

Helping Our Father

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the urgency of responding to God's call during harvest time, urging believers to actively participate in sharing the Gospel and helping those in need.

Duration: 34:53

Scripture: Proverbs 10:5, Matthew 9:36-38, John 4:35, 2 Corinthians 11:23, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Harvest"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being a shepherd to those who are knocked down and unable to get up in life. He shares personal experiences of feeling brokenhearted and having bad days, highlighting the need for someone to come alongside and provide spiritual nourishment. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus saw people as harassed and in need of guidance, protection, and nourishment. He encourages believers to actively participate in the harvest by working hard and asking God to send out more workers into the field.

Transcript

I'd like everybody to turn in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs, chapter 10, verse 5. The name of this message is called, Helping Father. Helping Father. By the way, can I give you a tip about when you read Proverbs? Don't read Proverbs fast.

You can read other books kind of quickly, verses, but you can't read Proverbs quickly. Every proverb, you have to stop and meditate on it. Amen? How many have found that, right? Because you got to analyze it.

So here's Proverbs, chapter 10, verse 5, from the new King James. He who gathers in summer is a wise son. He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame or is a disgrace.

He who gathers in summer is a wise son. He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame. And then, in Matthew, chapter 9, it says this, in verse 36, but when he saw the multitudes, Jesus, when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd.

And then he said to his disciples, the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Let's look at that from the NIV.

I read from the new King James. So let's just look at it quickly. Proverbs 10, 5, from the NIV.

Let's say it out loud together. Ready? He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son. And then in Matthew 9, we read this, Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them. That means he was stirred to his heart, literally in the Greek, because they were harassed and helpless. This is much better than the King James and the new King James.

Harassed means that they were, it actually means the cutting of the skin. The word literally means the cutting of the skin. And it happens when sheep wander and go among the brambles and the thorns and the sharp rocks, and they're all cut up.

And then that next adjective, they were harassed and helpless. That word means to be knocked down and not be able to get up. Have you ever think of that, a sheep? Anybody ever been around some sheep? I once laid down in a field with my wife and just watched sheep in the English countryside years ago.

They're so peaceful, but they're so defenseless. And a sheep being knocked down, not able to get up, that's how we saw the people, like sheep without a shepherd. And then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

Then he doesn't say start a Bible school or train them, that's all important in its place. Notice what he says to do because of the, it's basically in the Greek, it's this, harvest great, workers few. They've added the other words to keep it more flowing.

Harvest great, workers few. Ask the Lord of the harvest. That's strange.

If God wants to send out more people, just won't he send them out? No. It says here that our part is to ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field. It's the first time I'm revisiting this verse for 10 years.

On Monday night, September 10th, 2001, I had dinner with my friend, my late friend from Portland, Oregon. He and his wife went out with Carol and I. We had a meal. I drank no coffee.

I ate nothing that should have disturbed my digestive system. Went home and I went to bed at about quarter to 11. I couldn't sleep.

This was Monday night. Hour went on, trying to check my body, listen to my body, no caffeine because the way I'm made right now, if I have a cup of coffee, I don't drink coffee at all, I drink just in decaf, but if I have a cup of coffee at six o'clock at night, I'm up. Anybody like that? Caffeine affects you? Yeah.

So after about an hour, I got up and I said, well, maybe the Lord has me up for a reason. So I went and walked into my study and I opened my Bible and I began to read and pray. And then I said, okay, now it's time to go to bed.

It's 1230 or something. I went and laid down at 1230 and I can't sleep. About 45 minutes of laying there, it's 115 and I realized I'm up for a reason, but I don't know what it is.

So I go back into my study and I open my Bible and I begin to pray and I begin to pace around in the house and just pray and say, God, why are you keeping me up? I know you're keeping me up. What do

you want to say to me? And of all the verses in the Bible that I read that night, this was the verse that God settled me on. Proverbs 10 verse five, he who gathers crops in the summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps at harvest time is a disgraceful son.

And all I could think of is harvest time. I'm thinking of harvest time at two in the morning. I'm thinking of harvest time and praying about it at three in the morning, four in the morning, 4.30, five, 5.30, six.

