

Sunday 14th June 2026

The Second Sunday after Trinity

Gospel Reading

Matthew 9.35 - 10.8

The Harvest Is Great, the Labourers Few

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.”

The Twelve Apostles

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

The Mission of the Twelve

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, “The kingdom of heaven has come near.” Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

Other Readings: Genesis 18.1-15 [21.1-7]

Psalm 116.1,10-17*

Romans 5.1-8

Homily

Jesus went through the cities and villages teaching, healing, proclaiming good news, and Matthew tells us that when he looked at the crowds, “he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” And then he says to his disciples:

“The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.”

Those words can sound painfully familiar to the Church in our own day.

Many churches know what it feels like to be few in number. Congregations smaller than they once were. Fewer clergy covering larger areas. The same faithful volunteers doing five different jobs because there is nobody else. PCC meetings where the conversation so easily becomes about survival rather than mission.

We know the feeling of looking around and wondering if there are enough people left to do what needs to be done.

But Jesus looks at the world differently from the way we often do. We may see empty pews and shrinking numbers. Jesus sees people longing for meaning, hope, healing, and belonging. He sees loneliness hidden beneath busy lives. He sees anxiety beneath success. He sees individuals who are spiritually hungry even if they may not yet believe the church has food worth eating.

The harvest is still plentiful because human need is still plentiful.

The problem is that too often, we as the church, have become anxious over the lack of resources. And that is entirely valid, justified, and understandable.

But Jesus never builds his movement on abundance of resources. He builds it on abundance of grace.

He sends twelve ordinary disciples. Not experts. Not the powerful elite. Not the wealthy and well resourced. But fishermen, tax collectors, ordinary people with mixed motives and imperfect understanding. And somehow through them the kingdom of God breaks open into the world.

The kingdom of God has always depended on ordinary people who quietly give of themselves in love.

Volunteers who unlock church doors early on cold mornings. People who make tea and remember names. Those who sing, clean, arrange flowers, count money, visit the lonely, run foodbanks, sit through endless meetings, maintain churchyards, and offer lifts to those who cannot drive. None of these things may seem dramatic, but they are holy.

The Church is alive not because of wealth or prestige, but because generation after generation people have given freely of themselves.

And perhaps that is where these later words of Jesus become so important:

“You received without payment; give without payment.”

Everything we have received from God has first been a gift. Life itself. Love. Forgiveness. Mercy. Hope. Community. The chance to begin again. None of us earned these things.

And because we have received freely, Jesus says we are to give freely. That spirit of generosity stands against so much of the culture around us. We live in a world that increasingly asks: What do I get in return? Is this worth my time? What benefit is there for me?

But the kingdom asks different questions:

Who needs compassion? Who needs welcome? What can we give?

Every act of generosity, however small, becomes a sign of the kingdom.

And yet this passage also challenges us. Because Jesus does not simply say, "Admire or praise the labourers." He says, "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers."

Perhaps one of the great struggles facing the church is that we are shaped more by consumer culture than by discipleship.

We can get concerned about whether the church meets people's needs, or suits their preferences, or "entertains" them enough to return next week.

But discipleship is not consumption. It is participation. The church is healthiest not when a few exhausted people do everything, but when everybody recognises they have gifts to offer. And those gifts are not all the same.

Some are public and visible. Others are hidden and quiet. Some preach. Some pray. Some organise rotas. Some comfort grieving people. Some offer practical wisdom. Some simply show up week after week and become living reminders that God does not abandon his people.

Jesus gathered ordinary people and trusted them with extraordinary work.

And perhaps we need to hear again that the future of the church will not be secured simply by strategies, restructures, or statistics, important though those things may sometimes be. The future of the church will be shaped by communities willing to live generously, serve joyfully, and embody compassion.

The harvest is plentiful. There are still people searching for hope. Still people needing community. Still people longing to know they are loved. Still people waiting for good news.

And Christ still calls labourers. Not perfect people. Not endlessly energetic people. Just willing people.

People who understand that what they have received freely from God is now theirs to share freely with the world.

And perhaps that is the deepest truth of this passage: the church does not exist for itself. We are sent out.

Sent to heal where there is hurt. Sent to welcome where there is exclusion. Sent to love where there is fear. Sent to give because God has first given to us.

The labourers may sometimes feel few. But grace has never depended on large numbers. Only on hearts willing to say yes. Amen

Conversation Questions

1. Where is God calling you to be a labourer in the harvest — not only through what you do, but through who you are willing to be alongside? Who in your community, church, workplace, or family needs someone simply to listen, accompany, encourage, or notice them?
2. What have you received freely from God that you are now being called to give freely to others? Time? Hospitality? Compassion? Skills? Encouragement? Resources?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Lord, you have taught us
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
send your Holy Spirit
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*Faithful Creator,
whose mercy never fails:
deepen our faithfulness to you
and to your living Word,
Jesus Christ our Lord.*