

Matthew 9:35-38

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[0 : 00] Amen. You know, we're going to begin by looking at verses 37 and 38.! Before the sermon tonight, we'll look at these two verses.

And I want us to think about these three things. Number one, the harvest is plentiful. Number two, the laborers are few.

And number three, God sends out laborers as we pray. Number one, the harvest is plentiful. The first point is this.

There is a harvest. There are the lost to be brought into God's storehouse. And this is a plentiful harvest. Jesus talks about this same plentiful harvest over in John chapter 4, verse 35.

He says, do not say there are yet four months. Then comes the harvest. Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest. There is a harvest.

[1 : 23] It's a plentiful harvest. There are people who are ready to believe. Ready to receive the Lord Jesus. And Jesus said, I want you to see it. I want you to see the harvest.

You know, I believe this harvest that God has that he desires to bring in, the harvest that Jesus is talking about here, it's not just the lost in general.

It's not those who might potentially be saved if they believe. I believe this harvest. I believe this harvest, the loss that God desires to bring in, are the loss that God has chosen for salvation.

Those who will believe at the preaching of the gospel. You know, Jesus changes the metaphor for talking about this harvest over in John 10, verse 16.

He's been talking about the harvest to be brought in. In John 10, verse 16, he talks about a flock of sheep to be brought into the fold. This is Jesus' words in John 10, verse 16.

[2 : 24] And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.

So there will be one flock and one shepherd. There is a flock of sheep. There is a harvest that will believe, that will listen to the voice of Jesus upon the preaching of God's word.

Brothers and sisters, let me tell you. As we engage in the work of God, preaching the gospel, sharing the gospel. As we, as this church, engage in God's word, sharing the gospel, telling others about the Lord Jesus.

What is our confidence? Our confidence is that there is a harvest. There are those God has chosen. There are those who are his elect. There are those who, as they hear God's word, will believe and be brought into God's kingdom.

Let me tell you, that is our great confidence. As we preach the gospels on Sunday. As we teach children on Thursday nights in youth clubs.

[3 : 43] As we have the women's English language Bible class on Wednesdays. As we have moms and tots, all of the different, on Tuesdays, the evening lunchtime talks.

All of these different things. What is our confidence as we do this? As we reach out to people? As we share the gospel with them? Our confidence is there is a harvest. And God is bringing it in.

There are those that God will bring in. There is a harvest. I want to read you a verse from Revelation chapter 7 earlier tonight. Stuart read from Revelation chapter 5.

And there are two great passages here that give us a window of the worship that will one day be in heaven. Let me read you the Revelation chapter 7 version of it.

This is Revelation chapter 7 verse 9. After thus I looked and behold a great multitude that no one can number. From every nation and tribe and people and languages.

[4 : 46] Standing before the throne and before the Lamb. Clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. Crying out with a loud voice. Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

two things Jesus says there's a great harvest what does it say right here there is a great multitude of people who will be saved second thing it says right here what do you notice from this verse what just hits you right in the face as you think about this harvest as you think about this great multitude of people that God will bring into his kingdom it's multi-ethnic it's multicultural it's multilingual you know isn't it interesting ethnic distinctions national distinctions seem to continue through eternity you know what I believe is that every ethnicity when they become a Christian have a unique way of glorifying God have something unique to say about God and what does this seem to be teaching that God is so great he is so wonderful he is so majestic that it will take all of the nations and all of their diversity and all of their differences together as one around the throne for all eternity to glorify God as he ought to be glorified let me tell you again this is great confidence for us in ministry this is our goal in ministry is this verse not the reason why we do what we do why do we do what we do here in this church to reach out to other people with the gospel it's that this verse would one day be a reality but not only is it our goal in what we do it's also our encouragement in what we do brothers and sisters this will be one day this is our great confidence as we engage in the work that God has called us to preach the gospel and to share the gospel first point there is a harvest secondly Jesus says here the labors are few first thing I want to want to mention is what is God's way of bringing in that harvest it is through a labor what is a labor a labor is someone that God sends and preaches the gospel this is how God brings in his harvest those who will go and those who will preach the gospel those who will share the gospel that others may hear it classic passage about this Romans 10 14 and 15 how then will they call on him in whom they've not believed and how are they to believe in him of whom they've never heard and how are they to hear without someone preaching and how are they to preach unless they are sent as it is written how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news for this harvest to be brought in people must hear the gospel and believe it what does that require it requires someone to be sent someone to preach it requires a labor this is God's way but what I want you to notice here is there's a problem and there is a problem from a human perspective

