

THE RADICAL PRAYER - PART 3

A Radical Prayer

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Luke 10:2c
Subject:	What the followers of Jesus should do in the light of the fact that the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few
Complement:	beg the Lord of the harvest to throw out laborers into His harvest.
Exegetical idea:	Because the harvest is great but the laborers are few, followers of Jesus should beg the Lord of the harvest to throw out laborers into His harvest.
Homiletical idea:	Lord of the harvest, I earnestly beg you to throw out laborers into Your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with me.
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to respond to the appeal of Jesus and pray the radical prayer.

Introduction

Have you ever prayed a bold prayer? I'm not talking about the standard blessing at the meal table: "Thank you for the world so sweet, thank you for the food we eat," or the run-of-the-mill "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep." I'm talking about a bold prayer.

Like Elijah, when he stretched himself out three times over the lifeless body of the son of the widow of Zarephath and prayed, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him." I Kings 17:21 (NKJV). That was a bold prayer.

Like Jesus, when He held a small lunch in his hands and prayed to His heavenly Father to provide food for a vast multitude. That was also a bold prayer. The Gospel writers don't give us the exact words of Jesus' prayer that day. But I know He wasn't just saying, "Thank you for the world so sweet, thank you for the food we eat." Jesus prayed a bold prayer.

Today, Jesus is going to challenge you to pray a bold prayer. A *radical* prayer. If you cry out to God in faith, this prayer will transform your life forever. We have been studying the words of Jesus, recorded in Luke 10, beginning with verse 2. First, we noticed a radical

perspective. Jesus says, “The harvest truly is great.” There are men and women, boys and girls, who are just waiting to be invited into the kingdom of heaven. The harvest truly is great!

Sometimes that harvest is obvious to us. But most of the time, we need to pray, “Lord, open my eyes so that I can see as you see.” From His radical perspective. That the harvest truly is great.

But then Jesus identified a radical problem. He says, “The harvest truly is great but the laborers are few.” We discovered in part 2 of this series that the real problem is not that there are too few laborers. The real problem is that there are too few laboring laborers. That’s the problem! Those called to be laborers have become distracted, discouraged.

And because of this radical problem, even though the harvest truly is great, Jesus challenges His disciples and He challenges us to pray a radical prayer. Let’s read Luke 10:2 again: “*The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; **therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.***” (Lk 10:2)

At first reading, this may not sound like a radical prayer. But a careful study of these words of Jesus will reveal that this is indeed a radical request. There are several Greek verbs that are translated “pray.” Is Jesus asking us to make a request? To express a desire? No! It’s more intense than that. The Greek verb used here, **deomai**, means “to beseech,” “to plead earnestly,” “to beg.” Do you sense the intensity of that word? It is so much stronger than simply “to pray.”

Let’s consider some passages where this verb, **deomai**, is used. We find it twice in connection with this teaching of Jesus to pray to the Lord of the harvest. It’s also found in Luke 5:12 in connection with a leper who is begging for healing, in Luke 8:38 where a man who has been freed from a legion of demons is earnestly pleading to go with Jesus, and in Luke 9:38 where a man is pleading for his son’s deliverance from an evil spirit. Do any of those

occurrences sound like simply expressing a desire or making a request? What does it sound like to you?

Perhaps even more helpful for our understanding of this verb **deomai**, is the use of this verb in Luke 22:31-32. Here Jesus is praying: "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have *prayed* for you, that your faith should not fail." Peter was in danger of eternal loss. Satan wanted to sift him like wheat. How do you think Jesus prayed for Peter? The answer is in the text. The verb is **deomai**. It was an earnest prayer. Jesus *earnestly pleaded* with the Father on Simon Peter's behalf. That's how Jesus tells us to pray the radical prayer. Pray earnestly. Beg.

The Earnest Appeal of Jesus

Notice that this verb is in the imperative: "therefore *pray* the Lord of the harvest..." What is implied when an imperative is used? It's a command, or an appeal. An imperative expects an active response. If a firefighter runs into a public building and shouts, "Vacate this building immediately," that is not a polite suggestion. It's a command. If a teacher says to her students, "Turn in your homework at the end of class," that's not just tentative request! She expects an active response.

