

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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“These are the times that try men's souls.”

Yet from that same pamphlet he knew that:

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I think it is safe to say that we all have an opinion on what is happening not just in the streets of our cities and towns but within our churches and congregations. We all have our opinions based on our own set of facts that we have harvested from our preferred resources. From our windows we can see that our streets are filled with violence, we see there is destruction, (*natural & otherwise*) there is anger, there is forceful resistance, there is protest, there is chaos, and in the wake of all of this...there is brutality, there is injury, there is loss, there is pain, there is heartache, and there is senseless death...but in all of this...there is God.

Likewise, in our churches there is fear and ignorance that leads to division and isolation. Thankfully though, through the very gift of our faith, we know that God is present and remains present in our mess. By God's glorious Word...Jesus Christ we know of God's presence in our lives despite these trying times. But this leads me to say...we know of God's grace and mercy but what effect does the Word Jesus Christ, we hear about in here, have on what we currently see out there?

Today in our Gospel lesson we hear Jesus say:

<sup>37b</sup> "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;..." (Matt 9:37b)

Take a moment with this line...“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;”...(pause) Perhaps this line has caused us to think, hummm...sounds like a problem, perhaps somebody should do something. Isn't that always the case, somebody should do something? The world has gone to hell in a handbasket...somebody should do something! The culture and the media are out of control...somebody should do something. There is division and fighting in our streets, somebody should do something. My favorite was when I heard a politician some time ago who had just won a *reelection* to his senate seat and complained in his acceptance speech about how corrupt Washington DC is and how politicians and politics in DC are out of control. In essence he was saying...somebody should do something! I remember screaming at the TV...dude, you're Washington DC, you're the politician...you're the somebody!! When we look at the state of the culture, the mess that it is in, or when we look at the state of the church and the state that she is in we probably want to say...somebody should do something...we are the somebodies! The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...we are the laborers.

When I think about the harvest and the few laborers, I am reminded of the prophet Hosea from last week when we heard the proclamation from God:

<sup>4</sup> What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. (Hosea 5:4)

Perhaps we can put that into our context today and hear God say to us...what shall I do with you O blessed church, your love, or your faith is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away

like a morning cloud. Yes, dear church, we are the laborers whose love and faith seem to dissipate like the dew when things heat up around us.

When we come to the realization that we the church are the laborers, I guess the next question becomes what are we harvesting and why are we harvesting? What is the task that is set before us today? Is the task before us the same task that Jesus sets before the twelve disciples? How does this call before these twelve men sound to us today...what do we understand that call to be?

Looking at this call that Jesus sets before us...the church today...I feel the need to attempt to emulate the late great legendary football coach Vince Lombardi. At the start of training camp in 1961, Coach Lombardi wanted to stress the basics of football to his team. So Lombardi walked into the locker room of the Green Bay Packers, picked up a football, held it up for display, said to his team one of the most iconic quotes in sports history...“Gentlemen, this is a football.”

Folks, this is a church...and we have gathered today in this church...what is the church? We claim to have faith, what is faith and what do we have faith in?

We are taught as Lutherans that the church is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. Likewise, although the Christian church is, properly speaking, nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even public sinners remain among the righteous, the sacraments – even though administered by unrighteous priests – are still efficacious.<sup>1</sup> The focus of the definition of the church found in the *Augsburg Confession* is on the Gospel and the sacraments and not on the gathering itself. Yes it describes the gathering, but the focus of the meaning of the church is on the Word and the Sacraments. The gathering, as we hear, is that the church is made up of hypocrites and sinners...and in the midst of that gathering is Jesus Christ, in Word and in Sacrament informing this gathering like every other gathering that there is grace, there is forgiveness, and there is life through our faith in Jesus Christ...and there is an abundance of it. Does this mean that it is all ours?

Jesus says very clearly today to those who are sent...

You received without payment; give without payment. (Matt 10:8b)

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And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.  
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This is the Good News that we as laborers are sent out with to share as freely as it has been given to us. Perhaps in this call from Jesus today we are not just being sent out as laborers for the harvest, perhaps we are being called to reexamine our faith, or our understanding of faith and our understanding of Christianity itself?

