

Jesus's Compassion (Matthew 9:35-38)

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[0 : 00] All right. So Matthew 9, verse 35 to 38. Cool.

So welcome, Pastor Richard, again, to preach to us. Thank you. Oh, well, let's just pray, shall we? Lord, we just thank you for your word and your word, which is living and active and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

But most of all, it's able to teach us about yourself. And I pray that as we study your word this evening, that you will teach us more about who you are and what you've done for us.

So, Lord, bless our time. At the same time, encourage us. Help us to be doers of the word and not just hearers. Help us to, yeah, apply some of these things that I'm going to share.

Help us to apply them to our lives, that we might be better disciples and that we might go deeper into you.

[1 : 42] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, as I said, it's really great to be here, and it's just great to talk about God's word.

There's nothing better than God's word, is there? You know, as a young Christian, I was involved in a group called The Navigators. I'm not sure whether they're operating on campus at the moment, but when I was a young fellow, they were operating on campus, and they were a very big group, a bit like student life.

And one of the leaders always used to constantly say, he used to say that evangelism was the cutting edge of discipleship. Evangelism is the cutting edge of discipleship.

And for a while, I didn't know what he meant by that, but I think what he meant was that evangelism or mission stimulated and sort of encouraged every other discipline of the faith.

For example, it encouraged your prayer life as you sort of went out and shared the gospel with people. You came back and you prayed for the people that you had been sharing the gospel with.

[3 : 02] It encouraged you to get into the Bible a lot more as you came back and wanted to know answers to questions that people had challenged you with.

And so mission and evangelism were the key to development and maturity of one's Christian faith. And, you know, you were wanting the series to be about going deeper into Jesus, getting to know Jesus more. Well, evangelism is one of those things that we can go deeper into our Christian faith and where we can stimulate these other areas.

But I suspect that for most of us here, you know, that evangelism is the one thing that most of us struggle with, isn't it?

If I asked you to put up your hands and, you know, I've asked you to how many of you have shared the gospel in the past month.

[4 : 15] And I wonder how many of you would put up your hands. You see, we're generally not great at evangelism.

Now, you know, PCBC might be really, really good at evangelism. I don't know, but at Howard Baptist, certainly people struggle in this whole area of evangelism.

We're always asking ourselves, how can we share the gospel more effectively? How can we, you know, be more, yeah, just better at sharing the gospel?

How can we lead Kiwis to Christ? We lead a few Asian immigrants to Christ, but we never seem to lead New Zealanders to Christ.

Well, you know, I think there are some clues in this passage as to how we can be more effective in evangelism. Matthew, though, he seems to divide his gospel up into sections.

[5 : 25] And chapters 1 to 7 is the first section, and then chapters 8 to 10 is the next section, where Matthew has been showing us who Jesus is, and then he issues this call to discipleship.

And as we come to the end of the section where we are now, there is this call to discipleship, a call to what it means to follow Jesus.

And here Jesus speaks about a harvest and the need for labourers for the harvest. And then in chapter 10, if you notice, he sends out the 12 apostles on a mission.

So here he is putting answers to prayer into practice. You know, as you probably saw last week, I think Nathan, did he, he preached last week.

As you saw last week, Jesus is really in the business of changing people's lives. You would have seen how Jesus can raise the dead, heal the sick, make clean the unclean.

[6 : 46] We saw how he, you probably saw how he gave sight to the blind and speech to the dumb. Now, all these people, in one way or another, were outcasts of the Jewish community.

They were the unclean or they were the rejected, people whom sort of the religious hierarchy would have nothing to do with.

And Jesus reaches out and he touches these people. And what he's doing, he's giving us a glimpse of what the kingdom of heaven is like.

No more death, no more uncleanness, no more darkness, no more oppression. And, you know, that's what heaven is like, isn't it? We will have no more tears anymore, no more COVID anymore, none of those things.

And Jesus gives us a glimpse as he heals these people of what the kingdom of heaven is like.

Jesus showed great concern for people.

[7 : 54] And especially people's souls. So right from the outset of his ministry, way back in chapter four, when Jesus comes out of that time of prayer and fasting, of 40 days in the desert, where he's tempted, we see this happening.

Matthew 4, 17 says, from that time, Jesus began to preach saying, repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And we see that coming through chapters 8 to 10.

