



**JESUS OF NAZARETH**  
**LABORERS FOR THE HARVEST**  
**MATTHEW 9:18-10:1**  
**5-03-20**

**All = bold sections – read together**

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

*Sung together = italics*

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light. We will continue to light the candle until we meet again.

**Reflect**

Outside of Christ, I am weak; in Christ, I am strong. Outside of Christ, I cannot; in Christ, I am more than able. Outside of Christ, I have been defeated; in Christ, I am already victorious. How meaningful are the words, in Christ! -Watchman Nee

**Welcome**

This is the day that the Lord has made.

**We will rejoice and be glad in it!**

Good morning from home to home! We gather apart to make much of Jesus; to learn, grow, discover and follow him as his disciples. May we gather with humble hearts, eager hearts, receptive hearts and open hearts to his leading...for where he leads, there will we follow. May we not be unchanged by your grace this morning.

**Candle Lighting** – Light the candle again this week as a reminder of the Easter Good News!

**Call to Christ: 1 Peter 2:9-10**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

**Song:** Build My Life -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnTsC0wzPOg>

*Worthy of ev'ry song we could ever sing.*

*Worthy of all the praise we could ever bring.*

*Worthy of ev'ry breath we could ever breathe.*

*We live for You, we live for You.*

*Holy there is no one like You. There is none beside You.*

*Open up my eyes in wonder and show me who You are,*

*And fill me with Your heart, and lead me in Your love to those around me.*

*Jesus the name above ev'ry other name.*

*Jesus the only one who could ever save.*

*Worthy of ev'ry breath we could ever breathe.*

*We live for You, we live for You.*

*Holy there is no one like You. There is none beside You.*

*Open up my eyes in wonder and show me who You are,*



*And fill me with Your heart, and lead me in Your love to those around me*

*I will build my life upon Your love. It is a firm foundation.*

*And I will put my trust in You alone, and I will not be shaken.*

*Holy there is no one like You. There is none beside You.*

*Open up my eyes in wonder and show me who You are,*

*And fill me with Your heart, and lead me in Your love to those around me*

**Psalm of Praise: Psalm 134**

**Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who stand by night in the house of the LORD! Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD! May the LORD bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!**

Note Christ's authority highlighted in this next song. In our series from the Gospel according Matthew, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Matthew has gone out of his way to make sure we not only recognize Jesus' authority but submit to it by faith so that we might overcome sin and death in him and praise him with our words and our deeds as salt and light in a broken land!

**Song: Overcome -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eP-JdZs4V54>**

*Seated above, enthroned in the Father's love.*

*Destined to die, poured out for all mankind.*

*God's only Son, perfect and spotless one.*

*He never sinned but suffered as if He did.*

*All authority, every victory is Yours!*

*All authority, every victory is Yours!*

*Savior, worthy of honor and glory.*

*Worthy of all our praise, You overcame.*

*Jesus, awesome in power forever.*

*Awesome and great is Your name, You overcame.*

*Power in hand speaking the Father's plan.*

*You're sending us out, light in this broken land.*

*All authority, every victory is Yours*

*Savior, worthy of honor and glory.*

*Worthy of all our praise, You overcame, You overcame.*

*Jesus, awesome in power forever.*

*Awesome and great is Your name, You overcame, yeah!*

*We will overcome by the blood of the Lamb.*

*And the word of our testimony, everyone overcome!*

*We will overcome by the blood of the Lamb.*

*And the word of our testimony, everyone overcome!*

*We will overcome by the blood of the Lamb.*

*And the word of our testimony, everyone overcome!*

*We will overcome by the blood of the Lamb*

*And the word of our testimony, everyone overcome*



*Savior, worthy of honor and glory  
Worthy of all our praise, You overcame, You overcame Jesus  
Jesus, awesome in power forever  
Awesome and great is Your name, You overcame  
You overcame (You overcame)  
Jesus (You overcame)  
You overcame (You overcame)  
You overcame*

**Song:** Great Is Thy Faithfulness -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKZ0xmkUtUo>

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father.  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.  
Thou changest not; Thy compassions they fail not.  
As Thou hast been Thou forever will be.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see.  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth.  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide.  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see.  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*

### **Offering**

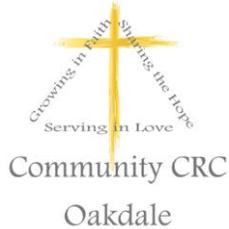
**We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.**

Last week we were reminded that God loves a cheerful giver from 2 Corinthians 9. Describe the difference between getting a gift from someone you care about because they “have to” (duty) and because they “want to” (delight).

