

**Laborers who Harvest Life Through Love**  
**based on Matthew 9: 35-10:14, David Jahnke, 6/18/17**

So I felt called to get back to Jesus' life after a couple of months of reflecting upon Jesus' death and resurrection according to Paul. Doing so reminded me that the gospels and the book of Acts are the narrative examples of Paul's understanding of justification through a faith in Jesus which sends us out into the world to do his mission. Justification comes through a faith that necessarily leads to deeds which, in turn, reveal what we believe in.

I was thinking about what would have happened if the disciples thought that faith in Jesus was just about getting into heaven. If they had thought, "Oh cool...Jesus rose from the dead. He was such a nice guy and he forgave our sins and all of that must mean we live forever" and if they then had just returned to life as usual. That would have been and it still is the false justification of sin, not the justification or righteousness-making of God. And there would have been no saving of the nations through the disciples going out and spreading Jesus' Way and Truth and Life.

God's true justification happens through the faithful work of Jesus and His Spirit; work which is now being done by you and me and all others who faithfully labor in God's harvest field just as the disciples did; by anyone who works to harvest the goodness and truth and justice deep inside others and the world.

Today is Father's Day. And as I was going astray as an adolescent, my dad told me a story what his mother taught him when he was around the same age. She told him that he could run around and smoke and drink and make a mess of his life; or he could choose to be an athlete and a student. My grandmother had lost her husband when my dad was just six and so she knew very well how hard she needed to work in order to justify-- in order to make things right for her two children.

And *of course*, all of this is rooted in what we believe. Do we believe in eating, drinking and being merry for a few decades before our short existence flickers out or even eating, drinking and being merry until we go to heaven? Or do we believe in God's reign of love over the earth, here and now, and His bringing His Kingdom to earth as it is in heaven? And do we believe that it is vital that we participate in that?

This is directly connected to the mission and the message of the disciples that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. This has to do with the righteous reorientation of the earth toward heaven but it also has to do with the nearness of death and the judgment that awaits us all with the meeting of the King.

The question posed by my grandma to my dad is one we all must face and one which we pose to the world, "What, if anything, are you living for?" And the answer to that questions depends on the answer to this, "Do you believe in God? And if so, what does that God expect of you?" A part of our work is to call people to think about that because the Kingdom is near and we will all be meeting Him before too long!

Shortly after writing this, I encountered a poem from a nun whose life was cut short by murder. Sister Catherine Cesnick was probably murdered because she was about to call out the abuse of students by priests at her school. She wrote this ten years earlier at 16:

*SOME PEOPLE MEET DEATH WITH OPEN ARMS  
AND THANK GOD THEIR TIME HAS COME.  
OTHERS BEG TO BE SPARED FOR JUST ONE MORE DAY  
SAYING THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE.  
BUT IF WE, BEFORE PERFORMING AN ACT,  
WOULD STOP AND THINK OF DEATH  
OF DEATH, OF JUDGEMENT, AND OF ALL SUCH THINGS  
I'M SURE WE WOULD DO OUR BEST  
SO THAT WHEN OUR TIME COMES, WE MAY SAY:  
"TAKE ME LORD WITHOUT DELAY."*

When our time comes, will we be ready for the Lord to take us without delay? Will we have an assurance that God will say to us, "Well-done good and faithful servant. Now enter the joy I have prepared for you?" And beyond this, do you not want there to be justice for those who do not pay for their misdeeds on earth? After being reminded by this movie of what the wicked sometimes get away with, I want God's justice to be upon everyone who has not fully repented.

So then what does God expect of us? That answer came to me in a song earlier this week from Nick Cave. With the London Gospel Choir singing their hearts out in the background and a powerful driving rock drum beat, Cave sings in his deep baritone, “Calling every boy and girl; Calling all around the world. Get ready for love! Praise Him! Praise Him ‘til you’ve forgotten what you’re praising Him for. Get ready for Love!”

Because Love is the divine image in which we were made; because love fills our lives with joy and peace; because love is coming and we have to get ready for it...because God is love, Love is what is expected of us. Love in the form of caring for and curing the sick. Love in the form of feeding the hungry. Love in the form of teaching the poorly educated. Love in the form of casting out the unclean spirits of hatred and lies and selfishness and violence and greed. Love in the form of advocating for all of these things in government and from businesses and corporations since we cannot individually do all of this. God grants us the authority to do this, boldly, fearlessly.

As I expressed to the children, Jesus (and therefore God) look with compassion on his lost and helpless and harassed children. God comes alongside and lets them know that even though the world rejects them, He does not. And, in fact, in many ways He is so pleased with them.

I got to thinking about how we feel when someone lets us know that our words or presence or help in some way made a difference to them. What a rewarding feeling that is. That’s how the disciples felt when they came back to Jesus and let him know that they actually were able to do the things he told them.

God wants us to know that we do things everyday that make a difference. And that He is pleased with us. And he wants us to communicate the same to others.

So please start saying good news to people. Start appreciating people. Let your families know what a difference they have made in your life and what they mean to you. That gives them a measure of rest and peace and purpose. Get to know others and offer them kind words and loving deeds that tell them that they are valued and valuable. Be a sign to them that they are God’s children, made to be citizens of and laborers in His Kingdom of Love, where we rest and work and praise for all eternity.

## Children's message on Father's Day

1. We just heard about Jesus seeing struggling people and having compassion on them and being a shepherd to these helpless and harassed children of God. Lots of people feel that way.
2. God is their shepherd and yours too.
3. What does a shepherd do? Guide, protect, feed...
4. So pay attention to his voice in your conscience; pray for him to guide your way...
5. And let your Father and your Mother be a shepherd to you too...; listen to us and trust in us (even though we are far from perfect!)
6. And then be a shepherd to others; go alongside and let people who feel harassed and helpless know that you are with them...;
7. Fathers do this for your little ones and other little ones out there. There is no more important work.