



Title: Send Forth

Theme: Petitioning for Laborers for God's Work

Series: Girding up the Church

Listen as I read Matthew 9:35-38, "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. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.'" (Matthew 9:35-38)

Jesus Christ is compassionate for souls

Jesus Christ is compassionate for souls and the greatest compassion that can be expressed by the Body of Christ is for the souls of mankind to know Jesus as Savior and Lord. People are apt to go astray much like sheep without a shepherd. Souls who do not walk closely in step with the Holy Spirit of Christ are very likely to fall prey to the flesh, the lures of the world and the lies of the devil. Without true shepherds, pastors to feed the people the Word of God and the help of Christians exercising their Spiritual gifts, those in this world and even the flock of God will be harassed and helpless against everything that sets itself against God, Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

It takes more than just one pastor in the church to maintain a spiritual hospital where lost souls can be born again, receive a powerful thirst for the Word of God and learn to say "Jesus teach me to pray." Jesus knew this and that is why in today's Scripture He exhorts us to pray for laborers for the work of God. No child of God is able to do this work on his own. He must have the help of other Christians.

I recently read the story of Martin Luther, the great reformer of the church, and about his friend who agreed to pray for Martin as he went out to do battle for the souls of the people of his day. Much like in the times of Christ when Jewish people were without true shepherds, the people of God in Luther's time were helpless to overcome the sins that were destroying the reputation of the church. There was only a form of godliness in the priest, thus the church was denying the true power of God to save a man from the bondage of sin. Much like today where there is a false grace being taught by CEO's, where only a form of godliness is loved over the true message of repentance.

Martin Luther and his friend established an agreement. Luther would go down into the dust and heat of battle for the Reformation of the church while his friend would stay in the monastery and uphold Luther in prayer. One night Luther's friend had a dream. He saw a vast field of corn as big as the world with one solitary man seeking to reap it – an impossible and a heartbreaking task. Then he caught the face of the reaper. It was Martin Luther. Luther's friend caught the message, not one man can do the job alone.

Two sad things happen in all churches that find themselves not properly girding up in prayer. One, people in the church expect the preacher of the gospel to come up with that vision that will intrigue great numbers to come into the church. Two, the pastor of the church expects people in the church to do what God has not gifted them to do. These two wrong perspectives rob heartfelt time for prayer, petitioning the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers, thus leaving the church shorthanded. God's Word has the answer, pray with the authority of God's Word.

I would propose to you that the harvest of souls and the amount of discipleship done in the Body of Christ is up to God. The church of Jesus Christ may be a part of making disciples of Christ if she has the same compassion for the lost that Christ had. She must be committed to Jesus' call to go and make disciples. (Matthew 28:20) She must stay dedicated to expressing a genuine faith in God's Word and walk in faithful obedience to the Lord's call to pray for laborers for the whole work of God. The Great Commission is to make disciples of Christ. (Matthew 28:20)

The church that is girded up for the true work of God has a heart to make "disciples" (*mathetes*) who believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles. A church that is girded up has disciples of Christ who rest in the sacrifice Jesus made for them on the Cross of Calvary, disciples who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of Christ and who imitate Jesus' life.

Just what laborers do we need to make true disciples of Christ? The truths found in today's text can equip the child of God to meet Jesus' supreme Christian challenge, to pray for laborers for the church.

Enter the "Throne of Grace" with praise

It is a sad thing when the work of God is at a standstill in any local church. A work can go slowly because of a lack of committed workmen or when keys workers are overworked. The first thing in girding up the church is to enter the "Throne of Grace" with praise.