In Luke 4, at the beginning of his ministry, we find Jesus going back to his hometown of Nazareth and opening up the scriptures at the book of Isaiah, where he says in verse 18 of Luke chapter four, he says, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he's anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And then he said, today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. And so Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[9 : 17] And here in Matthew's gospel, we see this being worked out through the pages of scripture, through what he was doing. Jesus was concerned for people, all people, but especially those who seem to have been rejected or those who were looked down upon by the religious elite.

The woman who was bleeding, the two blind men that you spoke about last week, the demon possessed person who couldn't speak, the paralyzed person who had to be carried in and laid down on a bed and put down through the roof, the crowd who was hungry.

And in verse 35, Matthew sums up what Jesus has been doing in those past four chapters.

And it says, and Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and every affliction.

It's quite amazing. There seems to be no stopping Jesus here, does there? Jesus is just consumed with sort of proclaiming the gospel of helping people, bringing the gospel to bear upon people's lives, meeting their needs.

[10 : 41] There seems to be such an urgency to what Jesus is doing. And I think this is a challenge to us as well, isn't it?

Today. What is it that exercises your mind the most? What is it that exercises your mind the most? What is it that consumes your thoughts, takes up your time? What is it? Is it the gospel? Of course, you know, we have excuses, don't we?

We have, perhaps you have families to look after, or you have work to do, you have studies to do, you may have a house to look after, and so forth.

And it's true, all these things take time, don't they? Jesus didn't have the restraints of a family. He didn't have a property to look after. He doesn't seem to have a full time job.

[11 : 46] He doesn't seem to have studied. However, while we might feel restrained because of these things that we are doing, all these things that are excuses, we can actually use to serve God.

You know, Colossians 3, 23, I think it is, Paul says, whatever you do, work heartily as serving the Lord and not man. Whatever you do, work heartily as serving the Lord and not man. Your family is an opportunity to serve God. The way you raise your children should be with Jesus in mind.

You know, how can I, how can my children get to know Jesus? Or how can our family serve Jesus better? How can my family situation be used to bring the gospel?

One of the things that Danilda and I always did was that we always involved our children in the ministry that we were carrying out.

[13:04] And unbeknown to us, well, two of them became ministers as a result. You know, in your workplace, your actions, your attitudes are ways in which you can serve Jesus.

Your colleagues at work are an opportunity for you to share the gospel with. I wonder if you think about that. You go to work with the view that this is my mission field.

Your business can be an opportunity to serve Christ and the way you treat your employers. It can be an opportunity to serve the church or wider ministry through the profits that you make out of your, your business.

You see, in every area of life, we have opportunities to serve Christ. Even though this COVID lockdown, there are lots of opportunities to serve Christ, ring somebody up and so forth.

But at the forefront of our minds should be this idea that everything we do is to further the gospel. Everything. And Jesus was consumed with that, with doing the will of his father.

[14:18] He resolutely set his face, for example, to go to Jerusalem to die on a cross. He gave his life. As a ransom for many. And we see this in verse 35, don't we?

Where we, where he's going all over Galilee, proclaiming the gospel, helping people. And naturally crowds are flocking to him. And look at Jesus response in verses 36 to 38.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers of you.

Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest, send out laborers into this harvest. Well, I just want to mention three things that come from this passage.

There's probably lots more, but I just want to mention three. The first is Jesus has compassion. Jesus' compassion. Verse 36.

[15:25] You know, Jesus looks at the crowd that is following him. Instead of panicking as I might, or instead of thinking that I might like a little bit of peace and quiet.

Jesus is moved with compassion for this crowd. And why is he moved? Because they are directionless people.

They are people with no shepherd to lead them. Their religious leaders had let them down. And here we see the heart of God at work.

Jesus is walking the roads of Palestine. Crowds are following him. It's a popular time for his ministry. And he looks out on this crowd and he's moved with compassion.

It's the strongest word in the Greek language for compassion. It's the compassion that moves.

Jesus is it moves to the depths of his stomach. So he gets ill when he looks out at this crowd who is following him.

[16:30] And he sees their needs. And, you know, this is not an isolated case. You know, for example, in Matthew 14, 14, we see how Jesus was moved with compassion for the crowds again.

And then it says that he does many healings. Matthew 15, 32, Jesus is moved with compassion for the crowd who'd been with him for three days and we're now getting hungry.

And so he feeds 4,000. Chapter 20, verse 34, he's moved with compassion for two blind men who were being told by the crowd to shut up.

And he restores their sight. In Luke's gospel, in Luke 15, the prodigal son's father had compassion for his son when he returned.

While he was a long way off, we're told he ran to greet his son. He throws his arms around him and he puts on a big welcome home party. He's moved with compassion.

