

# Matthew 9:35-10:10

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] And we're going back into Matthew's Gospel this morning. And so before the summertime, if! you can remember that we reached Matthew chapter 9 and verse 34. And we're going to pick up! that this morning from verse 35 to chapter 10 and verse 15. It's a Thursday morning. You've got to be up early for a meeting in the city. But you've slept in late. So you gobble breakfast down. You run to the bus stop. And it's absolutely packed because it's rush hour. There's a real scrum. As the doors open, you manage to get on to the E1. You get to Ealing Broadway and it's no better. You're faced with that great conundrum. Do you go Heathrow Connect to Paddington?

Oh, it's not called that anymore, is it? Or do you go Central Line? And so you go for the train to Paddington. You manage to somehow miraculously get a seat. But there's people standing in your face. There's a man with a satchel who every time he turns around hits you in the chops. And when you get to Paddington, you go to the underground and there's that horrific moment where you are waiting to go through the ticket barrier and nobody can get out. And they've managed to shut the food station from any more people getting in. And so you're trapped there. Just standing there. In typical British fashion. You go on the tube and there's a man next to you who is far too close with personal hygiene issues. If you're meeting, it's okay. It's a normal prostrating meeting. But then you have to go to see your friends in Reading later that evening. You go to Paddington and it's six o'clock and yet there are a group of men who are in their late twenties who've been drinking since lunchtime. There's games and songs. You finally make it back to Elyle and Broadway about 9.30 at night. You feel very exhausted. And as you get out of the tube station, there are people already there staggering a little bit worse for wear. The atmosphere is a bit aggressive. You feel unsafe. You get home. You kick off your shoes. You lie on the sofa. There's a phone call from your friend. He tells you he's got some really sad news that his marriage is breaking up. And that he's the one that had the affair. It's his own fault. You cannot believe that he's been so stupid.

So you flick on the telly. The news is on. There's a woman who's been neglecting her children and yet she's been claiming benefits of £45,000 per year. On days like that, if you had one word to describe how you feel towards other people, what would that word be?

Just think of that one word. What would that one word be? How you feel towards other people? Have you got that word? Jesus says, now is the time for compassion. Compassion. Now is the time for compassion because they are like sheep without a shepherd. Verse 35 is a drum that Matthew keeps on beating. He says that 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. And Jesus is preaching the kingdom. He is saying God's long promised king has come. And in God's long promised kingdom, everything was going to be restored how it was meant to be. And so there will be no more tears and no more suffering. And Jesus goes around and he heals every disease. He is saying God's long promised kingdom has come and I am God's long promised king.

[ 4 : 1 1 ] And I have power and authority to fix a broken world. Do you see what I'm doing? Do you see who I am? So chapter 8 and 9 if you remember them, they just zoom in, don't they, on a couple of days, two or three days in Jesus' ministry.

And we see what was it like? What is the new kingdom going to be like? Well he forgives the man his sins. He has a meal with a tax collector. He has a debate with a Pharisee. He raises a dead girl. He heals a sick woman. He gives sight to a woman that was blind. He sets someone free from the grip of evil. He goes around fixing broken lives. And verse 35 is telling us as we read that, this is just a sample of what Jesus did everywhere.

Do you see what it says? Wherever he went. And he went through, verse 35, all the cities and all the villages. Get your head around that. According to Josephus, the first century Jewish historian,

there are about 204 towns and villages.

In the region. And the smallest of those towns and villages had 15,000 people living in them. So imagine what it takes to go around 204 towns and villages, day after day, packed with the sort of things we read in chapter 8 and 9.

[ 5 : 32 ] Everywhere he went, crowds swarmed around him. They pushed and they jostled him. Everyone wanted something from him. Everyone had a question for him to answer. A sickness to be dealt with.

He was dealing with people the whole time. Crowds the whole time. Religious teachers. Local rulers. Little children. Tax collectors. Prostitutes. People who no one else would even touch. And as we've seen, Jesus takes the time.

He takes the time to speak to them personally. He looks them in the eye. He listens to their story. And in between people seeing people like that, he would stand up and he'd preach.

For hours at a time. And so it's no wonder, is it, that we read of him feeling so tired that he falls asleep in the back of a boat. And at the end of chapter 8, he says, he had nowhere to lay his head. Just kept down wherever he could. And so many times, he was just nodding off and then somebody else was at the door wanting to see him. It was a mystery, non-stop, of people, people, people.