Jesus presents a problem but notice also that Jesus gives the answer to the problem and what is the problem here Jesus has said there's a big harvest but there's not enough laborers there's not enough people to share the gospel and to preach the gospel to bring this harvest in so Jesus gives the problem but notice that he also gives the answer to this problem you know Jesus has just said there's a political harvest there's not enough laborers what would you think would be the answer that Jesus would give to this problem you would think that the answer with Jesus the obvious answer would be be a laborer go as a laborer go and preach the gospel is that what Jesus said it is not what Jesus said and this brings us to our third point God sends out laborers as we pray you know in light of the lack of laborers what did Jesus say to do look at verse 38 he said pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest the point I want to make to you is this the bringing in of this harvest it is the work of laborers it is the work of those who will go it is the work of those who will preach who will share the gospel but it is equally the work of those who will pray you know very often from a human perspective we look at we look at people who have become

Christians and we think this is because someone preached the gospel and sometimes we have a slightly more spiritual view we think well God use these people who preach the gospel but you know what that leaves out of the picture it leaves those who pray let me tell you this great work of bringing in the gospel it is equally the work of those who preach and share the gospel and do evangelism and those who pray where does the bringing in of this harvest begin does it begin with those who will go does it begin with those who will preach no it begins with those who will pray for this kind of harvest there's two kinds of labors those who will go those who will preach those who will do evangelism and those who will pray they're partners they work together this is

[11:08] God's way you know I am thankful to be in the church where prayer is emphasized one of the things I appreciate about Paul and Claire Levy is very simply their emphasis on prayer have we seen fruit in this church have we seen people come to know the Lord we have have we seen blessing in this church yes we have where does it begin it begins when people pray you know it's easy for us to think well I'm just not gifted at evangelism I'm just not gifted at standing at a book table and meeting people on the streets and talking to them about Jesus it's easy to think I'm not gifted to stand behind the pulpit and to preach the gospel maybe I'm not gifted at personal evangelism it's easy to think I just don't have a role to play what I do it's just not that important not according to this the bringing of the end of the harvest starts with people who pray labors are sent

forth they are raised up by God as people pray they are sustained by those who pray they are made effective by those who pray they are made fruitful by those who pray brothers and sisters it is a partnership in the gospel work three points harvest is plentiful labors a few

God sends out labors as we pray pretty good sermon huh you know these are wonderful fruits and these are things that we need to remind ourselves of again and again application there is a harvest let's pray let's be willing to go this is what we're supposed to do now let's just do it now that brings us to what I really want to talk to you about tonight I tell you the older I get as a Christian I'm not so much concerned about what I should do about knowing about what I'm supposed to do you know what my concern is my concern is how do I get the heart to do it how do I get the motivation to do it how am I moved to do what I should do and that's really what I want to talk about tonight

I want to spend the rest of the sermon looking at verse 36 I think there's something in verse 36 something we can extract from that verse that tells us how do we get a heart for the lost how do we get a heart to pray for the lost how do we get concerned for the lost how do we get a heart to preach and to pray to bring in this harvest so look again with me at verse 36 when he saw the crowds he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd Jesus is of course he's our great example he's our great example in everything and here he is our great example for us in compassion for the lost let me point out one thing to you there's a connection here in verse 36 it said when he saw the crowds he had compassion there's a connection between