[17:35] When Jesus approaches Jerusalem and his triumphant entry, before he goes to the cross, we're told that he wept for Jerusalem. He wept for Jerusalem.

Here were people going to kill him and he knows it. And he weeps over Jerusalem. You know, this is amazing. This is the compassion that God has toward you and me, toward his people.

And which we see in his son. It's the compassion and love for people that, that brought Jesus to this earth to, to die on a cross for us.

This compassion move Jesus to do something about the situation. And, you know, it's, it's, it's not a new Testament idea.

way back in Exodus, when Moses was on Mount Sinai, receiving the 10 commandments, we read this in Exodus 34. And he, Moses rose early in the morning, went up on Mount Sinai.

[18 : 40] as the Lord had commanded him. And he took in his hand, two tablets of stone. The Lord descended in, in the cloud and stood with them there and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious. And that word can be translated. Compassion. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and for sin. That's way back in Exodus. The Psalms too. We often read of God's love or God's compassion for his people. Psalm 103, for example, the Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.

This is what Jesus has done. He made known as ways to Moses, as acts to the people of Israel. And then it says, the Lord is merciful and gracious or compassion.

[19 : 47] As some versions say, he's slow to anger and abounding. And steadfast love. Psalm 145 is another one. The Lord is gracious and merciful.

That's compassion. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all. And his mercy is over all that he has made. God is compassionate.

He's incredibly compassionate. He's gracious and merciful and abounding in love. And so it's no surprise that Jesus is the same. Jesus is moved with compassion by the world's pain.

He's moved with compassion by the sick, by the blind, by those who are in the grip of sort of demonic forces. In all our afflictions, he's afflicted.

He was moved with compassion over the world's plight. And we see that when he weeps over Jerusalem. And I ask you tonight, what is it that moves you?

[20 : 59] Are you moved by compassion for Afghan Christians who are being killed right now in Afghanistan?

Are you moved with compassion for the COVID people? Or are you moved with compassion with the plight that you see in this world?

When Jesus looks out on the crowd, he was moved with compassion. And why was he moved with compassion? Because here was a people who were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

And here the idea of being sort of harassed and helpless is that people are being weighed down by burdens placed upon them.

That's the idea there. The burden of living in a sinful world. The burden of religious leaders who weighed them down with all their laws.

[22 : 02] Jesus saw past their enthusiasm to follow him because of the miracles he was performing. He saw deep into their lives and he sees people without direction.

Just clutching at straws, following the crowd of people whose needs were not really being met. Jesus sees past the superficial to what was really happening in people's lives.

He sees our hearts and what we are burdened with. No wonder the apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 5, he says, cast all your burdens on him.

Why? Because he says he cares for you. He has compassion for you. He has compassion for me. No wonder Jesus says two chapters later in chapter 11, where he says, come to me all who labour and who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Of course, there's much for us to be deeply concerned about. It may be that we should be concerned about the state of the church in New Zealand.

[23 : 24] Or perhaps the state of our society that we live in. We see a society being led down a path of secular humanism, of secularism, where if it feels okay, then it must be all right.

We live in a society where people are now calling good bad and bad good. We're living in a society where laws are being passed that are directly against the laws of God in his word.

Our children are growing up in a world of consumerism, believing that if they can have the latest this or the latest that, that they are going to be happy.

You know, there's so many things that should grieve us in this world that we live. Does it move us with compassion?

Does it cause us to want to do something about it? Does it cause us to reach out with the gospel and share to our colleagues at work about Jesus?

[24 : 35] Jesus here sees people that are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. When I was a kid, my dad owned a farm, and so I was brought up on a dairy farm.

And I used to love going and milking the cows and helping in the cow shed and so forth. I like farm life in general. But every now and then I'd go to a friend's place or a neighbour's place to a sheep farm.

And I couldn't stand sheep. I thought they were stupid animals left to their own. You know, they were, I just could not understand them.

They might look woolly, they might look cuddly, but they were really stupid animals. Well, that's what I thought. I was a dairy farmer. A good shepherd, though, knows how to handle sheep.

He instinctively knows what they will try and do. You know, they'll race off in all directions. He knows the sheep. And for some reason, sheep seem to know the shepherd.

[25 : 46] Jesus in John 10 is described as the good shepherd who knows his sheep. He not only knows them, but when one goes astray, he gets lost.

He takes off after them and he finds them and he brings them back. He not only knows the sheep, but his sheep know him. In fact, Jesus is such a good shepherd that he willingly laid down his life for the sheep.

