



Introduction:

As important as it is to plant, it is just as important to harvest what has been planted. As a farmer, one of the worst things that could happen is to miss reaping the harvest. Much is lost when the harvest isn't reaped. Prior to every harvest, there is much planning and preparation. To see the fruit of any harvest, it takes a lot of sweat and hard work. Therefore, it is vital for a farmer to harvest the crops that have been planted. In the same way, so much goes into planting a church in a local community. There is a big investment. Why? The hope is that the church will evangelize their community and reap a harvest of lost souls that will come to Jesus Christ. In Matthew 9, Jesus spoke of a harvest. Jesus informed His disciples that there is a harvest to gather – the lost souls of this world (vs. 36-38). Paul spoke about the harvest in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 when he provided an example of the believers' role and God's role in the harvest. Souls need Jesus; souls need to be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16). There are souls right now who are searching for truth, meaning, and purpose in this life, but don't know the answers to their questions. But how can they hear unless we tell them (Romans 10:14; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4)? They will come to Jesus, but only if somebody will plow the soil, plant the seed of the gospel, and bring in the harvest. It is not our job to save, but rather, we must labor (vs. 37). It is God who gives the increase, but somebody has to plant, and another has to water. How are you participating in the harvest? What is your role in reaching the lost with the gospel of Christ?

The Focus:

- **We can't afford to miss the harvest? Why?**
 - **People are desperate. vs. 1-8**
 - **People are sick. vs. 9-13**
 - **People are dead (spiritually). vs. 18-26**

During the time of Jesus, there was a group that was self-absorbed and self-righteous, which caused them to completely miss the harvest (Romans 10:1-3). That religious group was known as the scribes and the Pharisees. However religious, it didn't impact or prompt them as it did Christ towards the people (vs. 36-38). When Christ forgave, they said He was blaspheming (vs. 2-3). When Christ mingled with the outcast of society, they questioned His disciples (vs. 10-13). And when Christ relieved people from spiritual oppression, they said He was able to do so by the power of Satan (vs. 32-34). What is your attitude toward the lost? Do you care for those for whom Christ died that are of another faith and culture? How about Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists? How about those that believe in and who are oppressed by ancestral spirit worship? How about those from a culture that is unlike our American culture? Remember, if you have trusted in Jesus, your primary residence is not of this world, but of heaven (Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:6-7). And having trusted Christ, you "are" an ambassador of Christ, and your responsibility is to declare the message of reconciliation to a world that needs to be reconciled back to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Romans 3:9). This is why we can't miss the harvest.

The first reason why we have to be actively engaged in the harvest is because people are desperate to find something to fill the void in their hearts (vs. 1-8). In Matthew 9:1-8, we have the story of the four friends who help their friend who has the palsy – the inability to move on his own. In another account of this story, you will learn that this man’s friends went so far as to remove the roof of the building that Jesus was teaching in and lowered him to where Jesus was (Mark 2:1-5). There are people all over Daytona and all over the world who are in “desperation mode.” No first responder or medical doctor can tend to their needs. The only person who can help them heal is Jesus. So how did this sick man’s friends know where to go to find Jesus? Mark 2:1 says, “...it was noised that he [Jesus] was in the house.” How will people know Jesus is at CrossRoads? We must tell others. We must proclaim Him, teach Him, and exalt Him. We have to go out into our community and tell them about Jesus. It’s not enough to put up signs and wishfully hope people come. No! We must actively tell them of our God and Savior. When was the last time you had a conversation with an unbeliever about the good news of the gospel? When was last time you told a lost person about Jesus? When was the last time you invited someone to your small group or to a Sunday service? In considerate of the sick man’s condition, the scribes missed the opportunity to bring in the harvest (vs. 3). They were too busy finding fault in others. Because people are desperate, we can’t miss the harvest.

The second reason why we have to be actively engaged in the harvest is people are sick (vs. 9-13). Just as the man of palsy was physically sick, there are people all across the world who are spiritually sick. As Christ left the house where He healed the man, He passed by Matthew who was a tax collector. As Jesus passed, He said, “*Follow me,*” (vs. 9) and the tax collector did just that – he “*left all*” and “*followed him*” (Luke 5:28). Afterward, Jesus was sitting at his house with others for a “*great feast*” (Luke 5:29). Along with Matthew, Jesus, and His disciples sat “*many publicans and sinners*” (Matthew 9:10; Mark 2:15). Matthew’s friends before He met Christ were extortionists and thieves. They were greatly disliked. So, Matthew invited his former colleagues to his house for a meal and to meet Jesus. Again, this was another time when Jesus did something, and it upset the religious crowd (vs. 10-11). But what was Jesus’ response to the disgruntled Pharisees (vs. 12-13)? We have to be aware of and be in tune with peoples’ needs. There are people who have been sick, physically and spiritually, for years and have been without a cure; they are searching for the remedy to their issues (vs. 20-22). As long as people are born into this world, there will always be people who are sin-sick and need help. We exist – CrossRoads exists – to reach outside of ourselves into the lives of others to help meet their need for Jesus.

