

Sunday June 14, 2020 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)
Open Our Eyes**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs, tell a story of when you

Group Dialogue (Approximately 30 minutes)

Matthew 9:35-10:23 - Context. This week's reading is the first half of the second of the five collections of Jesus' sayings in Matthew. This collection, sometimes called the "Missionary Discourse," follows the first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus describes how his disciples should live their day to day lives. Here, he sends them out as laborers into the harvest, with the authority to preach and heal even as he has been preaching and healing. In this passage he sends them specifically to the "lost sheep of Israel." This reflects the focus of Matthew's community on the mission to the Jews, and what was Jesus' principal focus in his own ministry. The conclusion of this passage highlights the conviction that Matthew and his community were convinced that the Kingdom of God was surely about to break in upon the world, living as they did in the chaotic aftermath of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.

Read Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23)

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23) again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- When Jesus saw the crowds, in v. 36, what did he see? What is the difference between seeing with our eyes and seeing with our hearts when it comes to truly seeing others? [We can "see" with our eyes without full consciousness and awareness of others' needs due to many factors, including being preoccupied with our own busyness, self-interest, or issues. When we "see" with our "heart," we are conscientious of others' needs and desires. It often takes deliberate attentiveness to truly "see" others for more than how they can benefit us.]
- After Jesus notes the size of the harvest and the lack of laborers, what does he do next? Do you think they were ready? How might that relate to how ready we feel to be sent in ministry?

- In verses 9:35 and 10:7, the content of preaching, whether from Jesus or the disciples, is the “kingdom of heaven.” Take some time as a group to talk about what the “kingdom of heaven” would have meant then and what it means now.

Note - Read after your discussion - The Jewish people held a diverse set of beliefs about the Temple, about the Torah, and about Israel’s relationship with Rome. They all desired God’s kingdom to come in fullness. Jesus’ message matched their deepest desire and hopes. Yet, Jesus’ teachings (Sermon on the Mount, Parables, etc.), life, and death illustrate that the kingdom would look different from the way these groups expected. It would come through the seemingly insignificant (mustard seeds, etc.) but would be worth giving their lives for. It was being birthed among them (“the kingdom of God is at hand”), as signified in acts of healing, (as we see in verse 8). The kingdom of God was achieved when all creation would come into order, justice, and righteousness, led by the divine king who would defeat the forces of evil. Today, kingdom language is awkward, especially for those living in a democracy. Yet, we too long for order, justice, and righteousness and for the forces of sin and death to be defeated. We live, praying for God’s kingdom (dominion or realm) to come in fullness, even while experiencing glimpses of it now.

- What might it look like for your church to be more intentional about seeing all the people in your community?

Read Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23) again

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of compassion, you have given yourself to us in Jesus Christ and you continue to be present to us through the Holy Spirit. Give us the eyes of faith to see those who are in need, those who are hungering, those who are grieving, those who are suffering from the weight of isolation, and those in need of your healing presence. Help us to serve, not with the intent to fix or solve, but as you have modeled for us, to be present. **Amen.** And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.