

Series: The Harvest
The Lord of the Harvest #1
Matthew 9:35-38

INTRODUCTION: Turn with me to Matthew 9:35-38: *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”* (NIV) **PRAY**

The one thing that interested the Lord Jesus more than anything else was the harvest. He calls himself in Matthew 9:38, '**The Lord of the Harvest.**' It was the harvest that moved him to leave heaven and come to a lost world. He said in Luke 19:10, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* (NIV)

During this month, I will be teaching a series of messages on The Harvest. The harvest is the reason we are here. Jesus said in John 20:21, *'as the father has sent me, I also send you.'* Jesus Christ is still calling for laborers to join him in sowing the Gospel seed and reaping a harvest of eternal souls for His glory.

I want you to see three things this morning: the ministry Jesus shared, the misery that Jesus saw, and the ministers Jesus sought.

The ministry Jesus shared, the misery that Jesus saw, and the ministers Jesus sought.

I. THE MINISTRY JESUS SHARED

Verse 35 says, “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming (preaching) the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.” (NIV)

I want you to see immediately how the savior was a servant. In fact at one point, He told His disciples...*'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.'* (Matt. 20:28, NIV)

When Jesus was on this earth, he literally poured himself out in ministering to others. It says that "Jesus went through all the towns and villages." The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that at this time there were over two hundred towns and villages in the region of Galilee, which was an area of about forty miles wide by seventy miles long.

Josephus estimated that the smallest villages and towns contained at least 15,000 people. So, Galilee could have contained at least three million people.

Jesus was willing to get to anybody, whether they were a somebody or a nobody. Jesus was in the soul business because "there is no business like soul business."

We are told that the ministry Jesus shared involved three things: ***teaching, preaching, and healing***. When you think about it, that sums up our ministry.

Teaching is ministry to the soul,
Preaching is ministry to the spirit, and
Healing is ministry to the body.

Teaching ministers to the mind,
preaching ministers to the heart, and
healing ministers to the flesh.

Jesus had an intellectual ministry through his teaching, a spiritual ministry through his preaching, and a physical ministry through his healing.

Teaching takes care of man's superficiality, preaching takes care of man's sinfulness, healing takes care of man's sickness.

Notice that healing is last on the list, not because it is unimportant, but because it is not Jesus' number one priority.

The two main responsibilities of the Body of Christ are ***teaching the word*** and ***preaching the Good News***. Jesus did not come primarily to heal the sick or perform miracles. He came primarily to preach the Gospel, and to bring people into the Kingdom of God. In other words, to bring in the harvest.

Just so you know, Jesus didn't wait for people to come to Him, He went to them.

We need to remember that we come to the church to worship, but we leave the church to work.

The greatest task of any church is to turn members into ministers, and saints into servants, so we can share in Jesus' ministry.

II. THE MISERY JESUS SAW

Verse 36 says, ***"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."***

Jesus saw people the way they really were. He could look past their faces and see their fear. He could look into their heart and see their hurt. Henry David Thoreau said, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."(2)

"Compassion is the capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It's the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy for you too." Frederick Buechner

When the Pharisees looked at the multitude. They simply saw a crowd of people. But when Jesus looked at a multitude, he saw a flock of sheep, and He noted three things about them.

A. He saw sheep that were **hurting**.

We were told they were 'weary.' In other words, the people were harassed, troubled, battered, bruised, mangled, ripped apart, worn out, exhausted. They were hurting from the problems of life, the captivity to the Roman empire and the bondage that the religious leaders of the day put on them.

B. He saw sheep that were **helpless**.

They were 'scattered.' That word literally means cast down. If a sheep ever falls over on its back, (cast) it will die because it cannot get up. This world is full of people, not just senior citizens, who have '*fallen*' and can't get up.

c. He saw sheep that were hopeless.

They were 'like sheep having no shepherd.' It can be said without apology, that a person without God is not only lost, but he is also utterly lost.

Almost 3,000 years ago the prophet Isaiah said, '**All we like sheep have gone astray.**' (Is. 53:6)

When Jesus saw these hurting, helpless, hopeless sheep, the Bible says, "He was moved with compassion." It has been well said, '**people will never care how much we know until they know how much we care.**'

STORY: I read about a lady named Mamie. She always went to a certain post office in her town because the workers were friendly to her. One time Mamie went in to buy some stamps. The lines were extra-long that day, because it was just before Christmas. Someone pointed out that there was no need to wait in line, because there was a stamp machine in the lobby. "I know," she said, "but the machine won't ask me about my arthritis."

We will never care for people the way Jesus cared for them, until we see people in their hurt, hopelessness, and helplessness, the way Jesus saw them.

Illustration: On September 11, 1992, a very unusual parking ticket was given on Piru Street in South Central Los Angeles. At 9:45 AM an officer wrote up the ticket for a Cadillac that was illegally parked. Now there was no question that the car was in violation, and the driver gave no indication that he objected to the ticket. In fact, the driver didn't say a word.

