

# The Lord of the Harvest

by Todd Atkinson

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*This sermon focuses on the passion for mission, emphasizing the importance of seeing people through the eyes of Jesus, who had genuine compassion for them. It delves into the concept of the Lord of the harvest, highlighting the need for prayer and recognizing God's sovereignty in preparing hearts for faith. The message encourages believers to engage in kingdom work, discern signs of readiness in others, and allow God to do the heavy lifting in the mission field.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:35, Matthew 9:37, Matthew 10:1, John 4:35, Luke 10:2, Psalm 126:5, 1 Corinthians 3:6, Galatians 6:9, Colossians 4:5

**Topics:** "Compassion for the Lost", "Engaging in Kingdom Work"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Let's just posture our hearts to uh Just hang on his every word this morning The reading is from the gospel of matthew chapter 9 starting at verse 35 and ending in chapter 10 verse 1 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 And 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 And he called to him his 12 disciples And he gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out And to heal every disease and every affliction the gospel of our lord Good morning, everyone Almost too many special things happening on a single morning to count If you are new to us today We are in the middle of a preaching series On something that we call the five passions of Jesus Many years ago we Looked back again at the gospel narrative with fresh eyes And just simply asked ourselves the question. What were the things? That Jesus was most passionate about And it seemed like the uh Like something that we couldn't fail in is that if we took the things that he was most passionate about And made them our greatest and highest passions That that could never be an approach to doing church. That could be wrong Today we are turning our attention to the fifth passion To the passion for

mission And I want to take a look at this passage That has just been read aloud That has become just so important to me and I think to many of us This morning If we had the time I would take you through the whole of chapter 9 It's a magnificent chapter Just such one striking story after another If we were to put a chapter heading over the whole of matthew chapter 9 It could be something like the people find themselves trusting in jesus Or the crowds welcome jesus and his ministry amongst them Because in this chapter there is one story after another of people expressing a remarkably Strong faith in jesus if we had the time I would love to take you through that series of stories and show you some of the parallels But we don't have the time just choose one Verse 18 and following a synagogue ruler Comes and kneels before jesus Knowing full well the way this could discredit him in front of all of his peers And he says to jesus my daughter has just died but if you come and lay hands on her she'll live So Hear that again, my daughter has just died But you come and lay hands on her and she'll live so matter of fact Such great faith, how did this man that has never met jesus? May never have even set eyes upon him before But at least would have heard of him by reputation How does that man come to jesus and take the thing that is probably most precious in the whole world to him And trust him with that with that kind of faith It's one of the questions of matthew chapter 9 and the answers Are in some of the verses that follow in matthew Chapter 9 verses 36 to 38 are reading it takes us beyond these stories To kind of some of the things that lie behind them what's driving all of these gospel activity Matthew starts by saying when jesus saw the crowds The crowds is a common expression in matthew's gospel Chapter 4 verse 1 and great crowds followed him Chapter 7 the crowds were astonished at his teaching Chapter 9 verse 8 when the crowd saw this they were filled with awe And they glorified god.

So matthew is saying something to us About jesus and the crowds, but it may not be what we think Because for jesus the crowds were not a strategic focus In the sense that jesus thought that more is better than few He didn't think wouldn't be great if we just had crowds today The crowds were not a form of validation Jesus didn't feel Better about himself because of the crowds. He didn't say I must be a really great messiah because look at all the people here I must just be doing a marvelous job He didn't think of the crowds as a sign of personal success No, he wasn't pursuing the crowds because he needed them for some internal reason He was pursuing the crowds Because they needed him He's not looking to the crowds to fill some need inside of himself Like he would feel a lot better about himself if there were more people How often have I done that? He's looking to them because he genuinely Genuinely loves them. This is why the look at the next phrase When he saw the crowds he had Compassion on them the word compassion means to be stirred up with feeling to be affected deeply To have one's feelings Go out to someone even to yearn for them There are so many reasons why we might want to do mission in our city a sense of duty A sense of obligation Perhaps we think we have something to prove Maybe we would feel happier and more satisfied if we were really out in the world winning people.

