

Reading: Luke 10:1-9

The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.

Today along with our little church in Yaldhurst we are celebrating St Luke. Twenty centuries ago, Luke pioneered a new way of reaching people with the Good News of Jesus. He wrote a Gospel. A Gospel was a new form of writing; it was cutting edge. By any measure it has been tremendously successful. Luke's Gospel has been translated into almost every language on earth. It is read daily by millions of people. It has been set to music and poetry and it forms part of the best-selling book of all time. People have literally given their lives so that others might read it.

However, as Luke tells us today, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. There is still an urgent need to tell others about the love of God and the peace they can find through Jesus Christ.

Gospel writing was cutting edge so what method can we use today to bring in the harvest? What cutting edge technology are we using in a new harvest field?

It all began with COVID. Rosemary and I and Ethan, at a safe distance, began recording services on his phone. Recorded services have grown into a standard feature of what we offer, but the cunning Ethan has taken it one stage further. He has been inviting people to send in prayer requests. The demand has been enormous, so much so that Ethan has had to stop offering it. Some requests were from fathers who have lost children and are feeling bereft. Some are from younger people with relationship issues. Some elderly people facing surgery have made requests. But they don't just stop asking, they send photos and stories and many send *thank you* for answering prayers.

I want to tell you the story of just one prayer request. The email goes like this:

My girlfriend of 4 years, whom I'm preparing to marry, just temporarily separated from me because she has been overwhelmed by work and life and is suffering mentally and spiritually. She says she needs some time alone before she can move on to our next stage in life. And she feels she is hurting me because she hates herself, feeling unable to love and not deserving of love. She is the love of my life, and it has been living hell for me for the past few days. Please pray for her peace and clarity, thank you and God bless.

Ethan responded with a video of himself where he introduced who he was and then prayed this prayer to them: *God of love and life, we pray with *** for patience and hope for a loving future with his girlfriend. In her time of suffering, mentally and spiritually, may he find the faith to let her have the space she requests, and the knowledge that this is the most gracious gift to offer her right now. We also pray that she may find the help she needs to love herself,*

*so that she can love **** too. We pray for peace and clarity for both of them as they journey through this suffering with God holding them close in God's loving heart. Amen.*

He then offered them the chance to follow our pages and to connect with us again if they ever need prayer.

A while later the young man wrote again, saying: *Thank you so much Ethan! A lot happened in the past month or so and we are closer to God and each other than ever before! I'd like to share it with you guys, as a testament and also as a request for you to continue to pray for us After a week of constant prayer and reflection. My girlfriend and I got back together, and this is what she told me afterwards.*

She said on the third day since we separated, all of sudden her mind was cleared, and she felt peace for the first time in a long time, which made her see clearly that she wanted to spend the rest of her life with me.

What's even more amazing is, despite having absolutely no contact with her, I felt that peace on the exact same day. We have no doubt that it was The Lord who guided us through all this.

About a week after we got back together, we were planning on getting married and moving in together, when my girlfriend had a serious car accident, she was hospitalized for almost two weeks and had to undergo surgery to fix her broken leg.

The surgery went very smoothly and she was released by the hospital yesterday, although the doctor said she couldn't walk without a walker for at least 6 months, we are very hopeful for the future, because we know that it's God who holds tomorrow, and he heals both broken hearts and broken bones, and this tribulation will just like the last one, will lead us closer to God, and also each other.

So I'd like to thank you again Ethan, for you and everyone else's prayers had been tremendously helpful to me and my girlfriend, and please continue to pray for her peace, and her physical recovery, a video just like the last one will be very appreciated since the last one really cheered her up.

Thank you so much and God bless.

This is just one conversation. In the two weeks we advertised prayer requests we had 35 new and unique conversations with real people who were struggling with real problems in their lives. We were able to offer support to their needs and to invite them into a loving community where they can feel as though they are heard, belong, and are valued.

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Do you feel you could help with this ministry? You don't need to be as eloquent as Ethan nor do you need to send a video of yourself. To start this up again we need people. In our day we have found a new way, just as Luke did in his day, to reach people with the good news of Jesus.

Can you help?