

Septuagesima
St. Matthew 20:1-16
January 28th, 2018
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Call the Laborers

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

From now until Christ returns again in glory, the Holy Ghost is calling us by the Gospel of + Jesus Christ. He is opening up our ears to hear, by God's Holy Word, everyday how Christ has won forgiveness for us by His death on the cross. And the Holy Ghost is at it again today in the words of our Gospel reading. The landowner of the vineyard time and time again is calling people to come and work in the vineyard. Some have been called since their birth, some were called when they were teenagers, and some more were called when they were young adults, some were called during their middle age years, and some were called by the Gospel even on their deathbeds. So too, have all of you been called by the Holy Ghost through the Gospel of + Jesus Christ at various times and places during your life.

This, of course, is the whole entire mission of the Church here on Earth: to proclaim the death and resurrection of the Lord + Jesus until He returns again in glory. Whenever the Gospel of the Lord + Jesus Christ is proclaimed, whenever the forgiveness of sins won by Christ's death is preached, whenever God's holy Word is heard in its truth and purity, then the Holy Ghost is at work calling, enlightening, gathering, sanctifying, and keeping us steadfast in the one true faith until God calls us home to eternal life. The Holy Spirit works when and where He wills, whenever the Word of God, the Gospel is proclaimed.

Whenever we talk about our Lord + Jesus, the Holy Ghost is there converting and regenerating our blind, dead souls back to life, and sight. This, my dear friends, is the task the Church on Earth has been given to do while it exists here on Earth: to proclaim our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, the One Who saved mankind from their sins.

The Landowner has gone out into the world, and has called each and every one of you to work in His vineyard, to work in His Church. What is your work you are supposed to be doing? Your work is to hear the good news about the Lord + Jesus Christ in its truth and purity. Listen to His Word, learn about His Word, and study His Word daily. Your work in the vineyard is to come to this parish and hear the preaching of the Word by your pastor, in order that you may be comforted through the work of the Holy Ghost working through the Word.

Your work also is to receive and participate in the means of grace as they were instituted by Christ Himself. Your work in the vineyard is to live in your Holy Baptism, meaning that you daily drown and kill the old sinful Adam within you, you are to beat down your urge to sin, to resist and flee temptation, in order that a new Adam will daily emerge and rise again to new life. A new Adam which is rejoicing each new day in the mercies of the Lord, which are new everyday, and which have been given to you in the waters of your Holy Baptism. Everyday when you wake up and make the sign of your Holy Baptism, the sign of the holy cross, you remind and comfort yourself of the promises of God, which proclaims that you are His child; a forgiven and holy child by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Word. And, your work in the vineyard is to make the sign of your Holy Baptism, the sign of the holy cross, before you lie down to sleep each night, taking comfort through the night that you are indeed a child of God.

Your work in the vineyard is to hear God's Word, so that you will daily rejoice that God has forgiven a poor, miserable sinner such as yourself. Your work in the vineyard is to confess your sins to God and your pastor, in order that you might be absolved, that is, forgiven of your sins. It is to give free course to the Holy Ghost, so that he might create and sustain eternal life and salvation in you, in order that you might have hope for every trial and temptation that comes your way.

Your work in the vineyard is to gather together around this altar and eat and drink Christ's Body and Blood for the forgiveness of your sins, thereby remembering His death and resurrection for you. Your work in the vineyard is to have the peace, which passes all understanding, and to keep that peace steadfast until Christ calls you home to Heaven.

The work of the laborers in the vineyard is to strengthen and sustain one another in the one true faith, by the work of the Holy Ghost working through the Word of God. Whenever we share with one another what we believe about Christ, namely, that He has won forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation for us by His all-availing sacrifice of death on the cross, we open up the door for the Holy Ghost to enter into, and comfort us, with hope and eternal life.

This is why it is so important to be here on Sunday mornings, and why it is so important to carry the belief in God's Word that you share here today, out into the world with you. Because wherever God's Word is, there is the Holy Ghost is creating and sustaining faith and life. Wherever people are talking about the Lord + Jesus, and His death and resurrection, wherever the laborers of the vineyard are—wherever the Church is proclaiming the Gospel—there can be found the Holy Ghost converting and regenerating blind, dead souls.

Such is the work of the Church, and as members of the Church on Earth, this is your task, too. The work of the Church is the administration of the Word and Sacrament. It is your job, as members of the Church on Earth, to make sure that these things are going on in your midst, and that they are going on according to God's ordinance in truth and purity. And when these things are being done in your midst rightly and according to God's command, then the Holy Ghost has free reign to do His work in our midst. Then we have comfort, and hope, and peace, joy, and all of the gifts that the Holy Ghost has to offer.

But when we fail to do these things, when we fail to preach the Gospel in its truth and purity, when we fail to proclaim the crucified and risen Christ, then we sin greatly, for we are resisting, and refusing the Holy Ghost the ability to strengthen this parish.

And indeed our text even speaks about this in the last verse. "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*" Wherever the Gospel is preached, the Holy Ghost is calling people to new life in Christ + Jesus, but whenever we resist, or rebel against the Holy Ghost, whenever we resist or rebel against the Gospel, the message that all sins have been paid for by Christ's innocent suffering and death on

the tree of the holy cross for our benefit suffers. Whenever we resist or rebel against forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation, the Holy Ghost leaves us. Indeed, we ourselves have kicked Him out, by our own resisting and rebelling against God's holy Word.

If you were wondering why things were so crummy in your life, this is why. You have been resisting and rebelling against the Holy Ghost. If you have doubt. The Holy Ghost creates and sustains faith and hope in you. If you have sadness. The Holy Ghost by God's Word creates and sustains joy in you. If you have fear. The Holy Ghost by the Gospel, creates and sustains calm. Your life is crummy, because you have neglected the Gospel in your life. You have resisted the hearing of God's Word. You have not listened to it, and let it have free course in your heart.

And this is why we have this text at this time in the Church year. You notice at the top of your bulletin on the inside the title of this Sunday. It is Septuagesima Sunday. What that means is we are about 70 days away from Easter. And we are in the season known as Pre-Lent. We are getting ready for Lent. And to get us ready for Lent we need to first be reminded of the work of the Holy Ghost. But perhaps more clearly, we need to be reminded of what we, the laborers in the vineyard, need to be doing. And that is preaching the good news of the Lord + Jesus Christ to this poor, miserable, sinful world.

We get ready for Lent by sharing that message of salvation through Christ + Jesus alone with one another in this place. The Gospel starts with us, my dear friends. It starts with preaching it in its truth and purity from the pulpit on Sundays, it continues with the living out of our baptisms, and baptizing new children of God, it goes on by administering and receiving Christ's Body and Blood in bread and wine, it is sustained by the forgiving of the sins of the repentant, and the retaining of the sins of the openly unrepentant. We must confess our sins to God and our pastor, and receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, in order to sustain the Gospel. And the Gospel finds its final place, whenever there are two or three or more people gathered together around God's Word talking about the Lord + Jesus and His sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross. When we as the people of God are about this work in the vineyard of God, then the Holy Ghost is building up and strengthening the Church on Earth, just as Christ promised. And He will build and strengthen His Church, until Christ returns in glory, and until you are called home. May the Lord go forth and create and sustain faith in you today, by His holy Word. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.