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Sermon Notes

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## **The Compassion of Lord of the Harvest**

### **Matthew 9:35-38**

#### I. A Vast Harvest Waiting for Laborers

Today: Christ demonstrates Kingly compassion for the people... and begins to involve His disciples in His worldwide ministry of compassion

#### II. Christ's Comprehensive Ministry (vs. 35)

**vs. 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 every sickness.*

A Comprehensive Life: "All", "Every"... Jesus left nothing undone of all the work the Father gave Him to do

***John 17:4*** *I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.*

##### A. Comprehensive in Scope: To Every Town

1. Jesus was not sent into the entire world... but only to the "lost sheep of Israel"

***Matthew 15:24*** *He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."*

2. BUT within that mandate, Christ was comprehensive... He went day after day to town after town
  - a. Greek verb vs. 35 "was continually traveling about"
  - b. indicates a constant preaching tour... an itinerant ministry
3. Once, some townspeople tried to keep Him just to themselves... one of the few requests He ever refused

***Luke 4:42-44 At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." 44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.***

4. Jesus traveled to every town and village... no matter how small or great... to preach and teach the people

#### B. Comprehensive in Content: Speaking the Complete Gospel

We undervalue teaching and preaching today

"Seeker sensitive" churches are getting away from sermons... that's too authoritative; people like entertainment better, so they show more videos, do more skits, do narratives and drama

Jesus didn't disdain teaching, but actually put it above even feeding the hungry

***Mark 6:34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.***

This is right before Mark's account of the feeding of the 5000!!! Teaching was the greatest outlet of Jesus' compassion on the people

1. Teaching... clear exposition of Biblical truth
2. Preaching... passionate application of the truth to the hearts of the hearers
3. Synagogues: gathering places for the Jews, where they would worship when they weren't in Jerusalem at the temple
4. The Good News of the Kingdom

***Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."***

***Matthew 4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom***

***Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in heart, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven..."***

***Matthew 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.***

***Matthew 6:9-10 "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

***Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***

***Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.***

The Kingdom of Heaven was the comprehensive topic of Jesus' preaching and teaching ministry

A Kingdom where God rules over repentant, broken-hearted spiritual beggars, who for joy have sold everything in this world to enter that Kingdom... who know that God's full Kingdom hasn't come yet, but wait for that feast with a hope that is glorious and full of joy

C. Comprehensive in Power: Healing Every Disease, Healing Every Sickness

1. Not only did He teach powerfully
2. He backed it up with continuous displays of Kingdom power
3. Matthew is strong in the Greek: EVERY DISEASE, EVERY SICKNESS

nothing was too difficult for Jesus

Illus. Center for Disease Control lists \_\_\_\_\_ diseases that are incurable... AIDS, ebola, mad cow disease

D. Summary: A Life of Kingly Power in Word and Deed

Ample evidence that Jesus was fit to be King of the Kingdom of Heaven

Now... great Kings are great because of their power

Christ was also great because of His compassion

III. Christ's Compassionate Vision (vs. 36)

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

## A. Christ's Vision

1. Christ could see things no one else could see
2. He knew the minds and hearts of the people

***John 2:24-25 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.***

3. He knew the condition of their souls
4. We was torn up inside over things they couldn't even see... it was NOT their physical condition that moved Him to tears, but their desperate spiritual plight

John MacArthur: "The divine eyes of Jesus saw infinitely greater need in their lives, a need that far surpassed a withered arm, a bleeding body, a possessed mind, blind eyes, or deaf ears. He sympathized with their physical pains, too, and would have been deeply moved had those been their only afflictions. But in seeing the multitudes Jesus saw the deepness and pervasiveness of their sin and the desperate plight of their spiritual blindness and lostness. Consequently, He felt compassion for them as only God can feel. He cared for them because He was God incarnate and it is God's nature to love and care, for 'God is love.'"

Christ could see into the spiritual realm and see them like walking dead men... under the wrath of God, harassed and tormented constantly by demons... spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms

Even worse was the impending wrath of God... a wrath so terrifying nothing can describe it, but inescapable for these harassed sheep if they truly have no shepherd

## B. Christ's Compassion

Lit. "moved with compassion"

1. Hebrew: "heart" vs. "bowels"
  - a. heart = seat of logic, mind, decisions, will, intellect
  - b. bowels = seat of passion, emotion, feeling
2. Christ felt pain in His stomach... a deep moving compassion for these people
3. Divine, supernatural compassion
  - Ancient Greek philosophers celebrated gods for their ***apatheia*** ... complete freedom from passion, freedom from pain
  - Hindu gods have no compassion... Buddhism as well