We feel like really great christians But jesus was ministering to people because he was genuinely Moved moved inside We use the word love in such an easy way. It's become a salutation. Love ya It's nothing wrong with that, but he's talking something inside of him.

It's not the same it is moving It is reaching out You know that people believed his message god so loved the world. Why did they believe it? Because they saw it in him Because he was the message Because he actually loved the world because he was the revelation of god So they saw his message in his manner the love he was proclaiming they saw it in him They didn't throw around the word love they saw the way he looked at them the way he treated them that he was genuinely moved Something in him was different Than anyone they had ever met before and so the question is how will our city believe? God so loved the

world if our love for them doesn't seem believable convincing real persuasive The truth is Outside of Jesus. I feel like I'm really crummy at loving people I became a Christian as a teenager before that.

I don't remember ever feeling deeply moved for somebody I never feel Deep heart connection. Maybe it was the result of our story at that time But I never felt it from someone or to someone Not this kind of love Not a kind of love where something in your very core is affected not this kind of love That lacks all self-interest. Of course.

I love someone giving well if I like you you'll like me But not something that's devoid of all self-interest that never looks to get anything out of it That love is completely foreign to me actually But I learned a secret I think in my life it happened through The birth of our first child Cecilia Where I remember saying to the Lord, I think my human love even at its best Is hugely insufficient. I can feel it It's not enough And so all I did is I gave my heart to Jesus And I asked that His love for my daughter would be resident in my heart And something started at that stage of my life Where instead of aspiring to love people with the highest human love that I could reach retain to? I experienced the love That was far from natural for me. It was supernatural a love as strong as the sun at midday A strong like a love like the tides of the ocean That I knew was God's love for people that He would graciously allow to be resident in my heart I wish I had more time to talk about the importance between the gospel message gospel content and gospel compassion Because if you preach gospel content put the message out there, but it's devoid of gospel compassion it will always undermine your content Because the content is God loves the world And so the words of our mouth And the compassion of our heart have to flow Together the scripture goes on to explain that Jesus had compassion on them because He saw their true state He saw them as they really were and that is something I like about Jesus I'm fascinated about that side that He doesn't fall for illusion For appearances for pretense He sees right through me and it took me some time with Him before I could actually appreciate that To be known there's there's nothing I could say or do to fool Him And at a certain point I loved that about Him He saw their true state When we were starting the church plant in Regina Rob and I were out to mission one day's meeting the community I remember we walked into this kind of iconic breakfast place called the Mercury You know such a trendy place.

It's not a kind of place I would fit in Naturally, but I we went in there and there was a dear lady uh, who was going to see us to our table and as soon as I I I looked at her. It was like I saw through her eyes and her soul And I just leaned forward and said Are you okay? She did not appreciate me saying that She grew quite brusque with me Saw me saw Rob and I to our tables was not happy because she did not want to be saw or known And so I thought that because if I thought about it a little bit I never want people to feel unsafe with that So we quickly just gave her her space and thought oh no that just came out of me impulsively I saw her So we uh ate our dinner made sure that we didn't have any further contact with her that day And I took Rob out and said let's just do something marvelous Let's buy a card and we're each going to ask the Lord for messages And we're going to write this lady a message And so we went and have beautiful well chosen card. We asked God Who alone could know what was happening that day? And we asked Him to give us messages And then we asked the Lord for her favorite treat And I'll tell you it was so much fun And so we did we took it back to the Mercury gave it to somebody else because again that lady needs Uh loved that day loving her looked like giving her some space and all the introverts said And you're surprised that the rest of us would know that But the next day we went back for breakfast again And as soon as we came in the door that girl Ran across the restaurant to us How did you know? How did you know so excited that card? I shared the gift out with the friends brought the staff out And from that day on the relationship we had with the staff in the Mercury That every time we would go in there The staff would

empty out even the chefs from the back and sit with us and I could see in the eyes of all the customers These two guys i'll snake for myself Looks like the complete antithesis of cool Because this is a very sharp place Why is all the staff Run to them in fact that christmas Our church plant and regina put on a christmas meal for these people whose job was cooking And we put we made a christmas meal for them And it was awesome And all circus jesus was looking at people and he and that day he just happened to look at them through my eyes You want to be in the harvest ask him to give you his eyes for people He sees them As they really are he then uses two metaphors to describe that state Number one.