[ 6 : 41 ] Loading him down with sorrows. Casting their burdens before him. Crying out for help. Now how does that feel? How does he feel about all these people?

Well, if it was us, if it was me, I'd have enough of them. But look how he feels in verse 36. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them. Because they were harassed and helpless like sheep.

Without a shepherd. He had compassion on them. It's actually a really strong word. He is moved in the inner core. It's like his guts are wrenched by them.

Why? Well, it tells us because they were harassed and helpless. Literally flayed and torn to pieces. They were helpless. Whipped from all sides.

They don't know where the next blow is coming from. There's nothing that they can do to protect themselves. Why? Well, because they are like sheep without a shepherd. And that is a phrase that's really rich in Old Testament history.

[ 7 : 51 ] Sheep without a shepherd. In the Old Testament, the Lord described his people as his sheep. And he appoints leaders to be their shepherd. To care for them.

We don't see today, do we, why the role of shepherds is so important. Most sheep, when we're driving along the motorway, there's sheep on the hillside, aren't there?

But there's never a shepherd. I asked the children in school, have any of them seen a shepherd?

And none of them have. None of them had seen a shepherd. There's not much sign of shepherds in London. Why? Well, not in London, but in England.

Because, isn't it, it's a rainy country. As I think we're probably experiencing just on the left. It's a rainy country. And so there's loads of grass.

There's loads of green grass. You don't have to hunt for grass. You just let the sheep in the field and let them go. You probably don't have wolves in this country. And so you don't need a shepherd to fight off the wolves.

[ 8 : 52 ] But if you were in the Middle East, your whole life depended on the shepherd leading you to green pastures. And water. Sheep in the middle of those long, hot summers.

When water was hard to find. And along the way, you'd cross rocky terrain. And if you got lost, if you got caught in a thicket, your shepherd would come and would rescue you. And if wolves came, your shepherd would stay and protect you.

Or would he run away and leave you? God's people were like sheep without a shepherd. And they were ripped to pieces. They were hurting. They were desperately lost. And not just because it was their own stupid fault.

Not just because they kept getting caught up in the thicket. But because their shepherds, the very people that were supposed to look after them, weren't looking after them. And the religious leaders didn't show them the way to go.

And so when Jesus looks at the grim-faced crowds barging their way through Oxford Street. Or when he sees the supporters going into Wembley Stadium. Or clubbers worse for wear on a Saturday night.

[ 9 : 56 ] Or gangs who fight with knives. His first emotion is not daily male outrage. In his compassion.

He doesn't say it's their own stupid fault. Leave them to it. They've been badly let down. Where are the shepherds?

Where are the fathers? Where are the church leaders? The political leaders? Who has cared for them? Who has shown them the way to go? They've been left to the wolves.

But back in the Old Testament, the Lord made a promise, didn't he? He made a promise that he would come. And that he would come and be the shepherd of his sheep. Prophet Ezekiel, there's a beautiful thing.

He says, I will come and I will gather up my lost. And I will bind up the injured. And I will strengthen the weak. And I will lead them to good pasture. And I will come and I will take care of my sheep.

[ 10 : 56 ] And that is what he promises. And that is exactly what Jesus is doing in Matthew 8 and 9. That's why he goes tirelessly from one town to the next town.

And he says, I'm here. I've come for you. It's alright. I've come to bind up your wounds. It seems to me that we often talk about what Jesus has achieved for us.

And the salvation he has won for us. And it is mind-blowing. But what has really struck me in these chapters in Matthew is the window that we get into his heart.

It's not just what he's done, as wonderful as that is, but what he's like. And so maybe this morning you think of yourself as someone in the crowd.

Someone whose life has been torn to pieces. And you feel rather lost. And you don't know which way to turn. And you maybe think that Jesus is going to be outraged at you.

[ 12 : 01 ] And you think that he will look down his nose at you. And he'll have no time for you. No, look at what it's like. Look at what he's like. He has compassion on you.

He's saying to you this morning, I am the shepherd you need. I've come to take care of you. And the movement in this passage, and the movement in Matthew's Gospel as a whole, Matthew shows us Jesus' mission, and then he shows us that Jesus' mission continues through his followers.

