

Well, Thursday night I made it to my first Market Night on State Street! A sea of people walked up and down State street, some there for the fresh produce, others there for the food, some for the bounce house and other children focused activities like face painting, others just relaxing on benches at Ed Hale Park. Vendors lined the street from Orange almost to Redlands Boulevard selling all types of wares. Musicians played at various street corners and a native dance group in full regale was located just past Baskin and Robbins around 8 p.m. There was one other element I noticed while I walked, though – religious groups – Seventh Day Adventist, Latter Day Saints, Jehovah Witnesses, a couple of older gentlemen chanting Hari Krishna and a group of Atheists proclaiming you are not alone if you don't believe in a god. There may have been more religious groups, but those are the ones I engaged with as I strolled along State Street and enjoyed some Thai Chicken Skewers and Carmel Popcorn.

People of all ages and abilities roamed downtown, as police officers patrolled on foot, to make sure everyone enjoyed the evening. People are fascinating; don't you think? Not one of us alike, not even twins, like my sons! So, I enjoyed being among the sea of people, as I walked with my husband and his brother up and down State Street. I may have even found a vendor to make some word art for our home!

Every Thursday night, people from Redlands and our surrounding communities make Market Night possible. More people from Redlands and our surrounding communities will be gathering soon for the 94th season of the Redlands Bowl Summer Music Festival. Friday, June 30th the San Bernardino Orchestra kick off the season at the Bowl. Events will be held on Fridays and Tuesdays throughout the summer – we have some brochures in the office if you like to partake.

I also walked across the street after our Session gathering yesterday into the crowds at the Smiley Library Summer Event. Crowds were enjoying activities outside, while others were browsing the history of Lincoln and the Civil War at the Lincoln Shrine or in the Library itself. I engaged a woman in the department where books are for sale, who told me of another place crowds will gather for the summer... at the Redlands Theater Festival where plays are produced under the stars! Crowds will gather at the Bowl, at Prospect Park and on State Street all summer long.

Crowds. Do you like crowds? When you are among crowds what happens to you physically? Are you energized by crowds? Are you overwhelmed by crowds? Would you rather be home and alone? "When Jesus looked over the crowds, his heart broke." What does your heart do in crowds? Does your heart shut down? Does your heart break open? Jesus saw the crowd and he knew the need was great.

Jesus had made a circuit of all the towns and villages in and around Galilee. On the circuit, he had healed diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. His heart broke given the immensity of the pain and suffering he saw all around him. He didn't overlook the pain that might have been buried underneath fake smiles, he addressed the bruised and hurt lives he saw all around him.

For those, like Jesus, who work to heal bruised and hurt lives today, there is a term used when the need overwhelms, when the need is just too great - compassion fatigue. Dr. Charles Figley defines compassion fatigue this way, "It is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper." Caring too much can hurt,

always being preoccupied with the pain of others can be too much. Especially when those whose hearts break, like Jesus seeing the overwhelming need, focus on others without practicing self-care, without nurturing what renews and restores those whose hearts break.

Jesus had a remedy for compassion fatigue though. Although he knew the harvest was huge and that the need was overwhelming, he was not deterred. He said to the disciples, “On your knees and pray for harvest hands.”

“On your knees.” In our do it yourself culture, even as Christians, we often fall to get on our knees, figuratively or literally. We believe we can think or work our way to a fix. We just need to work harder or volunteer more hours, with more effort so needs can be met. The reality is the harvest is huge and the workers are few.

You can pick an issue – homeless veterans, at risk youth, hungry children, the unemployed, the terminally ill, war torn lives, those who fear their own neighborhoods, wild life killed for sport and left to suffer, gun violence, gangs and the list could go on and on, for the harvest, the need that breaks Jesus’ heart in our world really is overwhelming.

Yet, our culture tries to convince us otherwise, saying, “don’t worry, be happy.” Don’t worry about anybody else, just take care of yourself. Don’t worry about that which you have no power to change. The problems are just too big. You can’t solve them, so “Don’t worry, just be happy.” But, then we hear Jesus say to his disciples and to us as his followers, “On your knees and pray for harvest hands.”

Harvest hands... Take a look at your hands. What do you see? Do you see hands that could be like the hands of Jesus? Hands that could heal. Hands that could comfort? Hands that could challenge injustice? Nearly five hundred years ago, Teresa of Avila said, “Christ has no body on earth but yours, no hands but yours... yours are the hands with which Christ is to bless us **now**.”