Similarly, when Jesus says to the disciples, and also to us, "Pray the Lord of the harvest," He is expecting an active response. But there's even more that we can learn from this appeal of Jesus. In Greek, the imperative can be stated in two ways. A present imperative has the idea of "keep doing what you're already doing." If you're running away from a mad dog, and I shout out "Run! Run!", I would use a present imperative. In other words, you are running. Just keep

on running! Similarly, when Jesus says in Matt 7:7, “Ask, and it will be given to you,” he uses a present imperative. So what would that mean? You’re absolutely right. Jesus is saying, “You are already asking. Continue to ask. Keep on asking.”

But in the Greek, there is also an *aorist* imperative, which implies “start doing something that you’re not yet doing.” If I’m standing in a ditch, leaning on my shovel, and the boss says, “Dig!”, he means, “Start digging. You’re not digging now. But you need to start digging.” That would be an *aorist* imperative in Greek. Similarly, when Jesus says to the people at Lazarus’ tomb, “Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:44), He uses an *aorist* imperative. “You’re not yet unwrapping him. Look at him. He’s all wrapped up and he can’t free himself. Start unwrapping him and let him go.”

Do you see the difference between a present imperative and an *aorist* imperative? In this appeal of Jesus for us to pray a radical prayer, Jesus asks us to pray earnestly, to plead, to beg. Jesus uses an *aorist* imperative. He is saying to us, “Start praying earnestly. You’re not yet praying as you should. You need to start earnestly pleading with the Lord of the harvest.”

At this point, you might be thinking, “Wait a minute! I don’t understand. Why do I need to beg the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers? Why do I need to start begging the Lord of the harvest like I’ve never prayed before? Doesn’t the Lord of the harvest already want to do this?” Absolutely. So why then do we need to beg? Let me suggest that it has more to do with changing *our* hearts than changing God’s heart. We are giving God permission to do something radical.

Throwing Out Laborers

What, then, is so radical about this prayer? As we dig deeper, we find the answer in the words of Jesus. We are to begin to earnestly plead with the Lord of the harvest to do what? “Send out laborers into His harvest.” That doesn’t sound very radical. But “send out laborers” is not an accurate translation of the Greek. The common verb in Greek for "send out" is the verb **apostello**, from which we get the noun **apostolos**, “apostle.” When the Gospels record that Jesus "sent out" the disciples, the verb **apostello** is used. But the verb used by Jesus in Luke 10:2 is much more radical.

“Send out laborers” isn’t even an accurate translation. It’s far too polite. The verb used here is **ekballo**. **Ballo** means “to cast” or “to throw.” **Ballo** is used when the disciples cast their nets out of the ship (John 21:6). **Ballo** is used when the enemies of Jesus picked up rocks to throw at Him (John 8:59). **Ballo** is used when John the Baptist was thrown into prison (John 3:24). **Ballo** means to throw or cast. But that still doesn’t capture the complete meaning of this radical prayer.

The Greek verb used by Jesus in Luke 10:2 is **ekballo**. The prefix *ek* means “out”. So **ekballo** means "to throw out," or "to cast out." On numerous occasions in the Gospel record, **ekballo** is used for casting out demons. This verb **ekballo** is also used when Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple (John 2:15). As you can see, this is not a weak verb, and Jesus is not asking you to pray a weak prayer. What Jesus is asking you to do is earnestly plead with the Lord of the harvest “to throw out” laborers, “to hurl out” laborers, “to cast out” laborers into His harvest. That is a radical prayer!

A Personal Request

You can't possibly pray this radical prayer unless you're willing to be a part of the answer to that prayer. Let me put this radical prayer into simple words:

“Lord of the harvest, I earnestly beg you to throw out laborers into your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with *me*.”

Jesus Himself was willing to be thrown out! Matthew records that immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Jesus came out of that wilderness to begin His active ministry, in fulfillment of the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. The Gospel writer Mark, on the other hand, records that Jesus was “thrown out” by the Spirit. Most translators don't translate the Greek accurately. The verb that is used in Mark 1:12 is **ekballo**. Jesus was willing to be thrown out into God's harvest field.

