

Trinity 3

I stand here in need of God's mercy and grace. May I speak in the name of the God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.

There is lots to do and not quite enough people to get it done. Sound familiar? It reminds me of working as a waitress in a big café at another time of my life. To maximise the small profit margins of the café, the owner would often slightly understaff us, making it nearly impossible to get everything done, although we would work at a high pace all day long. Lot's to do, but never quite enough hands to do it.

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few;

On a farm harvest is usually the busiest time of year, everyone has to pitch in to get all the fruits and vegetables harvested, before they become unusable. It's a short time window with an impossible amount of work to be done and there is often a sense that there are just not quite enough people to help get this very important work done, so that everyone will have enough food to eat until the next harvest time.

What Jesus is sending his 70 followers to do is as urgent and crucial a task as a harvest that is to provide food for many people. And like with the peak business of a harvest, it is slightly understaffed.

But what is Jesus sending these 70 followers out to do? They are being sent ahead of Jesus, to prepare, to ready things for people to encounter

Jesus. They are to tell people wherever they go and wherever people are willing to hear:

The Kingdom of God has come near to you.

The Kingdom of God was a concept that would have been familiar to most if not all Jewish people. It refers to God's promises communicated through prophets, for a world at peace, where all have enough of all they need and there is no longer any need to be afraid. God's Kingdom is where God's will for the wellbeing and flourishing of human beings and all of creation is fulfilled. God's Kingdom is where what has been broken is made whole and new life is born from ashes.

And because Jesus is the Son of God, wherever Jesus went, God's will was being done. Hungry people received food, outcasts were invited to belong, people were being healed and restored and the good news of God's justice, love and grace was being shared. But at the time Jesus was only able to be in one place at a time so he sent his followers ahead of him, to prepare people, to tell them about Jesus and what he is like, so that as many as possible would gather and be able to encounter Jesus once he arrived in a place.

Today, after ascending back to God the Father, Jesus is no longer constrained by space and time. But nonetheless, as his followers we are called to go ahead of Jesus and let people know, that God's Kingdom is near, that where God's will is being done, all of creation is able to flourish. And like with Jesus' followers 2000 years ago, we aren't Jesus, so we likely will mess up, sometimes, we won't always get it right and we might also at times get a little overwhelmed by the sheer need in the world. There is a big harvest and not quite enough hands to do it all.

When there is an overwhelming task, we might simply feel paralysed before it. But when harvesting a big field, it's best to simply start with the bit right in front of you, taking things one at a time and suddenly one looks up and a whole lot has gotten done.

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There is a lot to do, so how could we go about moving ahead of Jesus this week and letting people know the good news of God's Kingdom? I suggest it is best to start with the thing right in front of us, whatever that might be. It could be a friend in desperate need of a minute to themselves, so you might offer some childcare, you might have a neighbour feeling unwell and you offer to bring around some food, keep them some company or simply keep them in your prayers, you might have a co-worker having a hard time, who needs a listening ear, or you might be concerned about an injustice affecting many people and decide to write to your local MP about it or a hundred other little ways, in which we can communicate something of God's justice, love and grace to the people right in front of us.

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Are we prepared to get stuck in in this harvesting work?

Amen.