Psalm 100:3 says, “Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.” (Psalm 100:3-5) Thank the Lord for His Holy Spirit empowered gifts to the church of Christ given for the purpose of edifying the Body of Christ. (Prayerfully Read 1 Corinthians 12-14; 12:8-10, 28-30; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:7)

In writing about the Holy Spirit given gifts to the Body of Christ the Apostle Paul writes, “Now to each one the manifestation of the [Holy] Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7) We express praise to the Lord by making time to learn what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit given gifts and seeking Him for understanding on how to exercise those gifts through sacrificial love. (1 Corinthians 12-14) We express praise to God by appreciating those who exercise their gifts in this Body of Christ for the good of others, by thanking God for them by name, and thanking them with a true and right heart. When someone does a good job, tell him. When someone is feeling like their laborers for the Lord are going nowhere, remind them that as long they are serving sacrificially, the Bible says there will be fruit from their labors in His time if they do not give up and if they serve Him wholeheartedly. (Hebrews 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58) The Holy Spirit’s presence will be among those who express true appreciation for what the Lord has done and is doing through His servants who experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Trust only in God for the raising up laborers for the church

The church that is girded up has Christians who express true appreciation for the work of the Holy Spirit of Christ working through the servants of God and she has Christians who trust only in God for the raising up laborers for the church.

Jesus said, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.” (Matthew 9:38) The Apostle Paul tells us, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6) The New American Standard Bible tells us, “But one and the same Spirit works all these [gifts], distributing to each one individually.” (1 Corinthians 12:11)

Christians are to trust in God alone for Holy Spirit gifted laborers because the gifts are not selected by individuals or personally solicited or handed out by anyone. Christ sets the example, He prayed all night getting direction from God His Father before calling forth the original 12 apostles of the New Testament Church. (Luke 6:12-16) If Jesus sought God in prayer then Christians can be real disciples of Christ and pray to God for Holy Spirit filled and empowered workers.

Anointed leaders to lead the Body of Christ in Spirit and truth

The Lord wants Christians to depend upon Him alone and the church that is girded up in prayer has anointed leaders to lead the Body of Christ in Spirit and truth. In regard to congregational worship the Body of Christ is to sing the praises of her glorious Lord. Ephesians 5:19 says, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:19) Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)

The church that is girded up with laborers for the work of the Lord has workers who are hungry for the whole counsel of God’s Word. Not much is said in the New Testament about the congregational singing service, however, clear directions are found in the Old Testament. In 2 Chronicles 29 we read of a king by the name of Hezekiah. The Bible says that he “...trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.” (2 Kings 18:5) His first official act was to cleanse the Lord’s temple of its pollutions. (The Expositors Bible Commentary) After the purification process, the Bible says, “He stationed the Levites in the temple of the Lord with cymbals, harps and lyres in the way prescribed by David and Gad the king’s seer and Nathan the prophet; this was commanded by the Lord through His prophets.” (2 Chronicles 29:25) Hezekiah was putting together a gathering of the city officials, they were having a public worship service in the temple and Hezekiah was following the directions given by God through King David in order to have a service that was pleasing to the Lord.

King David, the man after God’s heart, (Acts 13:22) had a powerful desire in his heart to build the temple of God. (2 Samuel 7:2) However, he was not permitted to undertake the construction of God’s house. (2 Samuel 7:5-7; 1 Chronicles 22:8) Although he was not involved in the actual building of the temple of God, he did prepare for it in plans and material. (1 Chronicles 22:1-19; 28:1-29:9) He was also God’s agent in setting in order the method of temple service. We read all about that in 1 Chronicles chapters 23-26. All this was the leading of God, through David to set in order corporate worship.

In 1 Chronicles 25 we see that music is to be considered and approached as being ministry in the house of God. Therefore, the preparation of the song service should be approached and received with the same approach and reception as the proclaiming of God’s Word. Music is ministry to the Lord and to the Body of Christ and it must be blanketed in prayer and guided by the truths of God’s Word.

Listen to what the Bible says about music for the house of the Lord for public worship. “David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals...” (1 Chronicles 25:1) “All these men were under the supervision of their fathers for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king. Along with their relatives--all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD... Young and old alike, teacher as well as student, cast lots for their duties.” (1 Chronicles 25:6-8)

The church that is as hungry as Hezekiah was about having public worship services which are pleasing to the Lord will look to God’s Word and see what His instructions are. In regard to the song service for the house of God Christians ask God for music ministers who are “trained and skilled in music” (*lamad*). (1 Chronicles 25:7) The church is to be praying for music ministers who have studied, are able to be taught and able to teach others about music for the house of God to oversee the music ministry. The music ministry team is to be made up of Christians who are teachers and students prepared for the song services in the house of God. Both the music minister and student are to be able to exercise the ministry under supervision of a higher authority.

