Pentecost 7 Luke 10:1-12, 16-20
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"The Harvest Is Plentiful"
I. So pray for more workers.
II. So get busy and don't get distracted.
III. So work with confidence and joy.

Dear Christian friends,

"The harvest is plentiful." **At first** I thought it would be interesting to GOOGLE UP **some statistics** to prove Jesus' point. How many billions of people are **alive right now**? **How many** of those billions claim to be Christians? **How many** are Moslems – Hindus – Buddhists – Mormons, etc. But then I thought - FORGET IT! That's a waste of time. We don't need to prove **Jesus'** words. Not only that, we can get so distracted by all that **googling of information** – we can get so bogged down with **statistics** – that we NEVER GET BUSY in the Lord's harvest.

"The harvest is plentiful." That's a GIVEN – a FACT. ***"The harvest is plentiful"*** SO 1)pray for **more workers**, 2)get busy and **don't get discouraged** and 3)work with confidence and **joy**.

I. So pray for more workers.

"The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go." Jesus was slowly making His way to **Jerusalem** and the **cross**. Popular opinion had **turned against** Him. **Many** disciples had already abandoned Him. His opposition was becoming MORE VOCAL – more challenging – more determined to **do away** with Him. But Jesus didn't dwell on any of that. **Instead** He told His disciples, ***"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."***

The ***"harvest"*** is all those whom God will BRING TO FAITH in Jesus and KEEP in that **saving faith**. ONLY GOD knows exactly who and **how many** they are. Jesus simply says, ***"the harvest is plentiful."*** We catch a glimpse of JUST HOW ***"plentiful"*** in Revelation 7. There God showed John ***"a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne (of God) and in front of the Lamb."***

What a joy – what an encouragement – to **hear Jesus** DECLARE ***"the harvest is plentiful."*** The majority of people NEVER WILL BE Christians. Jesus calls us His ***"little flock."*** He tells us that ***"wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it."*** We often see only **little results** TRICKLING in. 3000 were converted that first Pentecost but today it's more like **two or three** here – two or three there. Here in America it's like MORE FALL AWAY from Jesus than stay faithful to Him. Going by WHAT WE SEE we can easily get discouraged and **frustrated**. But Jesus doesn't say, "The harvest COULD BE plentiful." No! ***"The harvest IS plentiful."***

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." We hear ***"workers"*** and we perhaps automatically think that we NEED MORE pastors – teachers – missionaries – AND WE DO! But let's not MISUNDERSTAND this. It's NOT, ***"The harvest is plentiful*** SO I'll pray for more workers. I'll even help pay for more workers – but THEY go and work – NOT ME!" After saying – ***"the harvest is plentiful, the workers are few"*** – after telling the 72, ***"ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers"*** – Jesus then continued, ***"Go! I am sending YOU!"***

Not every Christian is CALLED TO BE a pastor – teacher – missionary. But every Christian IS a ***"witness"*** for Jesus. You may not be called **to work** in some FOREIGN mission field but you do have your own PERSONAL, GOD-GIVEN mission field. That field starts **at home** with your children and grandchildren – your brothers and sisters - who NEED JESUS AS MUCH as you do. **Your mission field** spreads out into your **neighborhood**, your job, etc. Do you know some people who have FALLEN

AWAY from Jesus – who are trying to handle **life** – **personal problems** – **health issues** – WITHOUT Jesus' **love** and **forgiveness** and **promises**? Do you know some people who are HEADING to hell because they've fallen for the **world's sinful priorities** and **values**? Lord, OPEN our eyes to see the field RIGHT BEFORE our eyes! Pray for more workers – PRAY ALSO that God would use you in His harvest field **right here**!

Yes, ***"the harvest is plentiful…"***

II. So get busy and don't get distracted.

Harvest work is HARD work, and not just because ***"the harvest is plentiful."*** Jesus compares our WORKING CONDITIONS to ***"sending out lambs among wolves."*** That's a **natural** PREDATOR-PREY **relationship**. The wolf sees the lamb as an EASY MEAL reading to be eaten. The devil already has the **majority** of people IN HIS HANDS – the same people we want to **reach** with the gospel. The devil will try everything to FRUSTRATE our **work of sharing** Jesus. **At the same time** the devil is working hard to harvest US FOR HELL!

The **lamb** has no natural defenses against a wolf. The wolf is bigger – **stronger** – **faster** – **smarter**. The lamb's ONLY DEFENSE is its **shepherd**. Jesus isn't trying to scare us **away from working** in His harvest but He is letting us know HOW THINGS STAND and where our strength and **protection** are. ***"The harvest is plentiful"*** – we NEED to get busy AND be alert!

