

The Harvest Is Plentiful, but the Laborers Are Few

Good morning brothers and sisters, let us pray.

Living and loving Heavenly Father, we thank You, O Lord, for giving us this day and this time. We thank You and praise You for what You have done for us on that cross, O Lord, and the living hope that You have given to us. We thank You and praise You, O Lord, for giving us the chance to remember You and take part in the table. As we come before You today and at this time, O Lord, to meditate upon Your word, please be with us, O Lord. Open up all of our senses. Help us to listen to Your sweet, little voice. O Lord, please remember me as well. I am not worthy enough to stand here and speak about You, O Lord, but You have opened this door for me. I commit myself into Your hands. Let Your words be spoken through me, O Lord; not my understanding, not my wisdom and knowledge but Your knowledge and wisdom will be presented before us today, O Lord, through me. Use me as Your trumpet. I commit myself and this time everyone offers into Your hands. In Jesus Christ's name, I pray. Amen.

Introduction

Well, the burden that I have on my heart that I want to share today, I do not know whether it is a complicated one or a simple one, but I just want to bring it before all of you today. Every time I come here, whenever there is an opportunity for me to stand here and share the word of God, I always think, let us pick a tough topic or complicated topic. I can do this. I can talk about the specifics of this. I need to prepare this much or that much. And every time, right before two to three weeks, God comes back and tells me, you are not going to speak about that. You are going to speak about a whole different thing. This is the fourth time I am standing here, and it has happened all four times. So, I bring this burden that I have to you with a heavy heart. I feel like we need to take this seriously. And I am sure I am not as experienced as the people who are sitting in front of me or the people who have already gone before me to discuss this topic. Many saints have discussed this topic before, but I just want to bring it to your remembrance. Before going to that burden, I want to lay a foundation: a foundation that every one of us knows, a foundation that every one of us needs to remember, and a foundation that every one of us needs to understand.

The Work of God Continues

What is that foundation? The Lord Jesus Christ is the heavenly vision for us and for His church. That heavenly vision was presented to Paul on the road to Damascus, and that same heavenly vision has been presented to us through Jesus Christ when we understand what He has done on that cross. The work of redemption has been done on that cross, which is once and forever for all of us. We need to understand that the heavenly vision is for us, to transform us. We have that through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, and we have been transformed into living stones for His church. That is the heavenly vision. The work of God is to show us that heavenly vision through the Lord Jesus Christ. But the work of the Father is not complete yet. Is it

complete through the heavenly vision that Paul had seen on the road to Damascus? No, John the Apostle also had that vision on the island of Patmos. He saw something different, not different, but a continuation of what had happened on that cross. So, there is a continuation. The work is still continuing. When we look at our Lord Jesus Christ, the work of God is still going on.

And what is that work of God that is still continuing? It is the will of God that His body needs to be built up until our Lord Jesus Christ comes back for us. So, it is His will to build the church. And why does He want to build the church? It is for His Son's sake. The whole theme today, it is for His sake. From the beginning of the Word, when the brother opened the Word today, for whose sake we have been presenting, it is for His Son's sake. And this church has to be presented to the Lord Jesus Christ as His bride. It is for His sake. And that is the will of God, and that is the continuation of the work. As far as the work of redemption, it was finished when Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross. I am just reiterating again, and the work of the church is still continuing. And that is the heavenly vision we also need to consider.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has been taking care of us here on earth as Christians. He is our intercessor. As we have seen, Abraham interceded for Lot, and many have interceded for us in our personal lives. Even Jesus Christ, sitting at the right hand of the throne, is interceding for us. He is not only interceding for us; He is also our high priest, sitting at the right hand of God. This Christ needs to be expressed through the continuous work of the Lord on this earth, which is the church. So, what I want to mention or lay the foundation for is that we have a heavenly vision that is still continuing and needs to be represented through the church, because that is the will of God. This church has to be presented as a full-fledged bride to His Son. That is the foundation we all need to remember.

