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A rather pompous landowner met a local farmer one morning and said to him: 'Why, Brown, you're getting quite bent. Why don't you stand up straight, like me?' In reply, Farmer Brown said: 'Do you see that field of corn?' You'll notice that the full heads hang down, and the empty ones stand up.'

As we've just heard, pompous people often make others feel small and dejected if they let them. It was mostly ordinary people who followed Jesus, not those pompous high up ones. The leaders kept their distance from the unlettered masses and were suspicious of Jesus for fraternising with them. These ordinary folk had no one to guide them spiritually - that is why Jesus said they were harassed and dejected like 'sheep without a Shepherd'. The Jewish priests were control fanatics who wanted the people to only look up to them even though they had nothing to offer of any value. Much to their annoyance, these unpretentious folk were increasingly turning to Jesus - he performed miracles on their behalf and told them that they were important in God eyes and had no need to feel harassed or dejected.

So Jesus sent the apostles into this vast harvest of unlettered people with the same reassuring message. In Jesus the apostles could see at first hand God's compassion in action – his kindness to sinners, his healing of the sick, his feeding of the multitude, his patience with the apostles themselves. Even though he reproved them, on a number of occasions for their lack of faith, you never find Jesus making them feel dejected or depressed. It is also interesting to note that Jesus never 'fired' any of his apostles, not even Judas, whom he knew was plotting behind his back. At the Last Supper he never called out Judas for being a traitor. He never embarrassed him by mentioning his name. The other apostles were at a loss as to whom Jesus was referring to when he said '*one of you is about to betray me*'.

Like the people in Jesus' time, ordinary people today can also feel dejected and harassed. When we are not taken seriously, when we rarely hear words of encouragement or affirmation, when we feel excluded, when others keep reminding us of our mistakes, dejection can easily set in and cast a dark shadow over our lives.

If our children are cosseted too much or are given material things in exchange for real love or are deprived of emotional intimacy with parents or siblings, or are poorly served in the spiritual domain, we might be unwittingly sowing the seeds of dejection when these same children have to face difficult challenges in life later on. They won't be able to deal with the hard knocks. We reap what we sow.

As people of faith, let us be God's instruments in bringing light and hope to peoples' lives especially those who need it the most.

The apostles were sent out on a mission to expel the demons of demoralization from peoples' hearts. As present day apostles and disciples that too must be top of our agenda. Only then will we reap a fruitful harvest for the Lord.