

**Sermon Title:** *Pray Earnestly for Preachers*  
**Sermon text:** **Luke 10:2**

**August 27, 2023**  
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**Scripture Reading:** Luke 10.1-24 (p. )  
 See parallel: Matthew 9.37-38; 10.7-16

*Context:* “Mission is the basic topic of the entire pericope.” (Bock, 992)  
 “It is a text from which the church draws its missionary zeal,  
 its art of being present among other people, and its rules of evangelism.  
 The passage does, in fact, brim over with joy (vv.17, 20).” (Orange, p.21)

## **Prayer for the Spirit’s illumination**

### **Introduction**

The message of our text should be quite clear.  
 The call of our Lord Jesus is quite clear.

**“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few;  
 therefore pray the Lord of the harvest  
 to send out laborers into His harvest.”** (Luke 10.2 NKJV)

You are called to pray.  
 You are called to ask the Lord God to send out laborers into his harvest,  
 that is the spiritual harvest of bringing in his elect,  
 through teaching/ preaching the Gospel.  
 In other words, you need to ask God for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers  
 – these are the primary laborers in his mission harvest.

Most likely, you already do pray for preachers:  
 This message will be a reminder to continue praying.  
 Some of you need to learn to pray for preachers.  
 All of us need to learn to pray more earnestly for preachers.

We consider then the Spirit’s instruction in our text by focusing on three key concepts:

#### *Pray Earnestly for Preachers*

1. The Harvest is Truly Great
2. The Laborers are Too Few
3. Pray Earnestly  
 -including some practical lessons  
 to pray earnestly, eagerly, expectantly,  
 for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers.

*Pray Earnestly for Preachers*

**1. The Harvest is Truly Great**

Jesus first draws our attention to an opportunity – the harvest is plentiful.

**“The harvest truly is great.”** (Luke 10.2 NKJV)

*Lesson:* The chosen people of God – his adopted children –  
are like a great harvest, a multitude that no one can count!

I grew up on a farm, with over a hundred cows, plus a few chickens, rabbits, and a horse.  
We needed to feed them.

We needed a plentiful harvest – hay, corn, wheat.

However, Jesus is not talking about a literal harvest.

-the harvest metaphor, even an allegory

-frequently employed to describe the final judgement

Using agricultural imagery for a spiritual harvest was common in Judaism:

Isaiah 27.11-12; Hosea 6.11; Joel 3.13; Luke 10.10-16; John 4.31-38;

Romans 11.16-24; 1 Corinthians 3.6-7) also the Parable of the Sower

-the Samaritan woman at the well, when the villagers came out

John 4:35. **Do you not say, 'There are still four months until the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ripe for harvest.**

Harvest – applied in Scripture especially to judgement (Isaiah 17.5),

sometimes takes on a positive sense; also Isaiah 9.2; Ps. 125/126.6)

-the final gathering of God’s people (Is.27.12; Joel 3.13 LXX)

“The eschatological gathering of God’s people

is regarded as taking place in the mission of the disciples.” (Commentary, 416)

-also of gentiles as per OT allusions in this text

-looking forward to the greatness of world mission

In our passage, not a negative image of judgement, punishment,

but a joyful picture of a plentiful harvest, of many saved souls.

Jesus draws our attention to the great multitude that will be saved!

An often-quoted text, particular by evangelical pastors

-eager, zealous for evangelism

-see a plentiful harvest in Quebec

Ex. François, a Pentecostal pastor in a small, rural town

-always speaking of the plentiful harvest, with passion, even tears

-organise a big, summer evangelism event, shows, teachings, altar calls

-spending more than \$10,000!

-not agree with his theology, but admire his zeal, enthusiasm.

François sees a plentiful harvest in Quebec.

Personally, I do not see it. Do I lack faith?

We need to refine our image of a plentiful harvest.

Two elements:

1) Not think of modern agriculture practices

Ex. drive into the country and see fields ripe with wheat, corn, soybeans.

