

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Tempe, AZ
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
July 6, 2025
Please send workers into the harvest field

¹After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go your way. Look, I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. ⁴Do not carry a money bag or traveler’s bag or sandals. Do not greet anyone along the way. ⁵Whenever you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’ ⁶And if a peaceful person is there, your peace will rest on him, but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in that same house, eating and drinking what they give you, because the worker is worthy of his pay. Do not keep moving from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and they welcome you, eat what is set before you. ⁹Heal the sick who are in the town and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near you.’ ¹⁰“But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust from your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on that day than for that town. ¹⁶Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.” ¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!” ¹⁸He told them, “I was watching Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Look, I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing will ever harm you. ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names have been written in heaven.”

—Luke 10:1-12, 16-20

Hope Lutheran Church is calling once again for a pastor. It has been two years since their pastor retired. The members of the church have grown disheartened through this process. Sadly, one man after another has returned the call from the Lord extended through their congregation to serve as their pastor. Their people need godly counsel during life's challenges. Their families need encouragement from the Scriptures. The members of this church are starting to wonder why God has not given them one?

St. John's Lutheran is scrambling in their planning process as they look forward to beginning the school year. You see, their previous principal accepted a divine call to serve at a high school out of state. Sadly, they were not able to get a new principal to serve as the leading gospel minister in their Christian school. Their plan for the year is to have their pastor step into the role as interim, but he is already stretched thin as it is.

The core group has been meeting in the city for 2 years now. They have come up with plans. They have invited friends. They just want a pastor to join them. They want a man to preach, teach, and reach in the stead of their fledgling congregation. Sadly, the Lord has not provided them with one yet. These people are sadly growing tired. They are starting to think they shouldn't even try to start a church in this growing city. Unfortunately, though, there are so many people who need to learn about Jesus there.

Brothers and sisters, we have a seemingly daunting issue before us. In our church body, there are approximately 150 vacant pastoral positions. In our school system, there are hundreds of vacant Christian school teacher and school leader positions. We are not alone in this. This is an issue that Christianity faces at large.

To compile this issue, we live in a time in which the number of people who go to church and confess faith in Jesus is decreasing dramatically in our country. All over the nation, churches are asking, “How will we continue?” All over the nation, children are growing up never even hearing about Jesus. All over the nation, adults are drifting away from knowing God.

Today, we need to consider the encouragement that Jesus gave in the gospel to the seventy-two he was preparing to send out. Consider Jesus' words as he said, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are*

few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field." I want you to also consider this encouragement. One of my goals from this message is that you would join me in praying to the Lord, please send workers into the harvest field.

When the Lord sends out workers into his harvest field, he sends them out into an extremely important task. The Lord chooses to use people in his gospel ministry. The Lord chose to send people to proclaim the saving message of Christ to those who need to hear it.

As we consider this encouragement to pray to the Lord, I want you to also consider how the Lord may be answering such a prayer. Perhaps you are the answer to this prayer. Perhaps your child is the answer to this prayer. Perhaps you know someone sitting in this very room who you think may be an answer to this prayer. The Lord will answer our prayer. Since this prayer is according to the instruction of Jesus and is prayed according to the will of God, we know the answer is yes. Let us consider how God might answer our prayer: Please send workers into the harvest field.

As we consider this prayer, let us consider the context in which Jesus encouraged a group to pray this prayer. It was his sending out of the seventy-two for a short-term mission. Last week, we saw that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, where he would die on the cross for the sins of the world. Yet, a lot still will happen as Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem. These seventy-two men would go to the cities and places Jesus would stop at on his way to Jerusalem before he did.

Jesus had sent out these individuals. They are called "others" because they were not the twelve disciples that we typically think of. These seventy-two others were to go in groups of two. There seems to be a lot of wisdom in this structure of sending. Having a partner in mission is always helpful. This is also tied to the regulations of having a witness according to the Jewish standards.

When Jesus sent out these seventy-two men, he impressed on them the urgency of their sending. They were not to bring a money bag or traveler's bag with them. They also were not to stop and make chit-chat with people along the way. They had an urgent task. They were going out as one sent by the Lord Jesus.

When the seventy-two would go to these cities, Jesus told them in clear words that things would not always be easy. He told them that he was sending them out as lambs among wolves. That is a frightening image to consider, that one would be a weak, defenseless lamb among a pack of ferocious wolves. Jesus was being real with them. They had a high but difficult call from him.

As they would go out, some people would accept them. If those people were peaceful, then Jesus said to stay with them. Enjoy their generosity. The worker is worth his wages.