I'm just walking around my house, sitting, praying, standing, sitting, kneeling, whatever. I'm just walking around saying, harvest time, what are you saying to me? Why have you not let me sleep tonight? Because God can keep you up sometimes. How many have ever been kept up by God for some reason? And can I remind you all that whenever that happens, it's very important to be sensitive and alert and awake to whatever the spirit of God wants to say or do in your life.

It got to six o'clock in the morning. I remember then laying back down and I think my clock next to my pillow there said 6.17 or something. That's the last time I remember.

I probably fell asleep around 6.30 in the morning. I slept for just a couple hours and then 9.11 unfolded. I don't want to go into that day, but we all remember it.

And then I realized that God was telling me it's harvest time. We can forget so easily that it's harvest time. And I want to represent our Father, which art in heaven.

I want to represent him today and make an appeal to you. We talk a lot about what God has done for us, what God wants to do for us, and it's all true. And we couldn't say it enough, but I want to now address something to you a little bit different because there are passages in scripture which don't just make promises what God wants to do for us, but it asks us to respond to what he's already done for us.

Now the picture here is of two sons. Let's put them in the same family. The father obviously is a farmer.

The agricultural picture is used often in scripture. Jesus told parables about sowers going out to sow seed. Agriculture was the main thing.

There were no manufacturing cities, no factories. There were some tradesmen, but everyone knew stories about the farm. And in this proverb, there's a father who has a farm, and it's harvest time.

You know, not every month is harvest time. I worked one summer when I was 16 years old, 15, 16 years old, a very important summer in my life out in a dairy farm in Wisconsin, which was run by my wife's uncles. I had never been out in the Midwest.

I had never worked on the farm. They're kicking me out of bed at five o'clock in the morning, working hard out in the field during the day. And I learned from listening to the farmers, you know, it's not harvest time in January.

It's not harvest time in December. It's not harvest time in February or March. There's planting time.

There's a time to break up the ground. There's a time to sow the seed. And then you have to wait, and then you have to depend on the sun and the rain to do their job.

And then there's a moment when the corn is ready, the wheat is ready. Last time I was at the prison, I was riding in an SUV with the warden down in Louisiana, and he has a degree in agriculture, oddly, and yet

he's maybe the most famous warden now in America. And we're riding on an SUV.

The prison takes up as much more, it's larger than the island of Manhattan. And we're riding, and there's big cornfields there. And he just jumps off the road and goes down an embankment I was holding on for dear life, and he just makes like a little papa wheelie, like that, next to the corn.

He says, get out, pastor. I jump out, and he walks into the cornfields, and he says, see this corn? This corn is ready. It's harvest time.

I said, really? He said, yeah, I'll prove it to you. I'm going to give you some now to eat. So I only know buy corn, boil it, and eat it.

How many love corn on the cob like I do? Oh, I love corn on the cob. Come on, wave your hand if you love corn on the cob. How could you not like corn on the cob with butter dripping off and everything? Yeah.

So he takes the corn off the stalk and pulls it down the sheath, and he says, pulls it down, he starts eating it, just right there. And I went, whoa. He says, no, have some yourself.

Takes another one, pulls it down. He says, eat it. And I felt funny.

I said, aren't you supposed to cook it or do something? He said, I told you, it's harvest time. And I, oh, it was so sweet. It was so good.

I was eating raw corn in a field in Louisiana. That's a long way from Brooklyn, right? So now two sons are part of the home where the father is the farmer. And now the Proverbs compares the two sons.

It says one is a wise son. The other one is a disgraceful son. That tells us that you could be in the family but be a disgrace.

Just because you're a son doesn't mean you can't be a disgraceful son. That's an interesting thought. And the other son is a wise son.

The father's proud of him. Why? Because he puts his shoulder to the wheel and he goes out and he works in the fields. Remember now, no tractors, nothing like that.

There's a lot more manual back in that day. And this son realizes what season it is. And whatever else is going on in his life, he understands there's a small window of opportunity to harvest.

So I'm going to go out and I'm going to work in the fields, but it's hot. I know, but it's harvest time. But don't you have a little pain in your hip from that fall you took? Yeah, but it's harvest time.

If I don't help my father now, then that window of opportunity closes and it's no longer harvest time and the crops go to waste. In fact, while I was there, the warden jumped on the phone and he called to one of the associate wardens and some of the people working under him and he says, will you please get the guys down here to the cornfields and start harvesting now? We're going to lose some of this. It's perfect.

