

IV. Project Andrew
Bring Them to Him
“Project Andrew and Earnest Prayer”

Matthew 9:35-38

Dr. Harry L. Reeder, III

February 12, 2023 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is the Word of God. Matthew 9:35-38, 10:1-5a says [35] *And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. [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 pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

[10:1] And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. [2] The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; [3] Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; [4] Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

[5a] These twelve Jesus sent out...

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

As a congregation, we realize that the challenges in this present age are pretty significant as we see Satan's attack from the outside and the inside. What is it that we should do? One of the things that's always important is to understand why we are where we are and what our purpose is. What is the purpose of Christ’s Church? Why is His church here? Which of course, would mean why is Briarwood Presbyterian Church here? We don't have to wonder, because A) it's Christ Church. B) Christ who purchased the church with His own blood, has made abundantly clear to us why we are here.

This series of our ministry theme Project Andrew – bring them to Him started as an exhortation, encouragement, and just a reminder to myself that when the times get challenging, the key is, to stay focused on the essentials with intentionality, a commitment to excellence, and with full reliance upon the Holy Spirit. So we started by declaring why we are here as a church. To sum up how we were led into this project for this year I’m going to give you a Pauline sentence which means it’s a little lengthy – until He returns, Christ has unleashed His church upon a God-glorifying, Christ-exalting and Holy Spirit-empowered mission. What is that mission? It is to make disciples of all the nations. How long do we have that mission? It is until He returns.

Here at Briarwood, we try to commit to that mission. One of the great legacy ministries at this church which has been around now for 60 plus years, is world missions. But we also want to remind ourselves that we don't send out there to get done what we're not, by God's grace attempting to do here. When Jesus calls us to go to the nations, He said, ‘Go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the other most part of the world’ and then He gives us a record of the unfolding of this purpose in the Book of Acts. They didn't start out in the nations, they started in Jerusalem, then it overflows to Judea, then to Samaria, then to the world. That pattern should

be guiding us for He's called us to make disciples of all the nations. It is not how do we end but how we you start? We start right here in our own Jerusalem to go to our own Judea. So we go local, regional, national and then international. So while we find people who are vocationally called and able to go cross cultural into other arenas, we're sending out there what we are already equipped and called to do right in our own arena. Our evangelism is extended through world missions, but world missions should be an extension of our mission and our evangelism right here.

So, until He returns, Christ has unleashed His church upon a God-glorifying, Christ-exalting, Holy Spirit-empowered mission and that mission is to make disciples of all the nations. How do we do that mission? It is by implementing four ministries – the ministry of Evangelism, the ministry of enfolding, the ministry of equipping and the ministry of exaltation/worship. We did not invent that. That is simply a distillation of what Jesus said at the first General Assembly of His church and the first General Assembly of His church took place on an unnamed mountain in Galilee after His resurrection and prior to His ascension. The Disciples were gathered around Him, minus the one who had betrayed Him which was Judas Iscariot. As they gathered there, He said to them, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, **to the end of the age**”* (Matthew 28:18-20).

We are here to make disciples of all the nations according to what Jesus has said here and according to Jesus we have this mission until the end of the age – until He returns. Our mission is that glorious declaration of the Gospel with the whole counsel of God teaching them to observe all that He has commanded us. So we want to be on mission, on message and in ministry and even in this Great Commission, He gives us our four basic ministries. Number one is evangelism – as you are going, go seek and save the lost. Jesus isn't waiting for everybody to come to Him. He's going to get them as He went through all the cities and villages of Israel. So we are to be going to the highways, byways, corners and the public squares. We are to go to anyone and everywhere. Spread the Gospel of the seed throughout the whole field of the world.

Then when people are brought to Christ, what do we do? He says, “baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” What is baptism? It is the initiatory sign and seal of the covenant whereby the believer and his household are added into the body of Christ. They were baptized and added to the church. Now it doesn't save them. No, they were saved when they were brought to Christ. Now when they come to Christ, they are enfolded into the body of Christ which is the second ministry we are to do. They are brought in for nurturing, shepherding, loving and the communion of the saints.

The third ministry is we start equipping them. On the Lord's Day morning you cut onto the congregation this tsunami of Biblical truth and love. Then it narrows down a little bit more with the Sunday school lectern, then to the small group discipleship and when necessary, into life on life, one on one. So there's the life on lives in worship, the life on lives in the Sunday school community and the life on lives in a small group. Then there's a life on a life for a season and a reason in the focused discipleship that takes place.

