

**Sunday 7th July 2019 Luke 10:1-11, 16-20
Labour Shortage!!!**

Intro

August 2018

England's schools are facing a "severe shortage" of teachers, with bigger class sizes and more subjects taught by staff without a relevant degree, says the Education Policy Institute
Labour Shortages in South Africa, Australia and India as well

May 2019

Shortage of people with trade skills. Demand for electricians FAR exceeds their availability.
London is home to the largest shortage of electricians, and with the government aiming to build 1 million homes in England by 2020, there is immense pressure on trade industries to meet this target. Shortage of skilled labour.

June 2019

The NHS is in a state of perpetual crisis characterised by doctor shortages, long wait times, and rationing. The UK lost 441 general practitioners last year and had 11,576 unfilled vacancies for doctors as of last June.
Labour Shortage in Canada, USA, India, Germany as well as UK

And so there was a shortage of labour at the time of Jesus

To quote Jesus himself ...'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few' Vs 2
"The harvest is huge and ripe. But there are not enough harvesters to bring it all in.'

This passage, hopefully, is quite familiar to most of us.... we have been using it over the last year as our passage to dwell in as part of our journey through PMC (Partnership for Missional Church)

We have heard it read, we have read it ourselves and we have spent time noticing where our attention lingers, noticing which part of the reading we are especially drawn to.
So I am not going to spend long on it today but hope to draw out the main themes and pick up on just a couple of points

70

After Jesus had appointed and sent out 12 disciples, after he had fed 5000+ people with a few small loaves and a couple of fish, after the Transfiguration of Jesus up on the mountainside, Jesus appointed 70 others and sent them on ahead of him to the towns where he was planning to go.

A few weeks ago Penny was talking about the significance of some of the numbers used in the gospels. 70 is another of those that has significance

The text states they were "other" (i.e., other than the Twelve). A few Greek manuscripts have "seventy-two." The number seventy is a key numerical symbol in the Bible. Seventy nations are listed in the table of nations after Noah survived the flood (Gen 10), seventy of Jacob's clan went into Egypt (Ex. 1:5), seventy palm trees refreshed God's people at Elim (Ex. 15:27), seventy elders served with Moses (Ex. 24:1), seventy princes are mentioned in Judg. 9:56, seventy men sat on the council of the Sanhedrin, and Jesus sent out seventy apostles to preach the message of the kingdom.

It's interesting to read what Jesus says next to the 70 after telling them the harvest is great. He warns them that the task they are being sent to will not be easy or comfortable. In fact he warns them that it will feel like a lamb being sent in to a pack of wolves... a vulnerable and scary place to be. That's an interesting tactic! I can't imagine our government being that blunt with perspective teachers or doctors whilst in an effort to recruit more !!!

And then he says... take nothing with you - no purse, bag or sandals.

Just think about this for a moment... Jesus was sending these 70 people out into places where he was intending to visit, into an environment where he felt people were hungry to know and learn, but where they would feel vulnerable, and he said take nothing with you. They didn't have super markets and credit cards that they could use should things get tricky! These 70 people, in their pairs, had to go with nothing EXCEPT their trust in God.

Peace

Then we come to vs 5&6

Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" **6** And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

vs 6 anyone who shares in peace was another way of saying a godly man
Jesus was explaining that there would be places and homes where their blessing would be accepted, where there would be some connection...
But there would be other places where their blessing would be rejected...
Expect a mixed reception

vs 7 & 8 and where you stay... whatever they provide for you then received gladly
Don't be fussy about what you eat... remember these were Jewish people and they had strict laws about what and how to eat. But Jesus was telling them to receive from those that were willing to provide

Something for us... How easily do we receive from others??? It may not be exactly as we would offer, or as we would serve it... but receive from others.
I was once hugely challenged by this thought... I enjoy serving others, I enjoy helping others and offering hospitality. But if I am always the 'giver' and not the receiver then I may be preventing someone from being able to give to me and so stopping them enjoying the experience that I enjoy !!!

Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Vs 11

This sentence has caused much pondering. It doesn't feel 'right' so what does it mean?

Go back to Luke 9:5

Shaking the dust off their feet would be a statement against the people who had rejected the gospel, that the messengers would not be responsible for their fate. More than a metaphor, this was an actual custom of the day.

