Harvest Season

Introduction

This was my first TIM talk. For the first round of talks we were free to choose any passage we wanted to. Our only constraints we time and that it should be a gospel talk. For my passage I chose one of the many things that Jesus said in the gospel of Matthew which I find particularly powerful.

For my **intended audience** I chose Christian students. The talk was held on 18 March 2009.

The Talk

> [35]Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. [36]When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [37]Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. [38]Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” – Matthew 9:35–38 (NIV)

As you may know, we are now in the middle of the harvest season, if only because of getting stuck behind tractors on the road moving along at 10km/h. I suppose most of us do not consider how our food—our bread and rice and fruit and wine—get to the stores from where we buy it. Do we ever to stop to think about the farmer—the sower and grow—and the concerns he has? Are you at all aware that we are experiencing a drought this year, and that South Africa will have to import an estimated 1 million tonnes of wheat? Perhaps you are or perhaps you aren’t, but does the gravity and reality of words like “drought” and “failed harvest” impress us? Not only do we always find food in our stores when we go out looking for it, but we are spoiled for choice. Earlier this week I was amazed to realize I was part of a peculiar group of people in a store. While others were milling about around us, we stood mesmerised in from of the bread section, like a group of strangers united in front of a TV watching a sports final. Cheap bread, expensive bread, low GI, whole wheat, white bread, toaster bread: so many choices! And none of us lifted a finger to get any of it there. Someone provided for us.

In Matthew 9:36-–38, Jesus speaks of people as a harvest: a crop which had been nurtured into ripeness and readiness. My question to you is this: are we as complacent about the harvest He speaks of as we are about the physical harvest?

When Jesus sees the crowd, He feels compassion for them. They are tired and troubled by the laws and the heavy burdens that are lain on them. They are neglected and distracted by the very people who are suppose to lead and instruct them. And they were not alone. Today, the world is full of people like these: people longing for love, healing and forgiveness. But there is good news for these people: Christ Jesus came to Earth and without fault or sin was nailed to a cross so that He could die and take our sin away. And Jesus arose again, so that we can believe in Him and find the love, healing and forgiveness we were longing for. Yes, this is the Good News! And it is out there!

But who will deliver this news? Who will accurately and correctly teach of the salvation we have in Jesus? Jesus says “Ask the Lord to send out workers into his harvest field”. It is our responsibility to be concerned about the harvest. However, directly after Jesus said these words, in Matthew chapter 10, Jesus instructs His disciples to go out and spread the Good News! He repeats it again at the end of the book of Matthew, 28:18–20. This time Jesus gives them the Great Charge: “[19]Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”. The same people He instructed to pray for the work to be done, Jesus sends out to do that work. And what a wonderful mission isn’t it? Imagine the privilege of sharing the Good News of Christ. Imagine telling one’s

stories of salvation and redemption. In John 4:38, Jesus says: "[38]I sent you to reap what you have not worked for.". Jesus laid His life down for the people of the harvest and God prepares their hearts for the Good News. They planted the seeds and grew the crops. All that is necessary, is for someone to bring the harvest in.

But who is spreading this glorious news? Surely someone is? Surely it is the preachers and pastors and missionaries? Surely. After all, someone fed us and took care of us. It was not by our own instrument: someone provided for us. Surely someone will provide for the person down the street or in class? We find great joy and encouragement in seeing the fellow believers around us. But how often do we stop to think where they came from? How was this part of the harvest brought in? No, I don't suppose we often stop to think about this question. All that matters, after all, is that the harvest does come in. We are not concerned by the hows.

But we should be. The reality is that the harvest is too great for few workers to bring in. How terrible a waste would it be to let the unharvested crop rot away? Jesus' Great Charge is for all is followers and believers. We are charged to ask God to send people to work in the fields. We are then charged to go out into these fields and help bring in the harvest: to spread the gospel. Even if your calling is not in ministry, you can support and encourage those who do minister. Get involved in church initiatives and activities. After all, every part of the body of Christ works towards the same goal. But when the time comes to speak, regardless of where you think your gift lies, you must not shy away. Stand up when God answers your prayers through you yourself and let His Holy Spirit speak.

When you next see someone who is damaged by this world and is weary, and you are filled with compassion for them, what will you do? Will you trust that "someone" will provide? Or will you help with the harvest?

Critique

The talk was well received and apart from a couple of minor hitches, the delivery went well. The main point of criticism was that this wasn't a *gospel* talk. It therefore didn't contain anything for the unbeliever. I also had too many references to other Bible passages for a talk of this length. For a longer talk (approaching the length of a sermon), this would have been good.

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