So when we think about the crowds in Ealing, when we think of the people closer to home, when we think of our boss who we work with, who's so difficult, when we think of that mum at the school gate, who's just always talking about herself, when we think about our neighbour who is so grumpy, when we think of that relative who is always stirring up trouble in our family, if we're following Jesus, we will feel as Jesus feels.

And not disdain, but compassion for these people. We are so quick to think, don't we? I am so quick to think, it is their own stupid fault.

And we'll leave it at that. And Jesus just reminds us that they are lost because they don't have a shepherd. Don't think of them as people that just need a good telling off.

[ 13 : 35 ] Think of them as people who need a good shepherd, who needs Jesus desperately. It is a time for compassion. Secondly, it's a time for prayer.

That's verse 37. A time for prayer. Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.

Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. He could have said, couldn't he, there's thousands and thousands of lost sheep who need a shepherd to round them up.

And who is going to go after them? That would have worked, wouldn't it? But he changes the image. He changes the image from sheep to crops. And what he's saying is this, the crops are ripe. There is a massive harvest out there that needs to be gathered in. And the Old Testament looked forward to the day when the Lord would gather his people into his kingdom. And Jesus is saying, the time has come.

[ 14 : 39 ] And it's not just a handful of religious types who need bringing into God's barn, as it were. There are millions and millions of people who need to be gathered into the harvest of God. And the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

In other words, there are not many people to go out and gather them in. And I think we don't believe Jesus. Unless we...

Because when we look at our city, and when we look at the crowds going into the rugby, and when we look at the kids in the playground of our schools, and when we get on the tube in the morning, and there's just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people, we don't think of them as ripe and

ready for harvest.

To be gathered in. What do we think of them as? We think of them as not interested. They're not really interested in Jesus. We look to China, or we hear about China, and we hear about millions of people becoming Christians.

We look at the revivals in Africa or South America. And maybe we think the harvest is plentiful there, but it's not plentiful here. Not in London.

[15:56] When we think of our city, we think of it often as a spiritual desert. We think maybe there's not much call for Christian workers around these parts. There's no harvest to bring in.

But the image of harvest is not whether people feel ripe or not. Jesus says they are like ripe crops. As a matter of fact, that is what they are like.

Because the point about ripe crops is that you can't leave ripe crops out of the field, can you? You need to go and gather them into the barn before they perish.

And Jesus is saying there are millions and millions of people out there, and you just can't leave them out there. You need to go and gather them into the kingdom of God. But there are not many workers to get them.

Verse 38. Not verse 38, verse 37. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send labourers out into his field.

[16:59] And we see how Jesus' followers get involved in Jesus' mission. And it's very beautiful. He doesn't say, he doesn't say, the harvest is ripe, the harvest is plentiful, the workers are few, there's loads to do, so it's all down to you.

Go on, get out there, good luck. We're not told, are we, just to get on with it. The workers are few, so, ask the Lord of the harvest.

The first thing to note is just that, is that he is the Lord of the harvest. It is God's harvest. He is in charge of the whole operation.

But amazingly, and wonderfully, God gets us involved in his plans. And getting involved starts when we pray. When we pray.

I had a discussion this week about prison ministry, about us going into Wormwood Scrubs. And I spoke to somebody from Daylight Prison Ministries, a brilliant organisation. And he says, it's quite difficult to get in, but there may be opportunities next year.

[18:12] And he said to me, it may seem a little thing, but pray for opportunities in prison ministries. He said, because we've noticed that when we pray for opportunities, the Lord gives them.

So simple, isn't it? Lord, please send workers into the harvest field to bring people into your kingdom. I hope that as we move into a new building, we will see people coming to the church. As elders, we are praying and seeking the Lord as well about whether we can plant another congregation in a kind of Axbridge area. But get this from this passage, the first thing we've got to do is pray.

To pray that God would raise up people in our church family and in the Axbridge area who will bring in the harvest. I love the story of St. Helens Bishopsgate in the city.

Most of you will know it as a very, very large church. But it all started when a group of businessmen in the early 60s began to meet to pray. There were about seven or eight of them.

[19:20] They wanted to reach the city so they prayed. And they asked then a very young man called Dick Lucas to come and give a series of talks in a church building. It wasn't being used. The talks went down well.

They ran for two months. And then a post came up in a church for the vicar of a church called St. Helens and they prayed that he would be appointed. It was a long shot. Dick Lucas was a rank outsider but he was appointed.