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

### **Youth Celebration** - Prayer

**Almighty God, we pray for our youth. We pray for an encounter with You, the One who can change everything. Grant them understanding and revelation of insight into the life-changing and loving experience of your grace. Open eyes, hearts, and ears as only You can do. May all know and understand the calling You’ve placed upon them, the inheritance You’ve given them, and what You, Father, have positioned them for and their purpose in this time and hour in Jesus Christ.**



**We pray specifically for those who are far away from You; meet those who are wandering aimlessly. Meet them with Your grace and mercy through the person and power of the Holy Spirit. May they experience Your presence and be drawn to You and your kingdom. We pray for those who are wondering whether You care about them, if You know their names, if You heal, what their destinies are, and if they can have an effect on this world. We pray for each person who is wondering about You and pray that wonder would be answered in You. May they know your love, your forgiveness, your acceptance and that they belong to you because of Jesus Christ who is Lord and Savior. It's in his name we pray, Amen.**

**Scripture Reading:** Please read Matthew 9:8-10:1

**Gospel Message:** Laborers for the Harvest



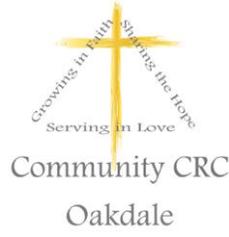
In November of 2018, Char and I met a remarkable young man in Israel named Emmanuel. He was from Mexico working in Israel as a tour guide at the Magdala archeological site. This site had recently uncovered an ancient synagogue that Jesus certainly would have taught at. It is also the place where one of Jesus' most faithful followers lived, Mary Magdalene. Emmanuel was a disciple of Jesus and his passion showed through when he led us at the end of the tour to a room with a large mural on the wall depicting the scene of the women we just read about; the one who touched the fringe of Jesus' robe and was healed because of her faith. This is the painting:

Emmanuel spoke to us near the stone table at the center of the picture and his passion grew with every word he spoke about the women's encounter with Jesus; about how she was changed by his healing grace and about how we too can be changed by his healing grace to be a witness to Jesus. It didn't matter who we were. What mattered was Jesus. Our group sat in humble silence as we listened to him speak of God's grace and love towards us in and through Jesus. There were more than a few tears....



Take a few moments to speak about this women's faith and what we might learn from her about ourselves and Jesus.

This encounter the woman had with Jesus mirrors the three other encounters from our passage today: the dead child raised back to life by the thought of Jesus (there are no recorded words of him speaking or touching her back to life); the healing of two blind men and the healing of the man unable to speak. In all these miraculous healings we are reminded of Jesus' authoritative and restorative grace and that the kingdom of God had arrived in him. It is through him that we are brought back to life from being dead in our sins; made to be able to see with the eyes of faith; enabled to hear the truth of the gospel of Jesus. Jesus is our healer, the one we encounter who restores, renews, redeems and re-creates us.



Matthew summarizes Jesus works with these words in verse 35, "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages [including Magdala], teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction." There were no effects of sin that Jesus could not undo. None. Matthew then includes a very important story about a harvest and its laborers. We live in an area of agriculture. Talk about the harvest; maybe of almonds or milk or walnuts, or grapes or peaches. What's so important about the harvest? How's it connected with all the work that is done prior?

Jesus says the harvest is plentiful (or abundant) but the laborers are few. In other words, there are many who were ready to receive the gospel but only a few to share it. Now, in context this makes even more sense as Jesus was beginning to gather his disciples to send them out into the world to make more and better disciples of him that would demonstrate his love, grow in faithful discipleship to him and share the hope they have in him to others. The whole world was a field ready to be harvested. Two thousand years have gone by and much harvesting has been done in the name of Jesus. Many laborers have taken up the call to go out into the farthest reaches of the harvest to labor there. Yet, the harvest is still plentiful and the laborers still too few in number. According to the Joshua Project, of the 7.1 billion people alive, 2.9 billion live in unreached people groups with little to no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, there are approximately 16,500 unique people groups in the world with about 6,900 of them considered unreached. Think out loud together about what those numbers represent.

