

Most of us are familiar with this verse from the Old Testament.

*And Samuel said, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. I Samuel 15:22 (ESV)*

The Hebrew word for obey means “to hearken, to give respect, attend to, listen, put value on what is said, be persuaded”. We understand that word differently from the mindset of being a son versus the mindset of being a servant. Only a son (or daughter) truly understands the Father heart of God.

When we are a servant, we may not understand the reasoning of what God is telling us to do, but we do it because we want to serve God, we want to work for God, we want the favor of God on our lives. Our obedience comes as a result of sacrifice. In this place, we can also choose to disobey as King Saul did in this passage that prompted Samuel’s words.

As a son, we may still not understand the reasoning of what God is telling us to do, but we do it because we know our Father’s heart and He is always good. He always does what is best in every situation and we trust Him as our Father. Therefore, we do what He says. We eagerly jump into His arms without fear of falling.

Much of what we call service to God, church work, evangelizing, donating our time and money comes from an attitude of sacrifice. It is work and it is no wonder people are burnt out. Obedience as a child is rest. Obedience as a servant is sacrifice and is work. Work came as a result of the fall. Restoration restores us to a place of rest. Restoration restores us to God’s original intent.

We don’t obey out of fear or expectations of favor, we obey because we trust God. It is not our obedience, or our works that please God, it is our faith in Him that causes us to respect and put value on what He says or does even when we do not understand.

The Kingdom of God is going to be advanced in the earth through us “being”, not us “doing”. It will not be expanded by us working to make it happen, by conquering the mountains of society. It will be advanced by us having our being in the King of Kings and just being what He has called us to be. We influence life and culture wherever God takes us by being who He created us to be, at work, at play, in school, wherever! It will not be accomplished through sacrifice, but through understanding and trusting in the Father heart of God and His love.

*And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and*

*learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." Matthew 9:10-13 (ESV)*

The Romans had control of Israel at the time Jesus walked the earth. The Greeks had control before the Romans. Sacrifices were prevalent in Old Testament Jewish law, but they were also a part of the pagan culture.

Plato was a philosopher who lived 3-4 centuries before Jesus came to earth. He had his own university where he taught people the importance of thought and reasoning. He was big into debate on discussing issues and forming conclusions.

He wrote about a discussion he had with a priest. They were discussing piety. The priest related piety in relationship to the gods as "a knowledge of how to sacrifice and pray". As the discussion continued, the question is asked about the purpose for a sacrifice. Is a sacrifice made to honor the gods and thus only benefit the gods, or is it a transaction between the gods and man, where the sacrifice is given in trade for favor?

Sacrifices were a huge part of Greek life. They were rituals. When there was sickness in the midst of a group, they sacrificed to the gods hoping to end the plague.

Here Jesus is healing the sick among the rejected of society, and then he sits down with them and eats with them. These are sinners, those who have missed the mark of how to honor God. He tells them that they do not need the sacrifices or the rituals that religion teaches is required to honor God and receive favor from Him. They just need compassion and mercy.

Jesus was teaching His students what pleases God, and contrary to popular belief, it is not works. It is knowing and understanding the heart of the Father, which is love. Love is the driving force that causes us to see people as our Father sees people and His desire for them to be whole.

In this chapter in Matthew, Jesus goes on to heal many more people. In the following verses, we begin to truly understand His motivation.

*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:35-36 (ESV)*

It was love, not works in hope of pleasing Father God, that motivated Him. It was love that propelled Him to travel from city to city. It was love that moved Him to teach the good news of the KINGDOM. It was love that ignited a flame in Him to see every disease and every affliction destroyed and people restored.

*But this is a people plundered and looted; they are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become plunder with none to rescue, spoil*

*with none to say, “Restore!” Who among you will give ear to this, will attend and listen for the time to come? Isaiah 42:22,23 (ESV)*

God is looking for those who desire to see restoration, who love people with the love that is in Father’s heart and desire wholeness for them. God is not looking for those who do works in order to attempt to please God, or to get some sort of favor from Him.

God is not looking for those who want to make a name for themselves or build a large ministry. He is not even looking for a “billion people harvest of souls”. He is looking for those who have His heart for restoration, not only of people but all aspects of human life. Even the earth, itself, according to Romans 8, needs restoration and is crying out for the sons of God to be revealed. Sons (and daughters) should have their Father’s heart.

In Matthew, chapter 13, after Jesus eats with sinners, teaches His disciples, travels to cities teaching about the Kingdom, and healing the sick and afflicted, He explains why He does all this, because of His great love. But, then, the next few verses are the kicker.

*Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

Jesus has just spent the day teaching about the Kingdom and demonstrating it. The Kingdom is about restoration, our inheritance. The harvest is great, plentiful, huge. There are millions of people who are ripe for restoration, who need it. There are millions who need to understand Kingdom principles, which are really about understand the heart of Father God. Our cities need restoration. The earth and all its cultures and ways need restoration. This is the harvest field.

The word “laborers” means those skilled in what they do. Those who are skilled in harvesting what God wants harvested are few. True laborers who truly understand seedtime and harvest, in God’s plans from the beginning and always before us (in our face, so to speak), are few. Those who understand our inheritance are few. We must understand the fulness of God’s love and be skilled in knowing the heart of the Father and His call for restoration. Not only skilled in harvesting, but leadership. The sheep need shepherds, not to drive them to religion, but to lead them to Jesus.

How do we get there? We pray. Do we really understand what that means? The Greek word for “pray” in this verse is said by the Strong’s Lexicon to mean, “beseech, make a request”. It uses the middle voice of another Greek word which is interpreted to mean “bind, tie oneself to, to fasten”. When using the middle voice in Greek it implies that the action is being taken by the subject to benefit themselves, or to impose themselves into the results.

The Strong's lexicon uses the example of "binding oneself" to mean begging. Much of the religious world today thinks prayer is asking God, to the point of begging, to do something. This is NOT prayer.

Why would Jesus tell us it was the will of the Father to have laborers, or those skilled in harvesting, and then tell us to beg with everything we got in us for Father God to do what He says He wants to do? Does that make any sense?

Let me offer another perspective. If when we pray it means that we expect it to benefit us, how does praying for laborers benefit us? Yes, sure, if our cities benefit, then in effect, we are receiving some benefit as well.

Here is what I believe this verse is saying and what prayer really is. When we pray, we are asking, desiring and expecting God to reveal His heart to us concerning whatever it is for which we are praying. That is for our benefit, so we can see what God sees. When we know and understand His heart and His ways, we can bind ourselves to what He reveals. Then, we cannot pray amiss.

If we are begging God for anything, it is for our hearts to align with His heart, to know and understand His ways. Once we know and understand His heart, we are bound to His heart, fastened to His heart according to what He has revealed. Once, we know His heart, we can declare it, and decree it in the earth.

We plant His seed from heaven that He gives us in the earth. We water it, nurture it, until it produces a harvest. When the harvest is ready, we know how to harvest according to the heart of God. This is the rest of God, and we cease from works. It is no longer about sacrifice, but about His heart of love.

We need to pray earnestly for an understanding of what "laborers" are, what the harvest is, and what the heart of the Father is. Then we can declare those laborers, those skilled in God's ways and His heart, those who understand the heart of the Father for restoration come forth ready to harvest, advancing the Kingdom and restoring all that needs restored.

Joy Mountain Ranch desires to see Acts 8:8 in action, great joy coming to all our cities. In order for this to happen, laborers are needed, those who understand the Father heart of God and not only cry for restoration but know how to bind themselves to God and His love to cause it to happen. Joy is only found in the heart of God.

*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11 (ESV)*