Love and Good Works

As we present this church to Christ, the work has to continue. What is that work? My intention today is to bring this before you to express what that work could be. As I mentioned earlier, we may have heard about this work many times, but I want to bring it again before you today. My intention in doing so is because of these verses. I want to encourage everyone through the love of God and the Word of God. I want to stir everyone up through the love of God and the Word of God.

Let us turn our Bibles to Hebrews 10:23-25. This is what I intend to do today. This is my intention: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." So, my intention is to encourage one another and stir up one another. The reason is that the day is drawing near. The more we encourage one another in love and good works of the Lord, the better. It is better to gather together and encourage one another for love and good works because the day is drawing near.

Now how do I want to encourage love and good works? How do I want to do that? I want to bring before you a practical representation of what I want to do. So, for that practical representation, let us work together while I present this in front of you.

The Wrath of God Upon the Unrepentant

Human Beings in The Winepress

So, let us take a moment. What you all can see here are grapes, a bunch of grapes. These are really sweet if we eat them. They can be used in many ways, especially in the Bible. When we try to use them there are many representations for grapes. But one exact point I want to bring before you all are that I want to crush these grapes as much as I can. Imagine you have lots and lots of grapes, vines of grapes. What do you try to do with that many grapes? Either you eat them or you press them in a wine press and extract the wine out of it and drink it. Today, what I want to do is the second part. I just want to crush them. Imagine this little stone is the wine press and this is the whole bunch of grapes. Let us see what happens if I crush them. If I crush them as hard as I can, what happens? The juice comes out, and it turns into wine as much as possible. I am not that strong; it cannot turn into wine right now. But at least I am trying. I am just trying to represent it here. So, if I crush this, what happens to it? It is all crushed and mushy. See, the juice is flowing out of it.

What happens if there are human beings in place of these grapes and human beings are being crushed like this? Can you see that? Can you imagine what happened? Will you be able to see it, witness it? When human beings are crushed like this in a winepress, what happens? The blood flows out like wine. Do you think that same thing has been represented in the Bible?

Let us turn our Bibles to Revelation chapter 14. And I am glad that we sang that song at the end of worship, Maranatha. So, it is really important for us to remember this when we are singing that song as well. Let us turn our Bibles to Revelation 14:14-20. I will read. And this is why I want to represent this in a practical way. Because you need to understand the seriousness of what is happening in these verses. So let us read it together, Revelation 14: 14-20.

“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” So, he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, “Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.” So, the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the

great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia."

The Two Harvests

Now do you understand why I want to represent this? Who is being crushed here in the wrath of God? Who is being crushed here? There are two types of harvest here. One is by the grace of God; we are in the first harvest. I am really sure about it. I mean, there are different ways of representing the first harvest. I just do not want to go into the details of it or the different representations of it because that is not the point I want to make here. But we are in the first harvest. Thank God for that.

But what about the second harvest? Look around, people. How many of the people we know are bound to be in God's wrath, who are going to be crushed like grapes, and their blood is going to flow outside the city of Jerusalem? Are you ready to see it? Are you ready to see it all? No, I am not ready. When we are singing that song, all I can see is, "Lord, I am not ready to see my loved ones crushed." Look around. How many are bound to be crushed like this in God's wrath? Our families, our friends, our neighbors, our colleagues. How many people are there just in your community who do not know about the Lord Jesus Christ? For clarification, if anyone does not understand why I am saying: people are going to be crushed because their way is not according to God's way. We saw Lot was bound to be dead or destroyed in the fire. But what happened? Abraham interceded for Lot. In the same way, there are many people in this world who are bound to be destroyed in God's wrath.

