

CONSIDER YOUR CALL- HARVEST RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE



One day a farmer was working in his fields when he heard a voice speaking to him. Now he couldn't tell whether this voice was being heard by his ears or by his heart, but he knew that it was the voice of God.

The voice said...

"I'm calling you into the harvest".

That night before the farmer went to bed, he shut himself into a room and opened his Bible. It was as if the very pages of his Bible caught fire. Never had the Scriptures spoken to this man as they now did. And everywhere he turned, the same message came to him.

"I'm calling you into the harvest".

For days there was a glow within him.

His wife never saw him in a better mood.

His children never found him more patient.

He kept working his fields, but he knew deep within him that there was to be a change, there was a new life waiting for him, that he had been called into the harvest. The months went by and wherever this door was which was supposed to open him into this new and fruitful life he couldn't seem to find it. Then the pastor of his church was transferred to Alaska, and he was asked to preach every Sunday. "At last," he said to himself...

"This must be my chance to get into the harvest".

He had visions of a spellbound audience, growing crowds of people, healings, and a spreading revival. But the reality was that the same sleepy congregation came week after week and went on their way, obviously unchanged.

This couldn't be the harvest, so the farmer sold 50 acres of his land, bought a revival tent, some sound equipment, a semi-truck and hit the road as an evangelist...

"Evangelism must be what the Lord has in mind".

He went from city to city and occasionally really got some good crowds together. Sometimes people answered his altar call. There were even a few healings. But after two years of this, he knew that this was not where he belonged... He asked himself...

“Where is this harvest Lord”?

Then he heard of desperate needs and tremendous spiritual opportunities in southern Brazil. So, he sold another 50 acres of his land, studied Portuguese, and took his family to Brazil. The reception in Brazil was like everywhere else, lukewarm. After three years of urgent labor among the people of Brazil, in spite of the hopeful things he sent back in his mission letters, he was driven to the very edge of despair.

The farmer came home with his family, holed himself up in a room with a typewriter and for six months worked on a book which he hoped would start a Christian world and bring in a harvest. But the book didn't even sell 1000 copies. He said...

“I'm going back to farming”.

And so he set about trying to restore his overgrown fields, what was left of them, and mending the broken down fences. One spring morning as he was plowing with his rusty old tractor, the voice spoke to him again....

“I'm calling you into my harvest”.

But this time he was angry. *“Oh yeah, I believed you the last time you told me that and you can't say I didn't try, but everything I put my hand to failed, so please don't mess up my life anymore”.*

Just then the engine of his tractor sputtered and died. It was out of gas. So, he picks up the gas can that's hanging behind the seat and heads for an old broken-down shack that lies just across the property line that had been there a long time. He says, *“well, surely they'll had some gas and it will save me having to walk back all the way to the barn”.* *“Gas”,* says the old lady at the door, *“I don't have any gas, I don't have a car, I don't have a tractor, I have no truck”.*

Looking through the door the farmer could see poverty ... a bare table with part of a loaf of bread and a teapot. The woman was shivering. *“The only thing I can offer you”* she said to him, *“is a cup of tea”.* And sitting there at the table of this poor, lonely, sickly old soul... this woman who had been his neighbor since childhood... whose husband's death never even left an impression on his mind...the voice came to him, for the third and final time.

“I'm calling you into the harvest”.

Now suddenly he understands.

This is the harvest!



And this was the beginning of a new life for him, for the elderly lady, and for numberless other people.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity. He called to him the twelve. (Matthew 9:35-10:1)

Now there is call on the life of every single one of us who is at all serious about following Jesus.

When Jesus calls us to follow him, he always calls us to a work. To each of us, he says.

"I'm calling you into the harvest".

When Peter fell to his knees in the boat, after the net came up loaded with fish, he said *"depart from me for I am a sinful man, oh Lord"*.

Jesus did not say "you must be born again, you got to repent and become a Christian Peter". The only thing Jesus said to him was....

"Don't be afraid, from now on you're going to be catching men".

Which was the same as to say...

"I'm sending you into the harvest".

But it's so easy to accept the fact that we've been called into the harvest of God and to rejoice in the knowledge that there is a call on us....and yet to spend or to wait half our lives going all over the place and racking our brains trying to figure out where the harvest is.

The harvest of God is a glorious thing... but... when we get up close to it, it looks so ordinary and often so repulsive.... that we miss it, we pass it right by.

Because all the harvest is... is people.



People who hurt.

People who are lost in the shuffle.

People who don't even know how to say "thank you".

People who hide their wounds and their hurt behind anger, boredom, bad habits, cynicism.

And the ones who are sent to do the harvesting are also people...

.....almost exactly the same kind of people.

People like you and me.

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

So, God takes the earthen vessel of our lives... weak and faltering as they are... fills them with the Heavenly treasure, the transcendent power of his spirit.... and sends us forth.

See the people (the Harvest) in the place where we are.... with the eyes of God

And if we will begin with the people who are right where we are...

There will be a harvest.

Specifically, Jesus is calling us to see the people in the place where we now are... with the eyes of God.

The farmer went over half the world trying to find his calling because he failed to see his nearest neighbor with the eyes of God.

And we do the same thing, we miss the needs that are right under our faces because we don't see these people with the eyes of God.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus saw these people, saw beneath their masks, saw how weak, how troubled, how helpless, how needy, and how wounded they were... and his heart went out to them with a compassion that bore their iniquities and carried their sorrows...



.... and he commands us to do the same.

Do you not say, “Four months more, then comes the harvest”? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. (John 4:35)

And as Jesus said that to his disciples in Samaria, out comes the woman he had met at the well, who was now coming with people from the town. “Look at them”.

And Jesus says the same to us right now...

“Look at them” ...

“Look at these people, see how ripe they are for the Kingdom” ...

“Where else can they turn?” ...

“If you will only look at them with my eyes” ...

“You'll soon be pouring out your life for them in my name”.

Jesus calls us to draw nearer to the people, in the place where we are ...

...with the heart of God.

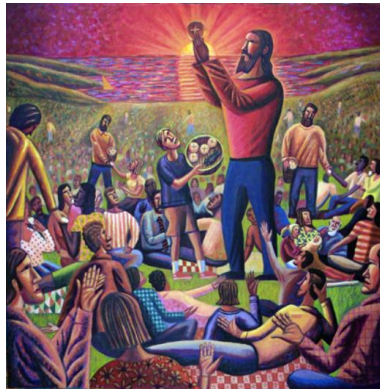
This man, the farmer, had visions of setting the world on fire for the Kingdom, yet ignored his nearest neighbor. Now how in the world is he going to have any kind of compassion for people in Brazil, if he doesn't even see the work before him and draw near with mercy to this woman.

Draw near to the people in the place where we are.... with the heart of God

And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:10-13)

Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?

He eats with them.



In other words, he doesn't draw near to them as a professional approaching a client, but he comes to them as a peer.

The physician comes down and dwells in the world of the sick... with mercy.

And if we would but draw near the people in the place wherever we are, with the heart of God, we will soon find ourselves surrounded with human anguish and human need.

You don't have to do something dramatic to develop a ministry. All you have to do is to eat with tax collectors and sinners, and before you know it, your hands are going to be fuller than you can handle.

And you'll have to cry out to God for help.

Serve the people in the place where we are ... with the patience of God.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28)

... That's what Jesus did, he ministered... he served.



He served day after day after day ... when they appreciated it and when they maligned him and despised him and rejected him. The nine others who never said thank you were still healed. Jerusalem... over which Jesus wept because of its hardness of heart was still the object of his love, it was his goal, it was going to be the place where he would lay down his life.

...good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest. (Luke 8:15b)

How else do we patiently produce a huge harvest but by serving people right where we are!

We serve whether they like us, whether they dislike us, whether they malign us, and whether they misunderstand us. Our joy is not that people appreciate us. If we seek that for our joy, we're going to be upset all our lives.

Our joy is that God has given us something to do.

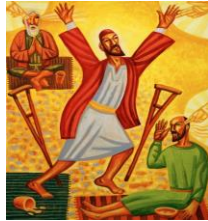


That's all.

Lift the people, by name, in the place where we are ... into the Kingdom of God.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.*



*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (Luke 4:17-19)*

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”, Jesus said...

Now the Spirit that was upon him during his days of flesh and blood ... is upon us. And when we...in him, preach good news to the poor, there *will be* a response. When we proclaim release to the captives, they receive freedom... eyes open...oppression lifts.

And the scene of the most awesome aspect of this lifting people up into the Kingdom of God, from their bondage into God's freedom, is a room where there are no crowds. In fact, where there is nobody but just you...

.... and faithfully by name, we lift these people up before God's throne.



And we do that every day. You say that's a ritual, sure, so is eating, so is sleeping. And this is a more important ritual than eating and sleeping.

No ministry will ever get to first base without it ... nor any calling God has put upon our lives... until we start to do this, until we start to intercede for people, by name. That's not just for Saint Francis of Assisi. That's for you and me.

Then when we do that, we then can go out into the world and proclaim the word God gives us to the people in the place where we are...knowing that that word will not come back empty.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity.

He called to him the twelve, then he called to him countless other people down through the centuries, and now he calls to us.

Why should he call us? Surely, not because we have the greatest potential. On the contrary, he calls us to him, to show that the heavenly treasure can do marvelous things even in such piddly earthen vessels as you and me.

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

What awesome things God will do through us....

If we will but open our eyes to the harvest right where we are.



Message: Richard E. Bieber- 1980 [Audio link to this sermon](#)
Featured Art: Courtesy of James Janknegt at bcartfarm.com

Prayer: Dear Lord, open our eyes to the harvest right where we are. Help us to hear your voice speaking to us “I’m calling you into the harvest”. Lord at this point, even if we’ve misunderstood your call into the harvest, help us to see it very clearly now. Help us to look around and really see the people who need us, who have been waiting for your hand. Help us to see with your eyes, light our hearts with compassion. Help us to draw nearer and sit down and eat with them, to truly be a part of their lives. And as we face their needs, some of them that are beyond us, we cry to you for help, for intervention, for mercy, for answers, for change, for release, for peace in the lives of these people who are beloved by you. And yes, help us to serve patiently, joyfully....no matter what....because serving in joy is where we find you. Lord, take these weak, earthen vessels and turn them into heavenly treasure filled with the life, the light, the healing of your Spirit so that we can pour it out into the fields in front of us and harvest right where we are. Amen.

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

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