He describes them as a flock. They're like sheep without a shepherd. I am not going to be able to touch that metaphor It's a wonderful and deserves attention of its own Number two, he describes them as a field.

It's a metaphor to describe how He sees them Then he said to the disciples the harvest is plentiful The so what is he saying here looking at the crowds The harvest is plentiful what is a harvest and in what way are these people like a harvest? well harvest is of course a agricultural term A harvest comes about when seeds are planted into the earth They grow To a mature or ripened state And then they are gathered or harvested Collected but that doesn't answer the question. Why are the crowds like that? What makes the crowds like a harvest in jesus eyes And the answer is because they are displaying a ripeness or a a readiness There's something ready prepared full grown inside of something that's coming of age There's a ripeness a readiness to them to be persuaded About the kingdom of god a ripeness to to choose faith to come to faith And even that doesn't answer the question. Well, how did they get there? Why did they become ripe? What ripened them what brought them to that place of of a positive warm-hearted response to jesus And the answer is found in the next couple phrases therefore Pray earnestly to the lord of the harvest First of all, he uses the word pray Raises some really good questions the word therefore is a call to action And it's rightly placed here in the light of if you really love people if you really saw them as sheep without a shepherd If you if you if the gospel of the kingdom was really present then you should really do something about this therefore call to action But what we don't understand is why is the call to action a call to prayer? therefore pray Because some people would think that prayer is kind of the antithesis of action Well, there's a reason why jesus puts prayer in that place because there's things that a good farmer can do and things that he can't a good farmer can put Seeds in the ground at one time of the year and he can harvest them in another But there are other things that a good farmer is absolutely 100% powerless to do and that is he can't make those things grow Not a thing he can't make it rain He can't make the sunshine The complex processes that go from one seed to many There's not a thing he can do to make that happen except to pray to the one that can That's why the first call to action is therefore you better get praying Pray to pray to who? Now this is a mind-blowing phrase pray to the lord of the harvest And that should make you ask what in the world does that phrase mean so when I lived in scotland, I had a series of Encounters with the lord.

I don't know what you want to call them God things happening in my life And all of them had some similarities to them which is I was in public places Not in my prayer room Not in church. I was always in public And in a public place I would hear god speak to me And he would give me Just a bible reference and I did not know What that reference was Interestingly this happened over several months All of the bible references were on the same theme But one of them is I was walking in scotland one day in a public place And the lord told me turn to this verse and this is what he said to me Read it as though for the very first time so as soon as he said that I I I could realize that i've obviously read something and missed it a lot Read it as though for the very first time and when I read that text matthew chapter nine This phrase was the one that stood out of the page. What? Lord of the harvest i'm lord of the harvest pray to the lord of the

harvest and I had to say what does that mean? Because lord means supreme ruler One with absolute power and authority.

It means the sovereign one But what does it mean to be lord over? the harvest Because the harvest is not the church these are not people who have believed for these are the people who are on their way to belief Whose belief is ripening What does that mean that he has lordship Over the harvest Jesus saw his father as lord of the harvest that his father had the ability to harvest at will At will the power to do it that he had the that there was no person Or place that he could not do this with it changed The way I see things completely when people say well, this is this is a really hard place. I'm like It's hard for you It's hard for me. It's not hard for lord of the harvest.

That's what makes him lord of the harvest He can do it whenever he wants He actually has lordship in this area complete supreme rulership and authority And so when when he said read it for the very first time inside of me come up objections Well, it couldn't mean this and it couldn't mean that And I had to put them all aside for a while and just because otherwise you lose the kernel of truth I thought I can have all the rest of my life to figure out how It works with everything else. I just can't lose this. I am meant to see my lord in a different and new way And so I think before our communities Come to see him in a new way Before they come to see him as lord.