The third reason why we have to be actively engaged in the harvest is people are dead, spiritually dead (vs. 18-26). In Matthew 9:18, 23-25 a ruler’s daughter was reported to have died. But the ruler had great faith. He came to Jesus and said, “... *come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live*” (vs. 18). Because of this man’s faith, it moved Christ to action (vs. 19). How much do you trust Christ to move the hearts of your family, friends, and coworkers? Do you have faith, and does your faith act upon God’s heart for all the people of the earth (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4)? Paul teaches us that because of the fall of man, because of sin, humanity has been separated from God, and therefore we are disconnected from Him (Ephesians 2:11-12). Paul also tells us the result of that separation (Ephesians 2:1-3). God created mankind to be in fellowship with Him and to worship Him (Malachi 1:11; Revelation 5:9). Man who was

created in the image of God sinned, and because of sin our spirit became dead. And because “*God is a Spirit,*” He is to be worshiped on a spiritual level. Therefore, for mankind to worship God as He intended, our dead spirits must be given life (Ephesians 2:1, 5). Without this transformation, people can never have true fellowship, nor can they worship God in sincerity and truth. There are people who sense the deadness in their soul and spirit – they are feeling empty inside. They long for more, but simply have never heard God’s story and what Jesus has done to reconcile and restore them, giving them true life. Paul tells us that the love of Christ should constrain us (2 Corinthians 5:14). Constrain means “to hold together, to arrest, or to compel.” As the body of Christ and as the local church, we have experienced the love of God. We know that we were dead in our sins until Christ gave us His resurrection life. Therefore, because of the love we have enjoyed, together we must share the love and life of Christ with our community and with the world. Jesus’ love should arrest our minds and hearts. We should be strategizing and thinking continually of new ways and new methods for reaching people. Let’s not miss the harvest!

Response to the Sermon:

Pastor Dan’s focus was on the different people and their status when Christ was ministering. We learned that there were and are people who are desperate, sick, and spiritually dead. As well, one of the other focuses was on those that were antagonistic towards Christ and the people He reached out to. How is your attitude toward reaching the lost with the gospel? Do you care enough for the souls of Muslims, here in the US and around the world, that they would receive Christ? Do you think that those who live in a Hindu or Buddhist culture need to hear the gospel of God’s grace? But how will they hear (Romans 10:14)? We must tell them God’s story of love through the gospel (Romans 10:15). Are you being the witness you are commissioned to be (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)?

Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:

Pastor Dan told us about Paul’s comment about the harvest in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7. As an evangelist, Paul planted the seed of the gospel in people’s hearts, as a teacher and pastor/shepherd, Apollos watered the seed and soil of people’s hearts (vs. 6). But neither one of them are anything apart from Christ and the Holy Spirit in them (vs. 7). The context of this passage speaks to the different gifts that are given to each of us in the body who have trusted in Christ (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-7; Ephesians 4:11-12).

How does God view the different spiritual gifts that are given (1 Corinthians 3:7)?

How should the gifts we have function (1 Corinthians 3:8; Ephesians 4:2-4, 13-16)?

Having been given gifts by God, we have a duty to build our life on the foundation of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). Paul reveals that, one day, how we built upon our faith in Christ will be judged, examined, and measured (1 Corinthians 3:12-13). What are the materials listed that people can build their house out of (1 Corinthians 3:12)?

If our works are to be tried by fire, what works will endure (1 Corinthians 12-13)?

What happens if our works are burned up, and what happens if they endure (1 Corinthians 3:14-15)?

Ultimately, what are the crowns that we will be able to show Jesus at the Day of Judgment (Philippians 4:1)?

Application Questions:

As Pastor Dan begins this series on the harvest, I think it is vital at the outset to examine our hearts regarding the harvest. Read Matthew chapter 9 and look at the actions and responses of Christ to the lost. As well, read the chapter to see the actions of the religious crowd – the scribes and Pharisees. Imagine Christ on one side of a spectrum and the religious crowd on the other. If it were a scale of one to ten, one being closest to the religious crowd and ten being closest to Christ, where would you be on the line? Be honest with yourself. How much do you really care if your neighbor, family member, or coworker places their faith in Christ? Maybe you say you care, but what do your actions say? Are you praying for their heart to be softened to receive the gospel? Are you having conversations with them to plant the seeds of God's truth? In our text, Christ proclaimed the good news and truth everywhere He went. He met the needs on an individual basis.

How did Christ address the needs of the man who had the palsy (Matthew 9:2, 5-7)?

Visiting and eating with Matthew and his friends and coworkers, Christ was despised by the religious crowd (Matthew 9:10-11)? Upon their disapproval of Jesus' actions, how did He respond and address the needs of the people (Matthew 9:12-13)?

How did Christ respond to the woman who had the disease of the blood (Matthew 9:20-22)?

Why was the daughter of the ruler healed (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-25)?

Prayer:

- Pray that you would see and be moved like Christ when we see those that are lost (Matthew 9:36).
- Pray that our focus in ministry would be on Christ and the harvest, not on ourselves (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).
- Pray that we would be unified as we reach the lost for Christ (Ephesians 4:2-4,13).
- Pray that we understand and live as citizens of heaven. We must be about our ambassadorship and not be focused on or get entangled with affairs of this life (2 Corinthians 5:20; Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:6-7; 2 Timothy 2:4).