The Responsibility of the Church

So, should we neglect them, saying that I am in the first harvest, I do not care about them? Or, I cannot do anything about it because it is their choice? Should we neglect them? Or should we say that they are bound to be punished and I cannot do anything, the Lord will take His course? The Lord will take His course at some time. Whenever the Lord comes, He loves everyone. He is going to save everyone. Can we say that? No. Or should we say there is a lot of time to reap that harvest and say there is a lot of time for them to be saved? The Lord's coming can be delayed, and they can be saved when the time comes, and we continue with our own lives. Do we want to say that? I do not want to say it. Do we want to say that? No, because we never know when the Lord is going to come. He can come at the next minute. Then what is going to happen to all of those people if He comes in the next minute? We are here praising the Lord that we are going to be with Him. But what is going to happen to those people who do not know about the Lord and who are around us? We cannot say that there is time for the harvest, that there is time for the Lord's coming. We cannot be sure about it because Lord Jesus did not say that.

The Fields Are White for Harvest

Let us turn our Bibles to John 4:34-38. "Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields

are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.'” So, what the Lord is saying is that there are not yet four months. There is no time. We have seen in Hebrews that the day is drawing near. We need to understand that the harvest is ready. The day is drawing near. There are so many people who need to receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what should we do? We say that the conditions outside the church are very tough. People are not open to listening to what we want to share. It is really difficult to share the gospel with them. Then what is happening at Emporia? LifeWise Academy is a living testimony right in front of us. People are receiving the Lord with open hearts. Kids receive the Lord with open hearts. What is happening in South Africa, in the Middle East? What is happening in India, in Asian countries, in China, in secret churches? It is not difficult. Even in the States, the harvest is ready. Here in the United States, everywhere in the world, the harvest is ready. We cannot say that there are difficult situations. Yes, there are difficult situations all the time. The first-century believers and apostles faced those difficult situations. Have you read “Tortured for Christ?” Richard Wurmbrand, during the Second World War, what he had to go through in the secret churches in Russia, in Europe, in Germany—the harvest was plentiful at that time too. It is not just us who will be facing difficult situations. The harvest is ready right now. But there is something lacking.

The Laborers Are Few

Let us turn our Bibles to Matthew 9:35-38. We see that the harvest is now; it is not sometime in the future. And we see the harvest is plentiful. But there is one thing that is lacking. Let me read Matthew 9:35-38. “And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. 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; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”” What is the issue? Laborers are few.

Seeing from God’s Perspective

And as I said in the beginning, the heavenly vision for the church is to build up the body. So, it is not just about the believers who are actually coming into the church. It is not only about them; it is also about the new ones being added to the church, I mean the universal church, wherever they are—not just here in this fellowship house. So, the harvest is required to build His body. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. To continue the Father's work on this earth until Christ returns, we, as believers, should become those laborers who go out and harvest the people who are ready to be harvested. God is calling us to be His co-workers for this harvest. God is calling us to leave the cares of this world, which are dragging us down, so that we can go out into this world and proclaim the gospel.

It is not just about coming to the fellowship, spending time around the Lord's table, and worshiping the Lord; those are all important. But there is another part as well that Jesus Christ Himself is doing here, which is proclaiming the Gospel. In these verses, it says, I think in verse thirty-five, "And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction," and having compassion for the crowds. So, the Gospel needs to be preached to this world. We, as individuals and as a church, need to share and proclaim the good news as well, like Jesus is doing. Teaching is important, serving with compassion is important, but proclaiming the gospel to the people who do not know about the Lord Jesus Christ is most important because it is not the Lord's plan to destroy anyone.

In II Peter 3:9, it says, "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." It is the Lord's plan and will to save each and every one of the human beings that He has created. He does not want to send anyone into that God's wrath. So, who does He want to use? He wants to use His church. Who is His church? We are His church. We are the individuals who need to come out of our comfort zone to accomplish the will of the Lord. We need to come out of our comfort zone, and we need to be ready to go into this world and face difficult situations. I am not saying we all will face them, and I am also not intending to say that none of us is doing the work of the Lord or sharing the gospel outside the church. No, we are all doing it. We hear the testimonies every time we get a chance to share with the people we can. But we also need to go out as a church to share that gospel because it is the responsibility of the church to share the gospel.

