

Will you labor in the vineyard for the Master?

July 9, 2017 Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

I always feel a bit of sadness when I travel through a town and see houses that are boarded up, empty and abandoned. One day as we were out riding, we came across a three story house that had so many unique characteristics but it was deserted and the lawn was overgrown and for lack of care, it was falling down. When I saw it, I wondered how many well to do families had enjoyed the house when it was first built. What kind of work did the owners do for a living and how many children had grown up under that roof? I thought about the day that the last tenant moved out and closed the door. Was it due to lack of employment? Health issues? Broken marriage? I don't know but there are so many people lacking a vision and a purpose in life. The Bible says, "Without a vision, the people perish." (Proverbs 28:19) The other day I saw a sign that read "Enjoy Recreation; don't wreck creation!" Do you have a vision for building up the kingdom of God? In Proverbs 24:30-34, King Solomon gave a description of a piece of land that he travelled by. He said that he passed by a lazy person's field and by the vineyard of someone with no sense. Thorns had grown up everywhere and the ground was covered with weeds. The stone wall had fallen down and Solomon took time to think about what he had seen. He learned a lesson from that picture in his mind. You sleep a little; you take a nap. You fold your hands and lie down to rest. Soon you will be as poor as if you had been robbed; you will have as little as if you had been robbed.

When Jesus walked on this earth, he saw some of the same conditions in a spiritual setting. In Matthew 9:35-38, Jesus had just cast out demons from a man who couldn't talk due to demon possession. Jesus forced the demon out and the man was able to speak. The people were amazed and proclaimed that they had never witnessed anything like this before in Israel. However the Pharisees declared that Jesus received his power from the prince of demons.

Jesus travelled through all the towns and villages teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News about the kingdom and healing all kinds of diseases and sicknesses. When he saw the multitudes, he had pity on them because they were hurting and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus said to his disciples, "There are many people to harvest but only a few workers to help harvest them. Pray to the Lord, who owns the harvest, that he will send more workers to gather the harvest."

In Matthew 20, Jesus likens the kingdom of God to a person who owned some land. One morning he went out very early to hire some people to work in his vineyard. The man agreed to pay the workers one coin for working that day. Then he sent them into the vineyard to work. About nine o'clock, the man went to the marketplace and there were some people standing there, doing nothing. So he said to them, "If you will go and work in my vineyard, I will pay you what your work is worth." So they went to work in the vineyard. The man went out again at noon and again at 3 o'clock and did the same thing.

About 5 o'clock, the man went to the marketplace again and saw others standing there. He asked them, "Why did you stand here all day doing nothing?" They answered, "No one gave us a job." The man said to them, "Then you can go and work in my vineyard." At the end of the day, the owner of the vineyard said to the boss of all the workers, "Call the workers and pay them. Start with the last people I hired and end with those I hired first." When the workers lined up to get their pay, the owner gave each of them a coin for their pay. When the workers who had been hired first got their pay, they also received one coin. They had expected to get more money since they had worked a longer time and when they didn't receive more compensation for their work, they complained about it. They wondered why the workers that had worked only one hour received the same as those who had labored all day in the hot sun. The owner of the field said to them, "Friend, I am being fair to you. You agreed to work for one coin. So take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same pay that I gave you. I can do what I want with my own money. Are you jealous because I am good to those people? So those who have the last place now will have the first place in the future, and those who have the first place now will have the last place in the future."

It is very interesting how that God compensates and rewards his workers. The disciples argued over who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom of God. Jesus' mind was focused on the joy that was set before him after he had endured the shame and suffering of the cross. See Hebrews 12:2. In Luke 9:44, Jesus reminded his followers that he would be handed over to people. They didn't understand and their thoughts were on who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God. Jesus had no one to share his burden with for the disciples were missing the meaning of the words that Jesus had spoken concerning his suffering and death. Jesus knew what the disciples were thinking and discussing, so he took a child and set him in their midst. He said, "Whoever accepts this little child in my name accepts me. And whosoever accepts me accepts the One who sent me, because whoever is least among you all is really the greatest."

John told Jesus that he and other disciples saw a person using the name of Jesus to cast out demons out of people. They told him to stop because he didn't belong to their little band of followers. Jesus told him not to stop him because whoever is not against him is for him.

We must be careful of our judgment of people who don't belong to our little group.

In John 10:14, Jesus spoke of himself as the "Good Shepherd." He knows his sheep and the Father knows him. He promised to give his life for his sheep. He also declared that he had other sheep that are not in this flock and he must bring them also. Those sheep are those who listen and recognize his voice calling them to come and work in his vineyard. There will be one flock and one shepherd. Jesus said that he had the right to give up his life; no one really took it from him for he offered it freely. He had the right to give it up and he also had the right to take it back. This is what his Father commanded him to do.

He would rise from the dead and ascend into heaven to sit on the right hand of God to intercede for his children.

In Matthew 28:16, the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had instructed them to go. There they saw Jesus and worshipped him. Some of them did not believe it was Jesus. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make disciples of all people in the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age."

As you read the Book of Acts, you will learn that this command was followed right to the letter by the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. It started with the Holy Ghost falling on the 120 people who gathered and waited for the promise of being filled with the Holy Ghost and fire enabling them to be bold and fearless in the face of persecution and opposition. It spread and the Jews soon realized that the "other flocks" that Jesus had spoken to them about included all people, not just Jews. Even some of those who persecuted Jesus were drawn to him and accepted him. Some of the soldiers at the cross proclaimed him to be the Son of God. Saul, the Pharisee, was called by Jesus to suffer and to proclaim the gospel to all people. Cornelius, an officer in the Italian group in the Roman army was called by Jesus and Peter was sent to preach the truth of the gospel to him and his family. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and were baptized in Jesus name. Acts 10.

The jailor who had whipped Paul and Silas was also converted and he and his household were baptized in the name of Jesus. Acts 16: 25-34.

The Lord is looking for workers to carry his message to the lost. Will you answer his call and heed his voice?

The Bible declares that "He that wins souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30)

I pray that we all will catch the glimpse of eternity and the glory of God that will surround his chosen people and heed the call to go and make disciples.