- Islam says that Allah is compassionate, but there's precious little mercy in the bloody trail that Islam has made through history
- BUT God moved with compassion over Jews in slavery in Egypt
- God moved with compassion over Ninevites in the days of Jonah
- Christ wept over Jerusalem
- Christ touched sick, diseased people even though He could have cured them with a word from a distance

### C. The Sheep's Condition

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

#### 1. People are like sheep

- a. consistent comparison from Israel's history: people are like sheep who need a leader
- b. emphasized greatly during the reign of David, who began as a shepherd of sheep and became shepherd of Israel

**Psalm 78:70-72** *He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.*

- c. David struck this theme again and again in his Psalms

**Psalm 23:1** *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside the still waters, He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil for you are with me; your rods and your staff, they comfort me."*

**Psalm 100:3-4** *Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*

***Ezekiel 34:31 You my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are people, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign LORD.'"***

d. the prophet Isaiah likened Israel's sinfulness to the wandering of sheep

***Isaiah 53:6-7 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.***

2. Israel's leaders the shepherds

a. kings were "shepherds"

b. priests, teachers of the law were shepherds also

c. when the leaders were godly, like David, they shepherded with an upright heart in God place

d. BUT when they were ungodly, they fleeced the flock and the people suffered

3. Israel's "shepherds" judged for how they shepherded the flock

***Ezekiel 34:1-16 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3 You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. 4 You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals.***

4. People like sheep without a shepherd

a. in Jesus' day... the chief priests and teachers of the law were hypocrites, on the take for financial gain

b. house of High Priest Annas like a Mafia godfather, controlling all aspects of religion

c. no righteous priests, Levites to teach them the truth

5. God's Response in Prophecy: I will shepherd them myself THROUGH DAVID

**Ezekiel 34:11-16** *"For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. 12 As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. 13 I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. 14 I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. 16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.*

**Isaiah 40:11** *He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*

This was written into the prophetic record... God Himself would come to shepherd His people

A Good Shepherd predicted who would shepherd God's people in righteousness

**Matthew 2:6 [Micah 5:2]** *"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."*

**Ezekiel 34:23** *I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.*

**Jeremiah 23:1-6** *"Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. 2 Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: "Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done," declares the LORD. 3 "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. 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. 5 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be*

***saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.***

6. “Harassed and helpless”

a. NAS has “distressed and downcast”

b. “harassed” literally “to skin or flay”... as though the sheep were caught in briars and thorns which were ripping their flesh

- Tormented politically: dominated by the Romans who saw them only as slaves to work in their imperial galleys for Roman prophet, helpless to overthrow their vicious taskmaster
- Tormented physically: tyrannized disease and death, with no power to respond
- Tormented religiously: fleeced by a religious establishment that cared nothing for their needs, the evil house of Annas and the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees
- Tormented spiritually: by a host of demons, by Satan himself, who afflicted them day after day with overpowering temptations, leading them again and again into sin... the people like sheep surrounded by vicious, bloodthirsty wolves, utterly helpless to resist temptation, they sank down deeper and deeper under the wrath of God
- Tormented by their sins and the wrath to come... “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” This was the worst of all... the record of their sins stood against them, and there was no one to save them

***Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.***

When Christ saw their condition, HE was deeply moved with compassion

But He didn't leave it there... His answer was to bring His disciples powerfully into His compassion

His vision would be their vision, His passion would be theirs as well

IV. Christ's Compelling Diagnosis (vs. 37)

***vs. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.***

A. Turning to the Disciples

1. Christ's strategy: committing to US the ministry of reconciliation
2. Calling disciples after him to follow Him in His work

***Matthew 4:19 "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."***

3. The work of gathering lost sheep would not be Christ's alone... He would do it through people who once were lost sheep themselves

B. The Plentiful Harvest

1. A harvest of wrath

***Joel 3:13-14 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!' 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.***

***Matthew 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."***

2. A harvest of souls for eternal life

***John 4:31-36 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." 33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" 34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35 Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.***

There are thousands and thousands of people coming to faith in Christ every day... 20 million per year by some estimation... 2300 souls per hour, 24 hours per day!!! A vast, immense harvest, so great that no one can count it

***Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."***

### C. The Scarcity of Workers

Illus. "Places in the Heart"... a widow plants a field of cotton in order to survive and not lose her farm... the only chance she has is to be the first to the harvest her cotton and win the prize for the first bale of the year

She begins picking, with her two small children and one man who she's taken in... the camera pulls back slowly, higher and higher... more and more of the white cotton field appears, until the four puny workers are lost in a sea of white cotton... the harvesting task is overwhelming

1. Workers needed to bring in the harvest
2. Constant call for missionaries
  - a. Southern Baptists: largest denominational mission-sending agency in the world

