

# Dangerous Prayer

Matthew 9:35—10:8

## Introduction

I saw a comic strip one time that showed a young man at a wishing well. As he threw in a coin, he said, “I wish I could be held in the arms of a rich, beautiful woman for the rest of my life.” Then, POOF! In the last panel, he is now a toy poodle. The moral of the story is “Be careful what you wish for; you may just get it.” The same may be said about our prayer life as well. “Be careful what you pray for; you may be the answer to your own prayer.” That’s what seemed to happen to the disciples in our Gospel lesson today. In **Matthew 9:37-38**, Jesus tells them to pray that the *Lord of the harvest will send out laborers into His harvest (Matthew 9:38)*. Then, just five verses later, He shows *He* is the Lord of the harvest and sends *them* out to work in the harvest field.

## Why Pray?

So, why should we pray, anyway? Well, there are two reasons. First, God commands it.

### God Commands Us to Pray

Throughout the Bible, the question, “Why should we pray?” is never asked. People ask, “How should we pray?” But they never ask, “Why?” Prayer is something we, as people of God, do. When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, He told them what to pray for, as He gave them the model prayer, what we know as the Lord’s Prayer. Among other things, we are to pray for *His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10)*. We are praying for the harvest of the kingdom of God.

### We Pray Because There is a Need

We pray because there is a need. When we have a need, God tells us in **1 Peter 5** to cast *all our anxieties on Him, because He cares for [us] (1 Peter 5:7)*. God is our heavenly Father. As His dear children, we are to come to Him in prayer whenever we have a need, just as we would go to our earthly father.

## Expectations When We Pray

When we pray in faith, we expect God to answer our prayers. But we usually have an idea of how He should answer them. We expect Him to directly meet the need. Or we expect Him to send someone else along to meet the need. But we never expect His answer to be, “Do it yourself.” So, what do we do when things don’t work out like we planned? What do we do when we find out that we are the answer to our own prayer?

## Take Courage

Well, take courage, because God won’t make us do the work all alone. This is one of the things Jesus was talking about when He said, *“I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20)*. Even if we are the answer to our prayer, He won’t just say, “Do it yourself.” There are four things Jesus does that make everything all right.

## Jesus Calls

In **Matthew 10:1**, Jesus *calls* the twelve disciples. This calling wasn't just Jesus saying, "OK, you twelve men, come over here." This was a divine call, setting them apart for service. He didn't call them because they had prayed for help. He called them because He had already chosen them for the job. If He determines that we are to be the answer to our prayer, it's because He has already chosen us for the job. Another thing to remember is what Paul said in **Romans 11**, that *the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29)*. This means He won't take them back and we should never take them lightly.

## Jesus Equips

Next, Jesus *equips* them as we see that He gives the disciples He has called authority over unclean spirits and diseases. Jesus gave them the power to do what He was sending them out to do. They were to heal, preach, and teach in His name. Even though the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, they would have the power of His name to be able to heal, cast out demons, and preach the Gospel. When the Lord calls us to a job, He gives us the ability to carry it out. He has given the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower us for all He desires.

## Jesus Sends

Then, Jesus *sends* them out. Now, when He sends, He doesn't just turn them loose and say, "Go, get 'em, boys." He sends them out with very explicit instructions. *Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5)*. Literally, the phrase reads, "do not go off into the way of the Gentiles." Hilary of Poitiers said that this meant *they were to avoid the works and lifestyle of the Gentiles*. If we are going to do the work of the Lord, we cannot get dragged into the mire of the world. We must stay true to His Word and avoid worldly ways.

## Jesus Instructs

Finally, Jesus instructs them as to what to say, *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7)*. Our message is simple, too. "Jesus loves you and died on the cross for you." The gift of salvation was free to us. We are to give it away free to everyone else.

## Jesus with Us

But how does Jesus call us? Although He is not physically here, He is still here as He promised. He is here in Word and Sacrament. He calls each of us through His Word and empowers us in the Sacrament of the Altar, as the Holy Spirit applies the body and blood to our lives, forgives our sins, and strengthens our faith. He has a mission for each of us in advancing His kingdom here on earth in answer to the requests we make in the Lord's Prayer, **THY KINGDOM COME; THY WILL BE DONE**.

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*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

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