

Robin Dodge
Holy Faith, Santa Fe
June 14, 2026

Proper 6 – Year A
Exodus 19.2-8a
Ps. 100
Romans 5.1-8
Mt. 9.35-10.8 [9-23]

In the name of the one, true, and living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” How many times have you said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few?” You know, it’s good to quote Jesus from time to time. I’ve heard people at work looking for people to step up for some additional responsibility use Jesus’ line. And back in school I remember teachers trying to get us to do our homework would say, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” (That was before the separation of Church and State that we have now!) And I suspect there is someone here this morning who, before this week is out, in trying to cajole a family member or friend into doing a chore around the house, will utter, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few!”

Of course, we in the Church love to quote Jesus! When we’re looking for someone to usher or to volunteer to be on altar guild or to join the hospitality team, you’ll often hear us exclaim, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few!” So now you’re thinking, okay, this sermon is going to be about ushering, or volunteering to be on altar guild, or joining the hospitality team. Well, it isn’t really, but I’ve made a pretty good plug for these ministries, haven’t I?

What I really want to focus on is what Jesus says after he says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” Jesus then says in a better translation than what we heard this morning, “[P]ray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” “[P]ray...the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” In other words, start with prayer. Pray before you think. Pray before you act. Don’t wait until you’re stuck before you pray. Start with prayer.

We who call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ are supposed to model a different way – a better way – to the rest of the world. That different way – that better way – is to begin, continue, and end all things in prayer. Remember, prayer does not have to be some formal, prescribed, mysterious act – prayer is simply communicating with God, much like we communicate with anyone else with whom we are in a relationship. We share our concerns. We share our joys. We ask what we can do to help. We listen.

Of course, we have a special relationship with God. St. Paul describes this special relationship best in his letter to the Romans that we heard this morning when he says, “God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” God’s extravagant love for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ rightly induces hope and confidence in us, now put right with God, as we wait for the judgment at the end of time. Paul tells us that, since we have been put right with God in the sacrifice of Jesus, how much more certain it is that we will be saved through him from the wrath of righteous judgment against all unrighteousness.

God's character as gracious and merciful to the point of extravagance, even with sinners, leads us to believe that God will also be gracious on the day of judgment. Paul goes on to say that, since while we were still enemies, God reconciled us to God through the death of Jesus Christ, how much more certain it is that we will be saved by his life, that is, by the resurrection life of Jesus Christ in which we, too, hope to participate through our baptism. Given this kind of relationship with God, no wonder why Paul says we can even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We can ask God for anything, because God has already given us the greatest gift of all.

So start praying, and start with prayer. By starting with prayer – by asking the Lord to send out laborers into his harvest when the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few, we're recognizing a couple of things. First, we recognize that God calls us to ministry and, more importantly, God calls us to specific ministries. Remember Jesus didn't say, "The harvest is plentiful, but the warm bodies are few." There are plenty of warm bodies, but we don't want warm bodies trampling down the harvest because they're not sure of what they're supposed to be doing.

God calls laborers with the gifts and skills and know-how for reaping the harvest. That's why Jesus called his apostles – which in Greek literally means "those who are sent out" – and gave them specific instructions: "[P]roclaim the good news...Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." These are all activities that Jesus did and that the apostles, as his closest friends, witnessed and were capable of carrying out. God does not ask us to do things beyond our capability.

This leads to our second recognition of the importance of beginning all things with prayer. God will provide. God provides the harvest, but God also provides the laborers. God calls us to ministry. God provides us with the skills to minister in the way God calls. Our authority to minister comes from God, just as Jesus gave authority to his apostles over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. We are now Jesus' apostles who are sent out to minister in the name of Jesus Christ.

And when we remember to begin our ministry with prayer, we are reminded that it is God's ministry, not our ministry. It is God's harvest, not our harvest. When we begin with prayer, we are given a reality check as far as our motivations are concerned. Are we doing this for God's glory or for our own glory? In today's collect we prayed that it is through God's grace we proclaim God's truth with boldness; it is through God's grace that we minister God's justice with compassion. Without God's grace, our ministry rings hollow indeed. Yes, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers – to send us out – into his harvest. Amen.