

Through Jesus' Eyes 8-29-04

Matthew 9:35-38 (NIV)

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on 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 workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Most of you know that chapter and verse numbering were only added to the translated texts in recent times. For hundreds of years the church did not have such divisions. It is very helpful to locate a passage, but it is sometimes confusing in the way it divides up topics. I would have put the chapter break at the beginning of our passage for today.

Matthew used his first four chapters to introduce Christ. In chapters 5 through 7 he told us of Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. In chapter 8 and 9 up to our text for today, he has told us of the miracles that confirm Jesus to be the promised Messiah. Those miracles were the validation that He had authority to define the Law. In the passage for today, Matthew gave us a summary of the chapters to follow, Jesus' outreach to Israel.

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. The next 15 chapters are an elaboration on this verse.

Verse 35 declares the threefold ministry of Jesus, teaching, preaching and healing. (Matthew 4:23) The Father sent the Son to go throughout the villages of Galilee to teach and preach and heal, all of which proclaimed the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:11) What is the difference between teaching and preaching? Teaching is to instruct. It often involves discussion. (Luke 4:15) Preaching is a proclamation. It is similar to a herald who proclaims the words of the one who is in authority. In this case, Jesus is declaring the very pronouncements of God. (Mark 1:38)

Healing is from the Greek word *therapeuo* from which we get our word *therapeutic*. We think of it as healing of a physical problem, but the most common use of the word simply meant to serve. As we have seen in the last two chapters, this often took the form of physical healing and deliverance from demonic power. (Luke 7:22)

We think of Jesus' ministry as going to the cross to die in our place. Certainly that was the key reason He was incarnated, but that could be included as the climax of His service to God and man. (Matthew 20:28) If we didn't have His teaching, we might receive salvation, but we certainly wouldn't know how to live. (John 15:10-15)

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Matthew follows his summary of Jesus' ministry by telling us the heart of Jesus' ministry, compassion. It is compassion that was aroused by the reality of man's

Commented [notes1]: ²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Matthew 4:23 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ¹¹ but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. Luke 9:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: ¹⁵ He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. Luke 4:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: ³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." Mark 1:38 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: ²² So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Luke 7:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. John 15:10-15 (NIV)

condition. As we go through the following chapters in the coming months, let us remember that the ministry of Jesus that we are studying comes out of a compassionate heart for man's condition.

He uses three terms to describe what Jesus saw. I think it is essential that we see the world in the same way if we are to have Jesus' heart of compassion in us, so let's look at each term. "Harassed", to understand this word, look at how it is used in Hebrews 12:3. *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* Here, the translation is to "lose heart" or the KJV says "faint in your mind". The reason for fainting is the opposition from sinful man. Anybody here relate to that? When people cheat you, abuse your generosity, lie to you, or take advantage of you, you grow weary and feel harassed. The expression is used when a bowstring is unstrung and becomes loose. We give up being useful and despair of making an effort. Anybody here feel harassed? Can you see that pain in others? That is what our Savior sees. Though He was harassed, He didn't focus on opposition to Him. He focused on His Father's heart for others.

The next term that expresses what Jesus saw is "helpless". It literally means thrown to the ground. We might say "thrown around". Other translators use these words, aimless, wandering, and cast aside.

Jesus then makes a simile for the condition both of these words describe, "...like sheep without a shepherd." Funny thing about sheep, they can't survive without human assistance. Perhaps that is why one of man's first occupations was herding sheep. (Genesis 4:2) They don't know where to go for pasture. They don't know how to defend themselves. They are harassed and helpless, taken advantage of at every turn.

That prompts the question by whom or what power? The answer is not man. The answer is by beast, by evil, evil in our own hearts and in the hearts of others. As Jesus looked out on humanity, His heart broke with compassion. If He looked out over this city today, He would have the same reaction. He'd see evil in the hearts of men taking advantage of one another. It drives us to self-destructive habits. Evil in the heart of man causes us to harass and harm one another and ourselves. (Jeremiah 17:9) Jesus endured this opposition from sinful men, but He knew that behind it was evil and their lack of a shepherd to guide them to truth.

In our Tuesday night Bible study we are learning about one of the enemy's greatest tools in the modern world, the philosophy of existentialism. It permeates our society. This philosophy says the world has no meaning. It rejects a personal Creator. (Psalms 14:1) It claims the world and life is the result of natural causes alone. Because this philosophy does not believe in the absolutes conveyed to us in the Bible, because it teaches that the Bible is the creation of man, it claims there is no reason or value in life. No wonder existentialists have no qualms about abortion. Existentialism leads us to a conclusion that right and wrong do not exist. The only truth that is relevant, they say, is the one you think is good for you. That leads man into the very condition that Jesus saw, harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. (Judges 17:6) The only guidance is their inner-self that is confused and uncertain. They may choose a guru that pretends to be enlightened, but what does that mean except that he

Commented [notes8]: ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.
Genesis 4:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: ⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: ¹ The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.
Psalms 14:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: ⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.
Judges 17:6 (KJV)

believes that he has found within himself some inner "truth" that gives him a sense of purpose and peace. (Psalms 36:1) It does not answer the need of mankind. It does not give man dignity or value the Bible does in its declaration that man is made in the image of his eternal Creator. (Genesis 1:26-27) The only objective truth it claims is that there is no all-encompassing truth.

