



Cultivate

A Christ-Centered Way of Life

... as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted, and built up in him and established in the faith... Colossians 2:6-7

COMMUNITY – MEND THE NETS, PREPARE FOR THE HARVEST

By Marius Gradwell

LET US HAVE A LOOK AT GOD'S WORD – 3 READINGS

First Reading:

Matthew 4:17-23 *ESV* From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**” (18) While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. (19) And he said to them, “**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**” (20) Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (21) And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. (22) Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (23) And he went throughout all Galilee, **teaching** in their synagogues and **proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom** and **healing every disease and every affliction** among the people.

- Verse (17) From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**”
 - **Jesus did not come to earth to establish a religion but a government!**
 - Jesus inaugurated a new way of life, heralded a new order, and called people to conversion. **“Repent!”** He said. Why? Because the new order of the kingdom is breaking in upon you and, if you want to be a part of it, you will need to undergo a **fundamental transformation**.
 - God's new order is so radically different from everything we are accustomed to that we must be **spiritually remade** to be ready and equipped to participate in it.
 - Every aspect of human existence is impacted by this change – the personal, the spiritual, social, economic, and political. **The Kingdom of God has come to change the world and us with it.**
 - Our choice is simply whether we will offer our allegiance to the King and His Kingdom.
- Verses (19) And he said to them, “**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**” (20) Immediately they left their nets and followed him.
 - **“Follow me”**- Repentance is actualised by leaving my own agenda and to follow

Jesus and His agenda.

- When you follow me - "I will make you fishers of men" - True disciples are disciple makers.
- Application: We need a net to catch fish with - because we are fishers of men.

Discussion Questions:

1. Repentance calls for a change of heart and mind, to turn your back on your own agenda and to allow God to make and transform you in line with His purpose and will for your life. Please share your story, to what degree is this true of your life? (2-3 minutes each)
2. What did Jesus mean when he said: "I will make you fishers of men"?

Second Reading:

Luke 5:1-11 ESV *On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret (sea of Galilee, Lake of Tiberias), (2) and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. (3) Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. (4) And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." (5) And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." (6) And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. (7) They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. (8) But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (9) For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, (10) and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "**Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.**" (11) And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*

Luke gives another angle on the encounter Jesus had with the first disciples and how He called them to follow Him.

The purpose of today's message is to stir and encourage us to become fishers of men and to mend our nets by forming a vibrant Gospel-centred Kingdom Community.

Two Take-a-Way's from this portion of scripture:

- Verse (5) *And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."*

Some of us might have a measure of disappointment with church initiatives and might have suffered some hurt or are just burnt out on church programmes in general - toiled with little results/fruit.

"But **at your word** I will let down the nets" - forget the past disappointments - get ready - mend the nets - build Community - prepare for a great catch!

- *Verses (6) And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. (7) They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them...*

Churches need to be willing to work together and take hands in preparation of a great harvest. In that sense, mending nets also refers to churches working together.

Discussion Questions:

1. How ready are you to respond to a call to follow Jesus in a new way - to join hands with other believers and form a community net to receive new believers and form relationships with them and teach them how to live a kingdom way of life?
2. What can our church do to strengthen our relationship with other churches?

Third Reading:

Matthew 9:35-38 ESV *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."*

As we are embarking on Community Building, the Lord is saying to us: Build with a great harvest in mind...

We see in this portion of scripture that Jesus is drawing His disciples into His burden for the harvest by challenging them to pray...

Today, Jesus is going to **challenge you to pray a bold prayer** - a radical prayer.

1. **First, we noticed a radical perspective.**

Jesus says, "The harvest truly is great." There are men and women, boys, and girls, who are just waiting to be invited into the kingdom of heaven. The harvest truly is great! Sometimes that harvest is obvious to us. But most of the time, we need to pray, "Lord, open my eyes so that I can see as you see." See it from His radical perspective. That the harvest truly is great.

2. **But then Jesus identified a radical problem.**

He says, "The harvest truly is great but the labourers are few." The problem is not that there are too few labourers. The real problem is that there are too few labouring labourers. That's the problem! Those called to be labourers have become distracted, disengaged and discouraged.

3. And because of this radical problem, even though the harvest truly is great, Jesus challenges His disciples and He challenges us to **pray a radical prayer**.

