

THE RADICAL PRAYER - PART 1

A Radical Perspective

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Preaching passage: Luke 10:2a
Subject: What Jesus told His disciples about the harvest
Complement: it was truly great
Exegetical idea: Jesus told His disciples that the harvest truly was great.
Homiletical idea: **The harvest truly is great!**
Purpose: To convince my hearers that the harvest truly is great and to encourage them to pray that they might see the world from God's radical perspective.

Introduction

I love mountains! I even went looking for Mt. Dora, here in Florida, but I could never find the mountain! I can still remember the day that I rode in a cable car up the side of a rugged snow-covered mountain in California. What a view! It was exhilarating! However, when I finally reached the top of the mountain and stepped out of the cable car, my whole perspective changed. It was radical! Now, instead of merely gazing at one snow-covered mountainside, I had an amazing panoramic view of a whole range of majestic snow-covered Sierra Nevada mountains! I will remember that moment forever. I was seeing the world from a new perspective!

God wants *you*, God wants me, to view the world from a new perspective. Not just from a different altitude. He wants us to see the world as He sees the world. From His divine perspective. A radical perspective!

That's the title of the message today: A Radical Perspective. It is part 1 of a life-changing series about the harvest. (Hold up sheaf of grain). Jesus is going to challenge each one of us to pray a radical prayer to the Lord of the harvest. If you pray this radical prayer in simple faith, your life will be changed forever. I know that from experience! But before we can pray

this radical prayer, we must see the world from a radical perspective. From God's perspective.

So what is this radical perspective? It is found in Luke 10:2. Jesus shares with His apostles, and also with us, that "the harvest truly is great." What does Jesus mean when He says that the harvest truly is great, plentiful, abundant, extensive? The metaphor of the harvest is used in two ways in the teachings of Jesus. He speaks of the harvest when referring to the end of the world. In Matthew 13:39, Jesus tells us, "The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are the angels." The metaphor of the harvest is used in a similar way in Revelation 14:16. "Thrust in your sickle and reap, for the time has come for you to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." From these two passages of Scripture, it is clear that the harvest can refer to the gathering of the saints at the end of the age and the judgment of the wicked.

But Jesus also uses the metaphor of the harvest to refer to present missionary endeavors, leading men and women to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and gathering them into the Kingdom of God. This is the meaning of the harvest in the passage of Scripture that we are studying today. Look at the context for these words of Jesus. In Luke 10:1 Luke tells us, "After these things, the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go." This work of harvesting is a present activity. This is not the final harvest at the end of the world. In this present harvest work, God is using people, not angels. Jesus is sending His disciples out, two by two, into God's harvest field.

So what does Jesus mean when He says, "The harvest truly is great?" Simply this: there are many people, men and women, boys and girls, who are ready and waiting to be gathered into His kingdom. They only need to hear the Good News and receive the invitation. According to

Jesus, there is a present harvest to be gathered in, and “the harvest truly is great.”

But that raises a second question: Why does Jesus emphasize that the harvest *truly is great*? You say, “Because it is!” And this response is partially correct. Jesus is just telling the truth when He says, “The harvest truly is great.”

Have you heard the story of what happened on the day of Pentecost, ten days after the Risen Jesus ascended to heaven? Having preached a powerful sermon, the apostle Peter concludes with these words, recorded in Acts 2:36: “.....”

And Luke records, in Acts 2:37-40, “.....” What a day of rejoicing that must have been! When the apostles witnessed the conversion of three thousand individuals, I’m sure that they said to each other, “*Jesus was right! The harvest truly is great!*”

Similarly, when we see thousands receiving Christ as Savior and Lord, we also find it easy to say the same thing to one another. The words of Jesus are obviously true. I was reading about the amazing moving of God’s Spirit in the Inter American Division. On one Sabbath, March 24, 2007, almost 45,000 people were baptized. Here is the testimony of just one of those individuals who made a public confession of their love for Jesus in baptism:

Clarissa Pozo de los Santos gave this testimony: “I was walking in the world and I saw how there is so much evil , pain, and sadness, and God has something else for me! It’s like I have a new life now; I know that I will be different with God’s help.”

