

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. (Mat 9:35-38 KJV)

“Lord God, heavenly Father, you desire not the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn from sin and live. Mercifully turn away the punishment of our iniquities and, that we may be edified, grant us your Spirit and your power; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹

Dear friends of our Lord and saviour IX: On Tuesday my friend Matthias Albers attended the board meeting. As usual he came all the way from Panbult. That's a good 300km from here. This time he came on his new motorbike. A big BMW 1200 or so. Very nice. He's got his learner's licence and this was his first long trip. After the meeting he drove home again. I closed my office and followed some minutes later. Coming out on Farenden Street, there were many flashing lights. Red, blue, orange! Emergency vehicles were piled up at the crossing with Francis Baard. A motorbike had been hit. A big BMW 1200. Oh my God! Broken parts scattered around. Petrol spilt – or was it blood? It can't be! I stopped short. My stomach contracted. That's Matt's bike. Where's the big case? Broken off. Destroyed. The front steering was all messed up. And look at the car. Oh my! That must have been a hard hit. Nearly fainted. No, not quite. Rather I ran to the first guy and asked: Was that Albers, who got hit? Albers? No! Don't remember that name. But he's ok. He's in Emergency (Muelmed). An ambulance took him there for treatment. His father was here too. Father? Matt's father is not around. Well, I got on the phone and tried Matt's number. No answer. So I called others to ask if they knew more. Nothing. Once again tried Matt's number. The tension was unbearable. My inners were all wound up. My friend was hurt, perhaps severely. Oh no! What a relief to see the phone ringing and Matt's face and number lightening up the screen: What's up? Are you ok? Yes, but I was still driving so I couldn't take your call. Oh, that sure was a big relief! He was safe and sound. No problem. If he had been hit, I couldn't have done much to help that's for sure. And on a motorbike the accidents are so easily fatal. What a blessing, that he was not involved and it was not my friend in hospital, hurt and wounded. Driving home I slowly unwound and relaxed. That story could easily have gone the other way – wrong and very badly. It happens.

¹ Dobberstein Pg. 110
Wilhelm Weber, P.

Our Lord IX is also in one meeting after the other. Busy, busy. Teaching, preaching, evangelizing, catechizing. Law and gospel. God's holy will and godly way, his forgiving goodness and healing mercies. It's long days and long nights. And he has many, many friends and followers. Literally thousands are following him. Crowds of 4-5k. And Jesus sees lots of warning lights too. He's right in the emergency room with them. Scattered people around him – plenty people, multitudes: Wounded, broken, hurting, diseased, ailing, bleeding, sore, aching, suffering, ill, fainting, dying. And there was nobody around to help, nobody caring or able to mend them. They were like sheep without a shepherd. No, that's not quite true. IX was there. He is the true Physician, the best doctor and very able surgeon and medic. He's the truly good shepherd. And he has compassion on all those people: ***“He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick.”*** (Mt.12:20) These are not just strangers to him. He does not overlook them, but sees them – with compassion.² Rather he has adopted them as his close friends, he knows them as the true children of his heavenly father and therefore takes each one of them as his very own brother and sister – Jews, Samaritans, Syrophoenecians and others – Magdalene, Peter, Mary & Martha, John and James, Pierre Luc, Mokopedi, Mokopanele. Even the smallest, oldest, poorest and most outcast he draws near to himself, blesses them with heavenly gifts, grace, love and mercy, so that they are at peace and can depart joyfully and content. He truly takes good care of us. Heals all our diseases and forgives all iniquities too. No compassion fatigue on his part. Although he helps all these people in great distress, he bears the sins of the entire world on top of that and is therefore in an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering and trauma of the suffering, poor and outcasts, helping day and night without fail, yet he copes well, he gets the job done without fail, without frustration, without collapse as we are prone to do. The people are astonished and confess: *He hath done all things well!* Yes, he is the true, real and only Messiah, the saviour of our world, Lord of all.