The Christian Reformed Church has always been mission-minded. From early on in her history she was intentional to send missionaries to "mission fields" in foreign lands. In 1919, a young CRC woman by the name of Johanna Veenstra answered God's call to be a foreign missionary to Africa. At the time, Africa was not considered to be a viable mission field by the CRC but her heart was already set on the people in the region of Nigeria. She went without the official support of the CRC but knowing that it was where God wanted her to be. She labored there for 12 years, amongst a foreign people for whom she had Christ like compassion. It was hard work, demanding great faith, endurance and tenacity. She traveled well over a thousand miles on foot or bicycle through harsh and dangerous terrain. In the end, she laid the groundwork for a rich kingdom harvest for Christ in Nigeria by future CRC missionaries. Today, there are over 200,000 Nigerian CRC Christians and another 1 million Reformed Christians that Johanna led the way for in Christ. In a book that she wrote while on furlough she speaks of the harvest and the laborers:



"When your daughter in her early teens is being carefully shielded from every disorderly influence, remember that in Africa, girls, no older than she is, are sitting with their own babies in their arms. When you thus ponder over the privileges that are our portion, due to the fact that we have the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and you compare the state of these others, then heed the words of Jesus: "Pray ye therefore to the Lord of the harvest; that He would send forth laborers into His harvest."

You ask me is the *outlook* then so very dark? We answer that the long night of heathendom is dark indeed; is cruel beyond expression. The *outlook* as viewed by the human eye is well-nigh



hopeless. But, blessed be God, there is something greater and higher than the *outlook*. We have the *uplook*. We see Jesus, crowned Victor. We see all the purposes of God realized. We see the last of His sheep brought into the fold. We see each promise of Scripture gloriously fulfilled.

We ask: ‘Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?’ By faith we look up and hear an assuring answer to our question: ‘The morning cometh. . .’”

What struck you about her story? Who are some people that you know as missionaries?

Matthew 9:36 reveals the motivation Jesus had for the harvest ... and the motivation that Johanna had for the people of Nigeria ... and the motivation that Emmanuel had for the tourists at Magdala that may have never heard of Jesus of Nazareth. It says, “When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd.” Without compassion, kingdom harvesting will not happen, globally or locally. Our hearts must see others as Jesus sees them, indeed as Jesus saw us – dead, blind, mute, sick... like sheep without a shepherd. How do you see others? Do you have different categories for different people? Or do you see others simply as shepherdless or being shepherded by Jesus?

Some of you reading or hearing this right now may be the next Johanna Veenstra or Emmanuel. Listen to the call. Trust the Caller. Follow his lead no matter how long it takes or where it leads. It took Johanna nearly five years from her initial call to arriving in Nigeria with many experiences that ended up preparing her for her missional field. In the end, you will never regret it.

For the rest of us, our mission field is all around us. **We are all missionaries!** The mission field and harvest are not just “over there” but “right here” too. The mission fields are families, local neighborhoods, co-workers, fellow students, local strangers and even in the church (remember lost elder brothers). We live in an increasingly pluralistic (many cultures, diversity of faiths) and secular world. Foreign is often across the street. Another language and culture and customs are often a mailbox or a phone click away. How many people have you befriended that do not know Jesus? How many people do you know that are shepherdless? How many people do you see with Jesus’ eyes?

But how do we give witness to Jesus and his kingdom in a way that is winsome, intelligent, credible and coherent? Now matter if it is in the tropical plains of Nigeria, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee or a suburban street in Oakdale or Modesto, there are a few principles that can help. These principles are nurtured by and inseparable from the disciplines of prayer and reading God’s word.

