

Vince Lombardi, the great former head coach of the Green Bay Packers, said, "I firmly believe that man's finest hour, his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause, and lies exhausted on the field of battle, victorious." Fellow pastors, I know the temptations are great and the enemy is strong, but finishing well is a battle worth fighting.

Southern Baptists, we are in a battle. But I know regardless of what the personal circumstances are in your life or mine, what the national circumstances may be in our country, what the political circumstances may be around the world, we will be victorious because the Word of God says that the will of God is for us to be more than conquerors through Him.

Let us stay faithful, knowing that ahead of us lies "a crown of righteousness which the Lord our righteous Judge will give to us on that day." Remember the words of Fanny Crosby:

Not to the strong is the battle,
Not to the swift is the race,
Yet to the true and the faithful,
Victory is promised through grace.

Several years ago we observed the 50th Anniversary of D-Day, the allied invasion of Normandy. One of the television documentaries paired two contrasting interviews back to back. The first interview was with a marine who landed on Omaha Beach. As he recalled the horrors of that terrible battle, he remembered looking around at the bloody casualties and saying, "We're going to lose!"

But the very next interview was with a U.S. Army Air Corps Reconnaissance Pilot, who flew over the whole battle area. He viewed the carnage on the beaches, he saw the sacrifices on the hills, but he also witnessed the successes of the marines, the penetration by the paratroopers, and the effectiveness of the aerial bombardment. He looked at everything that was happening and said, "We're going to win!" Same battle—different viewpoint.

Precious saints, we may be tempted to look around at all of the forces that are arrayed against us, and let the devil convince us "we're going to lose." But I tell you we are seated in the heavenlies with Christ, and because God is Sovereign, Jesus is Lord, and the Spirit is omnipotent "We're going to win!" So until He comes, let us go forth in His name, under His blood, in His power, for the battle is worth fighting.

Notes

¹ *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, (Columbia, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) N.P.

² Charles Colson, *Faith on the Line*, pp. 65-66.

Fred Luter, Jr.'s Convention Message 2001 Southern Baptist Convention June 12, New Orleans, Louisiana

"THE MASTER'S CALL FOR LABORERS"

MATTHEW 9:35-38

Imagine if you will:

A fish that couldn't swim; a bird that couldn't fly;
A rabbit that couldn't hop; a pig that couldn't oink;
A dog that couldn't bark; a cat that couldn't meow;
A lion that couldn't roar; a duck that couldn't quack.
And the list goes on and on.

It would be really sad, it would be really tragic for none of those things not to do what God created them to do.

Think about it...

God created fish to swim, and they swim.
God created birds to fly, and they fly.
God created rabbits to hop, and they hop;
Dogs to bark; cats to meow; lions to roar; ducks to quack.
God created the sun to shine in the day, and it does.
He created the moon to shine at night, and it does.

I find it very interesting that all of those things do what God created them to do.

You'll never hear a dog saying meow!
You'll never hear a cat saying bow-wow!
You'll never hear a duck saying moo!
You'll never hear a cow saying quack, quack!
You'll never hear lion saying oink, oink, oink!

Why? Because they all do what God created them to do.

So think of the pain God feels when His very special creation, mankind, does not do what God created us to do. When God created the animals, He just thought about, He just spoke it, and animals came to life. But not so with man - God's special creation. When God decided to create man, He didn't just think about, or speak man into being. Instead, God called the Trinity together and said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Let me put a quarter in the meter and park here for a moment while I speak specifically to our young people listening to this message.

Young people, when it comes to creation, I know you may be hearing something else in school. I know you may be hearing something else in your classrooms. And I understand you must put

an answer on your test to pass the course – but don't let anyone convince you that you came from a monkey. Because the fact is, you didn't come from a monkey, because if that were true, who in the world stopped the process?

Think about it – from the beginning of creation...

Dogs are still having puppies!
Cats are still having kittens!
Bears are still having cubs!
Horses are still having ponies!
Deer are still having fawns!
Hens are still having chicks!

If it were true that you came from a monkey – who in the world stopped the process?

That's because, young people, you didn't come from a monkey. My Bible, God's Word, tells me that you and I were made in the image and likeness of God! And then God did something for us He didn't do for the birds, the lions, and the other animals – and that is – God breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

So think of the pain, think of the hurt, think of the agony God feels when His special creation doesn't do what He created us to do.

Think of the agony God feels when:

Men don't want to be men; women don't want to be women.
Husbands don't love their wives; wives don't respect their husbands.
Teenagers and children don't obey their parents.
Preachers don't practice what they preach.
Teachers don't practice what they teach.
Choir members don't live the life they sing about in their songs.
Folk who profess to be Christians don't obey the Bible.

Oh my friends, it's no wonder our cities are messed up; it's no wonder our states are messed up; it's no wonder our nation is messed up. When people don't do what God created them to do, we reap the consequences. That's why – sin is rampant, that's why – diseases are spreading, and that's why – sickness is everywhere. And that's why – the Master is calling for laborers!

In our text tonight, Jesus is, once again, surrounded by crowds of people with one need or another. And I suggest to you tonight, Southern Baptists, that if we're going to "occupy till He comes," we must heed His call for laborers.

There are four things I want you to see in this text tonight.

1st – The Concern of Jesus (v. 35)

Oh my friends, one of the lessons we can learn from Jesus Christ is His genuine concern for people. He truly cared for people – for all people. People were not just a number to Christ. People were not just a statistic to Christ – He truly was concerned about people. That's why when He went into their town and village, He taught in their synagogues, He preached to them the good news. He healed the sickness and diseases among the people – because Jesus was concerned about people. But don't just take my word for it.

I can call some witnesses...

Zacchaeus can testify about the Master's concern.

Blind Bartimaeus can testify about the Master's concern.

The woman at the well can testify about the Master's concern.

The woman caught in adultery can testify about the Master's concern.

But wait a minute, there's somebody in this Superdome tonight who can testify about the Master's concern. I know I can testify that He's concerned, I know I can testify that He cares, because one day He proved His concern for me! For my testimony is – "I was sinking deep in sin..." Oh, Southern Baptists – Oh, my brothers and sisters, if we are going to "occupy till He comes," if we're going to heed the Master's call for laborers – we must care about people.

We must care about their hurts.

We must care about their struggles.

We must care about their addictions.

We must care about their pain.

We must care about their eternal destiny.

Somebody said it like this – "the world doesn't care how much we know – until they know how much we care!"

Until He comes, our testimony should be...

"If I can help somebody as I pass along

If I can cheer someone with a word or song

If I can show someone that he's traveling wrong –

Then my living will not be in vain."

"If I can do my duty as a Christian ought

If I can bring salvation to a world once wrought

If I can spread the message as the Master taught –

Then my living will not be in vain."

Oh, my friends, we must care about people.

2nd – The Compassion of Jesus (v. 36)

Oh, my friends, notice the human side of Jesus. Notice the humanity of Christ.

Yes, He was divine because He was fully God – but yet He was human because He was fully man! Yes, He was divine because He was God's Son – but yet He was human because He was Mary's baby!

The Bible says when Jesus saw the crowds, He felt compassion for the people; He felt sympathy.

Jesus saw their lives and was moved with compassion.

Jesus saw their predicament and was moved with compassion.

Jesus saw their lostness and was moved with compassion.

Because they were weary; they were worn out. They were scattered abroad everywhere, like sheep without a shepherd. And that's dangerous – because anything could happen to sheep without a shepherd.

And, my friend, that's the reason the Master is calling for laborers – because the same thing is happening in America today. Lost folk have no direction – or bad direction.

They're wandering; they're drifting.
They're moving but not going anywhere.
They're talking but not making sense.
They're lost and don't realize it.
They're dying and don't realize it.
They're weary and worn and don't realize it.
They're being destroyed by sin and don't realize it.

That's why the Master is calling for laborers.

That's why the Master is calling for workers.

So we can tell a lost and dying world that the wages of sin is death – but the gift of God is eternal life!

That's why we must have compassion for the lost.

That's why we must have sympathy for the lost.

We must warn them about the danger of sin.

Because the fact of the matter is, man looks at sin differently than God looks at sin.

From A to Z, man sees sin differently from God:

Man sees sin as an accident; God sees sin as abomination.

Man sees sin as a blunder; God sees sin as blindness.

Man sees sin as a chance; God sees sin as a choice.

Man sees sin as a disease; God sees sin as death.

Man sees sin as an error; God sees sin as enmity.

Man sees sin as fascination; God sees sin as a fatality.

Man sees sin as glamorous; God sees sin as gruesome.

Man sees sin as habit-forming; God sees sin as hell-going.

Man sees sin as innocent; God sees sin as immoral.

Man sees sin as a joke; God sees sin as judgment.

Man sees sin as know how; God sees sin as a knockout.

Man sees sin as looking; God sees sin as lust.

Man sees sin as mischievous; God sees sin as misery.

Man sees sin as natural; God sees sin as naughty.

Man sees sin as opportunity; God sees sin as opposition.

Man sees sin as performance; God sees sin as pathetic.

Man sees sin as a quota; God sees sin as quicksand.

Man sees sin as rational; God sees sin as repulsive.

Man sees sin as safe; God sees sin as a scandal.

Man sees sin as a treat; God sees sin as treason.

Man sees sin as usual; God sees sin as ugly.

Man sees sin as vogue; God sees sin as vulgar.

Man sees sin as weakness; God sees sin as wretchedness.

Man sees sin as an X-ray; God sees sin as X-rated.

Man sees sin as yummy; God sees sin as yuckie.

Man sees sin as zealous; God sees sin as zero.

From A to Z, we've got to see sin as God sees sin!

That's why we need workers.

That's why we need *laborers*.

That's why we must "occupy until He comes."

That's why until He comes, we must go.

That's why we must have *compassion like Christ*.

That's why we must hurt for the dying world.

Because they have a void that only Jesus can fill!

3rd – The Cry of Jesus (v. 37)

Oh, Southern Baptists, listen to the cry of Jesus. Oh, brothers and sisters, listen to the cry of Jesus.

