

061420 Matthew 9:35-10:8
Ministry Series: Church Workers

Today's Gospel reading talks about the twelve disciples. Jesus hand-picked these men to do his work, to be his ministry partners. Today we're going to talk about the church workers here at Hope that Jesus has hand-picked to do his work. Do you know who they are? Well, I bet you know some of them. There are many people who work in our church office, preschool, music and family programs. But let's start with this group (*pictures*). These are the full-time called staff members that I serve with here at Hope, plus the vicar.

Let's see how well you know the six of us. I asked each one this question: "Why did you want to be a church worker?" See if you can match each answer to the staff member. So hit pause, grab a pen, jot down your answers, and then I'll tell you if you're right.

Why did you want to be a church worker?

- Our first answer: "I didn't. But God eventually got through to me." Who do you think said that?
- Our second answer: "I want to pass along the impact my DCE had on me, and be that person for others." Which called worker said that?
- Next: "I want to equip people to understand their faith, and to be able to defend their faith."
- Why did you want to be a church worker? Our fourth answer: "I want to proclaim the Word of God, especially in personal relationships developed with the people of God."
- Here's answer five. Guess which worker said this: "I thought I had a plan for my life that didn't include church work, but God changed my heart to follow his plan."

- And finally, answer six: “In my high school and college years, I considered a few different careers, but kept coming back to what I think God wanted me to do all along.”

Alright, let’s go back and reveal who really gave which answer to the question, “Why did you want to be a church worker?”

- Our first answer, “I didn’t,” is Pastor Lew.
- Our second answer, “impact,” is DCE Steve.
- Our third answer, “equip people,” is DCE Wesley.
- Answer four, “proclaim the Word,” is Vicar Zach.
- Answer five, “God changed my heart,” is DCE Beth.
- And that leaves me with answer six.

Let me know if you got all six correct. I’ll give you a special prize.

Now, if we could ask the twelve disciples of Jesus the same question, what would their answers be? “Why did you want to be a church worker, Peter? What about you, Andrew? Or Bartholomew?” These were all second-career men. Some were fishermen, one was a tax collector, one belonged to a radical political party. They weren’t highly-qualified. They had no academic training, and no ministry work experience. But Jesus hand-picked them all. He called them to follow him, to believe in him.

And, in today’s story, Jesus sends them out to do ministry work, to do the same work he was doing. “Proclaim the kingdom of heaven,” he tells them. “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.” Read the rest of Matthew chapter ten for more of the Lord’s instructions. Suddenly these twelve men aren’t just following Jesus around, watching and listening to him. Now they’re church workers, doing hard-core, intense ministry in the name of Christ.

And Jesus places high value on church workers. He sees the need for church workers. Christ looked with compassion on the crowds back in his day, and Christ sees the hurting people in the world today, those who are lost and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

I asked you before if you know all the church workers that Jesus has hand-picked here at Hope to do his work. I showed you some. Let me show you some more. Did you know that there are three young adults who grew up here at Hope, and are now full-time church workers, DCE's, in other churches? Did you know that another young lady from Hope is going to college to be a DCE, and another just graduated and will be teaching in a Lutheran school very soon?

Did you know that that two more Hope teens are planning to go to DCE school in a year or two, and that four more young adults whose families used to go to Hope are now church workers or are studying to be? All of these wonderful, dedicated, committed church workers, or future church workers, from your church! And maybe there's a young girl or boy listening to this sermon, whose name will be added to that list down the road.

And that's not to mention our former vicars now serving as pastors, and our former staff members now serving as a missionary in Kenya and as a pastor in Pennsylvania.

Jesus places high value on church workers, all the men and women he's hand-picked in our day and age to carry on his work. It's a remarkable thing, but Jesus chooses to use humble, imperfect, under-qualified people to proclaim his Gospel, to share his Good News, to bring healing and comfort to the world of hurting, helpless souls out there. And none of us needs to look far these days to see people in need. People in need of a Savior. People in need of God's

love. People without God's peace. People missing the direction of God's Word. People who don't confidently know God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The harvest out there is still plentiful, maybe more plentiful than ever; and the laborers are still few.

So I'll ask you one more time. Do you know all the church workers that Jesus has hand-picked here at Hope to do his work? Because there's a name we haven't mentioned yet. It's you. You're on the list. It's you. Look in the mirror. Jesus calls you to be part of his mission. Jesus wants you. Jesus can use you, no matter who you are. You don't need a ministry degree. You don't have to work full-time. You don't need credentials, except faith in Jesus Christ, and a willingness to follow him.

Are you baptized? Are you a believer? Are you still breathing? Are you able to smile, and to talk? Are you convinced that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life? Then know this in your heart today. Jesus can use you in his ministry. Jesus can equip you, and Jesus will work through you.

We have tremendous ministry opportunities, as a congregation, here at Hope. And we're all in this ministry work together. Some full-time; but all important, all needed. May God bless our church, and the vital, life-saving work we all do together in Jesus' name. Amen.