Ex. see pictures of harvesters combining huge fields in western Canada.

However, modern farming technologies have made significant changes,  
from developing more productive varieties,  
to better fertilization, to weed, pest and disease control.

In the past 100 years, average wheat yields have increased fourfold;

-today 2.5 metric tonnes / hectare; only 0.6 a century ago;

-estimates in medieval England, 0.4 tonnes / hectare;

likely not much different from ancient Israel

You recall the *Parable of the Sower* (Mark 4.1-20)

**“Other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”**

According to one website:

“The return on all this hard labor was usually about tenfold...

A good crop only came when the natural rains were good. This would push the yield up to around 20-30-fold. An exceptional crop of up to 100-fold had to combine these perfect early and late rains (Jeremiah 5:24, James 5:7) along with plenty of manure fertilisers. These exceptional harvests were known but very uncommon.”

[<https://setfreeeminars.com/the-parable-of-the-sower-growing-wheat-in-galilee/>]

When Jesus refers to **“The harvest is plentiful”**,

we must not think of modern agriculture,  
but of ancient agricultural expectations.

Like Quebec... hard rocky soil

-lots of granite rock; most of the fertile soil in the St Lawrence River basin.

-lots of hard, granite hearts, everywhere in Quebec

-the “normal” growth:

4-5 baptisms (professions) / year for a congregation of 100 members

During the “Réveil” (1970-1985) – up to 21 baptisms – mostly Quebecers!

Since the late 1980s, return to a growth of 4-5%.

(Lougheed, *Le Réveil et la croissance franco-protestante au 20e siècle*)

What would be the percentage of professions of faith in this church?

Personally, I find these numbers for Quebec very generous.

-evangelical churches accept people for baptism very quickly

-too many of the baptized members leave the church, and even the faith

Overall growth is more like 1% or slightly more;

higher still if many immigrants in the congregation.

From the Parable of the Sower, you may think of Quebec like the hard path.  
 Teach the Gospel, but the seed is taken immediately away by the devil.  
 However, on occasion, a lonely seed falls into a dry crack in the path.  
 The birds do not see it or cannot reach it.  
 With a little moisture, it sprouts and grows and bears the fruit of true faith.  
 Ex. Audrey-Ann; Gabriel; Alexis; Eugenie;  
 even covenant children, Michèle, Samuel, Dominic, etc.

A second element to consider in our picture of the plentiful harvest:

2) Not think of each local church, but of the whole church – catholic, universal  
 God’s elect people from all times, all places, all nations.

The sending of the seventy-two (or seventy) missionaries foreshadows / alludes to the mission to all nations, not just to the nation of Israel, as in the first sending of the twelve disciples.

-first, to Israel (Luke 9.1-6); second to all nations (Samaritans; 72 = nations, Gen.10; 70 nations in Hebrew text and 72 in the LXX, which Luke quotes more often; also possible to associate with the 72 elders in Numbers 11.16ss, 24s; Jesus a second Moses)

Before the ascension of Christ, the mission of God’s covenant people  
 was primarily limited to the descendants of Abraham.  
 -a few notable exceptions: Ruth

After Christ’s ascension, when he pours out his Spirit – particularly to equip Gospel preachers (Eph.4.7-12) – the mission expands to all nations:

Acts 1.8 **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

Two thousand years later, what an absolutely amazing, bountiful harvest!  
 Not done yet!

If Jesus tarries, we can expect millions, even billions more saved souls!

Until that final gathering:

Revelation 7.9-10 (5.9, 11) **“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”**

When Jesus refers to **“The harvest is plentiful”**,

we must not think of each local church, but of the whole church;  
 God’s elect people from all times, all places, all nations.

*The harvest is plentiful!*

What a joyful encouragement – an opportunity! – for the mission of every church.

Easy for us in Quebec (me!) to be jealous of churches like yours,  
or of the missions in French-speaking Africa.