The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. The harvest is truly plenteous, but the laborers are few.

The fact of the matter is, people need the Lord. People need to know the difference that Christ can make in their lives. And they won't know unless we tell them.

Notice I said "WE." "US." Everybody! Listen to the cry of Jesus.

The harvest is plenteous – but the laborers are few.

Oh, my friend, let's make the main thing – the main thing. Too many of us are majoring in the minors. Too many of us are getting off track.

Jesus says in Acts 1:8, "*But you shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you. And you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*"

My friend, soul-winning is not an option.

Soul-winning is not a choice.

Soul-winning is not just for the evangelist.

Soul-winning is not just for the pastor.

Soul-winning is not just for the staff.

Soul-winning is not just for the outreach ministry.

Soul-winning is for every child of God!

Soul-winning is for every born again believer!

Every member, of every church, of every size, of every race, of every city, of every state, hear the cry of Jesus. Listen to the cry of the Master. He's calling for laborers; He's calling for workers. "The harvest is abundant – but the workers are few."

But I can hear someone saying, "Fred, I've never been to a FAITH clinic."

"Fred, I've never taken a CWT course."

"Fred, I've never read the book *Share Jesus Without Fear*."

And you know what, my friend, you're right...

I have no doubt that many of you have never attended Bobby Welch's powerful FAITH clinic.

I have no doubt that many of you have never had the time to take the Continuous Witness Training course.

I have no doubt that many of you have never read Bill Fay's life-changing book *Share Jesus Without Fear*.

But, oh, my brothers and sisters, I also have no doubt that many of you have been born again!
 I have no doubt that many of you have been saved!
 I have no doubt that many of you have been renewed!
 I have no doubt that many of you have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb of God!

And the Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!"

If you've been washed – you ought to say so!
 If you've been delivered – you ought to say so!
 If you've been forgiven – you ought to say so!
 If you've been set free – you ought to say so!

In other words – you have a testimony. You have a story to tell! So go into all the world and tell your story!

Say so through your testimony!
 Say so through your lifestyle!
 Say so through your conversation!
 Say so through your conduct!
 Say so through your marriage!
 Say so through your ministry!

The cry of Jesus is, let the world know! Let the lost know! Let the weary know!

Oh, Southern Baptists – if we're going to "occupy till He comes," if we're going to accept the Master's call for laborers; then all of us must heed the cry of Jesus!

For truly the harvest is plenteous. For truly the harvest is abundant. But the laborers are few!

1st – The Concern of Jesus; 2nd – The Compassion of Jesus; and 3rd – The Cry of Jesus

Finally 4th – and finally – The Command of Jesus (v. 38)

Notice, Southern Baptists, what Jesus commands us to do. Notice, brothers and sisters, what Jesus says to His disciples.

Therefore, because of your concern for the lost.
 Therefore, because of your compassion for those trapped in sin
 Therefore, because of your cry for a great harvest

Therefore, pray to the Lord for more laborers.

Notice, Jesus didn't say to recruit more laborers.
 Notice, Jesus didn't say to run an announcement in the bulletin for more laborers.
 Notice, Jesus didn't say to have a cake and punch fellowship to entice more laborers.
 Notice, Jesus didn't say have a pizza party to sign up more laborers.
 But Jesus said – Pray! Pray to the Lord of harvest. In other words, pray to God to send laborers.

Oh, my brother and sister, I can think of no better way to get workers for the harvest – than to ask the Lord of the harvest.

Because God has a good track record about answering the prayers of His children:

Abraham prayed, and God provided a ram in the bush.
 Moses prayed, and God divided the Red Sea.
 Gideon prayed, and God gave him a sign.
 Hannah prayed, and God gave her a son.
 David prayed, and God forgave him of his sins.
 Elijah prayed, and God sent down fire on Mt. Carmel.
 Solomon prayed, and God gave him wisdom.
 Hezekiah prayed, and God added fifteen years to his life.
 Jabez prayed, and God granted him his request.

Oh, my friends, God has a good track record when it comes to answered prayer.

That's why I know there's somebody else in this Superdome besides me who can testify like the songwriter – "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O What peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!"

So come on, brothers and sisters, the harvest is ripe; so come on, Southern Baptists, the harvest is abundant – but the laborers are few.

Let's pray for laborers—

We got enough choir members. We need laborers!
 We got enough musicians. We need laborers!
 We got enough deacons. We need laborers!
 We got enough trustees. We need laborers!
 We got enough preachers. We need laborers!
 We got enough ushers. We need laborers!
 We got enough church members. We need laborers!

What about you, my brother? What about you, my sister? Can the Lord count on you?

"The Lord has need of workers to till His field today,
 So kindly He has led me to walk in wisdom's way,
 I pray for grace to help me with all my heart to say, O, blessed Savior count on me.
 Count on me, Count on me, for loving-hearted service glad and free,
 Yes, count on me, count on me, O, blessed Savior, count on me!"

So, come on, brothers and sisters – until He comes, let's go heed the Master's call for laborers!