June 14, 2026 – Westwood United Methodist Church

“When Our Worship Begins” Rev. HeeYoung (Lucas) Lim

Matthew 9: 35- 10:1(6)

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues
and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and
every sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them
because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;
38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”
1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean
spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.
2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter,
and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee and his brother John;
3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of
Alphaeus and Thaddaeus;
4 Simon the Cananaean and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.
5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not take a road
leading to gentiles, and do not enter a Samaritan town,
6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

“When Our Worship Begins”

When people hear this reading of gospel, they often focus on this verse:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few."

And when we hear those words, we often feel a burden.

We think or we interpret following ways:

"In the Church, we need more volunteers."

"We need more church members."

"We need more people serving."

“We need more money in order to keep this church as the center of the ministry of God”

But before Jesus ever speaks about them, Matthew tells us something else regarding the emotional expression of Jesus. Jesus saw the crowds. He saw people who were tired. People who were hurting. People who were searching. People who felt lost.

And the Scripture says:

> **36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.**

The story begins not with a command from Jesus. It begins with the heart of Jesus.

Before Jesus sends His disciples to command the mission, Jesus already loved the people.
Before Jesus called anyone for the mission, Jesus saw them.
Before Jesus asked for something to be done, Jesus felt compassion for them.

I think this part is a very important point because many Christians have heard this text as a message about what we should do such as “Go, Serve, Invite, Evangelize.”
It guides us to **do** something.

But if we begin the ministry, we can miss the heart, the spirit of the passage through Jesus.
This is not first a story about the mission or witness of the church.
It is a story about the compassion of Christ.
Jesus looked at people and saw the people who needed to be the children of God. Jesus looked at those who were struggling and desired that they would know the love of God.

He looked at those who felt far away and wanted them to be welcomed into God's family. And that is the good news.

The good news is not simply that people should come to church.

The good news is that God loves them and desires to be in a relationship with them. And that compassion in Jesus became the foundation of the church.

Today, many churches are sharing their challenging problems. .
Churches are getting smaller. Some churches are closing or are already closed. Many church members or pastors wonder what the future of the church will be or look like.

When people talk about contemporary churches, they often talk about buildings, budgets, and attendance.

But I wonder what Jesus would ask if Jesus were with us today. Not, "How large is your church?" but, "Do you have my heart?"

Because the church is more than a building.
The church is more than a weekly gathering.

The church is a people who carry the compassion of Christ into the world.

As a United Methodist pastor, I was appointed to Westwood United Methodist Church.
But in many ways, I was also appointed to the town of Westwood.

To the people who live in this town.
To the families who walk these streets.
To the neighbors God already loves.

Over time, I began to understand that calling more deeply, not because I suddenly became an extrovert.
In fact, I am naturally a quiet and introverted person.

But through opportunities to meet people in the community of this area, I discovered something important. The more I met people, then the more I cared about them.
The more I listened to their stories, the more compassion I felt.
All their stories became my prayers and thoughts.
And perhaps that is exactly what happened in the ministry of Jesus in the first century.

Jesus did not remain inside a building waiting for people to come to him. He went where people were. He met them. He listened to them. He loved them. Wasn't this the compassion of Jesus?

And then he invited them into the kingdom of God.

That is why I believe today's passage is not simply about bringing people into church, the Kingdom or the Kin-dom of God.

It is about becoming a church wherever we go.
Our worship does not end when we leave this sanctuary.

In many ways, that is when it begins. Worship begins when we see people the way Jesus sees them.

Worship begins when we listen to someone's story. Worship begins when we care about our neighbors. Worship begins when the compassion of Christ becomes visible through our lives.

So this week, I hope we will ask a different question.

Not, "How can I get someone to come to church?"
But, "How can I show someone the compassion of Christ?"
Because you are already called the church in Christ.

And wherever the compassion of Jesus is present, the gospel is being proclaimed. Wherever the love of Christ is shared, the kingdom or the kin-dom of God is drawing near.

And wherever God's people carry the heart of Jesus into the world, that is when our worship begins. Amen.

Let us pray.

Lord,
Let your Kin-dom of heaven come to the earth so we can call the church.
Let us have great compassion and let us spread your love to those who really need it at this time.

In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen.