

Today we finish our stewardship sermon series, Seedy Stewards Sow Something Grand. While this is the last time you'll hear a sermon about stewardship, there's still plenty of time to make a pledge for 2027.

This week we will look at the fruits we harvest or at least the fruits ready for us to harvest. After we've sown even the tiniest seed. After we've made sure that we keep the soil rich and well fed. After we see that God brought the fruitfulness and the full grain is ready to harvest. We must not rest at that point. We must be ready to participate in the harvest. To understand our roll in the harvest, we turn to our passage today from Matthew 9 & 10.

Jesus moves through towns and villages, teaching, proclaiming good news, and healing. He sees crowds and immediately is moved. He doesn't see the crowds as a problem to manage, He sees people who are "harassed and helpless." He sees people searching for care, dignity, and hope. While his initial reaction is compassion, Jesus knows it'll take more than a feeling to help this crowd. Jesus follows his feelings with action.

Jesus tells his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." This is not a call to save the world through exhaustion or to prove our worth through constant activity. It is an invitation to notice where God is already at work: among people. Particularly among those who are excluded, among communities seeking justice, and among those whose voices have been ignored. The harvest is the abundance of possibility that appears when love takes root in the real lives of real people.

Now let's look at the action follows the feelings. Because Jesus sends the Twelve, with authority to heal, restore, and announce that the reign of heaven has come near. Who did Jesus send? He sent ordinary people, not polished experts; a diverse community, not a perfect institution. They are sent in pairs, because liberation is not a solo project. Any endeavor worth doing is better when it invites in someone else's wisdom, courage, experience, and care.

Jesus also gives them a surprising instructions: "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." In every age, there are forces that diminish life—poverty, racism, violence,

loneliness, exploitation, and despair. To follow Jesus is to stand against whatever treats people as disposable and to participate in whatever restores people to wholeness, belonging, and agency. What instructions would Jesus give us today? Ask for answers.

These instructions are followed by a most challenging directive: “You received without payment; give without payment.” Why does Jesus emphasize this? Because grace is not a product to be sold. Healing is not a privilege reserved for only those who can afford it. The gospel cannot be reduced to winning arguments or building institutions; it is good news made visible through generosity, solidarity, and shared life.

Stewardship gives this generosity practical expression. We offer our time to listen and serve. We share our talents where they are needed. We use our money and shared resources with care.

Responsible stewardship also means tending the earth, avoiding waste, and sustaining the places and relationships that support healthy community life. Our everyday choices can help turn compassion into lasting care, not just for today but for those who come after us.

Today, Christ still looks upon the crowds, our crowds with compassion—and today Christ sends us. We are sent to listen before speaking, to accompany rather than control, and to make room for those pushed to the margins. May our churches become places where people are not merely welcomed in theory but honored in practice, where faith produces justice, and where every person can experience the nearness of God’s healing love.

Let us pray: Compassionate God, open our eyes to the people and places that need care. Give us courage to join the work of healing, justice, and reconciliation, and teach us to share freely the grace we have received. Amen.

To emphasize the impact of mission not just on the receivers but also the givers, and in honor of Laity Sunday which was last Sunday, I’ve asked...to share from his/her mission experiences.