Jesus seeing and having compassion and that's not just in this verse we find that three other places in the gospels here the other three Matthew 14 14 he went ashore he saw a great crowd he had compassion on them and he healed their sick Mark 6 34 and when he went ashore and saw a great crowd he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them many things Luke 7 13 this is Jesus words to the widow of Nain after her only son had just died and when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her and said to her do not wait Jesus saw he had compassion and he talked Jesus saw he had compassion and he healed Jesus saw he had compassion and he fed people what was it specifically about these people that elicited the compassion of Jesus Jesus here uses a sheep metaphor he describes their condition in terms of being a sheep he says these people were like sheep and what did he see as he looked at these people that elicited his compassion verse 36 he says they were harassed literally having torn skin these are sheep that had been cut up by rocks and brambles and predators cut up beaten up torn up he says also about these people in verse 36 they were helpless they were thrown down they were prone they were knocked down and they were so weak they could not get up and he says something else very sad why would they this way why could they not get up he says also they were without shepherds!

There was no one to help them! You see what this is this is imagery this is a metaphor for their spiritual condition we've already made the connection between Jesus seeing and having compassion but how did Jesus see he didn't just see their external circumstances Jesus eyes look deeper than their external circumstances he looked into their hearts Jesus was seeing into their hearts and into the spiritual condition of their hearts spiritually where were these people they were harassed they were cut up beat up torn up by sin and guilt and religion there is nothing that beats a person up and cuts a person up and tears them up like religion religions of works how good you have to be can you ever please this God oppressive religions of works they cut people up they beat them up they tear them up so these people were harassed by sin guilt and religion it says also he says that they are helpless here in other words these people were lost and yet they were helpless they had no power to do anything about their lost condition they owed a sin debt that they could never pay they were blind to their sin and they were blind to the grace of

[18 : 15] God and to the mercy of God and they were blind to God Savior and spiritually they without a shepherd didn't these people have religious leaders weren't there the scribes and the Pharisees the religious teachers of Jesus day weren't they the shepherds for these people yes they were the shepherds but they were not true shepherds they were false shepherds they knew nothing of the grace and mercy of God instead they just laid more and more heavy burdens upon the backs of these people these people were like sheep without a shepherd they were needy they were blind they were helpless and what was Jesus response he had compassion on them you know something I love the word here for Jesus compassion the image in this word compassion this is not the compassion that you have in your heart this is the compassion that you have in your stomach in

your guts in your viscera have you ever heard anyone say well

I had this gut feeling in other words this compassion that Jesus had is something that he felt deep in the idea here is that this is not a superficial compassion this is something that is deeply felt the idea here is that Jesus saw their spiritual condition he saw their spiritual pain and he felt it and he felt it down deep you know the C translates it correctly it said he has compassion but I like to paraphrase from the message it's not exactly a literal translation but I think it brings the power home the message says Jesus saw these people he saw their condition and it broke his heart when I ask you tonight is this your heart of response to the loss do you see the lost life Jesus saw them do you see people in their lostness in their condemnation in their sin is just the way you respond do you feel their pain where does this kind of heart come from now let me give you the application for this whole sermon there's only one point if you only remember one thing here it is right here let me give it to you we get compassion for the lost not so much by focusing on our own hearts and our lack of compassion for the lost we get compassion for the lost not so much by focusing on the lost and their plight we get compassion for the lost rather by focusing on

Jesus and his compassion for us in our lostness I want to ask you tonight have you ever thought about your lostness do you remember what it was like before you knew the Lord Jesus Christ have you ever thought where you would be if Jesus had not come where would you be apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart opening your eyes to God and his grace and mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ you know this description of these people here these people who are harassed cut up beat up torn by sin guilt and religion people who are helpless who had no power to help themselves or do anything about it this is a picture of us apart from

Christ we are no different from these people we owe the sin death that we could never pay one day there was a time when we were blind to our sin and blind to a savior and blind to the grace of God! God you and his heart was broken and his heart was filled with compassion for you you know I want to suggest that this description of Jesus compassion in verse 36 I believe it's not only a picture of the compassion of Jesus for these specific people in this specific incidence I believe this is a picture of the heart of Jesus and the compassion of Jesus for all the people of God. If you know the Lord Jesus, if you're a Christian, Jesus has looked at you in this way.

