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“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few” (Matt 9:38).

Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13; Matt 9:32-38

Today’s readings are filled with images that capture the drama of Jesus’ ministry as he faced deep opposition from his critics. When performing exorcisms, he was accused of driving out demons by the prince of demons. His growing popularity was raising concerns for religious leaders that he was threatening the temple priesthood. Jesus’ mention of a great harvest had an apocalyptic ring to it, implying that history was approaching an important threshold of conversion and change.

This recalls the impact of the preaching of John the Baptist and, before that, prophets like Hosea, who confronted the leaders of Israel for sowing wind that would become a whirlwind. Jesus is announcing the reign of God by performing miracles of healing and liberation. Wherever he goes he is moved with pity for the crowds, restless and lost like sheep without a shepherd. He sees the overflowing fields and calls for laborers to help bring in the harvest.

These images can also stir a sense of urgency in us as we try to interpret our own world during a pandemic, deep political divisions and uncertainty about the stability of our economy and social bonds. A quick review of history will remind us that every generation has faced its own times of crisis caused by war and economic dislocation, social unrest and violence. What one generation sows, subsequent generations reap. Ambition and deceit sow division and distrust. Wisdom and courage bless the future for others. The commitment to reconciliation and justice creates harmony

and opportunity for those to come.

The Gospel is first a revolution in the heart. Jesus described its effect not as sudden or dramatic but like the hidden processes of leaven, salt and light, like sowing seeds whose harvests we may not see. The prophets were rarely recognized in their own time, but their courage and fidelity built a future for later generations. Real change is the result of ordinary virtue over time, steady investments that produce returns nurtured with patience and discipline.

Sure signs that we are living in the Spirit of Jesus are that our words and actions bring healing and greater freedom to others. The seeds we sow multiply goodness, and when others sow generously, we are eager to help them harvest the results. Significant change is the work of communities, where egos disappear and the common good flourishes, where service is a sign of leadership. History will someday reveal what our time looks like to future generations, but if we are faithful now, they will honor us by imitating us.

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