Ex. Pastor Winston Bosch goes to Senegal, Jean Zoellner to Rwanda,  
and men come on foot from miles around  
to hear his teaching and prepare to better serve their churches.  
In Quebec, we have 2, possibly 3 students at Farel.

Yet, the harvest is plentiful, also in Quebec.

-plentiful because, like ancient agriculture expectations,  
we receive 1-2 believers  
-plentiful because our local churches belong to the great worldwide  
growth, today, for the past 2000 years, and for the years to come  
until Christ gathers his countless harvest.

*Lesson restated:*

The chosen people of God – his adopted children –  
are like a great harvest, a multitude that no one can count!

*Pray Earnestly for Preachers*

**1. The Harvest is Truly Great**

**2. The Laborers are Too Few**

After having stated the opportunity – a plentiful harvest –  
Jesus points out the problem, the challenge, the obstacle – the laborers are too few.  
“**The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.**” (Luke 10.2 NKJV)

*Lesson:* There are too few preachers, evangelists, missionaries, and teachers.

The laborers are the men working manually to bring in the harvest.  
Again, we need to correct our common picture of bringing in a harvest,  
even a harvest of corn, wheat or soybeans.

Modern harvesting involves harvesters,  
big equipment, combines or harvesters with wide head,  
that bring in large quantities of grain every hour.

Ex. My nephew worked on a cash-crop farm in Alberta, with is immense,  
sprawling fields. Not only very big tractors, but also equipped with GPS auto  
steer. Set out in one direction for about 40 minutes; turn around and head back in  
the other direction. Enough time to watch an episode of his favorite Netflix series!

That is not the image which Christ wishes to give us of preachers,  
although some do spend too much time watching videos and surfing the Web.

In antiquity, “all grain growing in ancient Israel relied on manual labour for sowing, weed control, harvesting, and thrashing so it was extremely labour intensive for the whole community.” [setfreeeminars]  
Mission is also “extremely labour intensive for the whole community.”  
The whole mission of the local church requires the work of the whole church community.

The work of evangelism and edification involves all believers.  
Jesus sends each of you,  
each of us to proclaim the Good News of his kingdom in word and deed.  
I still recall a sermon by the pastor David Craig on Acts 8.4  
**“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.”**  
Those who were scattered were all the believers except the apostles,  
the ordained preachers (Acts 8.1; see 6.1-7)  
Those nonordained men and women preached the Word of life!  
David Craig pointed out that the believers preached as they walked along,  
from place to place, passing through.  
So should each of you,  
each of you a laborer bringing in the harvest of God’s elect.  
And each new convert becomes another labourer in the great harvest!  
What a glorious response to the prayer for more laborers!

At the same time, we should not neglect the specific call for ordained preachers, ordained evangelists, ordained missionaries, and ordained teachers.

Luke 10.1 **“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others...”**

-others to join the twelve disciples, apostles

– ordained apostles laying the foundation of the church

-*appointed*

v.1 “installed” / commissioned; less common than “appoint”, can take on a certain official flavor; the purpose of the installation was in fact the sending

-two kinds of installations in Luke: the twelve (9.57-62) and the 72 (10.1)

-also in relation to appointing, calling, ordaining an apostle (Acts 1.24)

-see also Ephesians 4.7-16; pastoral epistles; etc.

“The knowledge of the gospel depends on the apostolic preaching authorized by the one who said, ‘Whoever listens to you listens to me...’ (v. 16).”  
(Irenaeus of Lyons, quoted by orange critical, p.32)

The Lord of the plentiful harvest, of the mission of the church,  
is pointing out the need, challenge, problem:

**“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.”** (Luke 10.2 NKJV)

The mission requires more preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers of the Gospel.  
The urgent need for more preachers!