Then there's a fourth ministry, it's the ministry of scoring. What does it mean to score and accomplish the mission? It means those who were falling short of the glory of God because of sin have come to Christ as their Savior and their greatest delight is to gather and live for the glory of God in worship and praise, that He is glorified. We send the Gospel out and to the

nations. Why? So that the praise of God will cover the Earth as the waters cover the sea. That's the end of it and all of it's right there in the Great Commission

So what we've said this year, any of those ministries could be a focus to accomplish the mission but the one we're looking at is evangelism. We have been looking at it through the framework of a biography of a man who every time he is seen in the Bible he is bringing someone to Jesus. This man is Andrew. So this series has been titled Project Andrew, how can we bring them to Him? We looked at Andrew in John 1, after Jesus had evangelized him. Actually, John the Baptist had evangelized him to bring him to Jesus and then as he came to Jesus, he then goes out and gets his brother, Peter, and brings him to Jesus and from that, Philip and Nathanael come to Jesus. From that one day, a little over three years later, Peter, who was brought to Jesus by Andrew, will bring 3000 and then a week or so later he'll bring 5000. So what did we learn? Bring them to Him by bringing Him to them, but you cannot and will not bring Him to them and therefore them to Him, unless you come to Him.

Then we watched Andrew take a little boy and bring him to Jesus, who brings to Jesus five loaves and two fishes. I'm sure his mother gave it to him, but I tell you who gave him the five loaves in the two fishes – it was the providence of God. What did we learn then? When you bring them to Him, as Andrew did with this little boy, they will bring to Jesus the resources that Jesus has already given them – your mind, heart, feet, even your po' boy fish sandwich. You bring everything to Him and then watch what He does with it.

The third encounter that we looked at with Andrew was the moment when Philip brings to him some Greeks who were on the Temple Mount who were asking to speak with Jesus. So, Andrew brings the Greeks to Jesus. Then there is this amazing moment where Jesus, who had been saying time and time again 'My hour has not yet come' now says, 'My hour has come.' Two things happened out of that moment besides the Greeks getting saved. Number one, Jesus will come back the next day and cleanse the temple in the court of Gentiles, where He had been talking to them so that it's used for what He intended it to be used for. Then He says, 'My hour has come.' Number two, that moment became the trigger to point to the hour of the Almighty, sending His Son to the cross to save the elect of God from every tribe and nation through the atoning work of Christ. So get ready. You never know when you bring someone to Him what that's going to trigger in God's history of redemptive providence – the person you bring and how He's going to use them. It is amazing what was triggered by the Greeks being brought to Christ by Andrew. So, that's what we have looked at so far.

As we take a look at this call to personal evangelism through the example of Andrew, I think it can rightly be asked, to accomplish this, what is absolutely essential? What is essential is power. This mission cannot be accomplished without Divine power. Sinners are dead. Salvation is impossible apart from the grace of God. The call to do evangelism, the reception of the message to those that we bring, for them to have the ability to come to Him how can dead people come to the Savior? All of that requires power. From what we know in the Bible, He has given to us two unfailing power sources (power plants) that are used to accomplish the mission for all of His people whom Christ have saved from every tribe and nation to be brought to Him through this endeavor of making disciples.

Power plant number one is the Gospel itself. Paul says 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. Just as it is written, the righteous man shall live by faith' (Romans 1:16-17). Here is the power plant of the Word of God.

The other power plant is the Spirit of God. Acts 1:8 says [8] *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* The power plant of the Gospel is put into effect when we proclaim the Gospel. The power plant of prayer is accessed through prayer. The power plant of the Gospel is enacted through proclamation. The power plant of the Holy Spirit comes through prayer itself.

There was a marvelous Baptist preacher named Charles Spurgeon who proclaimed the truths of reformation Christianity and the Gospel in a very tough area of London. He pastored a church in that area called the Metropolitan Tabernacle that was just growing and growing and growing because people were being converted. The Gospel power plant was initiated from the pulpit in that church, through the power of the Word. People were coming to see what they had heard about this church. There were about six to eight ministers that had just graduated, heading into the ministry but before they went off into ministry they decided to go and hear Spurgeon preach to see what was happening at this church. This church is on fire for the Lord. To make sure that they could hear and see Spurgeon without getting crowded out they got there early to get the pew they wanted so they could catch the intonations and inflections of the voice and everything that they possibly could.