And he now tells his disciples: *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* Jesus knows there are many, many more out there – not just from the house of Israel, but amongst the pagan nations. They too need help and salvation. Together with the heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit he wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. The harvest is plentiful. There are lots of seats open still in the church. There are many, many people still outside the church and without forgiveness, life and salvation. IX wants them too. Therefore he invites them in and wants

² “Sawbona”: I see you! Recognition, respect and honour. Martin Buber: “Ich & Du”
Wilhelm Weber, P.

us to take up that call of his: Invite them, be hospitable to even the most insignificant and kind, friendly and good to those, who need it most. Feed them, clothe them, visit them, when they are lonely, sick or in prison. Quench their thirst with water from heaven and nourish their famished souls, hearts and minds with heavenly treasures – you received it for free, hand it out for free too - not just titbits here and there, but all the main parts of the Christian faith and Luther's teaching i.e. all that IX himself has taught and entrusted to us. Tell the godly story – starting at the beginning and not leaving out crucial bits. Follow the lectionary, preach the topics of the church year and the themes of the Sunday and don't miss the high festivals and holidays so that the people will get the big picture of God's holy history with and for us and our salvation. Don't just sit back in the last row where Weber likes to sit, watching the world pass by and the final end draw nearer every day. No, you are called to join in too. Sometimes it's plain hard work. Perseverance, determination, passion and dedication is called for. Your entire life, soul, heart and mind. Yes, we Christians live with the sunny side up, IX is in control and he lives and we shall live too. Therefore we obviously have fun and games and a very good time too – God willing and God be praised. But sometimes our life is also a serious battle, a deep struggle and hard affliction. All seems dark, lost and in vain as the opposition forces are gathered around us and we face pain, evil and darkness in this world – even death's dark hour. That is very much a part of our life and our world – these dark valleys of desperation and hard times. You know that. Each one of you has gone through those, been there, done that. Still, it's no reason to despair or give up or withdraw and throw in the towel. Remember you're not alone. IX himself is with you. He is the sure victor over death, sin and devil. He has overcome all life-threatening forces. Overcome all evil and chaos. He is alive and well. He rules and reigns over all. Therefore look up to him. The author and perfecter of our faith. He promised his people: Where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name there I am too. He himself has promised and given his most solemn pledge: *Don't be afraid. Behold I am with you all the days of your life and until the end of the world.* He has challenged us: *Ask and it will be given to you.* Specifically he has admonished us to ask God our heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit. He has assured us to grant his Holy Spirit to those, who ask him for it. And it is this HS, who calls and brings us to faith. It is he, who holds and keeps us with Christ. It is he, who comforts, teaches and consoles us in the truth of IX. If you are in a tight spot, ask him for good counsel, right words and salutary ways. He himself has promised that he will not leave or desert you to your own devices or at a loss. Rather he will remind you of all, that IX taught his disciples. Yes, he will teach you all and everything you should be saying, teaching, preaching, evangelizing and catechizing faithfully to his will and way, subservient to his

Lordship and saving mission. In today's lesson he encourages us as member of the holy Christian Church and as people called into his worldwide mission of saving souls to pray for workers for the great harvest of our Lord. The field is white for harvest. The time is ready. There are plenty multitudes at a loss and without true saving faith. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest for more helpers. Don't think, if you've done it once, that's enough. 7x is not enough either. Rather 7x70 times and then still there will be loads of work to do – while it is day and the Lord grants mercy to continue with his work and opens doors and shows wide open fields, multitudes of people without the good shepherd, without his saving grace, tired and hungry, heavy burdened and without rest.

Don't think it's all up to you and you alone. Your not God. Your not the Good Shepherd. Rather ask for more laborers into the harvest. Ask for co-workers, for administrators, door keepers in the house of God, drivers, cleaners, teachers and professors, doctors and nurses, engineers and other people who fix things, but ask also for pastors, elders, evangelists, men of God's word, faithful preachers, bishops, missionaries, catechists, deacons and all sorts of other servants, domestics, workers of God's word, slaves of IX, helpers in his one church and worldwide mission. People according to his will, who will go out and call those outside inside! Pray for workers at the Seminary, in the congregation and church, on the missionfield and for the many, many multitudes of people – along the Ganges, Congo and Nile, the Amazon and the Mississippi, rushing through the crowded cities like Peking, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo, Lagos and Kinshasa; fleeing and fighting in the Muslim deserts and global wastelands. Ask for the means and ways to call, support and empower these workers and servants of God's word and holy truth. Request necessary finances, faithful education, godly training, helpful experience, faithfulness, diligence, competency, good leadership qualities, useful knowledge, godly insight, true wisdom, good counsel, saving truth, peace, lots of love and wholesome living – but also the compassion of IX, his eyes to see and willing hands to hand out his holy treasures and precious sacraments, gracious lips to proclaim his praises, his saving truth and willing forgiveness. Pray – and it will be given to you – for he is faithful and will surely do it. Amen.

Hymn 709: "The king of Love my Shepherd is..."

Psalm 62