The minister and I just ate some. It's harvest time. You got to get it there or it'll be spoiled.

Now the other son is a disgraceful son. Why? We don't know why he slept, but he was sleeping. One was working.

The other one was sleeping. One was a wise son. The other one was a disgrace to his father.

How could the father have a livelihood? The father brought you into this world. By his seed you were born. He watched over you when you were a little baby like this son and now the father needs help during harvest time and you're sleeping in your bed? Wait a minute.

You're sleeping in your bed? Yeah, I know, but that's my daddy. I know, but daddy needs you right now. It's harvest time.

He can't do it by himself. So he that gathers crops in the summer is a wise son, but the one the son who sleeps during harvest time, he's a disgraceful son. Both sons.

No question about it. That's not what this story is about. It's a story about responding not only to the father's love and the father's care, but it's understanding the season.

The one son didn't understand the season. He's sleeping. You can sleep in December.

You can't sleep in harvest time. And the other son was wise and whatever else was going on in his life, he said, I love my dad. I love my father.

My father's been good to me and I'm part of his enterprise. He's a farmer. We have a farm and now it's critical moment to harvest.

I got to do it. Now that picture of harvest is taken in another way by our Lord in Matthew nine and I'll close so we can pray. Jesus was going about doing good and doing things only he could do as the son of God, proving his divinity by certain signs and wonders that he was doing among the people.

And he stopped for a moment and he saw a crowd of people following him. He was doing this constantly, huge crowd, maybe more than the thousands that are here this morning. And the Bible says when he looked at him, he didn't just look at him and say, wow, it's a crowd of people.

Like somebody could walk in here today and stand in my place and look out and say, wow, what a huge difference in races here and backgrounds and in skills and jobs. You could analyze this audience a lot of different ways. Jesus didn't look at it that way.

The Bible says when he looked at the people, he was moved with compassion. He was stirred as he looked at the people. Why was he stirred? Because he saw them as sheep.

A lot of us look at people, what they could do for us. A lot of us look at people, do they like us or not like us? A lot of us look at people as being different, other race than we are. What a sad, shallow way to pass our lives.

Jesus looked at people and saw them as different as they were in so many ways. He saw them all as sheep, but he saw them as sheep who were harassed. They were all cut up.

They were bruised by life, not brambles, not rocks, life. Didn't know what to do. Nobody caring for them.

No one being a shepherd for them. You know what shepherds do? They lead, they protect, they feed. Nobody leading them in the way that they should go.

Nobody feeding them with food for their soul. Nobody protecting them from all the plots of Satan and all the vicissitudes of life and the bottom falling out of plans and wayward children and all the stuff that happens in life. Jesus saw them as harassed.

In other words, it's harvest time now, but harvest time means work. Who's going to take the time to help the child? Who's going to take the time? Well, no, God bless you because I know the Lord will see you through. People need more than that.

How many are with me? Say amen. People need more than that. It's harvest time.

He saw other people as sheep that were knocked down and couldn't get up. Don't you and I have people passing around us every day if we could only see with the eyes of Christ. They're knocked down and they can't get up.

And I know you have problems in your home, but you have Jesus in your life. You have the gift of eternal life. Has not God been good to you? I'm speaking now to the Christians that are here.

Do I get a witness? Has God been good to you? Don't you think Deacon Portolantino and his wife Jeanette, they have problems of course, but they have Christ and there are people now sheep without a shepherd. They're beat down. They're cut up.

Don't you see? I mean, Jesus saw them bleeding and bruised because he wasn't looking with these eyes. He was looking with these eyes. He saw people spiritually and he was moved with compassion.

He saw them knocked down and they can't get up. Jesus, as I close, Jesus looks at these people, moved with compassion, seeing them as sheep knocked down. They can't get up, all bruised and cut.

And the disciples, all they do is see people. You know, you see this over and over again and we better be aware of it ourselves because it's harvest time. Jesus saw people as a harvest.

The disciples saw them as a pain in the neck. And that's something we have to be careful of. Pastors can fall into that.

You know, we want to shine or preach and then move on to the next beautiful, glorious moment. I've been around that most of my life. See people perform in the pulpit, but when it comes to caring for bruised, bleeding sheep, no time.

They're too big for that. When I get too big for that, could somebody just send me off to a farm somewhere and just get rid of me because I don't have any value. So Jesus looked at and he said, the harvest is great.