As they were discussing things before the worship service started, this kind of unassuming, rather dumpy looking fella came up to them and said, ‘Are you visiting with us?’ They said, ‘Yes, we’ve come to hear Spurgeon preach. We’re so excited about what God is doing and the Gospel fire that’s going on here.’ He said, ‘Well, we’re glad to have you. Would you like to see how this church is heated?’ They weren’t really interested in a boiler room tour, so they kind of tried to put it off but he was pretty insistent and they said, ‘well, we don’t want to lose our place.’ He said, ‘I’ll take care of that, don’t worry, I’d just like for you to come with me.’ So, they went with him and he took them downstairs 30 minutes before the service began, and there were over 500 people on their knees in prayer for the service they were about to attend. He said to them, ‘The power in the pulpit, the fire is lit here. This is the boiler room right here.’

This is why Jesus says in Matthew 9:37-38, [37] *Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; [38] therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”* Let’s go back and look at the text now for this study and then I close with a takeaway.

Matthew 9:35 says [35] *And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.* This doesn’t mean everybody was healed of what He’s talking about. It means there was no disease or affliction that was too hard for Him to heal if He sovereignly chose to do so. So here we see Jesus going throughout all the cities and villages teaching and proclaiming the Gospel. There’s the power plant at work, and then He’s healing every kind of disease, every kind of affliction. That is a summation statement.

To give some context in the gospel of Matthew there is the birth narrative of Jesus in Matthew 1 and 2. Then there is the initiation of Jesus into ministry in Matthew 3 and 4 Then we have the first of Jesus’ five recorded sermons called the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Then in Matthew 8 and 9, there are a series of encounters that Jesus has with individuals and groups in order to give insight into Jesus, the Gospel and how He ministered and now Matthew sums it up by saying ‘Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues...’ In other words, Matthew is telling us he can’t give every illustration yet, but

here's where He went – all over the place. Going all over, He came into contact with sinners who were lost. They needed salvation and here is a takeaway He gives from these two chapters in ministry. Matthew 9:36 says [36] *When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

They needed a shepherd, but they didn't need just any shepherd. They needed a great Shepherd. They needed the good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. He was the answer to their helplessness and harassment of sin. That is what sin does. It nips, bites and devours you while promising you everything. Its wages are discouragement, depression, deception, distress, death of hope, death of relationships, and eternal death in a place called hell. It harasses to hell itself and they needed the Good Shepherd not sin. They needed a great Shepherd. Notice as He saw them, He had compassion upon them.

Next, He basically says 'So what should you do, Disciples?' The harvest is plentiful, but the labors are few. Therefore, I want you to pray.' There's what He commands us to do - pray. Is that all we do? No, and it's not the least you can do. It is the most essential that you do. What else do we do? We preach, we pray, we minister, we do all those things but the one thing we better do is pray. Notice He doesn't say, just pray. He tells us how to pray – earnestly, pray with intent, intensely and intentionally. Pray persistently.

Then He says, 'To whom do you pray?' You pray to the Lord of the harvest. Who is the Lord of the harvest? Now, on the one hand, this is very easy to answer. You could just say 'God', and you'd be right, but I think He is being even more specific than that. He tells you not only who to pray to, but then tells you what to pray for. He doesn't tell you to pray for the harvest for that's already been secured. He tells you to pray for the harvesters that are needed. He doesn't tell you to pray to increase the harvest. It is a plentiful harvest – the harvest is plentiful. This harvest is so plentiful that we don't have enough workers/laborers/harvesters. We don't have enough of those who will bring the sheaves in rejoicing. That's what we're missing – the laborers, not the harvest for it's plentiful.

Jesus did not go to the cross to create a bank of merits to give people salvation if they trusted Him. When Jesus went to the cross, He saved His people from their sins. We don't add anything to that. We're called to receive it. He didn't make us savable. He saved His people from their sins. He saw the travail of His soul and He was satisfied. Now this Jesus who owns and secures this plentiful harvest has ascended and He has sent the overseer of the harvest – the Holy Spirit. The Father has authored the harvest. He has sent His Son, who secured the harvest and Himself is the first fruits of the harvest with His resurrection and ascension. Now He from heaven, the Owner of the harvest, has sent the Holy Spirit who is bringing the harvest. How? It is by opening the hearts and the minds of those who have been redeemed by Christ so they have eyes to see and ears to hear and by sending those who have been saved to go into the harvest field, to bring others. The Holy Spirit's power with the power plant of the Gospel opens eyes and ears so that men and women are born again and able to come to Christ.