While we reexamine our faith and our understanding of the church and even Christianity itself, we can ask ourselves, have we remade our faith and the church to our own liking and sensibilities? And is this why we are afraid of the harvest because we realize the labor is not what we think it is or should be. Are we afraid we will be harassed and helpless as we hear at the start of our Gospel lesson today? Do we fear those who do not want to hear the Good News? Do we fear the labor that focuses on something other than ourselves? Do we fear what the work of the Lord that we are called to will do to our own families when we hear that:

<sup>21</sup> Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; <sup>22</sup> and you will be hated by all because of my name. (Matt 10:21-22)

Do we fear that God's faith in us is like our faith in God? Are we left to simply cry out...somebody should do something about this. Well...the Good News is...God has! That something God has done is Jesus Christ.

The reality of this labor in this world is our human struggle and difficulty but may it lead us all to understand that God is present and we learn in the challenges and struggles God remains with us in the hope that urges us, sustains us, and motivates us. Through Jesus Christ, God brings us all to Himself...we are all God's treasured possessions. Listen again to St. Paul telling us how this works:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. <sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For Paul, hope isn't wishful thinking, but absolute certainty about the future because it is grounded in *God's faithfulness* to keep his promises...*God's faithfulness* and NOT OURS. God's faithfulness to us is NOT like our faithfulness to God. What God *will do* for the believer in Christ *is* grounded in and centered in what God *has done* for the believer in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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From the cries and the unrest within our culture, we assemble in hope... and in that hope is where we find the very Son of God, Jesus Christ right in the midst of all the unrest...right in the midst of all our struggle and hardship. And in that difficulty and conflict, remains our glorious triumph...our hope in Jesus Christ whose promise to us reminds us that there is absolute certainty about our future...our future being, God's glorious kingdom, where, through our faith we will one day be in God's glorious kingdom. And there, in that kingdom we will be joined by those who stand up for justice, there we will be with all the colors and varieties of people, there we will be with every sinner like us, there we will be with everyone who ever cried out...somebody should do something...there we will truly know that God has done something. There we will know that through Jesus Christ, God has made us all His treasured possession.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
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Take a moment with this line...“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;”...(pause) Perhaps this line has caused us to think, hummm...sounds like a problem, perhaps somebody should do something. Isn't that always the case, somebody should do something? The world has gone to hell in a handbasket...somebody should do something! The culture and the media are out of control...somebody should do something. There is division and fighting in our streets, somebody should do something. My favorite was when I heard a politician some time ago who had just won a *reelection* to his senate seat and complained in his acceptance speech about how corrupt Washington DC is and how politicians and politics in DC are out of control. In essence he was saying...somebody should do something! I remember screaming at the TV...dude, you're Washington DC, you're the politician...you're the somebody!! When we look at the state of the culture, the mess that it is in, or when we look at the state of the church and the state that she is in we probably want to say...somebody should do something...we are the somebodies! The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...we are the laborers.

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like a morning cloud. Yes, dear church, we are the laborers whose love and faith seem to dissipate like the dew when things heat up around us.

When we come to the realization that we the church are the laborers, I guess the next question becomes what are we harvesting and why are we harvesting? What is the task that is set before us today? Is the task before us the same task that Jesus sets before the twelve disciples? How does this call before these twelve men sound to us today...what do we understand that call to be?

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We are taught as Lutherans that the church is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. Likewise, although the Christian church is, properly speaking, nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even public sinners remain among the righteous, the sacraments – even though administered by unrighteous priests – are still efficacious.<sup>1</sup> The focus of the definition of the church found in the *Augsburg Confession* is on the Gospel and the sacraments and not on the gathering itself. Yes it describes the gathering, but the focus of the meaning of the church is on the Word and the Sacraments. The gathering, as we hear, is that the church is made up of hypocrites and sinners...and in the midst of that gathering is Jesus Christ, in Word and in Sacrament informing this gathering like every other gathering that there is grace, there is forgiveness, and there is life through our faith in Jesus Christ...and there is an abundance of it. Does this mean that it is all ours?

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This is the Good News that we as laborers are sent out with to share as freely as it has been given to us. Perhaps in this call from Jesus today we are not just being sent out as laborers for the harvest, perhaps we are being called to reexamine our faith, or our understanding of faith and our understanding of Christianity itself?