We need to stop worrying about the cares of this world, especially the younger generation. I mean, if we look at the younger generation today, what are you concentrating on? Let us consider proclaiming the testimony of Jesus Christ to the people who do not know about it. Let us try to go out and work for the kingdom of the Lord. That is really important to add people into that kingdom of the Lord. That is what the apostles did in Acts as well. In the Acts of the Apostles, no one stayed back, and no one was afraid of the things they were facing. We are reading Acts now in our fellowship Bible studies, and we are seeing people going out and putting themselves in danger to share the gospel. Not just the apostles in Acts, there are people who have gone before us: Brother Kaung, Brother Bakht Singh, Brother Nee—they all put themselves out into this world. They were not afraid to face any difficulties.

Challenge to the Church

A Song of Challenge

So, when I was meditating upon this message that has been given or the thought that has been given to me by the Lord, I remembered one song that I always listen to. It always challenges me. I thought this was for individual introspection or examination. But when I was preparing for this, the Lord revealed that this is the responsibility of the church, and it is His heavenly vision that the work of the church has to be done. I wanted to read that song to every one of you. It was in Telugu, and I tried to translate it. Some of the brothers and sisters might know it: Sakshimi, Nibali, Arpanedi. I tried to translate it, and I will read

it through, and you will understand what the apostles had to go through and what our responsibility is in this world and how we need to be. What type of responsibility do we need to take upon ourselves?

So, I always thought about this song, which challenges an individual believer. But this can be a song for the church as well. We need to realize it is for the church, and through the church, it is for each one of us. Let me read them, and you can read them from there as well.

“What is your testimony? What is your sacrificial offering? Having accepted the Lord Jesus, why do you still slumber? Having accepted the Lord Jesus, why do you still delay? Awake, arise. Come, O believer. In the days of the apostles, amidst the pressure of tribulations, enduring all things, they won souls for the kingdom. They were stoned; they were cut in two. Having received the heavenly vision, they proclaimed the gospel. They were beaten with scourges. They were cast into dungeons. Yet the shackles of the prison could not hinder them. As a living sacrifice, they fulfilled the service of the Lord. The gospel prevailed, and the church was established. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Jesus is calling you. Will you cast aside the Lord's call? I offer myself, spirit, soul, and body. Taking up my cross, I will follow Thee.”

Our Responsibility as Laborers

So, we have seen what the apostles went through. Here, the writer is also saying the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Are we ready to put ourselves in the shoes of the apostles? I am not saying that we are apostles; we are the saints of the Lord, and the same privilege has been given to us. The Lord Jesus Christ is in us. He wants us to represent Him to this world.

Now, looking at all of this, we understand that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. How can we, as a church or as individuals, serve like the apostles for the work of the Lord and for building up His body? How can we do that? The first thing I want to bring before you is to let us examine ourselves by asking the questions that we read in Matthew 9:35.

Let us examine if there is anything missing from what Jesus did in Matthew 9:35. He taught, He proclaimed the gospel, He had compassion, and He healed. Now, when we hear “healing,” we can think that it is physical healing, but it can also be spiritual. The Lord can use us in someone's life for spiritual healing as well. When we pray, actual physical healing can occur as well. What I want to emphasize is that the harvest needs shepherds, teachers, and evangelists to counsel people, to teach the Word of God, and to proclaim the gospel.

Equipping the Church

Let us turn our Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4 and try to understand what the Bible wants us to do as the body of Christ to accomplish the work of the Lord. When we are challenged in life through some circumstances, or when we try to examine ourselves to see if we are actually accomplishing the will of God, our hearts tend to get discouraged.

We tend to think that we are not doing enough as human beings, as individuals of the Lord. But the beauty of the Lord is that He said, "Do not look at yourself; you need to look at Me." In Ephesians 4:7 it says, "But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." So, we do not need to depend on our own strength to do all of this work for the Lord. The Lord's grace has already been given to us. We do not need to worry about all those things. We do not need to get discouraged. We do not need to think, "I am not doing this, I am not doing that." We just need to look unto the Lord and ask Him, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Because His grace has been given to us, and not only His grace, the Lord also gave us His gifts.

