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June 28, 2020

Sermon Text – Matthew 9:38 – 10:8

Pentecost 4

WHAT DOES JESUS SEE?

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

There's a game where you try to see through someone else's eyes. It goes like this: "I spy with my little eye...something brown." If you guessed this pulpit, then in a way you were looking through my eyes—seeing what I was seeing.

Our Gospel lesson lets us do something similar with Jesus today. What Jesus saw in our gospel lesson gives us an idea of what He sees around and in us today. Since we want to answer the question **What does Jesus see?**, let us ask for His help in prayer: "*Lord open our eyes to see wonderful things in your word. Amen.*"

Here's what Jesus saw two thousand years ago as **traveled through Galilee: When he saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were troubled and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd.**

Sheep without a shepherd are indeed in **trouble**. They get cut up and torn by thorns and wild animals. They are **cast down** and unable to help or save themselves. Such sheep will die unless rescued by the **shepherd!**

What Jesus saw, were people in desperate spiritual need. People torn with guilt without the good news of God's forgiveness. He saw souls dragged down in slavery to sin. He saw broken hearts and lives. He saw souls held in the grip of the fear of death. Jesus saw people who without faith in Him, the **Good Shepherd**, were spiritually lost and headed for eternal ruin.

What does Jesus see as He looks at our world today? Much of the same: hearts and lives empty, lost, wondering, struggling because they do not know His forgiving love and care or know Him rightly. Souls in the same deadly danger as lost, bruised and bloody sheep, even if they think they are fine and don't need Him.

He sees souls misled by false teachers. Souls who stubbornly follow the desires of the naturally sinful human heart. Jesus still sees **sheep without a shepherd** who need the warning of God's law and the comforting peace of their Savior in the Gospel.

What does Jesus see...in our world? Nearly 8 billion souls, the largest mission field in history, with billions of them not knowing Him, or wrongly viewing His Word of Life, the Bible as a book of rules instead of what it is: a love letter from the Savior God.

What does Jesus see...in our United States? A land where knowledge or respect for the Bible is becoming rare, where more than 1 out of every 4 people say they have no religious affiliation whatsoever. Instead of helping, many churches harm their hearers leaving out or changing the Word of God.

What does Jesus see...in our Synod? We have a shortage of pastors and teachers, a reality we have felt here at Peace when extending divine calls for called workers. There are more opportunities for home and world mission work than there is funding or called workers to send. **The harvest is (still) plentiful, but the workers are few.**

What does Jesus see...in our community? Not only is the number of people who claim no religion higher than the national average in Sun Prairie, but studies show 3 out of every 5 of our neighbors have no involvement in any church...3 out of 5 are not hearing Jesus' saving Word.

What does Jesus see...here at Peace? The Lord has blessed us in many ways, but before coronavirus hit, only about half of the congregation was in worship each Sunday and there are many faces we haven't seen in worship for a long time. What hurting or straying hearts lie behind those figures?

So there is still a desperate need today for **teaching** and **preaching** God's Word just as there was back in our Gospel lesson. But Jesus saw something more that day. He also saw a solution: **Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into his harvest."**

With a heart of **compassion** for lost souls, Jesus then looked at His followers. They were former lost sheep who were found by the Holy Spirit's work. They had God's gift of faith, forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus.

So He showed them what He saw, souls that need to hear about the Savior to live just as a field of ripe grain needs to be harvested so it isn't lost. And then Jesus told them to pray about it, to look to the One who has the power to help, to ask the **Lord** to provide **workers** to **preach the gospel** to "**harvest**" souls for eternal life.

What does Jesus see now? He sees you and me, His forgiven people, His **disciples**, called by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus in faith. He sees people who through His Word now see the **harvest is enormous** and the need for **workers** is great! And what He said then He says to us: **Therefore pray...**

As Jesus' dearly loved people, we want to pray for **harvest workers**: for pastors, teachers, staff ministers and missionaries. But as they cannot do everything, this is also a prayer for God's people to support and work alongside those called workers. It's a prayer for Sunday School Teachers, elders and others ready to search after those who have strayed, men and women to serve through committees to carry out the work of the church.

Let us also pray for moms and dads to teach their children, families to make God's Word a priority, for people willing to invite that friend or family member to church or tell that hurting individual that Jesus died for them and does care about them. Pray for young people to stay faithful to their Savior and stand up for what God says is right and so be witnesses to His amazing love that has saved and changed them.

Let us bring such prayers to **the Lord of the Harvest** each day. Let's not wait, but please join me in your hearts to pray right now: ***Lord of the Harvest, send out workers into Your Harvest.***

Did you catch the neat twist in our reading? Right after Jesus led the disciples in prayer, we hear this: **Jesus called his twelve disciples to himself ... Jesus sent these twelve out..."As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near!'"** The Lord used these disciples as the answer to their own prayer, sending them out into **His Harvest!**

The same is true today. Jesus still sees you and me as His people as part of the answer to our prayer for **workers in His harvest**.

He sees people whom His compassionate love has saved and called. He sees people to whom He has given gifts, abilities, time, energy, and treasures with which we can thank Him by using them to support and send **workers** into our congregation and Synod. He sees people His saving love has touched that we might show and speak of it to those around us.

Perhaps as Jesus looks at our congregation today, He sees young people who have the gifts to be a pastor or teacher and family and friends who can encourage that person to train for full time ministry.

Of course isn't there something else Jesus must see when He looks at us? Surely he sees all the ways our sinful nature has gotten the best of us so that we failed to pray for and cheerfully support called workers, the ways we let busyness and distractions, laziness and self-absorption get in the way of the **work** we could do in the Lord's **Harvest**.

There are fears that have stopped us from always speaking up about the Savior in words and actions. Perhaps there's panic when we look at all the work and despair because we think it depends on us and not on the gracious **Lord of the Harvest** who alone changes hearts.

But now be amazed at what Jesus sees when He looks at you and me. Yes, He saw we could never earn his love, that we could not perfectly serve him this side of heaven and that we would sin and fail. As true God He saw all that before we were born, even before the world was made.

And yet Jesus still looked at us and loved us anyway! He sees us as people that He loved with such a great and undeserved love that He chose to suffer hell and death on a cross to save us from every sin. Romans 5 says so: **God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!**

So **What does Jesus see?** As people with Holy Spirit-worked faith who admit our sins and trust His love, Jesus no longer sees our sins—He chooses not to see our sins. He does not see any of your failures to **pray** or support His work, He does not see my weakness, worries and half-hearted efforts.

Instead, looking through the lens of His forgiving cross and empty tomb, Jesus sees us clothed in royal robes of the children of God, dressed in the forgiveness He won, adorned with the perfect life of perfect compassion and tireless work in God's Harvest that He lived in our place—the life of perfection He lived for us and for which He gives us the credit.

And so Jesus looks at you as His believers and sees hearts that He comforts with the good news of His saving love. He sees hearts the Holy Spirit renews again through the message of His free forgiveness.

He sees people His gospel message restores and prepares to again enter the daily battle against sin, selfishness and distractions. He sees people who by faith share his love for the lost and want many more to join us in that eternal harvest celebration of heaven. He sees in us His people whom His love equips to **pray for** and **work in His Harvest**. By God's grace, that's what Jesus sees in you. Amen.

The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things! I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. Amen.