And like every great work of God it was traceable back to people praying. Praying, Lord, we long for people to be brought into your kingdom but the Lord of the harvest is huge and there's not many of us and so please send more workers because without workers we'll never get the harvest in.

And so we tend to look at London and think there's not much of a crop to be brought in. We're discouraged. We think people are not interested.

There's nothing to harvest. But Jesus says no, there is plenty to be harvested. The harvest is plentiful. The reason why not much has been brought into the barns is there aren't enough workers going out and bringing them in.

[ 20 : 35 ] Fifty years ago China didn't look ripe to this. All the missionaries have been kicked out. looked like the end that God's people prayed.

And the Lord has raised up workers to bring in the harvest and if we would follow Jesus we must have a heart like Jesus. And Jesus longs for people to be brought into his kingdom. So the first move will be to pray for more workers.

More workers in our schools, more workers in our offices, more workers in our streets, more workers in our hospitals, more workers in our prisons. Pray that the Lord would raise up workers who are bold enough to say the time has come.

And when I say workers, don't think full time Christian ministry. Don't think that. What is these workers that he's talking about? They are workers who are bold enough to say the time has come, God's King is here, come into the kingdom.

And we can pray with confidence, can't we, this morning? We don't have to twist the Lord's arm on this, it's a prayer the Lord is longing to answer because he is the Lord of the harvest and it is his harvest.

[ 21 : 44 ] So, let's be people who want to be part of what God is doing. Which means when we look at our family or our school friends or our city or the places we work in, we are going to pray, Lord send more workers and it's a prayer that he longs to answer.

Pray it and watch how he answers it because he will. And of course people who pray for more workers to be sent often end up being sent themselves. Because where our prayers go our hearts follow.

And where our hearts go so often do our hands and our heads and our feet. Which leads me to the third point, time for compassion, time for prayer, and then thirdly time for evangelism.

Time for evangelism. Let me just clarify what I think that is. Evangelism is telling other people about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah.

And it may be that you're very suspicious about this. It may be that you're very nervous of this tell all the world kind of thing. Why do Christians think that they need to go imposing their views on everyone else?

[ 23 : 03 ] Or you think, well I do follow Jesus but it just wouldn't occur to me to tell someone else to come into the kingdom. It just seems so presumptuous and so arrogant. Well in this next little bit we begin to see the logic of why everyone needs to know.

There's a lot in verses 1-15 of chapter 10. I'm going to try and steer the main road through it. And Jesus is describing the specific mission that he sent his 12 disciples on.

And it's a mission to Jewish people. So if you look at verse 6 it says and tell the lost sheep of Israel. Go tell them that the king that they've been waiting for has come.

And in this 17 onwards really that is the longer term mission to the non-Jews to the Gentiles to the rest of the world. That's going to be carried out not just by the 12 but by Christians throughout all the ages.

So if you want verses 1-16 lay a foundation and verse 17 from verse 17 almost what we'll see is the fact that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and that is the reason the whole world needs to know.

[ 24 : 16 ] So let's look at verses 1-16. They underline why he's the Jewish Messiah. He's been talking to his disciples in general and then in chapter 12 chapter 10 verse 1 he calls the 12 disciples.

And again the Old Testament looked forward didn't it? It looked forward to the time when the scattered people would be made truly gods again. And belong to Jesus.

Now you remember Israel was founded wasn't it? On 12 tribes. And Jesus is reforming the people of God here. He is reforming people of God not on the 12 tribes but on his 12 disciples.

And he's saying do you want to be part of the people of God? Well you've got to follow me. And the Lord is gathering up in this passage his scattered people. He's gathering them all together and he's gathering them around me himself.

And Jesus says go tell the lost sheep of Israel I come. And the message that you're to go with is verse 7. It is this the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It's here. It's exactly the same message that he's been preaching.

[ 25 : 28 ] And the miracles that he gives them power and authority to perform well that's in verse 8 isn't it? For they are to heal sick raise the dead cleanse the lepers cast out demons. It's exactly the same miracles he's been performing.

In other words they are going to Jewish people who are waiting for the signs of the Messiah. The King. They've been waiting for Jesus to come and Jesus says go show them the signs that I've come.

And then he says verse 9 Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts. No bag for your journey or tunics or sandals or staff.

For the labourer deserves his food. And whatever the town or village you enter find out who is worthy in it. Stay there until you depart.