- 1) Notice – practice seeing people around you with the eyes of Jesus. Know that there is a story for each person that is probably far more broken that you might realize. Every person’s story that I have ever heard made me have a profoundly more compassionate heart for them knowing what they had experienced and been through.
- 2) Ask – questions, get to know someone by asking something like, “Tell me a little bit about yourself. I’d love to get to know you better” and “I’d love to hear more about that.”
- 3) Listen – listen to understand and know, not to compare or judge. Listen to ask more questions like, “What does that word or phrase mean to you?” or “How did you come to that conclusion?” Again, this is not to judge but to get to know and understand so you can empathize with them.
- 4) Share – this is last because we live in an age where people will not listen to you until you have listened to them and established that you actually care about them and have developed some trust



with them. This is true for any culture. Get to know that person and their culture first. Then share when asked.

5) Repeat – notice, ask, listen and share when appropriate again and again throughout a conversation.

Which principle comes easy for you? Which principle is challenging for you?

In conclusion, listen to a song by Brandon Heath called, “Give Me Your Eyes” that captures this message well. Take a listen...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5AkNqLuVgY>

*Looked down from a broken sky, traced out by the city of lights;  
My world from a mile high; best seat in the house tonight.  
Touch down on the cold black-top, hold on for the sudden stop;  
Breathe in the familiar shock of confusion and chaos.  
All those people going somewhere, why have I never cared?*

*Give me your eyes for just one second. Give me your eyes so I can see,  
Everything that I keep missing, give me your love for humanity.  
Give me your arms for the broken-hearted, the ones that are far beyond my reach.  
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten. Give me Your eyes so I can see.*

*Step out on the busy street. See a girl and our eyes meet.  
Does her best to smile at me to hide what's underneath.  
There's a man just to her right; black suit and a bright red tie;  
Too ashamed to tell his wife he's out of work, he's buying time.  
All those people going somewhere, why have I never cared?*

*Give me your eyes for just one second. Give me your eyes so I can see,  
Everything that I keep missing, give me your love for humanity.  
Give me your arms for the broken-hearted, the ones that are far beyond my reach.  
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten. Give me Your eyes so I can see.*

*I've been there a million times, a couple million lives;  
Just moving past me by, I swear I never thought that I was wrong.  
But I want a second glance so give me a second chance,  
To see the way you've seen the people all along.*

*Give me your eyes for just one second. Give me your eyes so I can see,  
Everything that I keep missing, give your love for humanity.  
Give me your arms for the broken-hearted, the ones that are far beyond my reach.  
Give me Your heart for the ones forgotten. Give me Your eyes so I can see.*

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are often blind to the harvest. We are often deaf to the sounds of help and need. We are often paralyzed with fear to follow your call to be your witness here and out there. Give us a heart of compassion that breaks for those your heart breaks for. Give us your eyes to see and ears to hear so that we might follow the lead of your Holy Spirit as you guide us to be your witness wherever you have us, here locally or there globally. We ask this for your glory and our joy. Amen.**



## **Communion Meditation**

**Professing:** (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,  
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven  
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come to judge the living and the dead.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

**Proclaiming** (1 Corinthians 11:23b-25) – Paraphrased

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

We often speak of communion in regards to the presence *of* and participation *in* Christ. Why is this important if we are to experience communion as a means of grace?

May our closing song be a declaration of our belief that Jesus is our strength and fortress that causes our faith to arise in obedience to his call on our lives as laborers in the mission fields both locally and globally. Let us focus on being credible witnesses and remember that God determines the harvest amount. Let faith arise!

**Song:** I Lift My Hands -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIPiuJ1Yz9Y>

*Be still, there is a healer. His love is deeper than the sea.  
His mercy, it is unfailing. His arms are a fortress for the weak.  
Let faith arise. Let faith arise.*

*I lift my hands to believe again. You are my refuge, You are my strength.  
As I pour out my heart, these things I remember.  
You are faithful, God, forever.*

*Be still, there is a river that flows from Calvary's tree.  
A fountain for the thirsty; pure grace that washes over me.  
So let faith arise; let faith arise. Open my eyes. Open my eyes.*

*I lift my hands to believe again. You are my refuge, You are my strength.  
As I pour out my heart, these things I remember.  
You are faithful, God. You are faithful, God, forever.*

**Sending as Disciples of Jesus:** Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!**