

TIM'S THOUGHTS HARVEST

Behind my backyard there is a bean field. In the spring I enjoy seeing the tractors come to plow and prepare the field. All summer long I watch the beans grow from buds to full plants, green and healthy. As fall hits the plants dry out and then the farmer returns, to harvest the beans. In the winter the field sits fallow, awaiting a new season to begin. I love to watch the field but I never worry about it. I don't stress about when the tractor will come or who will harvest the beans. I don't have to pay the workers or sell the crop. I don't have to do a single thing for the simple yet obvious reason: it is not my field.

The same is true for the Kingdom of God. It is not our kingdom. We do not own it. We did not plant it. We do not pay for it. It does not belong to us. We reside in it. We work in it. We build for it. Yet this is God's field, it is not ours. Listen to what Jesus taught his disciples as he was training them for ministry.

¹After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Luke 10:1-3 (NIV)

The field belongs to the Lord. God calls, appoints, sends and equips the field hands for his field. The church is God's operation. The whole world is His field. It is not ours. We do not need to fret and worry about the when, where, why, how and who of being church. Such worry will only lead to ulcers, manipulative behavior and hurt feelings. We don't need to stress about the church at all. That is God's job. Let Him worry about His church. That doesn't mean you ignore the things that cause you to worry about the church. You have a job to do. According to Luke your job here is threefold:

- 1) Respond to God's call to you.
- 2) Ask God to send out workers into His harvest fields.
- 3) Go where you are sent.

To be an obedient church we must purposefully differentiate our job from God's job. Our job is to respond, pray and go in obedience. God is the one who specializes in results. As a Craig Oliver once told me: "It is not my job to make it happen. It's my job to do what is asked of me, step back, and let God be awesome." Trusting in and waiting on God does not equal sitting back and doing nothing. It requires going only where God sends me and trusting God to raise up people to harvest the parts of the field that He did not call me to. This is God's church. Trust Him to lead it. Even and especially when it looks like things are headed in a downward direction. Trust God to love His church more than you and I do. That does not mean we should ignore brokenness in the church and in the world. On the contrary, God is likely showing us this brokenness so we can trust Him by praying for that area of brokenness in His church and for His world. Take a look at the same command quoted above now spoken by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew in a different context.

³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Matthew 9:35-38 (NIV)

Jesus saw the need. He saw people floundering about uncared for and unloved. He responded to many of them. Yet his response was not to fix it all or do it all. His response was to do His part and then teach His disciples to pray and ask God to send out workers to the harvest field. Can you believe it, even the Lord of the Universe delegates. In fact, that is a huge part of creation story. God works through people instead of doing it all Himself. So, why do we expect we can do it ourselves? It is still God who delegates. He calls, equips and appoints His workers. He sends, we go, not the other way around. So when you see the need for someone to be sent, go talk the sender.

What motivated Jesus to teach us to pray like this in the first place was His gut level empathy for those in trouble. We must have the same response. When you look around our neighborhood, our community and our world it is not hard to find harassed and helpless crowds. Many of us are deeply grieved by the needs all around us. That deeply felt grief and concern is the Holy Spirit calling us to action. Listen for your call. Pray for God to raise up Harvest workers and then go do your job and let God be awesome. He is you know, incredibly awesome. The Harvest is indeed plentiful, so ask the Lord of the Harvest...

