

In His Service
February 7, 2016
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Matthew 9:35-38; 10:1-8

Opening Discussion:

I believe you can learn a lot about a person by noticing both what makes them laugh, and what makes them cry. **What kinds of things can bring a tear of concern to your eye or a lump of compassion to your throat?**

In our text this morning we see that when Jesus saw the helpless and harassed people of Israel he was moved to compassion for them... literally gut level, stomach-knotting concern for their very lives and souls. He didn't just feel sorry for them; He came to their rescue and ours.

Here's the big idea: If we're followers of Christ, He expects us not only to care like He cares but also to do something about it.

Let's begin in verse thirty-five of chapter nine and see what it says; what it means; and how it should change us this week.

Matthew 9:35–38 (ESV)

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

- In our last lesson we said that after the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus began to display his authority and power in miraculous ways.
- Now He pauses to teach His disciples about His mission and theirs.

- Verse thirty-five concisely states Jesus' mission on earth: teaching in the synagogues; proclaiming the gospel everywhere he went; and healing every disease and affliction.
- The more He saw the more moved He became. That word for compassion means *to be moved in the inward parts*,¹ The root word literally means heart; liver; and lungs. It describes the center of emotions. Jesus was moved to the depths of His human emotions with pity for these people.
- **What do you think Jesus meant by “harassed and helpless?”**
- **Look at 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 below. How could we apply this verse to helping those who are “harassed and helpless” around us?**

2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (ESV)

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

- **What do you think Jesus meant by “sheep without a shepherd?”**
- Sadly, Israel had some bad shepherds in that day and the Old Testament prophets had warned about it. (Ezekiel 34:1–6; Jeremiah 23:1–5)
- **How might that compare to the shape of our country today?**
- While it's important to we take our civic duty seriously as citizens, it's clear Jesus has called the church to address many of society's problems. When there is a failure in leadership in a society the church must step up. The answers start in God's house not the White House!
- Our lesson writer sums up the situation in Jesus' day: “In Him (Jesus), the promised Shepherd had arrived, and Israel's so-called shepherds were resisting Him and leading the people to do the same. Jesus was so moved that He commissioned the Twelve to go to the lost sheep and provide them guidance and protection.”²

- In verse thirty-seven Jesus shifts from the example of sheep to that of a crop in the fields: “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.”
- **What harvest was Jesus describing? Think about a farm: When does harvesting become an urgent task? What makes this crop “ready?” How can we help people see their need for Christ?**
- The Holy Spirit brings the souls of people to the ripeness of conviction. Jesus is “Lord of the harvest,” our job is simply to “gather in the crops” by pointing people to the gospel. It starts with being moved to compassion.
- Verse thirty-eight: **What fundamental step (that we often miss) did Jesus call His disciples to take?**

John Piper writes:

“God has willed that his miraculous work of harvesting be preceded by prayer. He loves to bless the world. But even more, he loves to bless the world in answer to prayer. It is God's way before he does a great work to pour a Spirit of supplication upon his people so that they plead for the work.”³

- Without prayer there will not be enough workers, and the workers won't have the Spirit's power to bring in the harvest of souls that has ripened.

Oswald Chambers wrote:

*“We stay busy at work, while people all around us are ripe and ready to be harvested; we do not reap even one of them, but simply waste our Lord's time in over-energized activities and programs. Suppose a crisis were to come into your father's or your brother's life— are you there as a laborer to reap the harvest for Jesus Christ? ...Our Lord calls us to no special work— He calls us to Himself. “Pray the Lord of the harvest,” and He will engineer your circumstances to send you out as His laborer.”*⁴

- Jesus sent out the first group of laborers...twelve of them.
- To prove that the Kingdom had arrived Jesus began to destroy sickness and death. Next He delegated the power and authority to others.

Matthew 10:1–8 (ESV)

10 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

- The list of the Twelve appears four times in the New Testament (see also Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16; and Acts 1:13). Interestingly, each list presents the names in the same groups of four, with the same name headlining each of the three groups. *Peter* is the first name in the first group, *Philip* is the first name in the second group, and *James the son of Alphaeus* headlines the third group. The three groups seem to flow in order of prominence, with Peter, Andrew, James, and John, the inner circle, comprising the first group. It is also plausible that Jesus grouped them into smaller units with a unit leader for administrative purposes.⁵
- In verse two of chapter ten Matthew uses the term “apostles.” That word comes from the Greek word *apostello*, which means “to send forth with a commission.” It was used by the Greeks for the personal representatives of the king, ambassadors who functioned with the king’s authority.⁶
- Jesus gave the twelve apostles “authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.” In other words, His authority to do what He was doing.
- We are called to be disciples and ambassadors but none of us are called to be apostles. There are no apostles today. Those would be fighting words to some denominations and churches. On what do I base them?
- A man had to meet certain qualifications to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. He must have seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1) and fellowshiped with Him (Acts 1:21–22). He had to be chosen by the Lord (Eph. 4:11). The Apostles laid the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and then passed from the scene. While all believers are sent forth to represent the King (John 17:18; 20:21), no believer today can honestly claim to be

an apostle; for none of us has seen the risen Christ (1 Peter 1:8).⁷

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

- Jesus’ charge to the Twelve [tells them]: (1) where to carry out the mission (vv. 5-6); (2) what to preach on the mission (v. 7); (3) what to do on the mission (v. 8a); and (4) how they are to live while on mission (v. 8b).⁸
- **Verse five: Why do you think He limited them to the Jewish area?**
- Jesus told them to not only share the gospel (the kingdom is at hand) but to minister to the problems of the people.
- A thought: It’s hard to get someone to focus on the message of the gospel when their stomach is growling; their body is aching; or their life is falling apart. It’s not surprising that Jesus called us to do BOTH: minister to their physical needs while giving the solution to their spiritual need.
- These instructions were specific for that time; that place; and those disciples. How can we apply these verses to you and me today?
 - o God’s call – Go and make disciples in all nations. (Matt. 28:19)
 - o Our responsibility - Baptizing them and teaching them to observe everything Jesus commanded. (Matt. 28:20)
 - o God’s provision for the task – He said he would be with us always.

Warren Wiersbe wrote:

“...when we pray as He commanded, we will see what He saw, feel what He felt, and do what He did. God will multiply our lives as we share in the great harvest that is already ripe.”⁹

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- This is February 7th but for followers of Jesus it's always harvest time!
- In John 4:35 (NLT) Jesus said... ³⁵ You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe* for harvest.
- Then in John 20:21 (ESV) ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "...As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."
- Jesus told His disciples to pray for workers and to BE workers. That same command applies to us.
- If we really slow down and take a look at those around us this week we too will be moved with compassion the way Jesus is!
- We need to ask ourselves: How can we be Jesus to them this week?
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¹ Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

² ETB Lesson Feb 7 2016 - Lifeway

³ <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/prayer-at-harvest-time-now>

⁴ <http://utmost.org/the-key-to-the-master%E2%80%99s-orders/>

⁵ ETB Lesson Feb 7 2016. Lifeway

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 36). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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⁸ ETB Lesson Feb 7 2016 Lifeway

⁹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 36). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.