What's short is the laborers and the disciples. What harvest? I thought we're fishermen. We don't know about farming.

He wasn't talking about physical farming. He was saying the harvest is great. The laborers, instead of being out in the fields, they're sleeping.

What is it to harvest? Well, to harvest is to tell people about the love of Jesus and that he has a plan for their life. To share with them what he's done for you. And we're all called to it, not just the people on the platform, not Billy Graham.

It's to open up and be sensitive and be kind and talk. How can I help you? What can I pray about? Can I bring you to church? Don't you get it? They're knocked down. They can't get up.

Haven't you ever been knocked down in life? I've been knocked down in life. I had nights in my life where my heart was so broken, I didn't know what to do, that I didn't know if I could make it through the night. How many ever had some really bad days? Wave your hand at me.

Really bad days. Oh, how wonderful it is to have somebody come like a loving shepherd under Jesus Christ to feed you something from the word of God, to give you a little food for your soul. Not just a pat on the back, but give you a verse.

He promises never to leave you, never to forsake you. That's what the Father's work is right now. It's harvest time.

It's loving people into the kingdom. It's telling them about who Jesus is. Then it's discipling them.

Like this young lady told my wife, I'm going to meet her soon today, I said, I told you. She said, I want to be right. I want to live for God.

It's loving them, helping them. How easy can we all get so selfish, can't we? But I've determined today, I prayed last night, God, I want to spend my life seeing broken people get healed in the name of Jesus. You know why? Because that's what the Father does.

Jesus said something in John 4 that I would like to just leave with you. They thought he was hungry and they had gone to get food for him, and he didn't seem to want it. And then he said to them, I have food that you don't even know about.

And they went, who brought them food? Who sent out for food? And he said, no, my food, what sustains me, what fulfills me is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Look, the fields are ripe unto harvest. Jesus was seeing something, brothers and sisters, that we need to see on this anniversary of 9-11.

Don't you want to work with your Father? Don't you want to be a blessing to your Father? How many can say your Father, I'm talking about your Heavenly Father, how many can honestly say he's been the best dad that you've ever known in your whole life? You know, my father was an alcoholic for a good part of my life. And my Heavenly Father, I just regret the days I've lived selfishly and self-consciously and not focused on what he's doing. You know what he's doing now? He's gathering a harvest, but he needs laborers.

The laborers are few. And if you've been brought up around some theology, God is on the throne and he's sovereign and he has all power, so what will be will be, and he's just going to do it, so we might as well just sit back and watch the football game. That is so wrong.

Paul boasts about his apostleship and says, I'll tell you one thing, I've worked harder than them all. Why work hard if God has to do it? Because when you work for Jesus, God is working with you and you're working with God. Can we put our hands together and say amen? I know of no one, I know of no one who has seen God do great things who is sitting back on a sofa.

I know of no one. I've read a lot about church history. I know of no one.

So then how can I end this so that we can pray? Today, tomorrow. Oh, and you know what? It's such a good harvest time now because you know what people are remembering from 9-11? That you get no warning it's your last day on this earth. Nobody woke up that morning in our church and said, hey this is good, I'm going to work.

It'll be the last day of my life. I'm going to die today. Nobody does that.

Don't say tomorrow I'm going to do this. Tomorrow. Yesterday's gone.

Tomorrow's not promised. We only have today. So whatever work we're going to do in the harvest is today.

Today is the day of salvation. Tomorrow is not the day of salvation. Yesterday for sure is not the day of salvation.

There's only one day we have to work with the Father and that's today. But here's, I want to leave you differently. When I was playing basketball and there was a big game against UConn, I remember a playoff game in my senior year at Storrs Connecticut and you gather in the locker room.

Those of you who have played sports, you know this. You gather in the locker room. Your heart is already beating.

The pressure. It's a playoff game. Whoever wins is going to go to the NCAA tournament.

Big thing. You feel that acid in your stomach. So the coach gets everybody together and says, alright guys.

Are we going to do it today? We're going to play defense. We're going to die for the loose balls. And he psychs everybody up and then you all get in the middle and you lift your hands up, whatever the style is, and come on, we're going to do it.

Let's go. Everybody. All for one.

One for all. Come on. Everyone.