The officer took the time to observe the parking violation, write a ticket, then stick his hand through the open window (within inches of the body sitting behind the steering wheel), and placed the \$30 citation on the dashboard. He never even noticed that the man was dead. Paramedics said later the man had been dead for at least twelve hours when the ticket was given.

I wonder sometimes if the reason we don't have compassion for the lost is because we don't see them as spiritually dead. We might see them as the wrong political party, wrong side of the tracks, wrong denomination, etc.

We have seen what Jesus shared, then we heard what Jesus said, and now we will see what Jesus sought. He did not want to see souls dying and going to hell. If there is no hell and if eternity does not matter, then none of us should be concerned, but if there is a hell to avoid and a heaven to gain, then being saved matters.

III. THE MINISTERS JESUS SOUGHT

The harvest is greater now than it has ever been. Vs. 37-38, ***“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*** (NIV).

What does the Lord Jesus do? **He calls us to prayer.** But amazingly, He does not ask us to pray for the lost, He asks us to pray for the laborers.

He does not ask us to pray for the harvest, he asks us to pray for the harvesters.

He does not ask us to pray for the sheep, he asks us to pray for the shepherds.

Jesus addresses His followers, letting them know that they had a responsibility in this matter. If we don't get involved, who will get involved. The government is not responsible for the souls of mankind, that is our task.

Jesus calls His disciples to pray this prayer and ask the Lord to send out Laborers into the harvest. But be careful before you pray this prayer, because every Christian is an answer to this prayer.

There is a harvest waiting to be gathered, ripe for picking. The problem is not with the size of the harvest, the problem is with the lack of the harvesters.

Illustration: A little boy was asked to go somewhere by his dad. His little boy looked at him and said, 'I ain't going.' Well, his dad did not like that kind of language, and he said, 'Son, you're not supposed to use the word 'ain't.' That is not proper English."

He then proceeded to give his son an English lesson.

He said, "Now listen carefully, first person singular - I am not going; second person singular - you are not going; third person singular - he is not going; first person plural - we are not going; second person plural - you are not going; third person plural - they are not going."

He said, 'Now son, do you understand?' His son said, 'Yes sir, ***it looks like ain't nobody going.***'

STORY: I read a story of a military patrol that was patrolling enemy territory. They were tense, and suddenly out of the darkness of the night there was a blinding flash, and the point man was mortally wounded. While the sergeant screamed for the unit to take cover, a young recruit plunged ahead to the dying man. He too was wounded. In extreme pain, he dragged his now dead friend back to the unit and collapsed. Above the roar of the battle the sergeant yelled at the young recruit, "Why did you go get yourself shot for a dead man?"

The recruit said, '***Sergeant, I had to hear him say, 'I knew you would come.'***

It does not matter which city you look at or what town you visit, the numbers are pretty much the same, 75 to 80 percent of people have no church affiliation. Most of them never attend church, they are unchurched. Most of these people have never been invited to church, nor do they know what takes place within those churches.

STORY: The harvest is so vast. The needs are so overwhelming. What can I do? I am reminded of the old man, walking the beach at dawn, who noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up with the youth, he asked what he was doing. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun.

"But the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish," countered the old man. "What you're doing will hardly make a difference?" The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "***It makes a difference to this one,***" he said.

If Jesus is "The Lord of the Harvest" that means that He is concerned about

harvesting. He is not willing that any should perish, but all come to faith in Him and He urges us to pray and make this our priority.

The prayer that we pray is simple, we are to pray that the Lord will send forth laborers into "his" harvest. I wonder who those harvesters might be? It's us.

The only hands that the Lord has are your hands and the only feet that the Lord has are your feet, will you go, why won't you go? If you don't go to your family, who will go to them? Neighbors? Coworkers? Classmates? Teammates?

STORY: I Could Have Done More

In the movie, Schindler's List, one of the most moving scenes is near the end of the three-hour drama. Oscar Schindler had invested his energy and his fortune in saving the lives of hundreds of Jews who would have otherwise been killed in Hitler's holocaust. Because the war is at its end, the Jews he saved will become free men and women, while Schindler will become a fugitive. He walks to his car with his Jewish friend.

He looks at his watch and begins to cry. He knows if he had sold it he could have saved another life. He looks at his car and knows that he could have exchanged it for additional lives. He says to his friend, "I could have done more."

I could have done more. Oscar Schindler knew he could have done more to save Jews from perishing in the death camps. **You and I can do more to bring in the harvest and save people from perishing in hell.**

When you see what Jesus saw: people who are hurting, helpless, and hopeless, you will be moved with compassion and feel what Jesus felt, you will love who Jesus loved, you will pray as Jesus taught us to pray, and you will go as Jesus went, sowing and reaping, and the harvest will be great.