"The harvest is plentiful" and we need to be careful that we don't GET DISTRACTED. ***"Do not carry a money bag or traveler's bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone along the way."*** That's not Jesus telling us to be UNFRIENDLY or UNPREPARED but it is Jesus telling us to KEEP OUR PRIORITIES **straight** and not get **distracted**. We're not to let SMALL TALK about the **weather** or the **Packers** keep us from the BIG TALK about Jesus. We're not to get bogged down SO CAREFULLY PREPARING **to go** that we never actually go and **work** in the harvest.

Think of **someone** PACKING for a trip. You get out socks, underwear, toothbrush, etc. But I might need a sweatshirt too – **maybe** a heavier jacket **in case** it gets cold. I'll need these shoes IF WE GO wherever. You end up lugging **six suitcases** along and you'll only be gone for **three days**! The planning – all that luggage – just GETS IN the way and slows you down. "Just GET BUSY!" **Jesus tells** us. "I'll make sure you're TAKEN CARE of," He promises us.

There are other ways we can get DISTRACTED. A congregation can have ALL KINDS of meetings and activities and **committees** and **boards**. ALL of a congregation's work and activities should be REGULARLY EVALUATED **in the light** of is this HELPING us share Jesus or is it distracting us?

Parents need to **be careful** about GETTING DISTRACTED about their children's education. A **school** can have all kinds of EXTRA-CURRICULAR activities for our children – have a great sports **program** – fancy buildings – the **latest technology**, etc. There's nothing wrong with any of that but the devil can use that to DISTRACT US from the ***"one thing needful"*** – a CHRIST-CENTERED – Christ-PLEASING education for our children.

"The harvest is plentiful" – don't get **distracted** but GET BUSY because we have such a FANTASTIC MESSAGE to share. ***"Whenever you enter a house, say, 'Peace be to this house.' Tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near you.'"*** This is no ordinary, "Hi! How are you?" We are sent as messengers of GOD'S PEACE to the world. AS MUCH AS you and I need Jesus SO DOES everybody else! As Christians we're NOT BETTER than anybody else and we better never think or **act** like that. IF ***"God kept a record of our sins"*** – IF God ***"treated us as our sins deserve"*** – we too would be heading to hell's **eternal banishment** and **punishment**. But SOMEONE – maybe it was our parents – a neighbor – friend – pastor/teacher - SOMEONE told us about Jesus. Now we have the PEACE and JOY of having God's own Son as our **personal** and **perfect Savior**. God gives us all the

credit for the perfect life Jesus lived. God took all our sins OFF of us – put them all ON Jesus and punished Jesus in our place. The **sinless Lord** Jesus endured the death and hell **we guilty** sinners had coming. Jesus shares with us His EASTER VICTORY over death and the grave. FOR JESUS' SAKE God has forgiven all our sins. TRUSTING in Jesus we have a whole new relationship with God and eternal life in heaven when we die. Now we get to share Jesus and **all those blessings** with others!

As Americans we TREASURE OUR FREEDOMS. Look at all the **freedom we enjoy** AS CHRISTIANS. **Freedom** from fear and worry because we have a heavenly Father **watching** over us and **taking care** of us. **Freedom** to pray anytime to our heavenly Father about anything. **Freedom** from all sin and guilt **through** Jesus' shed blood. **Freedom** to die knowing that we **have eternal life** in heaven. And the church is a **real** MELTING POT as she opens her arms – extending God's **peace** and **love** and **forgiveness** in Jesus to everyone. ***"The harvest is plentiful"*** – we are PART of that harvest and we GET TO WORK in that harvest!

III. So work with confidence and joy.

Work with confidence **because** Jesus BACKS US UP in our work. ***"Whoever listens to you listens to Me. Whoever rejects you rejects Me. And whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."***

Work with confidence **because** God's WORD WORKS! The 72 returned all excited. ***"Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!"*** They may not have packed all kinds of **extra clothes** and shoes but they had God's Word and God's Word works. ***"The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."*** Talking to people about Jesus – inviting them to church – coming to church – being baptized – coming to Communion may not seem VERY IMPRESSIVE or spectacular but THAT'S HOW GOD **wants to do** it and it works!

So work WITH CONFIDENCE and with JOY. Again Jesus **tells us** to KEEP OUR PRIORITIES straight. ***"Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names have been written in heaven."*** How's that for a REASON to rejoice! Trusting in Jesus we can BE ABSOLUTELY SURE that we're forgiven and that we're going straight to heaven when we die. The devil may say that's **not true**. The world may think we're GULLIBLE FOOLS and **losers**. God says we're His children – **heirs** of heaven. WHAT GRACE!

Now He who wrote our names **in heaven's book** of life with His own blood – He tells you and me, ***"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest field. Go! I am sending YOU."*** Amen.

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