Go. And you cheer and you run out and the crowd roars and you start taking your layups and you just, you get psyched up. Go on.

Let's knock them dead. And unfortunately that spirit has invaded the church. Ministers try to psych people up.

Come on. We're going to go get them now for Jesus. But I have found in my own life that that does not work.

It wears out in about a day or two. I'd like to suggest there's something else the Lord just gave me as a prayer. I want you to pray with me today so we could work with our Father.

How many have heard the word today and you want to do work with the Father in the harvest field? Just lift your hand. Come on. Lift it up high.

I want to work with my Father in the harvest field. I want to be a co-laborer with Jesus Christ. I want to speak for him.

I want to love for him. I want to help someone for him. Bring someone to church for him.

I want to, I just want to help. So here's the prayer. Lord, take my mouth and speak through me.

Take my mind and think through me. Take my heart and set it on fire. Lord, take my mouth and speak to me.

Speak through me today. Don't ask God to speak through to you tomorrow, Monday. You don't know if you'll have Monday.

If you get up Monday, if we get up Monday, let's ask God to speak through us on Monday. How many are with me? Say amen. All I want you to do is focus today.

It's the only day I know we have. Lord, today take my mouth and speak through me. Take my mind and think through me.

Give me harvest thoughts. Give me people thoughts. Give me thoughts of compassion.

And then take my heart today, just today, set it on fire so that I can labor in the field. Brothers and sisters, look, I'm not much of a preacher. I'm not much of anything.

But one thing I do not want to be is a disgraceful son. After all God has done for me to be a disgraceful son, to be sleeping during harvest time. It's harvest time in New York City.

It's harvest time in Argentina. It's harvest time in Africa. People are dying like flies everywhere.

There's wars, rumors of wars. In the space of one week in New York City, we had an earthquake and a hurricane in one week. I'm no prophetic genius, but the Bible says we got to be aware of the signs of the times.

How many believe with all your heart? It's really harvest time now. It's harvest time now. Whoever you're going to talk, you got relatives, cousins, remember nieces, nephews, love them, speak to them, bring them to church because one billion years from now, they're going to be someplace, either with God or away from God in a place of punishment.

And then you and I are going to go like this and say, why didn't I love them? Why didn't I talk to them? I'm not trying to psych you up. I'm just trying to say, repeat after me. Dear God, put your hand on your mouth.

Take my mouth and speak through me. Put your hands on your head. Take my mind and think through me.

Put your hands on your chest. Lord, take my heart and set it on fire. We praise you, Jesus.

Let's just lift our hands and thank God for his kindness to us. Every eye closed. Is there anybody here? Maybe just one.

Is there anybody here not serving Jesus? You're not serving Jesus. I'm just about done. Don't anyone move.

But if you're not born again or you're not serving Jesus or if you've fallen away, slipped off the path, if you are not sure what would happen if today, 9-11, you were to pass out of this life, if you're not sure where you would go, why would you wait? Don't put it off. Don't say mañana. Don't say tomorrow.

If there's anyone I could pray over, give a New Testament to, you come out of your seat right now and I'll pray over you. It's harvest time. Just come and stand in front of me.

Anybody here that would like me to pray for you? Pastor Cymbala, it's not the way it should be between me and Jesus. I want to make an adjustment right now between me and my Savior. You just come and stand right here in front of me.

Come close. Folks here in the front, repeat after me. Dear Jesus, forgive me of my sins.

Wash me. Give me a new start. I need you.

I trust you as my Savior, as my Lord. As you help me, I will follow you all the days of my life. But today is Sunday.

I give you my life. I claim you as Savior and I ask you to do a work in me. Change me from the inside out and make me what you want me to be.

Have mercy on me and my family. Help me today, oh God, for Christ's sake. Now everybody in the building, final prayer.

Repeat after me. Dear God, take my mouth and speak through me. This very day, take my mind and think through me.

This very day, take my heart and set it on fire. I will work with you in the harvest fields as you help me to love, to speak, to pray, to help, to minister, to encourage all those you send me. I will not live for myself, but I will live for Jesus by the grace of God.

I pray this today. Help me to pray it every day until I see you face to face. Take my mouth and speak through me.

Take my mind and think through me. And take my heart and set it on fire. I pray this in Jesus' name.

And everyone said, Amen. Can we give God a hand clap of real praise today?

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