

“King of the Harvest”



Matthew 9:35-10:20

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Sermon audio and text available at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

• Compassion

There's a homeless lady I see quite often down the road here. Every time I see her, I feel compassion. I feel for her situation. I sense she's lonely. I can see she is not well physically. But do you know what grabs me about Matthew 9:36? When Jesus sees people, he doesn't feel compassion. He is **Moved** by compassion.

Verse 36 says: *"He had compassion on them"*

And the translation there is actually "He was **Moved** with compassion". Jesus didn't just **FEEL** compassion. He was moved to **DO** something. They were like sheep without a shepherd. Harassed and helpless. Living in a world harassed with sickness and evil and disease, and helpless to defend themselves. Jesus saw that people need more than just healing from being blind or paralysed or demon possessed. They need a shepherd. They need someone to lead them through life's uncertainties. Someone to offer them hope for the future. People actually need **Jesus** as their shepherd.

So that compassion motivates Jesus to turn to his disciples and say:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Jesus says: These people need help! Ask God to send help!

So often I think we are immovable. We get used to homelessness. We get used to children being abused and women being objectified. We get used to poverty in our world. We get used to Christians being persecuted. And we get used to banks charging high fees. But out of those things, which do we react to the most? Which ones push us into action? Because I'm wondering if it's the bank fees? I wonder if we get so used to the helplessness and harassment of the world, that it is difficult to be moved by the things that really matter. We're often more moved by unimportant worldly things.

I want to be moved with the compassion of Jesus. I want to be motivated by that compassion. I want to be taught again by God what it means to be moved with compassion for the lost people in our world. I want to see people the way God sees them. I want to be moved by the fact that people do not know Jesus and are headed for hell unless they come to know him.

I want to wake up in the morning and be **Moved** with compassion for the people of this world that God loves so much. How can we do that? How can we be moved by that compassion today? Let's have a look at how Jesus responds. And how we can respond.

Let's look at the disciples first, and then think about how this related to us:

• The disciples...

1. PRAY. First, Jesus tells his disciples to pray for God to send workers into the harvest field. 9:38 – *“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*
They are to pray in order to commit this work to God.
2. SPEAK. Jesus says: 10:7 – *“as you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’”*
It’s urgent that they leave **now** and tell people. First of all to the Jews – to the lost sheep of Israel. But they need to speak and tell people.
3. DO. Jesus tells them to do miracles. Verse 8: *“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.”*
Jesus says: I’ve given you the authority to do these things. Use it. Use the gifts and authority that I have given you to show people the power of the kingdom of God.
4. GO. Just go. He tells them to take nothing with them, no gold or silver, no extra sandals, no bag. He just wants them to go, and depend on God for all their needs.
5. STAY. He tells them to go to a house and stay there as long as they’re welcome to stay. They’re to leave houses that do not welcome them. And stay in houses that do welcome.
6. THINK. Jesus tells them to be as shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves. Because they be like sheep among wolves. That’s dangerous! So they need to be clever, but humble. Smart about how they do things, but not arrogant. Intelligent, but gentle.
7. PREPARE. Jesus says “Watch out!” He warns them that people will hate their message. They will be arrested and handed over to be flogged. Be ready for that. He doesn’t say “Avoid it!” He says: Be ready for it. Expect it will happen. Jesus is saying: “This is not going to be easy.”
8. Finally, DON’T WORRY. Jesus says: don’t worry about what to say. The Spirit of God will speak for you. God will make sure the right words come out at the right time. Trust him.

Now, how much of this is really relevant for **us** today? We’re not disciples. We didn’t walk around with Jesus for 3 years being personally taught by him. I don’t know anyone who has the power to raise the dead here. Since Jesus, we’ve been told to take the gospel to the Gentiles, not just the Jews. (Acts 1:8). Not many of us wear sandals. Not all of us can preach a message. Our society is different today: people don’t just invite you in to stay and talk for a few days about God if you knock on their door. We’re not likely to be flogged in Australia for our beliefs, or imprisoned. So what does this passage say to **us**?