I want to make this as clear as I can. (33:07) You don't come to Jesus to get born again. Jesus, by the Spirit, with the Gospel comes to you and when you're born again, you are brought from death unto life and now you can come. What is your condition before you're born again? You're dead. Dead people don't follow anybody. Dead people can't come to anybody. That's why Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'You cannot see or enter the kingdom until you are born again' (John 3:3). How do people get born again by the sovereign grace of God? God has ordained the use of His people to bring the power of the Gospel and then He goes with the Holy Spirit to give them eyes to see and ears to hear to bring them from death into life. So we pray for the

Spirit and then the Spirit, to whom we pray empowers us to go. We who were brought to Christ in the power of the Spirit, are now empowered by the Spirit to bring others to Him. He is the Supervisor of the harvest, secured by Jesus to the glory of the Father.

The big deal here is we're supposed to pray for laborers, right? Who are the laborers? They are the laborers of the harvest. What's the harvest? Because the Bible gives us two harvests. Please examine everything by the Scriptures. There is a harvest in Revelation 14 and it's called The Harvest at the End of the Age. You also find it in Matthew 13:39, in Jesus' exposition of the parable of the tares, that at the end the age He will bring the harvest of humanity before Him, and separate goats from sheep, tares from wheat. So who are the laborers in that harvest? It is the angels. That's not the harvest Jesus is talking about here in Matthew 9.

The harvest Jesus is talking about here in Matthew 9 is the harvest of this day until the last day and that's the harvest of bringing God's people, the elect of God from every tribe and nation through evangelism and discipleship. You will also find it in John 4 which I hope to get to in our next study in this series, where Jesus says after the encounter with the woman on the well, 'look, the fields are white unto harvest. There's a ready harvest. The harvest is plentiful, the fields are white unto harvest pray, for the laborers in the harvest.' Who are they? You and me. We're the laborers in the harvest. We're not the Lord of the harvest. The Father authored it, the Son accomplished it and now the Holy Spirit is superintending it. So we're calling upon the Holy Spirit to go before us to those who are being harvested and make them ready for the Gospel. Work on their hearts so that the good seed will find a good soil and then send us, empower us.

That's crucial because if we decide that we're going to get into the harvest field and be laborers, Satan will redouble his assaults from the outside and from the inside – he is more than happy for us to do church, but just not church that Christ has commissioned. Satan will do everything he can to stop it, but the question is, when we do that and I say not 'if' I say 'when' what should we do? There are a couple of things but here's one essential thing we need to do. We need to proclaim the power plant of the Gospel, and we need to pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send us with power – the power of His presence within us, whereby we are unstoppable, not because of our resoluteness, but because of His presence. Do you remember what happened when God's people couldn't be stopped in Jerusalem? Jesus gave them their mission. He showed them the Gospel and then He said, 'And you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you' (Acts 1:8). So, they were not to go into the field until they went to the upper room and prayed for the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yesterday, I stood in front of the church on Anston Street in Charleston, South Carolina, where for two weeks the African-American elders of that African-American congregation with their Caucasian pastor, John Girardeau, prayed for two weeks. They would come to him and say, 'Pastor, is it time?' He would say 'No,' and then when it became time, a revival was unleashed where thousands black and white were brought into the same buildings in 1858 and a Gospel awakening that spread, went to London through the shipping lanes, went to New York, through the shipping lanes, went to New Orleans, through the shipping lanes. But the first thing they did was what they did at Jerusalem. The harvest in the New Testament is initiated in Jerusalem. In Acts 1 they prayed for the Holy Spirit. Acts 2, they proclaimed the power plant of the Gospel as Peter preached. So here is our call to pray, not just check box earnestly.

If I were to tell our congregation that some great preacher is going to come and preach we would get a good crowd, but in most evangelical churches, if the preacher said 'we're going to have a prayer meeting' not many will show up. I want to ask you, are you a Christian? Do you know how you are Christian? The Holy Spirit came to you and the Holy Spirit sent someone or more than one person, likely to you. I have two choices as a pastor. I can try to motivate you with guilt. That's not hard. I could say 'Did somebody tell you about Jesus?' And if you said 'yes' I could come back with 'Okay, somebody told you about Jesus and you became a Christian, and you won't go tell somebody? What kind of Christian are you?' Now, that works – not long, but it works and there's no joy. Guilt gets attention but it doesn't motivate, and that's fine to get attention. But what motivates us is the love of Christ and what motivates you to pray earnestly knowing the harvest is plentiful – I'm not praying to get a bigger harvest for it's already big and my prayers don't enlarge the harvest but I'm praying for laborers.

