

## The Kingdom is Near

June 18, 2017

Matthew 9:35-10:1

*<sup>35</sup> Jesus went to every town and village. He taught in their meeting places and preached the good news about God's kingdom. Jesus also healed every kind of disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them. They were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> He said to his disciples, "A large crop is in the fields, but there are only a few workers. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord in charge of the harvest to send out workers to bring it in" ... <sup>1</sup>As you go, announce that the kingdom of heaven will soon be here.*

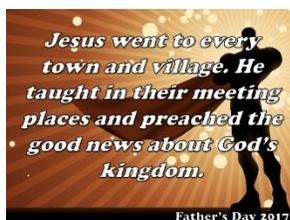


In our passage today, Jesus is found doing what Jesus most often did. He did this for a purpose and that purpose mirrors the call we have as individuals and as a church: to make new disciples for the transformation of the world. Two weeks ago, I shared the headlines from the Leadership Team and they all spoke of this same purpose in one form or another. Does anyone remember any of the three headlines? These same themes were echoed by Bishop Ough, the leader of the Dakotas Conference, in his episcopal address at Annual Conference. As I shared earlier, Bishop Ough stated that our congregations in the Dakotas Conference are "growing in our capacity to love God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world". It is very encouraging to see that what we have been talking



about here at our church is what the Bishop pointed out as positive signs that he sees in the churches of the Dakotas conference.

Our passage today begins with Jesus out in the world. Verse 35 reads,



*"Jesus went to every town and village. He taught in their meeting places and preached the good news about God's kingdom. Jesus also healed every kind of disease and sickness".* He taught people about the good news

of God's kingdom here on earth. He also cared for the people by healing them. In all His teachings and parables, Jesus was setting for us an example of how we are supposed to live as Christians. It again returns to the great commission. Go and make disciples.



As Clint referred to earlier, it is very important to know our 'why'. When we lose sight of our 'why', then our 'what' eventually becomes lost or at least muddled. In

verse 36 we hear the 'why' for Jesus. Verse 36 reads, *"When he saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them. They were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd"*. Jesus saw humanity and felt empathy and compassion for us. He was led to minister to us. When Jesus looked at the humanity around Him, He saw that we needed guidance and protection and direction – all things that a shepherd would give to his sheep. Last week at Annual Conference, Bishop Ough called this 'healing a broken world'. It involves us seeing with the eyes of Jesus and stepping out in

faith to be His hands and feet in ministry to the world. When we do this, we help the kingdom of God to draw near to those who are broken.

From here, Jesus moved on to the 'what' of our ministry. In verses 37 and 38, Jesus explained what we need to do. *"He said to his disciples, "A large crop is in the fields, but there are only a few workers.*

*Ask the Lord in charge of the harvest to send out workers to bring it in".* Out there in the world there are

many people who do not know Jesus and the good

news of salvation. Relatively speaking, yes, the workers are few. But

there are certainly more Christians today than there were in the early days

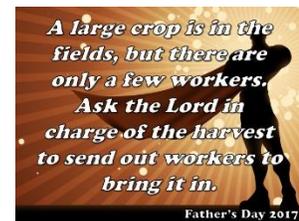
of the church. As followers of Jesus Christ, do we pray earnestly to be sent

out into the world to share our faith with nonbelievers? This is what Jesus

means when He says to *"ask the Lord of the harvest"*. If we do not go, if

we do not tell the story of Jesus and what He has done in our lives – how

will they ever come to know Him? How will they ever be saved?



Each of us has our own 'field'. For some of you it is your co-workers. For others, it is your team or club. For some it is your neighbors. For others, it is the person in the pew next to you. And for some, it is your family.

For us, the question is what does it look like to labor for God in the field in which He has placed you? What special gifts or talents has God blessed you with so that you can share the good news with those in your field?

Jesus ends this passage with these words: *“As you go, announce that the kingdom of heaven will soon be here”*. For those of us that believe, this is great news.



While we do not fear or do not wish for the end of this life, we do have hope in our eternity. For those who do not have a relationship with Jesus, the end is just that – the end. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to announce both the coming of the kingdom here on earth and to invite others to come to know Christ. As we share the love of Jesus with those in our world, we are actively bringing the kingdom of God to the places we go to as we serve and minister to the least, the lost, and the broken. As Junius Dotson and Adam Weber and Bishop Ough all shared last week at Annual Conference, this is our call as United Methodists: to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to all peoples. In doing so, we help the kingdom of God to draw near and we invite the Holy Spirit in for the transformation of the world. Let us pray.

### **GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve**

- 1) What would you tell someone if they asked you: what has Jesus done for you? How has Jesus changed your life?
- 2) Where is your mission field? Where is that God has planted you so that you can draw others nearer to the kingdom of God?
- 3) Pray for God’s guidance, discernment, and wisdom for how to “bring in” the harvest. Seek courage and strength from God!