-missionaries, preachers – not just “support staff”, even if so essential

Never neglect to preach the message of reconciliation with the King of kings

-central to the message: the arrival of God's kingdom

-central to the teaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul –

Acts 28.30-31 “...**proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.**”

-deliverance from the dark bondage of sin, suffering

– including death, and the devil (see his fall, Luke 10.17-1)

-brought into the kingdom of light, of forgiveness, of healing

– including resurrection of the King of righteousness and peace.

Like the 72 disciples, sent to:

v.9: preach that the kingdom of God is at hand, is here, is coming in all its glory!

v.16: preach in the name of Jesus, so that we hear the Lord Jesus himself call us

v.17-18: preach to free those enslaved to sin, evil, suffering, death; Satan falls!

v.20: preach so that our names might be written heaven, eternal life with God!

v.21: preach so that Christ rejoices, and we with him!

The essential, required, necessary, blessed means: *preaching* (Romans 10.14-17)

**How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?**

**And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?**

**And how are they to hear without someone preaching?**

**And how are they to preach unless they are sent? ...**

**So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**

See Heidelberg 84.

But, there are too few.

“*Wanted: Preachers!*”

-always a need for more preachers of the gospel of grace!

Mission is extremely labour intensive,  
particularly in Quebec

1 Corinthians 3.5-9 **I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth...**

**For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field...**

-need for more labourers to till, plant, water, weed, fertilize, prune, etc.  
each and every believer.

*Lesson restated:* There are too few preachers, evangelists, missionaries, and teachers.

*Pray Earnestly for Preachers*

- 1. The Harvest is Truly Great**
- 2. The Laborers are Too Few**
- 3. Pray Earnestly**

Since the harvest is plentiful,  
since the laborers are too few,  
you are called to pray.

**“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few;  
therefore pray the Lord of the harvest  
to send out laborers into His harvest.”** (Luke 10.2 NKJV)

*Lesson:* Pray *earnestly, eagerly, expectantly* for laborers,  
for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers.

Why pray?

If the Lord of the harvest has already chosen his elect people, and none will be lost...  
If he has even decided those whom he will call to become preachers and missionaries...

Without asking, will the Lord send out laborers?

Illus. FTSR scholarships - \$10,000! Several available for my doctoral studies.

The director the program laments that students do not receive them,  
because they do not apply / ask. This Dutch boy will apply!

If we do not ask for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, and teachers,  
we will not receive them.

Not an adequate illustration.

We cannot draw a complete parallel between human choices

– applying and granting scholarships;  
and divine, sovereign choices

– calling to preach so that the elect may be saved.

God in his infinite wisdom has provided not only the salvation in Jesus Christ,  
but also the means by which he saves his elect people:

– the Scriptures; the preachers, evangelists, missionaries;

including, *your prayers* to send pastors, evangelists, missionaries.

He could send without your prayers.

However, the Lord has ordained, even planned your prayers to be part of his plan to save.

He ordains, he commands you to pray,

because he promises to send laborers in response to your prayers.

So, pray for preachers!

Pray *earnestly!*

Greek verb employed for “**pray**”

-typically use *proseuchomai*: to pray (87x)

-here, employ *deómai* (7x of 22x)

- to feel pressing need because of lack – hence, to make urgent appeal.

- to have deep personal need causing one to beseech

- make earnest, specific request

-translations: *pray, beg, beseech, implore*

**Luke 5.12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”** (see Luc 8.28, 32; 9.38, 40; 21.36; 22.32; Acts 8.22, 24; 2 Corinthians 5.20)

So, the instruction of the Lord Jesus:

**“[B]eseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”**

NASB 1995

**“[P]lead with the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”**

New American Standard Bible:

**“[P]ray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest**

**to send out laborers into his harvest.”** (Luke 10.2 ESV)

Pray earnestly, eagerly, expectantly,

for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers.

-need some seriousness, passion, fervency

-also importunity

*The Parable of the Persistent Widow* (Luke 18.1-8)

**And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.**

How to pray earnestly for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, and teachers?