The truths presented in 2 Chronicles 25 are still the guide for us today. One of the best ways of getting practical application from a passage of Scripture is to take a brief look into the life of a person who is mentioned in a certain passage of Scripture.

Let us consider just one of the music ministers mentioned in 2 Chronicles 25. Asaph was placed in charge of the music ministry and he was under the authority of the king. The music ministers mentioned in 2 Chronicles 25:2-5 were under the supervision of their fathers for music in the temple of the Lord. Paul D. Gardner, writer of “Who’s Who in the Bible” tells us according to other Scriptures in the Bible, Asaph was one of the keys singers overseeing the music that was played and sung when the Ark was brought into Jerusalem as well as at other national rejoicings. (1 Chronicles 15:17-19; 16:5,7,37; 2 Chronicles 35:15) He joined in with the other Levites in leading the praise of God when the temple was consecrated. (2 Chronicles 5:12) His musical influence extended far beyond the temple and into Jewish hymn books for all time. During the revival under King Hezekiah songs were sung that were written by David and Asaph. (2 Chronicles 29:30)

God still raises up music ministers who not only lead music that proclaim the great works of God but also write music. I think of Bill Gaither whom God has and is using to write music for the House of God today. No one in our lifetime has trained more music ministers to write, lead and enable others to lead song services in public worship around the world than Bill Gaither. Bill and those he has trained have been used often by Dr. Billy Graham who has preached the gospel to more people around the world than anyone else ever has.

Over the last few years I have the privilege to visit with the “Music Ministry Team at Times Square Church.” The person who oversees that ministry is Gregory L. Thomas. He writes a lot of the music sung at Times Square Church and works with several overseers. They have trained hundreds of teachers and students for the music ministry. I know the members of Times Square Church spend hours each week prayerfully preparing for the song services and they enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit of Christ in their worship services. Christ glorified, lives change, ministry growing.

Praying for ministers of music for the house of the Lord

The church that is girded up for vibrant public worship services has children of God praying for ministers of music for the house of the Lord. She also has Christians praying for Holy Spirit appointed overseers to lead the Body of Christ. Acts 20:28 says, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

Church attendees often have heard the term “The New Testament Church,” yet very few have been taught just what that means. Here in Acts we read of the Apostle Paul talking about who is to oversee the New Testament Church. The term “elder” has been so misunderstood and so watered down by a world view that we have lost the value of this ministry in nearly all our churches in America.

Alexander Strauch was visiting a large church and as he walked into the foyer he saw a big display on the wall with pictures and names of the Senior Pastor and his staff. The pictures were arranged in a pyramid with the senior pastor at the top, his three associate pastors below, and the rest of the staff completing the base of the pyramid.

As Mr. Strauch walked further into the building and down a side hall he saw another glass encasement with pictures and names of the church elders in it. That is a perfect illustration of how the modern church views eldership in the local church. Most elders are selected by age or popularity rather than by Biblical maturity in life and knowledge of God’s Word. All New Testament accounts tell of appointing Biblical elders who were overseen by those who had apostolic authority. The appointment process involved a real investigation of the man’s life to see if there was a desire to be an overseer for the Lord’s church placed with

him by the Holy Ghost. New Testament elders are to be examined to see if they meet the Biblical qualifications, then a selection process is done by those who are found faithful in their calling as overseers. Finally is the public installation and the laying on of hands for prayer.

The Pastor of New Spring Community Church in Anderson, South Carolina wrote about a burden that was upon his heart in regard to the unBiblical way churches function today. He wrote, "If you operated an airplane like most churches operate today, you would have a pilot and his crew in the cockpit, knowing how to fly that plane. They know every instrument – that is their job. But if it was run like most churches, these pilots, or this crew, before they needed to make a life protecting decision, would have to come out of the cockpit, go into first class to meet with the plumber whose cousin was once a pilot, an electrician, a housewife, and a doctor. After they have met with those people, they would take it back to the coach section for a business meeting and have a vote. After they voted they could go implement what the coach section had told them to do. Now, my question is, 'How many would want to fly on that plane as it carried it's passengers through possible storms?'"