Let us read verses 11-12. It says, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." So, God has already given these gifts to the people of the church, to the people of the body. God has already selected or placed you in a particular position, giving you a gift to preach, to counsel someone, to proclaim the Gospel as an evangelist. It is not about holding positions like "I am the pastor of this church," or "I am the elder of this church," or "I am leading this group Bible study," or "I have leadership over them." It is not about that. It is about proclaiming or showing the love of God and the works of the Lord to other people. These gifts have been given to each and every one of us. Through those gifts, we are called to be in these roles to equip the saints for the work of ministry. It is not only about us learning from our elders, but it is also about us teaching our younger ones wherever we go, because having been equipped with these gifts, we can go out and proclaim; we can be laborers and co-workers for the Lord's kingdom.

So, we all need to understand, and we all need to ask God, "Lord, what is my gift in the body?" It is not just about preaching or leading a Bible study, but it is also about working for His kingdom wherever there is a need. It is about having compassion; it is about serving those who are needy. We all need to ask God and know what our gifts are, what spiritual gifts He provided for us. He will equip us for the ministry and for the work of the body of Christ. When we are trying to do that, when we realize or examine ourselves and when we try to go to the Lord to gain understanding about this, we will be tossed about because of the temptations of this world. Satan will be ready to come and disturb us, to take us away from the Lord. We do not need to worry about all of that as well - Satan's craftiness or deceitfulness - because the Lord Jesus Christ is already there for us, protecting us.

And what is the outcome of all these things for the church or for the individual? It is for the building up of the body of the church. The body builds itself up if the whole church comes together and equips itself for the ministry of the work of the Lord through Lord Jesus Christ. So let us read Ephesians 4:15-16. "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." So, the body builds itself up in love if the work of the Lord is for the body of Christ. We want to work

towards it as a church and as individuals, as children of God. If any of these things are missing among the church—teaching, proclaiming the Gospel, healing, serving with compassion—then the work of the Lord is hindered in His church. We need to understand there is a need for all of these things in this world. The work of the church must be whole; it should not be in fragments.

Conclusion

So, what we saw today is that there is a heavenly vision of the Lord, and it is still continuing until the Lord comes. There is work for the church to accomplish as long as we are in this world. The heavenly vision continues today, and the work of the Lord is accomplished through His church. We also saw that the day was drawing near. There is not much time. There are not four months for us to think it can happen in the future. The harvest is now. The harvest is plentiful, and if it is not reaped, it is bound for destruction. We saw in Revelation chapter 14 that the people we love, the people we see, are bound to be crushed under God's wrath. We, as a church, are His body called to be His co-workers for His work to be accomplished. So let us examine ourselves. If we are missing anything in the things we have seen now, anything we are not doing, let us ask God to show those things to us. Let us examine ourselves and come out of our comfort zones while we are in this world and try to work towards building His body as a whole and not in fragments.

Now, where can we start? The first thing we can do is pray. Matthew 9:38 is what Jesus Christ has asked us to do. That is the first thing we can do: “Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” That is all we can do as a starting point. But we can also examine ourselves as a church and then as children of God. Lord, what do You want us to do? What is our gift? Where do You want to use us? How can we be a testimony to this world? And how can we bring the people who do not know about You out of that, so they will not be part of that harvest who are bound to be crushed?

Let us pray.

Living and loving Heavenly Father, we thank You, O Lord, for giving us this day and this time. We thank You and praise You for showing us that there is much harvest in this world that is ready to be reaped, that is ready to be harvested. O Lord, we pray that we will be Your co-workers; that we will work with You as Your co-workers and be those laborers who can reap that harvest. O Lord if we look at ourselves as individuals, as human beings, we are weak. But, O Lord, we can find strength in You. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We commit ourselves into Your hands. Help us to look unto this burden, O Lord, take this burden seriously, and work for Your kingdom and the work that You had intended for the church, O Lord. We commit every one of us into Your hands. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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