

Romans 5:1-8 New International Version (NIV)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Matthew 9:35 - 10:8, **(9-23)** *Laughing Bird translation.*

(10:9-23 is not officially in this week's readings but make a good follow on)

Jesus hit the road and began teaching in the meeting halls of every city and town he came to. He broadcast the great news about the new culture, and healed people of every kind of disease and sickness. He was meeting crowds of people everywhere he went, and their predicament always left him feeling gutted. They were under so much stress and were so powerless to do anything about it. They were like children caught in a rip with not a lifesaver in sight. He said to his followers, "The world is an orchard, groaning under a bumper crop, ripe and ready for picking; but there are hardly any workers ready to bring it in. So get in touch with the Lord of the crop, and put in an urgent request for more workers to be sent out to do the picking."

Jesus called his twelve closest followers together and commissioned them to deal with every toxic spirit they would encounter, and to heal people of every kind of disease and sickness. These are the names of his twelve chosen ambassadors: first there was Simon, who was also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; there were the brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee; there was Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew who had collaborated with the Roman occupation forces; James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon the freedom fighter; and Judas Iscariot, the one who later double-crossed Jesus. Jesus gave these twelve their marching orders as follows:

"I am not giving you the job of going to foreign places or to groups that are hostile to our people. Instead I want you to go to the people of Israel who have gone off the rails. Everywhere you go, broadcast the message that the culture of heaven is close at hand. Restore the sick to health, raise the dead to life, integrate the outcasts back into society, flush out the demons. You haven't been asked for payment for what you have been given, so you too are to do all this free of charge for others. **Don't take a wallet full of money just in case, and don't go carting luggage around. Live simply and depend on others. Those who work hard have earned their keep.**

"Whenever you arrive in a new town, accept the hospitality of someone who is trustworthy and on-side. Stay put until it's time to move on. **No shopping around for a better place! When you arrive in someone's home, honour everyone as a friend. If they are good people they will benefit from your generous spirit; but if they prove unworthy of it, you have lost nothing by offering it. If you arrive somewhere and they refuse to welcome you in or to listen to what you have to say, just turn your backs and walk away. Scratch their name off your map and forget them. I kid you not; on judgment day the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah will get it easy compared to that town.**

"Keep your wits about you, because on this job you will be like children swimming among the sharks. You will need to be as street-wise as a feral cat and as harmless as a budgie. Be on your guard against those who make wild allegations against you and turn you over to the authorities or incite mobs to beat you up in public. You will be dragged before the magistrates and political leaders because of your association with me. It will be your chance to speak out for the truth before an international audience. When they arrest you and put you on trial, don't worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say in the witness box. You will be given the right words to say when the time comes. It won't really be you doing the talking, but the Spirit of God speaking through you. People will end up betraying even those closest to them, their own brothers and sisters, and having them killed. Parents will do in their own children, and children will turn on their parents and send them to the gallows. People everywhere will despise you because of your association with me, but those who tough it out to the end will be brought home safe and sound. When people begin to kick you around in one town, clear out and make a fresh start in the next. You can take my word for it; you will not run out of options before the New Human arrives on the scene.