I think we have to see him as lord in this area Why is this so important? How long have you been a christian for? And in the years that you've been a christian how many times have you heard a strong call to evangelism or mission And how many times have you heard that call? Something very good has risen inside of you and said i'm going to respond to that. I like this I'm going to give my life to this And how many times did you go? To engage with that call and throw this isn't as easy as I thought it was the world didn't fall at my feet This didn't look like a billy graham crusade My whole city didn't come in one accord singing just as I am So now here I know children are coming in stay with me for a minute because the truth is What happened in your heart at that moment where it didn't turn out as easy as you thought? What happened the next time after you heard it gave yourself tried? The whole world didn't kneel before your feet and say I want to believe in jesus What happened in your heart at that time? And if we're not careful some part of us ends up in significant disbelief We wouldn't call it that we compartmentalize it maybe that's true for evangelists not the rest of us Maybe that's true for africa place where there's real harvest happening around the world, but that's not true here Maybe i'm not spiritual enough yet. Maybe i'll have to take another year of corpus I'm not trained enough yet Because we have to find some way of resolving.

Why did that not happen for me? So much i'd like to say it's a little time to say what happens if you had to experience your poverty first You were never asked to be lord of the harvest But what happens if you had to experience your complete inability first? Your complete powerlessness to do that before the lord would display his power What happens if it's all working out to a plan who knew there may be a plan? There is person coming to jesus after person after person And the disciples are asking the same question that many of us ask because for 400 years What was it called before jesus? It's called the foreign silent years. It did not look like harvest time Now they can't understand what's happening People didn't used to do this Nobody did this before jesus came on the scene And so that's why they're wondering why is all this the centurion comes to them You just do anything just say the word my daughter will be healed like We're not coming from and jesus explanation is Because my father is starting to harvest He's creating readiness in people. He's bringing people to a place of ripeness He is doing it get out of his way.

All you've got to do is help collect the grain into the barn So much more can be said My one way I would implore you is this in prayer go to prayer this week as he says and say lord I don't see you like lord of the harvest. I think you're limited in harvest I want to see your vast lordship if you're if we're reaching a time in the fullness of time where god is beginning To prepare people and bring them to a place of readiness of harvest I don't want to be lagging in my faith in that Very quickly four simple points What do you do when god is starting to harvest? very quickly number two Get out into the field I promise you no farmer ever harvested from the barn Get out in the field I make sure I have time every week in my schedule where i'm just out of the church away from christians And i'm just out amongst people that don't know jesus on my busy weeks I gotta get out in the field That's what farmers are made for the field number two Go do kingdom kind of stuff in the field That's what matthew 9 is about jesus wasn't sitting idle. He was preaching the gospel Casting out devils healing the sick Get out there and go do it Learn how to do it.

Whatever kingdom of god stuff is to you Go into the field and say god. What does that look like for me to do my part? I want to do this stuff out here in the field Number three look for signs of readiness You don't have to make the crops ready And not all the grain is going to ripen at the same speed Just go and look for signs ask him to give you a sense of discernment An awareness that you would say I think grain is ripening here There's a readiness here And and at first the readiness Is not probably going to be get down on their knees and say i'm ready to pray a sinner's prayer The readiness is you can't figure out why that person kind of likes you Why they want to pause why there's a warmth why they want to talk a little bit So my wife is just so gracious to me because she knows I am home So late from the gym most days because some guy's gonna want to talk to me Completely ruins my workout Which explains a lot? I'm, so I I hardly say honey. I'm sorry i'm late again Because someone just wanted to pause Just wanted to talk I can see they just want to make a connection so I have to make space for that And they don't even really know how to do that So they're going to talk about something completely Obscure But I I see it they want a connection there look for signs Of readiness And then lastly and most importantly he's the lord of the harvest That means this Let god do the heavy lifting If it feels heavy for you out there, it means you're carrying more than you are intended to What it means to do harvest with the lord of the harvest is he gets to do all the heavy lifting And what that does is it restores a sense of joy into mission and ease Ease Because it's not like I got to work harder I got to produce results Everybody's watching If i'm a really good christian, I got to make some stuff happen out here.

It's none of that stuff None of it at all actually my father's harvesting I'm, just going to get out of the field and watch what he's doing And be part of it with my father. He's going to do all the heavy lifting And i'm going to do a little bit of gathering. Amen.

Would you bow your heads in prayer?

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Video: [https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/6\\_F1vTGyo4w.mp4](https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/6_F1vTGyo4w.mp4)

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