



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Devotion Time: Week 5: Matthew chapters 9 and 10
Prayer Time

Opening Prayer

✕ God of the church, you gather your people through every age with the laborers in your kingdom. Train me to be your laborer, give me the gifts that I find my calling in your kingdom as one who gathers more to you, today and always. Amen

Matthew uses the metaphor of "harvest" to represent the gathering of all God's people at the end times. And here at the end of chapter 9, the imagery of harvest cannot be more clear. This is not just farm work, this is a specific reference to the final judgment moment. And ahead of this final moment, God is sending laborers into the field for the harvest. Matthew is very clear, these laborers are not angels - they are humans who have experienced God's Kingdom, love, grace, forgiveness, and these humans are sent to share those things with others.

Look at what follows in this subsequent stories in Chapter 10. Matthew identifies the 12 disciples who are sent as apostles. Matthew records Jesus' teaching to them for what they are to do, and will go on to describe the very conflict they are about to encounter. But these are real people, who are still learning from Jesus, who are sent into the world, not angels.

Today, our culture is experiencing a great war over what the "harvest" for God is all about. There are many who want the "harvest" to be about gathering only "perfect-Christians". And they define "perfect-Christian" with political identities that support patriarchy, extreme nationalist views, a certain sexual purity, and a strict stance against abortion. This "harvest" is proclaimed as being sorted out by angels who will separate the "good" from the "bad". And those who do not subscribe are kicked out of church communities and are told they have no place here.

Matthew gives us an entirely different view of the "Harvest" and here is where we need to pay attention. Read through what follows. Read the mission of the 12. Underline what they are called to do. Write notes about what those tasks look like today. How does our church do these tasks today? Where are we promoting God's Kingdom values? How is our work as laborers in God's "Harvest" standing differently to that of the populist nationalist movement happening in our nation today?

Where does the conflict lie, then, as we bring Matthew's vision of the "Harvest" to fruition? Who holds the sword Jesus speaks of? Is it a sword that cuts down an individual or a sword that strikes at harmful ideologies? Where does the conflict come between families divided by political echo-chambers and media sources?

The "harvest" remains fruitful, just as Jesus said. The laborers are just as few. But God ultimately has the entire "harvest" in their hands, so we trust, and so we get to work.

Heigh-Ho! Heigh-Ho!

The year was 1937, an animation studio stamps its mark on the world with a blockbuster -- "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves." The feature is the first for many reasons. Disney invented many of the animation techniques he needed to bring realism to the screen, for one. And for another, proving animation features can be blockbusters.

In the middle of this feature, we encounter the seven dwarfs, simple workers, doing their simple work in their mine. We meet them as they sing their work song, "Heigh-Ho!" The sing this as they come home from work, though we may misremember it as the song they sing on their way to work. So, we pull out of our driveway to our daily job, and we whistle along with the dwarves; we head out into the field for another day, and we whistle the familiar tune; we head out of worship -- we are the laborers, and we have work to do.

Heigh - Ho!

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

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