While we reexamine our faith and our understanding of the church and even Christianity itself, we can ask ourselves, have we remade our faith and the church to our own liking and sensibilities? And is this why we are afraid of the harvest because we realize the labor is not what we think it is or should be. Are we afraid we will be harassed and helpless as we hear at the start of our Gospel lesson today? Do we fear those who do not want to hear the Good News? Do we fear the labor that focuses on something other than ourselves? Do we fear what the work of the Lord that we are called to will do to our own families when we hear that:

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The reality of this labor in this world is our human struggle and difficulty but may it lead us all to understand that God is present and we learn in the challenges and struggles God remains with us in the hope that urges us, sustains us, and motivates us. Through Jesus Christ, God brings us all to Himself...we are all God's treasured possessions. Listen again to St. Paul telling us how this works:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. <sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For Paul, hope isn't wishful thinking, but absolute certainty about the future because it is grounded in *God's faithfulness* to keep his promises...*God's faithfulness* and NOT OURS. God's faithfulness to us is NOT like our faithfulness to God. What God *will do* for the believer in Christ *is* grounded in and centered in what God *has done* for the believer in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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From the cries and the unrest within our culture, we assemble in hope... and in that hope is where we find the very Son of God, Jesus Christ right in the midst of all the unrest...right in the midst of all our struggle and hardship. And in that difficulty and conflict, remains our glorious triumph...our hope in Jesus Christ whose promise to us reminds us that there is absolute certainty about our future...our future being, God's glorious kingdom, where, through our faith we will one day be in God's glorious kingdom. And there, in that kingdom we will be joined by those who stand up for justice, there we will be with all the colors and varieties of people, there we will be with every sinner like us, there we will be with everyone who ever cried out...somebody should do something...there we will truly know that God has done something. There we will know that through Jesus Christ, God has made us all His treasured possession.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
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Likewise, in our churches there is fear and ignorance that leads to division and isolation. Thankfully though, through the very gift of our faith, we know that God is present and remains present in our mess. By God's glorious Word...Jesus Christ we know of God's presence in our lives despite these trying times. But this leads me to say...we know of God's grace and mercy but what effect does the Word Jesus Christ, we hear about in here, have on what we currently see out there?

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<sup>37b</sup> "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;..." (Matt 9:37b)

Take a moment with this line...“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;”...(pause) Perhaps this line has caused us to think, hummm...sounds like a problem, perhaps somebody should do something. Isn't that always the case, somebody should do something? The world has gone to hell in a handbasket...somebody should do something! The culture and the media are out of control...somebody should do something. There is division and fighting in our streets, somebody should do something. My favorite was when I heard a politician some time ago who had just won a *reelection* to his senate seat and complained in his acceptance speech about how corrupt Washington DC is and how politicians and politics in DC are out of control. In essence he was saying...somebody should do something! I remember screaming at the TV...dude, you're Washington DC, you're the politician...you're the somebody!! When we look at the state of the culture, the mess that it is in, or when we look at the state of the church and the state that she is in we probably want to say...somebody should do something...we are the somebodies! The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...we are the laborers.

When I think about the harvest and the few laborers, I am reminded of the prophet Hosea from last week when we heard the proclamation from God:

<sup>4</sup> What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. (Hosea 5:4)

Perhaps we can put that into our context today and hear God say to us...what shall I do with you O blessed church, your love, or your faith is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away

like a morning cloud. Yes, dear church, we are the laborers whose love and faith seem to dissipate like the dew when things heat up around us.

When we come to the realization that we the church are the laborers, I guess the next question becomes what are we harvesting and why are we harvesting? What is the task that is set before us today? Is the task before us the same task that Jesus sets before the twelve disciples? How does this call before these twelve men sound to us today...what do we understand that call to be?

Looking at this call that Jesus sets before us...the church today...I feel the need to attempt to emulate the late great legendary football coach Vince Lombardi. At the start of training camp in 1961, Coach Lombardi wanted to stress the basics of football to his team. So Lombardi walked into the locker room of the Green Bay Packers, picked up a football, held it up for display, said to his team one of the most iconic quotes in sports history...“Gentlemen, this is a football.”