He's partly saying that don't pack a spare coat. Basically the message. It's really urgent. Partly he's underlining the message that you take to these people.

[ 26 : 29 ] It is one that they should welcome. You are going to them. It is a message that they should welcome with open arms. They've been waiting for this good news for hundreds and thousands of years and the worker is worth their keeps.

In other words when you tell them when you travel to the villages and you tell them that I have come they should invite you in. They should be so glad that you took the trouble to tell them this good news. They'll be so grateful they'll look after you and they'll see you right for the next leg on the journey.

But not everyone will be like that. There'll be two reactions. So some will receive you and some will reject you. Look at verse 11. And whatever town you enter find out who's worthy and stay there until you depart.

And as you enter the house greet it and if the house is worthy let your peace come upon it and if it's not worthy let your peace return from it. And if anyone will not receive you'll listen to your words shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.

So the people that will receive you, peace be upon them, the Messiah has come. You receive them because that means they've been restored to God. You've been brought to this eternal kingdom.

[ 27 : 36 ] It's eternal peace but for those who reject you, you shake the dust off your feet. And that's a really significant Jewish thing to do. When you shook off the dust of your feet you were saying these people they are no longer part of why people Israel.

They are no longer part of God's people and for them, verse 15, there is a sober warning of judgment. People often say, don't they, Jesus claimed to be nothing but a good teacher.

And when people say that I wonder what gospel they'd be reading. Do you see what he's doing there? He's saying tell Israel I am here. The Messiah has come. And those who accept me, well they can be part of God's people.

And those who reject me, well they cannot be part of God's people. And they are right for judgment. Do you see the extraordinary thing he's saying? Where you stand with God hinges completely on how you receive me.

And that's not the sort of thing good teachers say. And if we see verses 1 to 16 as a kind of model for mission trips or how we go about evangelism, I think we're missing what Matthew is wanting us to see.

[ 28 : 46 ] Because apart from anything else, it's not a very good model for mission. Jesus tells us not to go to the Gentiles. By the end of the chapter, and by the end of Matthew's gospel, he's telling us to go to the whole world.

He tells them here, don't take stuff for the journey. But elsewhere, Jesus does say take stuff for the journey. By the time Paul is ministering, he doesn't shake the dust off his feet whenever people reject The message.

He stays and he perseveres. Because they've got to know. It's not a model for mission. It's a very specific mission to the lost people of Israel. But the reason Matthew includes it, he's saying to you and I, do you see who Jesus is?

Do you see who Jesus is? He is the Messiah. He wanted Israel to know that he had come for them. It's not a model for mission, but it is the motivation for our mission.

God. The reason the Bible starts with Genesis and with creation is to show us that the God of the Bible is the creator of the whole world. In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth.

[ 29 : 53 ] The whole earth is the Lord's in the fullness thereof. He is the one true God of the whole world. And then the Bible is the account of the one true God's one true plan to gather people from all the nations to his kingdom.

And he says he's going to do it. And he will do it through a king. And he'll do it through a king who will come from Israel. And Jesus is saying he is the king of the Old Testament promise. But the king of the Old Testament promise for Israel wasn't just for the Jewish people. He was going to be God's king for all people, for all nations. And he was going to be given power and authority over the whole world.

So the fact that Jesus is the king that Israel has been waiting for means he's not just Israel. He's the climax of the one true God's one true plan for the whole world.

And he's come to gather up people of all nations into God's kingdom. And he's here for everyone. And so when you tell somebody that Jesus is God's king for you, and he is king of all kings and lord of lords, that it's not a controlling thing to do.

[ 31 : 12 ] It just flows out of who Jesus is. That if Jesus was just another religious teacher, then we might want our friends to know about him, or we might not.

But we wouldn't go on about him, would we? But if he is the king that the Old Testament was waiting for, then everyone needs to know about him. Because where we stand with God hinges on how we receive him.

It's a time for compassion. To think of the people we know and love, or even the people that we've got no time for. They are lost and they need the shepherd.

And it's a time for prayer. Our compassion will mean, won't it, longing for them to be brought into God's kingdom. That we look out of our city and we cry out, Lord, raise up workers to bring in the harvest.

And it's a time for urgent evangelism. Why are we doing what we're doing? Well, it's a chance to tell them about the shepherd, who cares?

[ 32 : 17 ] Now is the time. The Jewish Messiah has come. And that means everyone needs to know. Let's pray.