[23 : 36] You say, when did Jesus look at me in this way? I'll tell you when. Before the foundation of the world, before any of us ever existed, Jesus looked at you and me and all the people of God in this way. In that great council in eternity past, in the council of redemption, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and God the Father gave his Son a people who would be his bride. And I believe the Son looked down the corridors of time at a people yet unformed, a people yet uncreated, and I believe he saw me and I believe he saw you and I believe he saw all the people of God and I believe that he saw us personally and he saw us in our sin, in our alienation from God, in our guilt, in our condemnation, justly deserving the wrath of God, eternally lost, hell bound. And Jesus' heart was moved with compassion when he saw our lostness. When he saw our lostness, when he saw the pain of our lostness, his heart was moved with compassion.

You know, worst of all, you know what the worst thing? I think the worst thing when Jesus looked at us in our lostness, it was our helplessness. In our lostness, there was absolutely nothing that we on our own could do about it to change it. And when Jesus looked at us and he saw our lostness and he saw our helplessness, his heart was broken. And Jesus said, I will go. I will die. I will save. Ephesians 5.25, Christ loved the church and gave himself forth. Romans 5.6, while we were still weep, Christ died for the ungodly. Jesus gave himself in time because he loved us in our sin, but I believe that Jesus loved us in our sin before we ever were in eternity past. He chose to love a sinful people because his heart was moved with compassion for our lostness. It was moved with compassion because of our helplessness. You know something? If you don't have compassion for the lost, I believe it's because you've never felt the compassion of Jesus for you in your lostness. Or put another way, how does the lostness of people break our hearts? It's to see the heart of Jesus broken for our lostness. I'll tell you where I am. I don't have the compassion for the loss that I should have. I don't have the compassion for the loss that I want to have.

But I know where I want to be. And I believe I know how to get there. You know, I believe that two things need to come together in our hearts for you and I to have compassion for the lost. And one of them is our lostness. The realization of our lostness apart from Christ. Where we would be apart from him? Where we would be if he didn't come?

Where would we be apart from the work of the Holy Spirit? You know, that's one thing. A realization of our lostness apart from Christ. But coupled with that, coming together with that, the heart of compassion for Jesus, for his people, and for you in me. Brothers and sisters, let me tell you, in eternity past, Jesus had compassion on you.

[27 : 25] In eternity past, Jesus' heart was broken for you and your lostness. And he came for you. And let me tell you, when you meditate on that, when you meditate on your lostness, and when you meditate on the compassion and love of the heart of Jesus, what does it do? Those two things together, it's like nitro and glyphorin.

It's explosive. It's powerful. And what happens? What's the byproduct of that in our lives? We have compassion for the lost. Those two things come together in our hearts, and we will see the harvest. Those two things come together in our hearts. We will pray for laborers. Those two things come together in our hearts, and we will go as God calls.

Let me, like, make just one other application in closing. It's not really related to the passage here.

You know, we've talked about the compassion of Jesus when he died on the cross for our sins.

We've talked about the compassion of Jesus for the lost. In eternity past, when he looked upon us and saw our need. Brothers and sisters, if Jesus had compassion, if his heart was broken because of our suffering, in eternity past, when he saw us as sinners, when he died on the cross for sinners, what do you think his heart of compassion for you today is like?

[28 : 53] Now that you're God's child. Now that your sins are forgiven. Now that you're part of the family of God. Do you think the compassion of Jesus for you is any different? Let me tell you, as I meditated on this, I realized how woefully we underestimate the compassion of Jesus' heart for you and me every day.

Jesus' heart was broken for us when we were sinners. What is it today? It is still broken for us when we suffer.

He is our great high priest. He is a compassionate high priest. He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. You know, our temptation is to think, nobody knows, nobody understands.

Oh, brothers and sisters, we have a compassionate high priest. And he is touched with everything that touches you.

Basically, the application of this sermon is that we are changed by the holy. How do we become like the Lord Jesus? How do we become compassionate like him? It's not by looking at our heart and trying to make it compassionate.

[30 : 03] It's not by looking at the lost and even looking at their plight. It's looking at Jesus and focusing on him and his wonderful compassion for us. And somehow, as we do that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that changes us.

When you look at him, you become like him. Let's bow together in prayer.