Folks, this is a church...and we have gathered today in this church...what is the church? We claim to have faith, what is faith and what do we have faith in?

We are taught as Lutherans that the church is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. Likewise, although the Christian church is, properly speaking, nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even public sinners remain among the righteous, the sacraments – even though administered by unrighteous priests – are still efficacious.<sup>1</sup> The focus of the definition of the church found in the *Augsburg Confession* is on the Gospel and the sacraments and not on the gathering itself. Yes it describes the gathering, but the focus of the meaning of the church is on the Word and the Sacraments. The gathering, as we hear, is that the church is made up of hypocrites and sinners...and in the midst of that gathering is Jesus Christ, in Word and in Sacrament informing this gathering like every other gathering that there is grace, there is forgiveness, and there is life through our faith in Jesus Christ...and there is an abundance of it. Does this mean that it is all ours?

Jesus says very clearly today to those who are sent...

You received without payment; give without payment. (Matt 10:8b)

Perhaps then, we fear that this grace, this forgiveness, and this new life that is Jesus Christ will run out. But we know better, because Jesus makes it clear to us throughout his ministry as well as in the feeding of the five-thousand with just five loaves of bread and two fish there is an abundance. St. Paul reminds the church in Corinth of this abundance:

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.  
(2 Corinthians 9:8)

St. Paul reminds Rome and us of the dominion of grace we are given a few verses after our appointed epistle reading today:

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<sup>1</sup> Kolb, Robert ; Wengert, Timothy J. ; Arand, Charles P.: *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000. The Augsburg Confession, Articles VII, Concerning the Church and VIII, What Is The Church, German Text, page 42.

If, because of the one man's trespass, (*Paul is referring to Adam*) death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)

This is the Good News that we as laborers are sent out with to share as freely as it has been given to us. Perhaps in this call from Jesus today we are not just being sent out as laborers for the harvest, perhaps we are being called to reexamine our faith, or our understanding of faith and our understanding of Christianity itself?

While we reexamine our faith and our understanding of the church and even Christianity itself, we can ask ourselves, have we remade our faith and the church to our own liking and sensibilities? And is this why we are afraid of the harvest because we realize the labor is not what we think it is or should be. Are we afraid we will be harassed and helpless as we hear at the start of our Gospel lesson today? Do we fear those who do not want to hear the Good News? Do we fear the labor that focuses on something other than ourselves? Do we fear what the work of the Lord that we are called to will do to our own families when we hear that:

<sup>21</sup> Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; <sup>22</sup> and you will be hated by all because of my name. (Matt 10:21-22)

Do we fear that God's faith in us is like our faith in God? Are we left to simply cry out...somebody should do something about this. Well...the Good News is...God has! That something God has done is Jesus Christ.

The reality of this labor in this world is our human struggle and difficulty but may it lead us all to understand that God is present and we learn in the challenges and struggles God remains with us in the hope that urges us, sustains us, and motivates us. Through Jesus Christ, God brings us all to Himself...we are all God's treasured possessions. Listen again to St. Paul telling us how this works:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. <sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For Paul, hope isn't wishful thinking, but absolute certainty about the future because it is grounded in *God's faithfulness* to keep his promises...*God's faithfulness* and NOT OURS. God's faithfulness to us is NOT like our faithfulness to God. What God *will do* for the believer in Christ *is* grounded in and centered in what God *has done* for the believer in Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Working Preacher – Second Lesson Romans 5:1-8, commentary by Elizabeth Shively appointed reading for June 14, 2020 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Pentecost, proper 6, lectionary 11. [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org)

From the cries and the unrest within our culture, we assemble in hope... and in that hope is where we find the very Son of God, Jesus Christ right in the midst of all the unrest...right in the midst of all our struggle and hardship. And in that difficulty and conflict, remains our glorious triumph...our hope in Jesus Christ whose promise to us reminds us that there is absolute certainty about our future...our future being, God's glorious kingdom, where, through our faith we will one day be in God's glorious kingdom. And there, in that kingdom we will be joined by those who stand up for justice, there we will be with all the colors and varieties of people, there we will be with every sinner like us, there we will be with everyone who ever cried out...somebody should do something...there we will truly know that God has done something. There we will know that through Jesus Christ, God has made us all His treasured possession.

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*