

Genesis 18:1-15
Matthew 9:35-10:8

PLENTIFUL

“Plentiful” also means abundant, ample, bountiful...

It’s a word we nearly always use in a positive sense,
because we think of plenty as wonderful blessings.

But when we sit back and think about life, especially right now,
we must admit that challenges, tragedies and curses are plentiful, too.

The enormous difference is that the *good* plenty is from God
to all of us in creation,
while the bad plenty is from the Evil One,
trying to create anger and antagonism in God’s people.

Our reading from Genesis this morning is not a surprise,
yet it is a story that requires great faith.

Three angels come to visit Abraham, and he immediately welcomes them
to enjoy his hospitality.

He offers a little bread and water,
but in fact he gives them a plentiful feast.

When they ask him where his wife Sarah is,
Abraham does not display any surprise that they know her name;
perhaps he has already figured out that these visitors
are God’s angels.

And when one promises to return to find Sarah pregnant
with their long-awaited son,
she is just inside the tent flap, hears him, and

cannot control her laughter.

She and Abraham are very old; and she is many years into menopause;
how could this be?

Through his angel, the LORD God comments on Sarah's disbelief.

After all, no miracle is impossible for the LORD.

Sarah protests that she did not laugh,

but God replies, "Oh yes indeed you did! We heard you!"

Nevertheless, she and Abraham will indeed receive

the long-promised son, and God's people will continue as his offspring.

And incidentally his name will be Isaac, which means "he who laughs".

Laughter is plentiful in this story,

representing joy, appreciation, surprise, and dependence on God.

As we look ahead to sharing communion today,

let's consider this beautiful reflection by Henri Nouwen:

"The joy that Jesus offers his disciples is his own joy,
which flows from his intimate communion with the One who sent
him.

It is a joy that does not separate happy days from sad days,
successful moments from moments of failure,
experiences of honor from experiences of dishonor,
passion from resurrection.

This joy is a divine gift that does not leave us during times of illness,
poverty, oppression, or persecution.

It is present even when the world laughs or tortures, robs or maims,

fight or kills.

It is truly ecstatic, always moving us away from the house of fear into the house of love,
and always proclaiming that death no longer has the final say, though its noise remains loud and its devastation visible.
The joy of Jesus lifts up life to be celebrated.”

In our gospel reading, Jesus is teaching and healing people in many cities and villages.

His disciples are with him, watching, listening and learning. When Jesus takes pity on the unhappy and helpless crowds, he tells his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.”

So Jesus assigns his disciples the new job of being those laborers to take in the harvest by going out to preach the gospel, to cast out evil spirits, and to heal people as they require. Even to raise the dead.

He clearly tells them to avoid Gentiles and Samaritans, but instead to specifically look for God’s lost sheep, to bring them back into the fold with renewed faith. The days will come for spreading the gospel to the Gentiles and the Samaritans.

Sisters and brothers, we are also those laborers sent by Jesus through his Holy Spirit, to tell the good news of salvation far and wide!

It is a challenge, but it is also a great blessing to do the work of the Lord.

Let us pray:

Wherever we are, Lord,

We know we are together, united in faithful prayer.

We thank you Father God, Lord Jesus and Holy Spirit,

we glorify you, we worship you,

and we count on you, especially during these devastating times,

to bless us with continuing faith and health.

Equip us always with strong faith and the right words

to adequately tell your story of salvation,

that more souls may be harvested.

You are our Rock and our Redeemer.

You sustain us with your never-ending love.

You encourage us to express with joy our love for you.

In your precious name we pray,

Amen.