One of the things I most enjoy about Sunrise, our Thursday Lectio Divina time, is listening to others engage the biblical text with their lives. Sunrise demonstrates over and over again for me that our scripture is not a dead word, but a living word. This past Thursday was no exception.

“Pray for harvest hands.” An insight was shared that I had not thought of before, as we pray for harvest hands. It was shared that we have to pray for the wisdom to know what to do with the harvest. Sure, the harvest is plentiful, but if we don’t know what to do with the harvest, we may be ineffective! Using the analogy of harvesting fruit, we better have a pipeline to the market set up in advance as some fruit has a short shelf life. If we harvest too much, too fast, and we don’t have a good pipeline to the market, the fruit will just rot and be wasted. If we are harvesting something that can be stored, we better have ample storage ready. Praying for harvest hands means we will be prepared for the harvest!

If we turn to the life and ministry of this church and pray for harvest hands, we better be prepared for the harvest. If we are praying for more young families and their children, we better be prepared to teach lots more children! If we are praying for a ministry that engages those without homes, we better be prepared for welcoming others without judgment or even expectation that they will change their lives around. If we are praying for a vibrant multiethnic congregation, we better be prepared to be continually

changed by the unique and varied gifts each ethnicity would bring. Praying for harvest hands, means praying for wisdom to know what to do with the harvest!

The text tells us that “the prayer was no sooner prayed than it was answered.” The answer was the 12 disciples and they were immediately sent into the ripe fields of their neighborhoods. We need to notice that they didn’t get sent out because they had the right skills or even enough energy to do what needed to be done. They were sent out as ordinary everyday individuals, but they were sent out with power, the power of the Spirit at work within them and through them. They were given power strong enough to kick out demons and power tender enough to care for bruised and hurt lives. The Spirit, not one’s own effort, provided every fiber of strength they would need to serve.

“Go to the lost, the confused people right here in the neighborhood.” This translation by Eugene Peterson puts the overwhelming needs of the world into perspective. There are lost and hurting people literally right outside our doors and maybe even within them. If we read the more common translation, we might be put off by it, for it says, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” It sounds exclusive or discriminatory. But what if, Jesus is getting at the truth that we need to be healed, our own people need to be healed. We don’t need to focus on others, suggesting that somehow, we are better than “those” people! We also don’t need to go half way around the world to see need. Sure, there is need worldwide, and plenty of it, but if we neglect the need right in our midst, I believe we are missing the point of Jesus’ prayer for harvest hands.

“When Jesus looked over the crowds, his heart broke.” What breaks your heart? What breaks your heart right here in our neighborhoods? Are you on your knees praying for your hands to be harvest hands?

Mary was moved into an assisted living facility by her family at the tender age of 92. She had lost her mobility and was not able to get out of bed without assistance. Her eyesight had failed her, yet her hearing was still just fine. Her room was warmly decorated with a few items, and her furniture was sparse with just her bed, a dresser and a rocking chair. What’s amazing about Mary’s story is she was the most visited room in her facility. She prayed for harvest hands and placed on her door this sign, “Come in and sit a spell. I’m here to listen.” Her door was always open during the day and early evening. And more often than not her rocking chair was occupied by someone who just needed to sit a spell, whether it was her family, a facility caregiver or another’s resident’s relatives. Mary, felt she had been treated generously by God throughout her life and that she was called to live generously with every ounce of life she had. It didn’t matter to her that she couldn’t get out of bed unassisted or that her eye sight had failed. She still had the generous gift of hearing. She still had harvest hands that could be used! She lived generously all the days of her life. You can imagine that when she passed from this life to life eternal, the celebration was attended by many who had the privilege of coming into her room and sitting for a spell.

“When Blare Gooch saw a little boy crying in a pile of rubble after the devastating earthquake in Haiti, his heart broke.” The story brought Blare to tears. The next day, still thinking about what he’d seen, Blare remembered his teddy bear that always comforted him. Then he thought, “I could start a drive to collect Teddy bears for children in Haiti.” At school his teachers gave him permission to share his plan of the PA. Then a local TV

station picked up his story and via Facebook other schools joined in. Blare's Bears for Haiti gave 25,000 teddy bears to the island nation and another 22,000 to local nonprofits. Blare was only 13 years old.

"On your knees, my friends, pray for harvest hands." Our age doesn't matter, only our willingness to be sent out with power.

I don't know what breaks your heart in our neighborhood or around the globe. I don't know how God is calling you to live generously. But, I do know that we are all called to be sent out. As I said in my Wednesday devotional, "We are not to remain in holy huddles safely within the walls of the church. We are to be ready and willing to be those sent out!" Let's live generously, for God has been so generous to us! Amen.