sermon Audio)
<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/gospel-kingdom/>

What is the Kingdom of God? - John Piper (Script & Audio)
<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-the-kingdom-of-god>

Galatians 6:7-10 (AMP)

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked [He will not allow Himself to be ridiculed, nor treated with contempt nor allow His precepts to be scornfully set aside]; for whatever a man sows, this and this only is what he will reap. **8** For the one who sows to his flesh [his sinful capacity, his worldliness, his disgraceful impulses] will reap from the flesh ruin and destruction, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. **9** Let us not grow weary or become discouraged in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap, if we do not give in. **10** So then, while we [as individual believers] have the opportunity, let us do good to all people [not only being helpful, but also doing that which

promotes their spiritual well-being], and especially [be a blessing] to those of the household of faith (born-again believers).

John Piper on the Kingdom of God

"Since God's purpose for the world is to save a people for Himself and renew the world for that people, His kingly rule implies a saving and a redeeming activity on their behalf. This is why the coming of the kingdom in the New Testament is called good news... In and through Jesus, God, the King, is coming in a way--a new way--into the world to establish His saving rule. First, in the hearts of His people and in their relationships by triumphing over sin, Satan, and death. Then by the exercise of His reign, gathering a people for Himself in congregations that live as citizens of a new allegiance of the kingdom--not of this world. Then Christ comes a second time and completes the reign by establishing a new heavens and a new earth."

- John Piper, *What is the Kingdom of God?* - Ask Pastor John, September 8, 2017.

What is a Spiritual Harvest and How Can I Achieve One?

By S. Michael Houdmann / GotQuestions.org

<https://www.gotquestions.org/spiritual-harvest.html>

Question: *"What is a spiritual harvest and how can I achieve one?"*

Answer: Throughout the Bible, the harvest carries spiritual significance. It is used in parables ([Luke 8:4-8](#)) and as a metaphor for spiritual growth and health ([2 Corinthians 9:10](#); [James 3:18](#)). The harvest has always been a beautiful and important part of life on earth, the time when the year's work bears fruit and the people are fed. It is symbolic of bounty, health and abundance. Israel celebrated the time of the harvest with a feast, appropriately called the Feast of Harvest ([Exodus 23:16](#)).

Jesus spoke of a spiritual harvest waiting to be reaped. As Jesus traveled, "He saw the crowds, [and] He had compassion for 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 harvest'" ([Matthew 9:36-38](#)). Here, Jesus referred to the many souls needing to be brought to repentance and faith as a harvest waiting to be realized.

Jesus used the same metaphor of a spiritual harvest in Samaria. After talking to the [woman at the well](#), Jesus told His disciples, "Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" ([John 4:35](#)). In the days following this statement, many of the Samaritans became believers in Christ (verse 41). Jesus saw the spiritual harvest of souls awaiting in that village.

A spiritual harvest is the result of God's work in the heart of man. It is clear from the [parable of the seed and the sower](#) that some people's hearts are good soil; when the Word of God is sown there, the person accepts it and continues to mature ([Luke 8:9-](#)

15). There is nothing we can do to change the soil—that is God’s job ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)). However, we can be faithful to sow the seed, help the plants to grow, or reap the harvest. The process of spiritual growth and maturity, from the heart’s regeneration to the recognition of faith, is often a long journey. In fact, the Bible indicates that the sower, the tender, and the reaper are likely to be different people at different times ([John 4:35–38](#); [1 Corinthians 3:6–9](#)).

Just like the physical growth of a field, the spiritual growth of people is a natural, organic process, overseen by God Himself. If we don’t see anyone getting saved, it can be discouraging, but we need to remember that sowing is just as important as reaping. Some of us are sowers and may never see the result of our labor. That is why our focus should be on pleasing the One who sent us into the field rather than on controlling the rate of growth or the amount we reap.

God’s laborers in the spiritual harvest of souls are promised great reward for their faith and perseverance ([James 1:12](#); [1 Peter 5:4](#); [2 Timothy 4:8](#); [Hebrews 11](#)). This applies to all aspects of our spiritual lives, including witnessing and seeing people saved and growing in the Lord, which is the spiritual harvest we all long to see. Sometimes we don’t see it. Nonetheless, believers are exhorted with these words: “Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” ([Galatians 6:9](#)) and “A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” ([James 3:18](#)) and “Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them” ([Psalm 126:6](#)).

Jesus told us to pray to the Lord of the harvest for more laborers ([Matthew 9:38](#)). We should pray about all aspects of the spiritual harvest process, including the preparation of the soil. We can ask God to change people’s hearts. “The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth” ([2 Timothy 2:24–25](#)). God will use us in His fields, each according to our gifts and the need of the moment, as we trust Him.

Recommended Resource: [The Keys to Spiritual Growth by John MacArthur](#)

- While he is not the author of every article on GotQuestions.org, for citation purposes, you may reference our CEO, S. Michael Houdmann.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Ligonier Ministries

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/gospel-kingdom/>

“Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.’”

- [Luke 17:20–21](#)

The book of Romans is well known as Paul's most comprehensive presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet the Apostle's teaching on the gospel does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it presupposes and is connected with the other presentations in the Bible regarding the good news of salvation. In order to help us see how the perspectives of the other biblical authors on the gospel fit in with Paul's exposition of the book of Romans, we are now going to pause our study of this epistle for a two-day look at what the rest of Scripture says about the good news. Dr. R.C. Sproul's teaching series *What Is the Gospel?* will guide our consideration of this important topic.

You will note that we have used the phrase good news of salvation synonymously with the word gospel in the previous paragraph, and with good reason. That is because *euangelion*, the Greek word we translate into English as "gospel," literally means "good news" or "good message." In biblical times, *euangelion* could refer to any piece of favorable news, including reports that a city's army had been victorious in battle. The authors of Scripture took the term and invested it with new meaning based on divine revelation, so that now we as Christians use the word gospel to speak of the good message of salvation.

In the New Testament, we find the term gospel on the lips of Jesus Himself ([Matt. 26:13](#)). Christ uses the word most often in connection with the kingdom of God; thus, the Evangelists can speak of Jesus proclaiming "the gospel of the kingdom" (9:35). From Genesis to Revelation, we see the Lord's servants longing for the kingdom of God to come. Put most simply, the kingdom of God is that place where His reign is recognized openly and gladly ([Isa. 52:7](#)). When we speak of the kingdom of God, we do not mean to imply that there are places over which the Lord does not currently reign, for our Creator sovereignly rules over all ([Ps. 9:7-8](#)). However, since the fall of Adam, His realm has been in open rebellion against Him (Gen. 3). Men and women do not willingly or happily embrace, submit to, and rejoice in God's reign, and because of that they forfeit many blessings.

For people to recognize God's kingdom, our Lord had to act and overcome humanity's suppression of the knowledge that He is King and that we are to be His loyal subjects. This He did in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who as the second person of the Trinity and victor over sin and death now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords ([Rev. 19:16](#)).

Coram Deo

With the coming of Christ, the kingdom of God is now evident among His people even as we wait for its final consummation at His return. The gospel announces that Jesus has done the work necessary to overcome our natural resistance to God's kingdom and to make us citizens of this kingdom through faith alone. As we preach the gospel, we are announcing the blessed reign of the Lord, and we must repeat His command that all people everywhere repent and bow to His rule.