

experiences with. It's not how much you know that matters, but how the teachings help keep those most precious relationships healthy and strong.

So today I'm reminded that I have a person to introduce, so that other people might get to know him, and be open to his invitation to share life together. Jesus has opened the way for us to share life in a personal way with God, our heavenly Father, and all the rest of our family.

Which reminds me that of the two rituals Jesus started, one is a family meal. A family celebration around a table, celebrating life

with Jesus at his dining table.

How do we reap the harvest? By introducing Jesus, personally.

Let us pray.

Jesus help me to know you personally, to grow in this relationship.

Help me to introduce you to all the people I meet this week, throughout my life, so that when you return in person it won't be as a stranger, but with the joy of meeting our closest friends. Jesus fill us with the Holy Spirit that we go out and reap your harvest your way, person to person, introducing Jesus, the real living, breathing person. Amen.

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## Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am  
Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

12 December 2010

## Now is the time to Harvest—JESUS

Advent 3—Matthew 11:2-11



The theme over Advent has been, 'Now is the Time to Harvest'. Knowing that now is the right time leads me to ask the question; how? With a grain harvest you use a header to gather in the heads of grain. With a grape harvest you could do it by hand or use a grape picker to harvest the crop. You couldn't use a grape picker to harvest a cereal crop too effectively, and you certainly couldn't use a header to harvest a grape crop.

Now is the time, so how do we go about reaping the harvest?

Jesus gives us some important pointers when we look at how he has gone about reaping the harvest. The first thing I notice is that Jesus does it in person. Of course that's

what we celebrate every Christmas. God, in person, come to build a personal relationship with us that is based on his loving personality.

Today we have John the Baptist mentioned, Jesus' advertising man. He prepared the crowd so that they were keen with anticipation. God's advertising campaign; have you heard about that madman out in the desert. Camel's hair, must be itchy. And what a diet; locusts and wild honey, probably good for his cholesterol. Let's go and have a look.

And when people came to John he always pointed beyond himself to the one who was coming. "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after

me comes one who is more powerful than I... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matthew 3:11) John pointed to a person, not a teaching, not an experience, but a person who would get then in personal contact with God.

His was only a baptism of repentance, there needed to be more, much more. Jesus didn't come with some teaching to follow, or a great life changing experience, but with an offer to become his disciple. To share life with him, personally. Jesus baptised people with the Holy Spirit, that's not some power, but God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, come that we might share life with him, now, looking forward to a wonderful future where this shared life is

lived face to face. The Holy Spirit is a person, because Jesus has come that we might be sharing a personal relationship with God. A personal relationship lived out now through the person of the Holy Spirit, reaching fullness when Jesus returns, in person.

I don't have some wonderful teaching to offer that if you follow it you'll become happy and successful. People seem to be looking for the latest teaching, the latest self-help book that they can use to meet their goals. But I don't have a wonderful teaching to offer, just a relationship, with a person who seeks to love you. And as we know relationships can be complicated.

I don't have some wonderful new experience either. It seems to me we're continually being offered wonderful new experiences; travel,

peace through meditation, stress relief through yoga, fun in the sun, a great party, a wild band. My senses are bombarded with new exciting experiences. What's the next one going to be? Hopefully better than the last!

I don't have any

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### Jesus comes in person

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wonderful new experience to offer, just a person to introduce, who wants to get to know you, and you to get to know him, so that you can grow a personal relationship, sharing life together.

Jesus first step in reaping the harvest is to do it personally. He's come in person, so that we can get to know him, the real him.

I believe that is why Jesus often tells people

to be quiet after he has healed them, rather than sending them to go and tell everyone. A good advertising man would take a video and blog it, youtube it, let everyone know. Wow, what a crowd you could gather, what momentum you could incite. But how it would obscure the real

Jesus, we'd have been attracted to an image, an image of what we find appealing according to our perceived needs.

Do you notice a trap in that? I was reading through the book of Romans the other day in the Message Paraphrase and it struck me how people wanted to make God in their own image. They wanted him to fit in with their agenda, with what they saw as important. Here's an example; "What we've learned is this: God does not respond to what *we* do; we respond

to what *God* does." (Romans 3)

Jesus has come so that God can be real. Not obscured by what I think, or how I feel, or the guilt and regret that I carry, the hurts and resentments that have left me scared. How can God be real, and not fashioned by my desires, wants and needs?

So Jesus is born with no great fanfare. Born so that I can get to know him for who he is, the real person. Do you remember the name God gave Moses when people asked who sent him; "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.'" (Exodus 3:14) God wants us to know the real person, not our impression, or anyone else's image.

The problem with our world isn't that we don't have a good set of teachings to live by. The problem with our world isn't that we need

more excitement. The problem with our world is that we try and shape it to fit our image, to fit what we think is important and to fit what I want, now. We seek to build a life of meaning, a self-worth by investing ourselves in our achievements, in accumulating lifeless objects, and fading

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### so we can get to know the real Jesus.

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memories. And what gets neglected, relationships. Jesus came in person, so that we could get to know and share life with the real person. How do I get to know Jesus? Simple, spend time with him; read the Gospels, pray, spend time with him. Seek to know the real Jesus, suspend your ideas and ideals and let Jesus reveal himself to you.

How do are we to reap the harvest? Personally. Not by introducing people to a program, or giving them some great teaching or seeking to engineer some wonderful experience, but introducing them to the person, Jesus.

My goal isn't to build a relationship with someone so that I might bring them to church. Once they know me, they are in touch with the church. I seek to build personal relationships because that's how we get to know Jesus. That's how people get to know Jesus, the real personal Jesus.

And once you're in a relationship, once you're in a family, the natural thing is to live it. To spend time together, to share life together, because that's what life is all about. In the end it's not the experiences you have that are so important as who you shared those