

Ninth Lesson. 'Pray the Lord of the Harvest;' Or, Prayer Provides Labourers

by Andrew Murray

Andrew Murray emphasizes the critical role of prayer in sending forth labourers for the harvest, urging believers to respond with compassion and faith.

Scripture: Matthew 9:37

Topics: "Compassion for the Lost", "Prayer"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the critical need for prayer in the context of the abundant harvest and the scarcity of laborers, urging believers to earnestly seek the Lord of the harvest to send forth workers. He reflects on Jesus' compassion for the lost and the necessity of prayer as a means to fulfill God's work on earth. Murray challenges Christians to recognize their role in interceding for laborers, highlighting that the success of the harvest depends on their prayers. He calls for a deeper understanding of the power of prayer and the importance of being moved by compassion for the perishing. Ultimately, he encourages believers to embrace their responsibility in prayer, believing that God will respond to their petitions for laborers.

Transcript

'Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.'--Matt. ix. 37-38.

THE Lord frequently taught His disciples that they must pray, and how; but seldom what to pray. This he left to their sense of need, and the leading of the Spirit. But here we have one thing He expressly enjoins them to remember: in view of the plenteous harvest, and the need of reapers, they must cry to the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers. Just as in the parable of the friend at midnight, He would have them understand that prayer is not to be selfish; so here it is the power through which blessing can come to others. The Father is Lord of the harvest; when we pray for the Holy Spirit, we must pray for Him to prepare and send forth labourers for the work.

Strange, is it not, that He should ask His disciples to pray for this? And could He not pray Himself? And would not one prayer of His avail more than a thousand of theirs? And God, the Lord of the harvest, did He not see the need? And would not He, in His own good time, send forth labourers without their prayer? Such questions lead us up to the deepest mysteries of prayer, and its power in the Kingdom of God. The

answer to such questions will convince us that prayer is indeed a power, on which the ingathering of the harvest and the coming of the Kingdom do in very truth depend.

Prayer is no form or show. The Lord Jesus was Himself the truth; everything He spake was the deepest truth. It was when (see ver. 36) 'He saw the multitude, and was moved with compassion on them, because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd,' that He called on the disciples to pray for labourers to be sent among them. He did so because He really believed that their prayer was needed, and would help. The veil which so hides the invisible world from us was wonderfully transparent to the holy human soul of Jesus. He had looked long and deep and far into the hidden connection of cause and effect in the spirit world. He had marked in God's Word how, when God called men like Abraham and Moses, Joshua and Samuel and Daniel, and given them authority over men in His name, He had at the same time given them authority and right to call in the powers of heaven to their aid as they needed them. He knew that as to these men of old, and to Himself for a time, here upon earth, the work of God had been entrusted, so it was now about to pass over into the hands of His disciples. He knew that when this work should be given in charge to them, it would not be a mere matter of form or show, but that on them, and their being faithful or unfaithful, the success of the work would actually depend. As a single individual, within the limitations of a human body and a human life, Jesus feels how little a short visit can accomplish among these wandering sheep He sees around Him, and He longs for help to have them properly cared for. And so He tells His disciples now to begin and pray, and, when they have taken over the work from Him on earth, to make this one of the chief petitions in their prayer: That the Lord of the harvest Himself would send forth labourers into His harvest. The God who entrusted them with the work, and made it to so large extent dependent on them, gives them authority to apply to Him for labourers to help, and makes the supply dependent on their prayer.

How little Christians really feel and mourn the need of labourers in the fields of the world so white to the harvest. And how little they believe that our labour-supply depends on prayer, that prayer will really provide 'as many as he needeth.' Not that the dearth of labour is not known or discussed. Not that efforts are not sometimes put forth to supply the want. But how little the burden of the sheep wandering without a Shepherd is really borne in the faith that the Lord of the harvest will, in answer to prayer, send forth the labourers, and in the solemn conviction that without this prayer fields ready for reaping will be left to perish. And yet it is so. So wonderful is the surrender of His work into the hands of His Church, so dependent has the Lord made Himself on them as His body, through whom alone His work can be done, so real is the power which the Lord gives His people to exercise in heaven and earth, that the number of the labourers and the measure of the harvest does actually depend upon their prayer.

