

### **Help Wanted!**

***“After 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. He 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. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. ... “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.””***

I’ve noticed that there are a lot of help wanted signs out there. I saw one at the Dairy Queen in St. Peter. Businesses are not the only ones looking for help. We ask for a lot of help around here at church. We don’t hang a sign. We usually put sign up sheets out in the narthex. Right now we are asking for help at Porky’s for the fair. Well, Jesus has hung help wanted signs in all his churches. You will not find a sign up sheet in the narthex, but he calls us to help like in our gospel reading for today. He is asking you to help harvest souls. Are you ready to sign up?

*I. Pray as if there is no tomorrow.*

***“After 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. He 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. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.***

You may remember last week’s sermon. Jesus was gathering people to join him in mission work. We heard how three people had one reason or another not to join him. But apparently others said yes. He gathered 72 other disciples to go ahead of him and to evangelize in as many towns and cities they could find.

As you listened to those words, you get a sense of urgency in Jesus’ voice. Yes, he got 72 people to help. I can only imagine what our Outreach Committee can do if we had 72 volunteers ready to go. But it wasn’t enough. Jesus told them to look around and see what he sees. Like 10,000s of thousands of acres of corn ready to be harvested, so many people don’t believe in him as their Savior. He asks these 72 to pray for even more workers.

And they were to pack lightly. In a couple weeks we hope to go to Michigan to visit my father and sister. It would be silly if we left our credit cards behind. It wouldn’t make sense if we didn’t pack extra clothing besides the clothes on our backs. And we always stop to top off the tank with gas. Yet, Jesus told his disciples not to do that. Nothing was to slow them down. He told them to leave behind their money. Don’t pack any extra clothes. While they walked on the road, he warned them not to stop to visit with fellow travelers. People like to talk. We see people hanging in the narthex visiting. Jesus said don’t do that. Don’t be rude. Say hi, but keep moving. He didn’t want them to worry, either, how they will eat or where they will stay. He promised people will open up their homes and feed them.

Friends, what do you see? We see different people and cities and states, different cultures and different languages. We see friends and foes out there. What does Jesus see? He sees souls who need to be saved. With this text Jesus is refocusing our attention to all the people who don’t know or believe Jesus as their Savior. Once we do, a sense of urgency comes upon us. The best thing we can do is pray for workers. Thank God that the number of young people studying to be pastors and teachers at Martin Luther College is up, but it will still be short. So pray that God moves and sends more workers. Maybe some of our young people will consider it.

But don’t be surprised that you are God’s answer to your own prayers. I see it how the lawn needs mowing. I can pray to God to send someone to mow it. When I open my eyes after my prayer, I probably will not see the neighbor mowing it. Instead I will see the shed with the mower and gas can and God telling me, “Here, mow it.” Every Christian can work the fields. It may not be the fields in Africa, but certainly here in our own backyard.

But how? What can we do? Well Jesus covers that as well.

*II. Harvest with confidence.*

***“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. ... ‘He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.’”***

You are probably feeling a little bit intimidated right now. You understand Jesus wants you to harvest souls. I am sure you actually want to share your faith. But I get scared thinking about that. And maybe you do, too. What if a person challenges the teaching of creation. Do you think you know enough about science and the Bible to defend creation against a skeptic? What if they bring up fellowship or the roles of men and women or politics? We are afraid we are not up to the challenge.

And we are not. That is why Jesus said he is sending us out in the world like lambs among wolves. He is not sending us out like lions, but as lambs. That means we don't go out looking for a fight. He is sending us to proclaim peace, not win arguments. So what can we do? Simply share God's Word. I am not a cook. Yes, I make meals. I can easily follow directions on a box or a recipe in a book. Anyone can do that. To me a cook is someone who can look at six ingredients and come up with a delicious meal without a recipe. God refuses to put the burden on you. He makes it easy. He doesn't ask you to be a cook, to make up a meal all in your head. He tells us to follow the directions. Don't invent something to say. Just share his Word. ***“He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”***

This doesn't mean you simply recite passages like a robot. Try it this way. Tell people what God told you and tell them what it means in your life. Share with them your own personal spiritual biography. Tell them how much you need a Savior. You have problems, too. Tell them how frustrated you are. You try to do good, yet sin still taints all you do. Then let them know how wonderful it is to have the burden of guilt taken off your shoulders. Tell them what Jesus did for you, how he lived a perfect life for you and then died for your sins. Tell them that not even death can get in the way for Jesus rose and we will, too. Tell them what God has told you.

To show that it doesn't depend on you, Jesus does pronounce a curse on those who refuse to listen. If they refuse to listen, then we may have to move on to someone else. They are closing the door that is open for them. How bad will it be? Sodom and Gomorrah go down as two very wicked cities who deserved what they got. It would be better for them on Judgment Day than for anyone who had a chance, but threw it away.

So Jesus tells you to be lambs. Simply share what God said to you. If they listen, great. But don't fear rejection because many will. Don't take it personally. All you did was tell them what God told you.

### *III. And enjoy it.*

Finally, Jesus tells us to have fun sharing his Word. ***“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’ He replied, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.’”***

Yes, Jesus gave them the power to drive out demons and to heal the sick. It excited them. Who wouldn't be? But Jesus saw something greater. The disciples saw demons run. Jesus saw the prince of demons, the big guy crashing and burning. Jesus saw the defeat of the devil.

As much as we would like to perform miracles, in his wisdom God doesn't pass on the same power to us. But we do see the devil crashing down. We did this morning in the Baptism. We heard it when kids sang, “Jesus Loves Me.” We see it when some sinner confesses, “Jesus is my Lord.” When a sinner repents, angels sing in heaven. I hope we do, too.

But there is one thing that makes us happier. ***“... do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*** This, I pray, is why you are willing to share your faith, because you are a satisfied customer. Not everyone's name is written in the book of life. But yours is. You didn't write it; God did when by grace he chose you and brought you to faith. This joy will exceed any joy we experience on earth. This joy will get us through all the tough times, too. It says in Daniel 12: ***“‘At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.’”*** Remember, they are wolves and we are lambs. It is very hard to be a redeemed child of God in a sinful world. And yet, God promises he will pull us through it.

So, help is wanted. Yes, we need help with Porky's. But Jesus wants you help to share his joy in saving souls. See what he sees, billions of people who don't believe. Sense the urgency. Pray for help. Then sign up and have fun with it. Amen.