However, not everyone would peacefully accept them. Some people would reject them and their message. Jesus let them know that this rejection wasn't just a rejection of them, but a rejection of him and the Father. In such a case, Jesus said that they should simply dust off their sandals and be on their way.

No matter how they were received, these seventy-two men sent by Jesus had a message to proclaim. The message was, "The kingdom of God is near." This message is about Jesus. This means that God's saving reign had come among them through Jesus' person and work. Whether or not the people, town, or city would accept them, the message was to be proclaimed.

When these men returned from their mission, they had a wonderful report. They told Jesus that they were able to defeat the demons. They could do this by the power of his Word. Jesus even rejoiced with them. He told them about how he saw the devil falling from the sky. This likely refers to the devil in his accusatory role being defeated because the people who heard the saving message of Jesus could stand confidently in him. Jesus even says that they had the power to stomp out snakes and scorpions. This is likely a reference to their defeating the devil and the demons.

In the wake of the success that these seventy-two men saw, Jesus did have a warning for them. Jesus' warning was that they shouldn't rejoice in their success. Instead, they rejoice in what he does for them. As Jesus warned them, the ministry would not always seem successful. Jesus is now reminding them that the power does come from them. Jesus is the one who sends. God is the one who has power. These men simply had the privilege to even join in on this.

Dear people, Jesus encouraged that people pray that the Lord of the harvest send out workers into the harvest field, for the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. After Jesus said this, he sent men into the harvest field. The work that the men did was not always easy. Sometimes they faced rejection. Jesus prepared them for that. When the men came back, they were enthused about their opportunity to join Jesus in his mission. The Lord answers the prayers that he sends out workers into the harvest field.

I want us to consider further how we consider the Lord's answer to this prayer: Please send workers into the harvest field. Is this always and honestly our prayer? Perhaps our actions could show that such a prayer rolls insincerely off our lips. Consider the following ways it might happen in how you consider ministry for yourself or your children.

Let's look at how you consider ministry for yourself or your children. So, has the Lord gifted you or your children with the gifts to serve in the full-time gospel ministry as a pastor, teacher, or staff minister? If the Lord has gifted you or your children with such gifts, have you even considered the possibility of pursuing them? Why or why not? In our church body, there are wonderful paths to serve in such ways.

Young men could go to Martin Luther College and then Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to prepare to serve as pastors. Older men could contact the Pastoral Studies Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to explore what their route of study could look like.

Men and women who want to serve in other roles, such as the teaching ministry, could explore the programs that are offered at Martin Luther College. This is a school where they could prepare to serve the church in various capacities.

The paths are there. Many of you have the gifts. Have you considered it? Again, why or why not? If you answer that you can and will serve the Lord through other vocations. You will step up as a lay member of your local congregation. You, as a universal priest, will pray for the ministry and support with your offerings. Awesome

Maybe you wouldn't consider public ministry for you or your children for other reasons, though. Maybe you have had sinful thoughts like some of the following: Do I want to be the "church guy" all the time? I would like to let loose sometimes. My kid has gifts that could be used in "better" ways than the public ministry. Maybe your lack of consideration in such things is that you don't think the gospel ministry is that important. It doesn't come to mind because Jesus, his Word, and reaching other people with his Word are just a total afterthought.

Dear people, we may have insincerely listened to Jesus' call to pray that the Lord send workers into the harvest field because we have not considered how he might just answer that prayer in us and our children. If this prayer has been insincere because we fail to value the Lord's ministry. Let us confess that sin.

The gospel ministry is wonderful and powerful. Jesus sent out the seventy-two to proclaim his saving reign. In doing so, they were his agents in defeating the works of the devil. Jesus saw Satan falling from the sky!

It is through this powerful word and sacrament ministry that God has worked in your life. The Holy Spirit has worked through these means to bring his saving grace to you. Jesus sent a pastor to baptize you. Jesus sent a teacher to tell you about Jesus. Jesus sent a minister to administer the sacrament to you. Through these means, he was strengthening faith in your heart. This is the faith that gives you peace and

comfort for eternity. Through this faith, you are saved. You have a living connection to the Lord who lived and died for you.

With the knowledge of what God has done for you through the gospel ministry, pray that the Lord of the harvest send workers into his harvest field. Then, consider how the Lord might answer this prayer. Perhaps you, your child, or someone that you know may be the answer to this prayer.

Let us end our message today with this short prayer: Dear Lord, please send workers into the harvest field. Amen.