Shaking the dust off their feet did not mean they were to stomp off offended and angry, but that they would move on with no defilement or unforgiveness in their hearts toward those who rejected their message. If they did not do that, they would take the "dust" of that offence to the next place they ministered.....

70 returned with joy

They had ventured out, been very vulnerable, trusted in God's guiding and provision and came back with JOY!

And Jesus reminds them that whilst this is all great, and they have made a difference in The Kingdom, he reminds them that what is most important is that their names are written heaven, that they, through their faith, were blessed.

In vs 9&11 Jesus gives the 70 some very specific words to say to those they meet

The Kingdom of God has come near to you

I am sure that the 70 were filled with joy because through their travels, and offering of peace, and receiving of hospitality, in their labours for Jesus, they had seen the Kingdom of God close to them

There was a labour shortage for God's farmers 200 years ago, as there is today. The harvest is plentiful even today. There are people of peace, people who will accept our blessing and offer us hospitality, people interested and hungry even for God, even if they do not express it quite in those terms.

PCC day

Next Saturday our PCC are joining with the PCC from Old Windsor and spending the day with Rhodri and Alison (Members of the PMC delivery team). The purpose of the day is to try to discern together, WITH GOD, an activity or project that we, as a church here in this place, may get involved in. An activity or project that will bless our community and be an opportunity for us to join with others who are already 'at work' in our community.

If anyone else would like to join us then do speak to myself or Penny after the service
But please will ALL of you pray for us this week that God will guide and direct us. Pray that He will send us to the place where He is already at work and where He wants us to be

The labourers may be few but the harvest is plentiful and Jesus said to 'ask the Lord of the harvest to send out the labourers. He has ALL the resources at His disposal. We are not to feel overburdened or over stretched. But we are to go where He sends us and trust in Him for everything no matter how vulnerable we may feel.
It is HIS harvest. We are HIS labourers.

Please pray for us.
Amen

After this, the Lord Jesus formed thirty-five teams among the other disciples. Each team was two disciples, seventy in all,[a] and he commissioned them to go ahead of him into every town he was about to visit.

2 He released them with these instructions:

"The harvest is huge and ripe. But there are not enough harvesters to bring it all in. As you go, plead with the Owner of the Harvest to drive out[b] into his harvest fields many more workers. **3** Now, off you go! I am sending you out even though you feel as vulnerable as lambs going into a pack of wolves. **4** You won't need to take anything[c] with you—trust in God alone. And don't get distracted from my purpose by anyone you might meet along the way.

5 "Once you enter a house, speak to the people there and say, 'God's blessing of peace be upon this house!' **6** If a lover of peace[d] resides there, your peace will rest upon that household.[e] But if you are rejected, your blessing of peace will come back upon you.

7 Don't feel the need to shift from one house to another, but stay put in one home during your time in that city. Eat and drink whatever they serve you. Receive their hospitality, for you are my harvester, and you deserve to be cared for.

8 "When you enter into a new town, and you have been welcomed by its people, follow these rules: Eat[f] what is served you. **9** Then heal the sick, and tell them all, 'God's kingdom realm has arrived and is now within your reach!'

10 But when you enter a city and they do not receive you, say to them publicly, **11** 'We wipe from our feet the very dust of your streets as a testimony before you![g] Understand this: God's kingdom realm came within your reach and yet you have rejected God's invitation!'"

12 Jesus continued, "Let me say it clearly: on the day of judgment the wicked people of Sodom will have a lesser degree of judgment than the city that rejects you, *for Sodom did not have the opportunity that was given to them.*"

16 Jesus concluded his instructions to the seventy with these words: "Remember this: Whoever listens to your message is actually listening to me. And anyone who rejects you is rejecting me, and not only me but the one who sent me."

17 When the seventy missionaries returned to Jesus, they were ecstatic with joy, telling him, "Lord, even the demons obeyed us when we commanded them in your name!"

18 Jesus replied, "While you were ministering, I watched Satan topple until he fell suddenly from heaven like lightning to the ground.

19 Now you understand that I have imparted to you all my authority to trample over his kingdom. You will trample upon every demon before you and overcome every power[j] Satan possesses. Absolutely nothing will be able to harm you as you walk in this authority.

20 However, your real source of joy isn't merely that these spirits submit to your authority, but that your names are written in the journals of heaven and that you belong to God's kingdom. This is the true source of your authority."