LORD, SPEAK TO ME THAT I MAY SPEAK

Words of encouragement, comfort and hope preached by Dr John Thiel, Pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, cnr Charles and Florence Sts, Murray Bridge

Basis: Matthew 9:35-10:8
Date: Sunday 12th June, 2005 (4 a P)

1. The great potential harvest

I don’t know what the populations of Israel’s towns and cities was in Jesus’ time. I imagine it was pretty sparse compared with some of the huge mega-cities in the world today.

As Jesus went through the cities and villages and saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said, “The harvest is plentiful.”

Jesus saw many people. He knew that every one of these people was basically built the same way. They had to cope with sin and sickness and death. In these people he saw huge potential. He could see thousands of them coming into God’s kingdom so that when they died they would enter the kingdom of heaven.

He had come to suffer and die so that by faith people could be part of that harvest. Instead of death being the end of their lives, it would be the great graduation into eternal life. The harvest was indeed plentiful.

2. The few labourers

There is a serious problem, however. It’s like problem facing some of our Australian fruit-growers. Locally our paper advertises for orange-pickers, lettuce-cutters, grape-pickers and meat-workers. The harvest is plentiful, but there are no enough workers.

Jesus knows that a crowd of people does not by itself make a harvest for eternal life. The people must be reached with the Good News and they must continue to be taught the Good News.

Jesus needs parents to teach and lead their children. He needs parents who place top priority on their children’s Christian faith. He needs parents who read Bible stories and devotions to their children, who teach their children to say grace before and after meals, to read the Bible privately and to pray. Lord of the harvest, send out such labourers into your harvest!

Jesus needs people who are willing to talk about their faith in the course of their daily lives. From our leaders in Parliament House to the unemployed we need people who will pray for opportunities to share their Christian faith with others. We need people who can present the contents of
their faith well. We need people who want to tell others about Jesus Christ. Lord of the harvest, send out such labourers into your harvest!

Jesus needs evangelists. He needs people who are specially gifted and specially trained to tell the Good News to others. These people are very valuable in bringing in the harvest. Lord of the harvest, send out such labourers into your harvest!

Jesus needs pastors. Many denominations are suddenly becoming short of pastors, and the LCA is no exception. Only two men have enrolled in first year at Australian Lutheran College this year. Lord of the harvest, send out such labourers into your harvest!

3. **We ask that God will use even us**

   **(1) Lord speak to me**

   He calls each one of us to remain in his harvest. He calls us to keep listening to his word. We want each one of us to be there when the saints go marching in. One hymn puts it beautifully, “Lord, speak to me.”

   **(2) That I may speak**

   As the Lord speaks to us and keeps us in the Kingdom of God, a side benefit is that he equips us to speak to others. We humbly ask that God would speak to us so that we can speak to others in loving echoes of his voice.

   The hymn goes on, “O lead me Lord, that I may lead.” The last verse begins “O use me Lord, use even me.” I am not worthy. But God deigns to use me in his service. If that is his will, I will serve him with all my heart and soul. Use me Lord, use even me!

   The constitution of all LCA congregations states that one of the central aims of the congregation is “to enable the members to reach out into the community in their daily lives and in their congregational activities as bearers of the Gospel.”

4. **The labourers gathered with an hour to go**

   Jesus told another harvest and labourer story about a man who needed labourers to gather in his harvest. He gained some at dawn, he found others during the day, and he hired some with only an hour to go. He was pleased to have as many as possible at work in his harvest.

   You may not have many years of labouring left, but God is pleased to use you. And the situation is urgent. Each day that passes is a day that is too late for someone to hear the Good News.

5. **The labourer who changed his mind and went**
In another harvest and labourer story Jesus told about a man who first said, “No, I’m not going to help with the harvest”, but later he changed his mind and went. Jesus was pleased with this person too.

You may have constantly said, “No” to God’s appeals for labourers, but he will still be glad if you change your mind and go.

6. **We pray for labourers**

   The world is growing at high speed. There are mega-cities with up to 35 million people. Jesus sees and loves every person in these great cities. He loves everyone in Murray Bridge. If Jesus said it then, how much more would he say it now, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into the harvest”?

7. **Thousands of words**

   Every day we speak thousands of words. What are our thousands of words made up of? There are many words spoken doing our work and doing our business. There are words spoken in general discussion. There are words between friends. There are words about entertainment and sport. How many words do we use in praising God, in prayer, and in telling others about Jesus Christ?

8. **You can take them with you**

   How many times are we reminded that you can’t take things with you when you die? A person who lives extravagantly will say, “I might was well spend up big. You can’t take it with you.”

   Someone told me recently about a man who loved his money. He wanted to take it with him. So his wife left a cheque in his grave, saying, “When you can cash the cheque, you are welcome to the money!”

   There is something you can take with you. It is the people who believe in Jesus Christ as a result of your witness. They will be there with you to celebrate in eternal life.

9. **Lord, speak to me that I may speak**

   Lord, speak to me, so that I am part of the great harvest. Lord, also speak to me, that I may speak in living echoes of your voice. I want others to come into that harvest also. Amen.