

Matthew 9:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Analysis

Jesus' solution to the worker shortage: 'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest' (δεηθητε ουν του κυριου του θερισμου οπως εκβαλη εργατας εις τον θερισμον αυτου). The command is to pray, not to organize human solutions. God is 'Lord of the harvest' (κυριου του θερισμου)—He owns the field and directs the work. Workers aren't self-appointed but sent by the Lord. 'Send forth' (εκβαλη) is forceful verb, literally 'cast out' or 'thrust out'—suggesting God's initiative and authority in calling workers. Prayer acknowledges that God raises up, gifts, and sends workers; human effort alone cannot produce genuine laborers. The passage teaches that mission begins with prayer, not programs. Before sending the Twelve (chapter 10), Jesus teaches them to pray for workers—they themselves become the answer to their own prayers.

Historical Context

Jewish prayer culture emphasized seeking God's intervention in community needs. Jesus teaches that workers for God's harvest come through prayer to the Lord who owns and oversees the harvest. This corrects activist tendencies to solve problems through human organization alone. Early church practiced this: prayer preceded missionary sending (Acts 13:2-3). Church history shows movements of gospel expansion typically began with prayer that moved God to raise and send workers. Modern missions often lacks this foundational emphasis on prayer for workers.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does praying for workers transform our approach to mission and evangelism?
2. What is the relationship between prayer for workers and willingness to become one yourself?
3. How can churches develop cultures of prayer for gospel workers rather than mere program development?

Interlinear Text

δεήθητε	οὖν	τοῦ	κυρίου	τοῦ	θερισμὸν	ὥπως
Pray ye	therefore	G3588	the Lord	G3588	harvest	that
G1189	G3767		G2962		G2326	G3704
ἐκβάλη	ἐργάτας	εἰς	τὸν	θερισμὸν	αὐτοῦ	
he will send forth	labourers	into	G3588	harvest	G846	
G1544	G2040	G1519		G2326		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 3:15 (Parallel theme): And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Acts 13:2 (References Lord): As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

2 Thessalonians 3:1 (Prayer): Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

Acts 8:4 (Parallel theme): Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

John 20:21 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

Psalms 68:11 (References Lord): The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.

Micah 5:7 (References Lord): And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

Ephesians 4:11 (Parallel theme): And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

1 Corinthians 12:28 (Parallel theme): And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.