At present the IMB has 5300 career missionaries on the field

- b. BUT this represents only 0.03% of all Southern Baptists

20,000 volunteer missionaries = less than one per two churches

Worldwide... there are 201,928 cross-cultural missionaries sent and received

Thus, there are approximately 30,000 people for every 1 missionary

3. Constant call for daily witnesses to Christ
  - a. statistics alone cannot tell the whole story
  - b. every day each one of you is surrounded by unbelievers who are "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."
  - c. Christ calls on us to pray with HIS compassion for laborers
4. Constant selfishness, lack of vision, lack of compassion by the church
  - a. why so few laborers? Why such little passion and compassion for missions?
  - b. church has a constant battle with sin, selfishness, lack of vision, self-centeredness, prayerlessness

### V. Christ's Command: PRAY (vs. 38)

***vs. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."***

A. Amazing: First step is prayer, not witnessing

1. Americans are such DOERS... in love with what we can accomplish if we really put our mind to it
2. God wants to slay our pride by setting before us a job so overwhelming that we would drown if not supported by God
3. He challenged His disciples first to PRAY

B. "Lord of the Harvest"

1. God the Father sent the Son... it is first of all God's Harvest
2. Now, however, it is Christ who is seen to be the "Lord of the Harvest"

***John 20:21 "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."***

The "Harvest" belongs to Christ... the souls won are HIS, for He bought them with His blood

The Laborers are sent out by Christ... He is the one who sent the first apostles... now He is sending out our generation

According to the Great Commission, Christ has "ALL AUTHORITY in heaven and on earth." That includes authority over the harvest

Christ is Lord of the Harvest

Amazing: Christ sees, Christ feels, Christ includes His disciples, Christ commands them to see, feel, and ask... It all starts with Christ and ends with Christ

C. Pray for What?

***vs. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."***

1. "Send out" is weak... the Greek is actually "thrust out" or "throw out"
2. Sometimes people have to be ripped from their comfortable lifestyles and thrown out into the harvest field... LIKE MATTHEW
3. Ask Christ to thrust out people who will bring in this vast harvest... pray for workers, witnesses, missionaries, servants

## VI. Application

A. Step One: Acquire Christ's Vision

- See the lost as Christ did... “Harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”
- See the mission field the way Christ did: “Harvest plentiful, workers few”
- Anticipate the good success of a strong evangelistic effort... THERE WILL BE A HARVEST!!!
- Meditate on the eternal torment of the lost in hell
- Meditate also on the great joys of the saved in heaven
- Understand the daily suffering of people who are enslaved to sin, under direct demonic assault
- Understand also the incredible joy and power of the Spirit-filled Christian life: sins repented from, addictions broken, relationships restored... so much more, all from the Gospel
- See the spiritual issues as absolutely paramount: “What would it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his soul?”
- This is the first step... spiritual KNOWLEDGE

#### B. Step Two: Beg for Christ’s Compassion

- We are naturally aloof, hard-hearted, self-centered, unconcerned
- It takes too much emotional energy to feel what others suffer
- But Christ wept for Jerusalem, and here was moved in His insides for the condition of the people
- If your heart is cold, you are too far from Christ... begin your prayer life with a cry against the coldness of your own heart
- Ask Christ to give you His heart of compassion for the lost
- This is the second step: spiritual PASSION

#### C. Step Three: Plead for Christ’s Co-Laborers

- Obey Christ’s clear command: Ask the Lord of the Harvest for WORKERS

Pray Knowledgeably

- Educate yourself concerning the world’s needs [use *Operation World*]

Pray Globally

- Keep your eye on the whole world... use *Operation World* and pray through the whole world

Pray Strategically

- Focus on a specific target group [Shandong Province]

Pray Relentlessly

- Pray day after day, month after month

Pray Confidently, in Faith

- Christ has COMMANDED this very prayer... therefore He will answer YES!

***1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.***

A specific challenge to our Senior Adults... you may be unable to do many of the things you used to want to do... or to serve God in all the ways you would like

But this one thing you can do... obey Christ's command here. "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest field." Pray daily for missionaries, and for FBC's missionary work

D. Step Four: Assess Your Own Life

- Could it be that you have been investing your life in something outside of God's will?
- Could it be that God is calling you to be a laborer in the harvest field, and you've been ignoring His call?
- Do you come to Tuesday night outreach? Do you invite your neighbors to church? Have you witnessed for Christ at all this past year? Are you "gathering with Christ" or scattering?
- If someone asked you to describe your contribution to the Great Commission in the last year, what would you say?

E. Step Five: Become a Laborer Yourself

- Next week: Christ sends out the Twelve... Is He also going to send you out??