Matthew 9:38 NKJV *Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest."*

There are several Greek verbs that are translated "pray." Is Jesus asking us to make a request? To express a desire? No! It is more intense than that. The Greek verb used here, **deomai**, means "to beseech," "to plead earnestly," "to beg."

Let us consider **Luke 22:31-32** where this verb, **deomai**, is used.

Here Jesus is praying: *"Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail."*

Satan wanted to sift Peter like wheat. **Jesus earnestly pleaded with the Father on Simon Peter's behalf.** That is how Jesus tells us to pray the radical prayer. Pray earnestly. Beg.

The Earnest Appeal of Jesus

Notice that this **verb is in the imperative**: *"therefore pray the Lord of the harvest..."* What is implied when an imperative is used? **It is a command, or an appeal. An imperative expects an active response.** If a fire-fighter runs into a public building and shouts, *"Vacate this building immediately,"* that is not a polite suggestion. It is a command.

Similarly, when Jesus says to the disciples, and to us, *"Pray the Lord of the harvest,"* He is **expecting an active response.**

But there is even more that we can learn from this appeal of Jesus. In Greek, **the imperative can be stated in two ways.**

A **present imperative** has the idea of *"keep doing what you're already doing."*

If you're running away from a mad dog, and I shout out *"Run! Run!"*, I would use a present imperative. In other words, you are running. Just keep on running!

But in the Greek, there is also an **aorist imperative**, which implies *"start doing something that you're not yet doing."*

Do you see the difference between a present imperative and an aorist imperative?

In this appeal of Jesus for us to pray a radical prayer, Jesus asks us to pray earnestly, to plead, to beg. **Jesus uses an aorist imperative.** He is saying to us, **"Start praying earnestly. You're not yet praying as you should. You need to start earnestly pleading with the Lord of the harvest."**

Why do I need to beg the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers? Why do I need to start begging the Lord of the harvest like I have never prayed before? Doesn't the Lord of the harvest already want to do this?" Absolutely. So why then do we need to beg?

Let me suggest that it has more to do with **changing our hearts** than changing God's heart.

We are giving God permission to do something radical.

Throwing Out Labourers

What, then, is so radical about this prayer? As we dig deeper, we find the answer in the words of Jesus. We are to begin to earnestly plead with the Lord of the harvest to do what? **"Send out labourers into His harvest."** That does not sound very radical.

But "send out labourers" is not an accurate translation of the Greek. The common verb in Greek for "send out" is the verb **apostello**, from which we get the noun *apostolos*, "apostle." When the Gospels record that Jesus "sent out" the disciples, the verb *apostello* is used. But the verb used by Jesus in Matthew 9 is much more radical.

"Send out labourers" isn't even an accurate translation. It is far too polite. The verb used here is **ekballo**. Ballo means **"to cast"** or **"to throw."**

Ballo is used when the **disciples cast their nets** out of the ship (John 21:6).

The Greek verb used by Jesus in Matthew 9:38 and Luke 10:2 is **ekballo**. The prefix **ek** means "out". So **ekballo** means **"to throw out,"** or **"to cast out."** On numerous occasions in the Gospel record, **ekballo** is used **for casting out demons.**

This verb **ekballo** is also used when **Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple (John 2:15).**

As you can see, this is **not a weak verb**, and Jesus is **not asking you to pray a weak prayer**. What Jesus is asking you to do is earnestly plead with the Lord of the harvest **"to throw out" labourers, "to hurl out" labourers, "to cast out" labourers into His harvest. That is a radical prayer!**

A Personal Request

You cannot possibly pray this radical prayer unless you are **willing to be a part** of the answer to that prayer. Let me put this radical prayer into simple words:

"Lord of the harvest, I earnestly beg you to throw out labourers into your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with me."

WHEN YOU PRAY FOR LABOURERS (WORKERS), YOU WILL BECOME A LABOURER (WORKER)!

Discussion Question:

Your assignment, my assignment, is to be willing, to be ready, to pray the radical prayer, to earnestly plead: **"Lord of the harvest, I earnestly beg you to throw out labourers into your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with me."** Are you willing to respond to the appeal of Jesus?

Conclusion - Jesus said:

- Repent, My Kingdom is at hand (in your reach)
- Follow me
- I will make you fishers of men
- Pray for workers to be thrown into the harvest field

LET US MEND THE NETS! LET US BUILD COMMUNITY – THE HARVEST IS READY!