- 9:36 – “he had compassion on them”

Jesus’ has compassion for the people in this world. There is a huge harvest of people who need to hear the gospel message. That need still exists today. So the need to hear this passage still exists. A different context today, but the same need for the compassion of Jesus. So let’s look at those 8 things in today’s context...

- **Us...**

1. **PRAY.** We still need to pray! We still need to commit this work to God. We still need to ask God to send people. To send US. Prayer is the first point of mission. God needs to be at the centre of all we do.
2. **SPEAK** – we still need the message to go out. Not all of us are preachers, but there are other ways. In our workplace, with our families, our friends, there are ways to share the gospel. Sharing your testimony. Inviting people to church. Giving Bibles to our Scripture children. Helping with ministries that speak and preach the gospel – C4K, Little Saints, Kids Club, Scripture, Sunday services.
3. **DO** – you might not be able to raise the dead, or heal the sick. These are certainly special gifts we see in more abundance during this time of Jesus’ ministry on earth. And we see miraculous signs today as well. But what are the gifts God has given **you**? Gifts of prayer? Healing? Counselling? Working with children? Working with the elderly? Gifts of music or leadership or administration. You may not be driving out demons, or you may be, but God has blessed **this church** with the gifts we need in **this place at this time**. Are you serving, and using your gifts? Or is there an excuse you’re making not to use those gifts? Let me encourage you to do this: Serve in some way, no matter how small. Cook a meal for someone who needs it. Visit or call someone. Be a helper for ministries here, be on the rosters, or look outside the church and join the red cross or meals on wheels or another volunteer organisation that shows people you care about people the way God does. Serve. If we don’t, we have **no** chance of using the gifts God has given us.
4. **GO.** God will provide your needs. Trust him to provide. Don’t make excuses. Don’t wait for a better education or more time, or a different family life situation. Just go. Go somewhere in some way and be involved in the harvest. Somewhere. Somehow. Today. When you drop your kids at school, see the mission field there. Talk to parents. Make friends. Open up the opportunity to share the gospel. THAT is working in the harvest field. At work. With the family. On the train. See those places as a mission field.
5. **STAY.** If you find a place where you can do ministry, don’t be looking around for some other place that might be better. Be content where God has placed you and just serve your heart out there. If God calls you to move to a different place, then go. But if God places you somewhere, serve there. That’s what my family are doing here, as long as God places us here. We’re not looking for other jobs. We serve God here. Until he tells us otherwise. Serve where God places you. Serve the people God puts in your path.
6. **THINK.** We don’t have to be stupid as Christians. We can be smart. AND humble. Wise AND gentle. As a church, we’re trying our best to use good business principals to look after God’s money. We want to be smart. And trust God. And be generous. And support those in need. Think about how you share the gospel. Some people will accept an invitation to church. Others won’t, so you need to find other ways, smart ways, to reach them. Not manipulative. But smart. Not arrogant. But gentle. Let’s use our brains and our hearts to reach people. Shrewd and innocent.
7. **PREPARE.** You might not be flogged, but prepare yourself for the fact that it won’t be easy. People may reject us. Even friends. But let’s not just try to take the easy road all the time. Sometimes the hard road is necessary. Prepare for the hard road.
8. And most importantly I think... **DON’T WORRY** about what you’ll say. In whatever context. Pray and trust God. God will use your words. God will use the opportunities in your life. Step out in faith and trust that he will use the opportunities for his kingdom. He can’t use you if you don’t step out.

But driving all of this is our motivation. Jesus had compassion on the people of this world. Do we? Do we want to see people saved? What we’re talking about doing here is not easy. It will cost you. **Being a disciple of Jesus will cost you.** But if we share Jesus’ compassion for this world, we will be moved by that compassion.

Jesus wants us to **see** the people of this world. And to be moved with compassion for them. Let’s pray.