Harassed, helpless, and shepherdless sheep is what Jesus sees as He looks out over our city. Do you share His heart? Is that what you see? That is what broke His heart with compassion. That expression of Jesus' compassion appears again and again in the Gospels. (Matthew 14:14; 15:32; Hebrews 4:15) In Greek the word "compassion" implies being moved in your gut. Doctors are discovering that the nervous system in your intestines actually does have something to do with emotion.¹⁷ This wasn't some light passing sympathy. What a difference compared to the apathetic Greek gods and even the God that the Jewish leaders presented! The Jews were presenting a demanding God that insisted on performance, finding reasons to add to people's burdens instead of relieving them. (Matthew 23:4) Compare that with Jesus saying, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.*" Matthew 11:28 No wonder the people were so attracted to Him. He was presenting a God that deeply cared about each person and compassionately demonstrated it by serving them with healing and deliverance. (Mark 10:45) Are you willing to see through Jesus' eyes?

Let me look on the crowd as my Savior did, Till my eyes with tears grow dim;
let me view with pity the wandering sheep, And love them for the love of Him.
—MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The

Jesus' compassion is what caused Him to make the request in the next verses.
³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."
³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."
Jesus then makes another analogy. He sees them ready for the harvest of judgment. (Revelation 14:15) The harvest is a reaping of the good and evil. Jesus is asking for us to pray for laborers to be sent in to intervene. He sees the people deceived and ready for the justice of God if workers do not intervene with the saving message of the Gospel. I know that is not the typical interpretation of this passage, but if you look at the Bible's idea of the harvest, you'll see it is a time of justice. (Jeremiah 51:33) I think it is so often interpreted only as a good harvest because the mind of man has a hard time putting together the love and wrath of God. The harvest in the parables is at the end of the age, not at this present time. (Matthew 13:39) The Gospel prepares them for heaven or condemns them.

He is asking His followers, and I believe that includes us today, to lift up our eyes. Are you willing to look at the pain in your fellow man? Are you willing to let your heart be broken with compassion for their hearts that are harassed by the misguided philosophies of man? And maybe if we see as Jesus did, that they are going to face judgment, our hearts will ache for them. (Joel 3:13) Workers, shepherds, need to go out to guide them to the light, turning them into a harvest of righteousness. So what are we to do? Wring our hands with worry? Work ourselves to death? No! Jesus said, Pray! There is something you can do! It begins with prayer. Pray for workers. There is never a shortage of workers for physical work. That is what our unemployment rate is about. But there is always a shortage of workers in the spiritual

Commented [notes12]: ¹ An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.
Psalms 36:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.
Matthew 14:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: ³² Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."
Matthew 15:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.
Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: "...each of us literally has two brains- the familiar one encased in our skulls and a lesser-known but vitally important one found in the human gut. Like Siamese twins, the two brains are inter-connected; when one gets upset, the other one does, too. Sandra Blakeslee Complex and Hidden Brain in the Gut, New York Times, January 23, 1996

Commented [notes18]: ⁴ They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.
Matthew 23:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Mark 10:45 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: ¹⁵ Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and re... [1]

Commented [notes21]: ³³ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "The Daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time it is trampled; the time to harvest her will soon come." ... [2]

Commented [notes22]: ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.
Matthew 13:39 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: ¹³ Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow-- so great is their wickedness! ... [3]

realm. We are to respond to this truth by praying that the Great Shepherd will send undershepherds out to the shepherdless sheep. (Jeremiah 23:4)

Commented [notes24]: ⁴ I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the LORD.
Jeremiah 23:4 (NIV)

When was the last time you asked the Lord to send someone to a soul in need? When was the last time your heart broke over the condition of the people in our city and you prayed that God would send workers that could get through to them? Prayer is the most overlooked instrument God has gifted to His people. (Philippians 4:6) If we would just pray... The storehouses of heaven are opened when the people of God pray. When Jesus' heart was broken with compassion what did He do? Did He run out and try to do as much as He could do on His own? Did He buy a book on successful salvation methods? NO! He prayed, and asked others to pray, that God would send out workers.

Commented [notes25]: ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

That is what I'm asking you this morning. Will you let your heart be truly broken and pray and continue to pray? Will you pray, and believe that the windows of heaven will be opened to those who obey God and pray in faith? Will you lift up your eyes and see the real condition of man and then pray for workers to be sent? Take a moment in a restaurant, or sit in uptown and watch, look at the harassed and helpless people, and let your heart be broken. Estimates are that of the 15,000 tourists that visit Sedona each day, 9000 are seeking spiritual answers.