When do you pray? When Jesus called you to pray. When did He call you to pray? Matthew 9:36 says 'He looked upon the people who were helpless, dead in their sins and harassed with the consequences of sin and He felt compassion.' Where does compassion reside? It is not in your head. It'll stop off in your heart. Go read your Bible – the bowels of compassion (I John 3:17). As one of my friends said "It's in the lowest part of your digestive system." In other words, Jesus looked at them and it was gut wrenching. It tore His stomach up and He said, 'Pray for laborers. I'll get you the harvest.' Holy Spirit, send the laborers right now. Will we pray for them?

Here's the takeaway and then I'll close in prayer. Pray that the Holy Spirit sent by Christ to us, to bring us, will send us with power into the harvest field, not only for Him but for those who need to hear the Gospel. God, will you put me in a place that my stomach churns until I see laborers going to the lost? Would you put that in us?

I was standing up to preach at Pinelands Presbyterian Church. This church was my first pastorate and the average was like 74 with no children, except my three. This guy walked in who was about 30 years old, six foot seven and beside him was a Puerto Rican young lady who was just beautiful. His height is what made him stand out in this congregation for he was head and shoulders above everybody. So when the service was over, I was going after them as quick as I could. I went to the back and said to him, "Hey, how did you come here? Did you hear about Pinelands or maybe the preacher?" He said, 'No, Fran grew up in a church and told me she thought we needed to get back to church and my mother has been sending me this born again stuff. So I told her we'd go to church.'

I said to him, "Well, what brought you to Pinelands?" He said, 'Well, we were looking around and there's a lot we like to do on a Sunday afternoon, and this church had the earliest service so we decided to go there.' There was a ringing declaration. Then he said, "we heard some things day that we'd like to talk to you about." I said "So what would you sign the guest register?" He said, 'Sure.' He signed the guest register and I went back to look at their names and saw two last names with the same address. The year was 1980 and that was unusual to me. I'd been in Chattanooga where I knew people who did that but they usually didn't sign church registers in 1980. I called up one of my mentors and told him the situation of them living together and asked him if he had any advice. He said "It sounds like to me they need Jesus." I said, 'Why didn't I think of that?' So I went, shared the Gospel and long story short, they came to Christ. You talk about the Holy Spirit, opening eyes and ears!

I set myself four weeks and I loaded up sermons with Biblical covenant of marriage stuff. The fourth week came pretty quickly for me and I kind of felt like I was being the prophet, Nathan, for I would get I was getting ready for it. So the day I was going to call them, I got a phone call from Fran. She said, "Ted and I have been talking and thinking about this and now that we're Christians, we don't think this relationship that we have is right so can we talk to you about getting married?" I said, "Yes, amen, let's get together." They got married and every Sunday after that I wish you could have seen the people that they were bringing.

Ted was a Clint Eastwood fan and I'm a Clint Eastwood fan and we would talk about that. He came up to me and said, "Harry, we've got some people coming and they're kind of like Fran and I were. They're not married, they're this and they're that, so is it okay if I bring them?" I said, 'We have prime seating for them so just bring them on.' He said 'okay. I wanted to tell you how I'm getting them here.'" I was kind of wondering what he's going to say. He said, "I just tell them that Fran and I have become Christians and we'd like for them to come here, our pastor and then they asked me about you, and I tell them, Oh, he's Dirty Harry." I don't recommend that as an evangelistic tool, but it was amazing to see what the Holy Spirit did in those coming weeks.

Let's pray that the Holy Spirit will go before us in the harvest, will send laborers into the harvest and will send us. Have you seen all the books that tell you if you buy the book it will give you the secret to life? Does that come across your social media yet? I want to tell you right now not to waste your money on those books. Here is what we have – the Good News. It's no secret what God can do, what He's done for others and we can tell people, 'He'll do it for you.' Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Holy Spirit go before us in the harvest, send laborers into the harvest and send us into the harvest. Lord, help us who know You to be the light we need to be for Your glory to share Your Good News with others. For those reading this who don't know You, please come to Him today. If you want someone to pray with you about a decision to follow Christ or you know Christ and need prayer for things happening in your life that perhaps are hindering you to share the Good News, please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd be happy to pray with you. Father, may we go forth with courage and compassion, boldness and love to share with any and everyone who comes across our path in life the Good News of Jesus Christ, I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.