Pastor Noble continues with, "But that is the way people want to have church. That is why so many churches are crashing and burning as their people are facing the storms of life on this earth."

The Greek Word for "overseers" (*episkopos*) is synonymous to elders, bishops and pastors. The call and appointment is the special function of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, men who take on this responsibility are to keep a close watch over themselves, prayerfully studying the Word of God so they correctly handle the Word of truth. They are to be as skillful with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God and in living it out as a skilled pilot and his crew are at flying a 747 carrying precious souls.

Prayer for Biblically qualified overseers

The church that is girded up has a congregation that is often in prayer for Biblically qualified overseers because they are put in charge by the Holy Spirit to oversee the guiding and protecting of the precious souls purchased by Christ's own blood. She also has Christians who are serious about her teachers. James 3:1 says, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (James 3:1)

The Apostle Paul admonishes the church to limit the number of teachers in their midst. He urges those who want to be teachers to just not assume they are teachers (*didaskaloi*). A teacher in the local church must be able to correctly handle the Word of God and there must be an application of Christian living expressed by all who would be called a teacher in the local church. Paul knew the damage that could be done by one holding the position of teacher as well as the benefits of a Christian possessing the gift of teacher appointed by Christ. (Ephesians 4:11)

People who do not attend church are constantly watching and taking mental notes. People who hold the position of teaching in the church can either help or hinder the work of God, especially in a small community. The church that is girded up to do the work of God has Christians who take the position of teacher seriously because God's Word does.

The church that is girded up has Christians who regularly petition the Lord for laborers to work in this world. All it takes to have qualified workers is for the Body of Christ to take time to be obedient in prayer.

One of the men of God who the Lord raised up out of this church to go out and do a work in this world is Floyd Nickelson. God called him to Christ and enabled him to grow in Christ in this church. The Lord through this church laid the foundation for his education. After moving on from this church he eventually found a place of ministry in "The Brooklyn Tabernacle Church."

The Brooklyn Tabernacle church was once a dwindling congregation. However, the Lord called Pastor Jim Cymbala and his wife Carol to oversee a work that He was about to do there. They went even though they struggled with knowing that Jim never had received any formal seminary training and Carol could not read a sheet of music. Yet through steadfast prayer--notice I said *steadfast* prayer, they put total reliance upon the Lord. Through huge trials and seeking the Lord He allowed them to learn what He wanted them to learn and brought them the help they needed. The Lord Jesus has strengthened their ministry unto Him, and raised up the needed workers so they could enjoy spiritual growth.

One ministry that has come about in The Brooklyn Tabernacle Church is the ministry of praying everything through to a completion. This is not a one time, give it a shot and see what happens, but a *steadfast* prayer time that intercedes for the needs of the Lord's work and the people who attend the church. Every Tuesday night they have a prayer service in which now two thousand Christians attend. They have all night prayer service as well.

This ministry is the power source to Carol Cymbala, a music minister now trained by the Holy Spirit to be very skilled to oversee the Grammy Award winning Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. This is why Jim Cymbala is overseeing a church in the inner-city of New York that plants new churches in various parts of the world. One of those churches has Floyd Nickelson serving as a Biblically qualified overseer. I know the church he serves has Christians working diligently, praying for, and training Christians in their church to teach others so they can enjoy powerful ministries overseen by Holy Spirit filled servants of the Lord.

I have had the privilege to be in several services at Times Square Church, to speak with some of their music ministries and their Biblically qualified overseers. They too are experiencing the powerful move of the Holy Spirit doing awesome things in the Body of Christ. Their church is also girded up by Christians who spend hours each week committed to prayer, praying for everything the Lord has called them to do.

Brooklyn Tabernacle and Times Square Church do not hold the keys that keep the Holy Spirit in their churches, they have prayer warriors who obey Christ, petitioning, "Send Forth" laborers for the harvest field!!!! Let us pray!!

Let us pray! Visit our Free Website www.standatthecrossroads.com