#1. *Thanks the Lord for preachers*

Illus. When receive something asked for, teach a child to say, “*Thank you.*”

God does give preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers.

For more two thousand years, he has given preachers.

In prayer, we say, “*Thank you.*”

-for your pastor, \_\_\_\_\_

-for pastors, evangelists, teachers who have instructed you in years past

-for missionaries sent out by your church

-for faithful, gospel preachers of many churches throughout the world

Yes, we need to pray for more preachers.

But even before you ask, say, *“Thank you.”*

-pray expectantly

-the promise, commitment of our Lord to raise up laborers

-the ascended, victorious Lord Jesus **“gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”** (Ephesians 4.11, 12)

Thank the Lord of the harvest for his gift... already, and still to come.

*#2. Ask the Lord for more men to preach, evangelise, and teach.*

Yes, encourage brothers to consider the noble task, calling (1 Tim.3.1)

But first, pray.

“...the missionary journey was to begin with a prayer.” (Commentary, p.26)

Pray earnestly, eagerly for more preachers.

Pray *specifically* for them, by name!

as you see brothers sense the call to the ministry of the Word.

Ex. Write up a list of seven men to pray for, one each day of the week.

Pray *specifically* for a church, a mission,

as you see the need for more preachers of the Gospel.

Ex. Add to your list, seven churches and missions needing more pastors.

*#3. Ask the Lord regularly for more preachers.*

Pray earnestly, regularly,

-not just once, after this sermon

-but every worship service;  
every prayer group meeting;  
regularly in family prayers;  
weekly in personal prayers

Write it down on your prayer card, list, remind.

Write it in your Bible, on your prayer card, stick it to your fridge,

add it to your screensaver, OTHER WORDs

Ex. Make a bookmark – real or virtual – so that every time you open your Bible,  
you are reminded to pray for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers

Ex. Make a church schedule to pray each week for a pastor,  
as well as a missionary or evangelist.

#4. Keep on *praying the Lord for each laborer*.

Do not stop praying for the brothers,

even as they enter the ministry, as they complete 10, 20, 30 years of service.

Too many abandon the ministry or the mission field.

The work is hard, intense, draining, discouraging.

The fruit is meager.

The opposition is intense.

Pray without ceasing for these laborers and their labors.

Pray for your pastor,

even as Paul requested the believers to pray for his mission:

**“[P]ray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ..., that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.”** (Colossians 4.3, 4; see Ephesians 6.19, 20)

*Lesson restated:* Pray *earnestly, eagerly, expectantly* for laborers,  
for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers.

### **Conclusion**

“Mission must still be built through dependence on God.

Such dependence starts with prayer

and ends with a sense of joy in being part of such a grand, long-standing mission...

Each generation looks to God’s direction to supply workers for the task of evangelism.”  
(Commentary, p.296)

Pray for the generations to come!

-even your own sons!

**“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.”** (Luke 10.2 ESV)

*Pray Earnestly for Preachers*

1. The Harvest is Truly Great
2. The Laborers are Too Few
3. Pray Earnestly

-for laborers, for preachers, evangelists, missionaries, teachers.

The Lord of the harvest will send his ambassadors

to gather in his chosen sons and daughters.

Thanks be to God for each preacher that he will send!

-Amen

**Prayer**

## **New King James Version**

### *The Seventy Sent Out*

1After these things the Lord appointed [a]seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. 2Then He said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. 4Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. 5But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ 6And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. 7And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. 8Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. 9And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ 10But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11‘The very dust of your city which clings to [b]us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’ 12[c]But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.

### *Woe to the Impenitent Cities*

13“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15And you, Capernaum, [d]who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. 16He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.”

### *The Seventy Return with Joy*

17Then the [e]seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”

18And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but [f]rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

### *Jesus Rejoices in the Spirit*

21In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 22All[g] things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” 23Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; 24for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.”