Fourteen hundred men and women were baptized at the one location where Clarissa took her stand for Jesus! As we hear a story like that, our natural response is to exclaim, “The harvest truly is great!”

But I believe that Jesus emphasizes that the harvest truly is great because there are times

when it does not appear to us that the harvest is great. From a human perspective, there are times when it appears to us that there is no harvest at all. At those times, Jesus also urges us to remember that the harvest truly is great. He urges us to view reality from a radical perspective. His perspective. And when we see as He sees, we will discover that the harvest truly *is* great.

A Great Harvest at Sychar

Have you ever read the story of Jesus meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar? (John 4:3-42) At first glance, there doesn't seem to be much of a harvest of souls there. Only one person comes to the meeting. Just one wayward woman. When the disciples arrive on the scene, they immediately evaluate the situation and conclude, "There's not much of a harvest here." And Jesus discerns the thoughts of the disciples. He reads their faces. He startles them with these words, recorded in John 4:35. "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest?' Behold I say to you, 'Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for the harvest.'"

In spite of the bleak landscape, Jesus sees that the harvest truly is *great*. I'm so thankful that Jesus can see past the externals, aren't you? That once wayward woman returns to Sychar and gives her testimony about her life-changing encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. And listen to what happens. The story is recorded in John 4:39-42. "....." Many Samaritans believe in Jesus because of this woman's testimony. The harvest is so plentiful that Jesus stays for two extra days and many more become believers because of His words.

Some of us would probably have driven straight through town without stopping. Or better yet, we might have chosen to avoid the town completely. No harvest here. At least, there

is no harvest that we can see from a human perspective. But Jesus challenges us to look again, to open our eyes. Or perhaps to give the Lord of the harvest permission to open our eyes and enable us to see from His radical perspective. Then we will more fully comprehend the truth in the words of Jesus: “*The harvest truly is great!*”

A Great Harvest at Sybertsville

I conducted my first public meetings in the small, depressed, town of Sybertsville, Pennsylvania. I was young and inexperienced, but the faithful followers of Jesus in that community were very encouraging. We rented a fire hall and sent out some invitations. I knew that I needed some powerful messages, so I called a well-known Christian evangelist, C.D. Brooks, and asked if I could borrow his sermons! He said, “Yes!” I knew right then that God was at work! I spent about four hundred hours transcribing those messages and making them my own. I listened to so many sermons by C.D. Brooks that I even started to sound like him!

As we prepared for the meetings, we had no idea if anyone would even show up on opening night. But somehow we had courage to believe the words of Jesus: “*the harvest truly is great.*” On opening night, the fire hall was full! The Lord of the harvest blessed as He always does when we put our trust in Him. I learned an important lesson during the next five weeks. It doesn’t matter what people say. You often hear, “It can’t happen here.” Or “It won’t work.” Or “No one will show up.” But I learned that when the Lord of the harvest is involved, anything can happen anywhere. This is His harvest, not ours. The Lord of the harvest knows what He is doing, and He says, “*The harvest truly is great.*”

Small Response–Big Harvest

On the day that one of the followers of Jesus named Stephen the deacon was stoned to death, he didn't notice much of a harvest as a result of his preaching. The Bible tells us that most of the people in the audience were furious, gnashing their teeth, stopping their ears, ranting and raving. Not exactly a positive response from his listeners. But Jesus looked down from the right hand of the throne of God, and said, "The harvest truly is great."

A young man by the name of Saul of Tarsus was in charge of the coats that day . The witness of Stephen changed Saul's life forever. Not long after hearing Stephen's sermon, Saul of Tarsus fell flat on his face before the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus and cried out, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6) Stephen's final sermon, preached in life and in death, has impacted the lives of thousands of future followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was right! The harvest truly *is* great, even when that harvest may not be immediately apparent to us.