Solemn thought! O why is it that we do not obey the injunction of the Master more heartily, and cry more earnestly for labourers? There are two reasons for this. The one is: We miss the compassion of Jesus, which gave rise to this request for prayer. When believers learn that to love their neighbours as themselves, that to live entirely for God's glory in their fellow-men, is the Father's first commandment to His redeemed ones, they will accept of the perishing ones as the charge entrusted to them by their Lord. And, accepting them not only as a field of labour, but as the objects of loving care and interest, it will not be long before compassion towards the hopelessly perishing will touch their heart, and the cry ascend with an earnestness till then unknown: Lord! send labourers. The other reason for the neglect of the command, the want of faith, will then make itself felt, but will be overcome as our pity pleads for help. We believe too little in the power of prayer to bring about definite results. We do not live close enough to God, and are not enough entirely given up to His service and Kingdom, to be capable of the confidence that He will give it in

answer to our prayer. O let us pray for a life so one with Christ, that His compassion may stream into us, and His Spirit be able to assure us that our prayer avails.

Such prayer will ask and obtain a twofold blessing. There will first be the desire for the increase of men entirely given up to the service of God. It is a terrible blot upon the Church of Christ that there are times when actually men cannot be found for the service of the Master as ministers, missionaries, or teachers of God's Word. As God's children make this a matter of supplication for their own circle or Church, it will be given. The Lord Jesus is now Lord of the harvest. He has been exalted to bestow gifts--the gifts of the Spirit. His chief gifts are men filled with the Spirit. But the supply and distribution of the gifts depend on the co-operation of Head and members. It is just prayer will lead to such co-operation; the believing suppliants will be stirred to find the men and the means for the work.

The other blessing to be asked will not be less. Every believer is a labourer; not one of God's children who has not been redeemed for service, and has not his work waiting. It must be our prayer that the Lord would so fill all His people with the spirit of devotion, that not one may be found standing idle in the vineyard. Wherever there is a complaint of the want of helpers, or of fit helpers in God's work, prayer has the promise of a supply. There is no Sunday school or district visiting, no Bible reading or rescue work, where God is not ready and able to provide. It may take time and importunity, but the command of Christ to ask the Lord of the harvest is the pledge that the prayer will be heard: 'I say unto you, he will arise and give him as many as he needeth.'

Solemn, blessed thought! this power has been given us in prayer to provide in the need of the world, to secure the servants for God's work. The Lord of the harvest will hear. Christ, who called us so specially to pray thus, will support our prayers offered in His name and interest. Let us set apart time and give ourselves to this part of our intercessory work. It will lead us into the fellowship of that compassionate heart of His that led Him to call for our prayers. It will elevate us to the insight of our regal position, as those whose will counts for something with the great God in the advancement of His Kingdom. It will make us feel how really we are God's fellow-workers on earth, to whom a share in His work has in downright earnest been entrusted. It will make us partakers in the soul travail, but also in the soul satisfaction of Jesus, as we know how, in answer to our prayer, blessing has been given that otherwise would not have come.

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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Blessed Lord! Thou hast this day again given us another of Thy wondrous lessons to learn. We humbly ask Thee, O give us to see aright the spiritual realities of which Thou hast been speaking. There is the harvest which is so large, and perishing, as it waits for sleepy disciples to give the signal for labourers to come. Lord, teach us to look out upon it with a heart moved with compassion and pity. There are the labourers, so few. Lord, show us how terrible the sin of the want of prayer and faith, of which this is the token. And there is the Lord of the harvest, so able and ready to send them forth. Lord, show us how He does indeed wait for the prayer to which He has bound His answer. And there are the disciples, to whom the commission to pray has been given: Lord, show us how Thou canst pour down Thy Spirit and breathe upon them, so that Thy compassion and the faith in Thy promise shall rouse them to unceasing, prevailing prayer.

O our Lord! we cannot understand how Thou canst entrust such work and give such power to men so slothful and unfaithful. We thank Thee for all whom Thou art teaching to cry day and night for labourers to be sent forth. Lord, breathe Thine own Spirit on all Thy children, that they may learn to live for this one thing alone--the Kingdom and glory of their Lord--and become fully awake to the faith of what their prayer can accomplish. And let all our hearts in this, as in every petition, be filled with the assurance that prayer, offered in loving faith in the living God, will bring certain and abundant answer. Amen.

Source:

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