Perhaps you're thinking, “What will happen to me if I give the Lord of the harvest permission to throw me out into His harvest field?” That is God's responsibility, not yours. He will throw you out where He wants you to be. It may be to a distant land, or it may be right where you currently live. Your assignment, my assignment, is to be willing, to be ready, to pray the radical prayer, to earnestly plead: **“Lord of the harvest, I earnestly beg you to throw out laborers into your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with *me*.”** Are you willing to respond to the appeal of Jesus?

Nathan's response

A young man in Allentown, Pennsylvania, had the courage to pray this radical prayer.

Nathan worked in a foundry in Macungie, Pennsylvania. Just a few months before I met Nathan, God had miraculously saved his life. Nathan accidentally put his hand on a live monorail at work and 440 volts of electricity surged through his body! Nathan should have died that night. When the doctors examined him, they found the entry point of the electricity on his hand but they couldn't find an exit point. Try to explain that. I can't. God miraculously spared Nathan's life that night and his life was spared for a reason.

A few months later, Nathan knelt with me under the starry heavens and prayed a radical prayer. In his own words, he cried out, **“Lord of the harvest, I earnestly beg you to throw out laborers into your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with *me*.”** Nathan prayed in simple faith, and God heard his prayer!

As a result of that earnest prayer, God set into motion a sequence of events that would change Nathan's life forever. First, God asked Nathan to part with his most cherished possession: a BMW motorcycle. Nathan loved that machine, even though Satan had tried to use that motorcycle to take his life, urging him to take a suicide ride on back roads at well over 100mph. Finally, Nathan became convicted that God wanted him to part with his beloved BMW, and he found the courage to let it go. His radical prayer was being answered.

Then God answered Nathan's radical prayer through the lives of other followers of Jesus. Two families in his home church were moved by the Spirit of God to help sponsor Nathan to go to college. Those families made significant financial sacrifices to join the Lord of the harvest in throwing a laborer out into His harvest field. One of those sponsors sleeps in Jesus today, but before he died, he laid up some treasure in heaven.

Four years after Nathan prayed that radical prayer, a former foundry worker graduated

from college with a degree in theology as president of his senior class. Today Nathan is still a devoted follower of Jesus. He is serving as a local church pastor and is deeply committed to mission work. In fact, it was on one of those mission trips that he met his beautiful wife. God always gives us more than we deserve! Do you think Nathan regrets praying that radical prayer? No! Now, instead of just making a living, God is using Nathan to make a difference in the world!

I know from personal experience that this prayer is radical! I began to pray this prayer some years ago, and God took me from a teaching position at one of our universities and threw me across the United States to pastor a church in southern California. After several years, while we were building a beautiful home in southern California, God threw me out to Florida! We never got to live in our new home! But we have seen God work here at Forest Lake church more powerfully than we have ever seen in 30 years of ministry. I continued to pray this radical prayer this past summer when I was invited to assume a ministry position at one of our colleges. And God threw me out right here. In basketball, they call that a slam dunk! God was clearly saying, “You’re exactly where I want you to be!” But every day, I want to give God permission to throw me out into His harvest—wherever, whenever, however.

I’m not suggesting that everyone who prays this radical prayer should become a pastor. I’m simply encouraging you to earnestly pray this radical prayer and see what the Lord of the harvest will do in your life:

“Lord of the harvest, I earnestly beg you to throw out laborers into your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with *me*.”

I challenge you to cry out to the Lord of the harvest today and every day. Say to Him, “Whatever You want me to do, I’ll do it. Wherever you want me to go, I’ll go. If you want me to enter into a full-time ministry, I’m willing. If you want me to be a laborer for you at my work, at my business, in my home, I’m willing, Lord. If you need me to give sacrificially to help send other laborers into your harvest, I’m willing. Just show me what you want me to do, Lord. I give you full permission. I yield fully to you. Throw out laborers into your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with *me*.”

Will you respond to the appeal of Jesus? Will you pray this radical prayer? If the answer is yes, I want you to slip to your knees, wherever you are. On campus. In your home. If your driving a car, find a place to pull over and bow your head in prayer. Then cry out to God.

“Lord of the harvest, I earnestly beg you to throw out laborers into your harvest, and you have my permission to begin with *me*.”

I’m going to give you a chance to share what God does as a result of praying that prayer. But I want to encourage you to join us for the next message in this series on the Radical Prayer, because you need to be aware of the radical challenges that you will surely face.