I witnessed a similar miracle as a young pastor. I had the privilege of participating in some public meetings in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Our team sensed the Spirit of God in our midst but not too many visitors attended those meetings. Only a few made decisions to become fully devoted followers of Jesus. From a human perspective, one might have concluded that the harvest wasn't that great. Maybe Jesus made a mistake this time. There was, however, one young couple named Gary and Laurie who came faithfully to the meetings, night by night. They seemed very interested in the truths of God's Word. But by the end of the series, they just didn't feel convicted to make a complete commitment to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Have

you ever met anyone like that? It looked like we had a total crop failure.

All we could do now was pray. After all, the Lord of the harvest was in charge, not us. On Friday afternoon as Gary left work and drove down the highway toward home, he came under the overwhelming conviction of the Holy Spirit that God wanted him to make a complete surrender of his life to Jesus Christ and to confess that commitment through baptism. Gary had no doubt in his mind. He only wondered how he would share the news of his decision with his wife Laurie. But by the time he arrived home, he discovered that the Lord of the harvest had been there before him.

That same afternoon, as Gary drove home, his wife Laurie sat in their home. She also came under the overwhelming conviction of the Holy Spirit that God wanted her to make the same life commitment! Imagine their surprise and joy when they shared their decision with each other. Imagine *our* surprise and joy when they shared their decision with us the following day! Isn't God amazing? He is the Lord of the harvest!

Perhaps you're thinking, "That's wonderful! Two people made a complete commitment to Jesus Christ. Two people were baptized. Two people became fully devoted followers of Jesus. But that's hardly a great harvest!" You might be right, if you were evaluating the situation from a human perspective, but the Lord of the harvest knew that the rest of the story had not yet been told. That young couple, Gary and Laurie, sensed the call of God to enter into full-time ministry. Even though Laurie was struggling with a terminal disease, this young couple courageously followed the call of God. Gary, who had been working in a factory that assembled catalytic converters, left his former occupation and studied to become a pastor. Now, instead of helping to convert exhaust fumes, God is using Gary to convert people! Now, instead of just

making a living, the Lord of the harvest is using him to make a difference. That's quite a switch, isn't it?

The Lord of the harvest is in the miracle-working business. Gary is still serving in full-time ministry. Thousands have heard the truth about Jesus as a result of Gary's testimony. Was the harvest *great*? Absolutely! The words of Jesus are true, my friends. Even though it may not always be clear to us, the harvest truly is *great*.

Did you know that there are people here today just waiting for an invitation to become a part of God's kingdom? There are people here on campus, and people joining us via our media ministries who want to make a full commitment of their lives to Jesus and become a part of His kingdom!

One young lady is going to confess her love for Jesus in baptism today. Her name is Susie Kim. I have asked her to come and stand with me today at the front of the church as a public confession of her love for Jesus and her desire to be baptized.

There is someone here today who is listening to this message and the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart. You know that it's time for you to say "Yes" to Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord. I want to invite you to take a stand for Jesus today. I want to invite you to get up and come here and join Susie in a public confession of your love for Jesus, a public confession of your faith.

If you are joining us via our media ministries, I invite you to stand right where you are. You may be all alone in your home, or gathered with a group of friends. Today is your day to take a stand for Jesus. After this service has concluded, I want you to send me an e-mail or write a letter and let me know of your decision for Jesus.

Those of you standing here on campus, and those who have made decisions around the world, you are a living witness of the truth of the words of Jesus. The harvest truly is great!

Now, for those of us who have already trusted Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, and have confessed our love for Jesus in baptism, I want to challenge you to pray a simple prayer:

“Lord of the harvest, open my eyes so that I can see the world as you do. Open my eyes so that I can see that the harvest truly is great!

Prayer

Lord of the harvest, thank you for revealing to us even today that the harvest truly is great! I pray a special blessing for all today who have made a public confession of their love for Jesus and their desire to be a part Your kingdom. Lord, we pray that you would open our eyes to see the world from Your radical perspective—in our homes, our communities, our workplaces. Help us to see as You see, that the harvest truly is great. In Jesus’ name, Amen.