It is interesting to me that immediately following this passage, Jesus sends these disciples out as workers. (Matthew 10:1) He first asked them to pray that God would send out workers. Then He sends them out as workers. If you are going to pray God does something about a great need, you have to be willing to be used to answer the need. You can't really ask unless you are willing to go if sent. I can't sincerely ask God to encourage my friend if I'm not willing to write a note of encouragement at the prompting of the Spirit. I can't earnestly petition God to save my neighbor if I'm not willing to share the gospel with him or her.

Commented [notes26]: ¹ He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.
Matthew 10:1 (NIV)

Just what is this worker we are praying for God to send? What does he or she do? I believe it is exactly what Jesus did, teach, proclaim, and serve. When someone gives you some existential rhetoric about subjective truth, teach them why you believe and are thankful for eternal truths that give you confidence and peace. Tell them how the rock solid truth of God's word has given you peace and joy. When someone tells you they are enlightened beyond simple Christianity, tell them Christianity is the revelation of the eternal truths of Christ that are able to give peace and purpose to all people in all cultures in any time period. Tell them how the Word of God is changing you.

We have to understand that the arguments against Christianity are often based on the intentional desire to be free from moral constraints. (2 Peter 2:13-14) Some of the philosophers of modern thinking have stated as much. They believe sexual self-realization is the highest personal value. What they don't realize is the moral constraints revealed in the Bible are given to us by a God who loves us. He tells us not to do what will be harmful to us. (Deuteronomy 4:40) A worker in God's harvest teaches this truth and doesn't bow to political correctness.

Commented [notes27]: ⁴⁰ Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.
Deuteronomy 4:40 (NIV)

Workers in the harvest proclaim the goodness of God and the trustworthiness of Scripture. One advantage we have in our day and age is that we can see that the love of God oversaw the Bible being translated into nearly every language on earth just as Jesus predicted. No other work of literature comes close. If there is a loving God, doesn't He want His word that reveals truth available to the world? (Matthew 24:14)

Commented [notes28]: ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14 (NIV)

Workers in the harvest proclaim that every life has dignity because we are made in the image of God. Modern philosophies are proclaiming that man is not a special creation. It matches the ideology of many Eastern philosophies. The loss of life is just a matter of karma, and animals are just as important as humans. Proclaim the great value that the living God places on each human life.

Finally, workers in the harvest serve out of Jesus' compassion. When I was in India it was so obvious that the faith that is serving mankind, holding up life as something to valued and protected, is the Christian faith. The hospitals, the schools, the assistance organizations are mostly financed by Christians who care about each and every human life. Workers in the harvest serve in their own homes and churches first, then in their neighborhoods and with all their acquaintances. Just this week I heard the testimony of a member in our church assisting a needy neighbor because it is what we are called to do. We are sent as workers in the harvest of humanity to bring the truth and love of Jesus and His salvation out of a compassionate heart. To this extent we can all be workers in the field.

To be honest with Biblical truth presented, I must add that what Jesus is talking about is specifically asking for those with teaching and preaching and public ministry gifts to be sent. He is asking for elders to be raised up. The next chapter will refer to the twelve disciples as workers. (Matthew 10:10) It is true that all believers are to be workers. Acts 8:4 (NIV) tells us "*Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.*" But we also need those willing to dedicate their lives to knowing God's word and teaching it. (Ephesians 4:11) (Acts 13:2)

Commented [notes29]: ¹⁰ take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep. Matthew 10:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: ¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, Ephesians 4:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Acts 13:2 (NIV)

When God called Isaiah into the heavenly throne room, Isaiah could hear God asking, "*Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?*" Isaiah 6:8b (NIV) The heart of God is to include us in the compassionate ministry of turning people from darkness to light. We can direct them to the Good Shepherd where they can find direction and purpose and eternal truth in the Lord who loves them personally. What a calling! What a privilege! Isaiah responded, "*Here am I. Send me!*" How will you respond? Will you pray and be willing to go? This church will be ineffective if we don't learn to pray with Jesus' compassion, and if we aren't willing to go when sent. But if we do pray, and if we are willing, look out! We will be God's co-laborers in transforming this city like we cannot even imagine. (1 Corinthians 3:9) It begins with compassion. Will you see through Jesus' eyes? It continues with prayer. Will you devote yourselves to prayer? (Colossians 4:2) If we will, God will touch and transform this city!

Commented [notes32]: ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: ² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Colossians 4:2 (NIV)

Page 3: [1] Commented [notes20] notes

¹⁵ Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Revelation 14:15 (NIV)

Page 3: [2] Commented [notes21] notes

³³ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "The Daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time it is trampled; the time to harvest her will soon come."

Jeremiah 51:33 (NIV)

Page 3: [3] Commented [notes23] notes

¹³ Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow-- so great is their wickedness!

Joel 3:13 (NIV)