You know, in the Old Testament, the religious leaders were sometimes called shepherds. And in Ezekiel 34, we read about bad shepherds. Listen to Ezekiel's prophecy.

It said, the word of the Lord came to me. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel.

Prophesy and say to them, even to the shepherds, thus says the Lord God, ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves.

Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.

[27 : 04] The weak, you have not strengthened. The sick, you have not healed. The injured, you have not bound up. The strayed, you have not brought back. The lost, you have not sought. And with force and with harshness, you have ruled them.

So they're scattered because there's no one to shepherd. And they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered.

They wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. Here in this passage and here in Matthew's gospel, Jesus is the good shepherd who has gone out over all the hills of Galilee, preaching the gospel, healing the sick, bringing back the lost sheep, concerned for his people who had not had a shepherd to lead them, but rather had been burdened down by them so that there was no way to escape.

Jesus is overwhelmed by compassion for these people. You know, what is it again that moves and motivates you to do something?

You know, until we get that same compassion and love for mission that Jesus had, until we get onto our hearts the same things that Jesus has on his heart, we will always struggle and be motivated to serve him.

[28 : 43] Jesus has compassion. Does the gospel move you? Have you got compassion for the people? Secondly, Jesus' compassion led to opportunity.

Jesus' compassion led to opportunity, verse 37. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. I wonder how many people saw what Jesus saw.

You know, Jesus saw a harvest, not just any type of harvest, but a plentiful harvest, a great harvest, a harvest that was plentiful.

You know, Jesus saw these people and not just in a superficial way, but as harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, not as problems.

He sees them as opportunities for mission. He sees them as potential disciples, as followers. I wonder if we see people like that.

[29 : 56] People who may be struggling to cope with life, people with needs, people who seem directionless, people who are needy as potential opportunities to share the gospel with.

That new neighbor in your street, that colleague at work who has just come, that frustrated solo mum down the road who is struggling with her terrible kids, that new family who have perhaps just walked in the church and whom seem a bit strange.

Do we see a harvest or do we just see them as work, as more things to do? We notice too in verse 37 that it is the Lord's harvest.

He is the Lord of the harvest. It's his harvest. And it's a harvest that he's asked us to join in and help him with.

These potential opportunities, these people that we see could be part of the Lord's harvest. harvest. You know, in the parable of the soils that Jesus speaks about, I think it's in Matthew 13, we're told that some seed fell on stony ground or on a path and other seed fell on stony ground and other seed fell amongst weeds, while some fell on good soil.

[31 : 32] And from all intent and purpose, there's a sense in this parable that all the soils for the sower look similar, otherwise the sower wouldn't have sown there.

But only certain seed going into good soil grew and produced good fruit. And I think the main point of that parable that that parable teaches is that we should be sowing seed and while we're going to have disappointments because the seed is not going to strike good soil at some times, the truth is that we are to keep on sowing.

Some will hit good soil and bear fruit. The key is to keep sowing because in the end it's the Lord's harvest and he will save those who are his own.

The results will be his. When Jesus sees this crowd with all their needs, he actually saw a harvest. The harvest was plentiful.

The crowd had great potential. The only limitation of course were labourers to reap the harvest. I wonder what we see when we come to church on a Sunday.

[32 : 55] I wonder what we see when we go to work on Monday. I wonder what we see when we walk down the street or when we sit in a lecture theatre or in a classroom or wherever.

Sometimes we don't see anything, do we? Sometimes we're so focused on other things that we miss the opportunities. opportunities. But the real reason the religious leaders of that day missed the opportunities was because they were not looking to Jesus.

They had lost sight of the good news, the gospel. We forget that we are dealing with life and death matters and that Jesus is the answer. Jesus is saying that there is a large number of people out there that constitute the harvest but actually there is a scarcity of laborers.

We must have a heart for the people we are amongst. We must learn to see that there is a harvest, the harvest of opportunities the Lord has given.

And even during these COVID times, there is tremendous opportunities to reap a harvest. There's opportunities to ring up people that you wouldn't otherwise ring up and ask them how they're doing.

[34 : 19] There's opportunities to send an email to someone whom you wouldn't necessarily email and to encourage them in the Christian faith.

There's opportunities to text somebody who is a colleague at work or somewhere and ask them how they're doing. There are opportunities for the harvest.

Do we see them? Do we see them at this COVID time? Do we see them as we are walking down the street? Or do we see a harvest that God has given?

We need to be like Jesus and see the harvest. And lastly, we must pray. We must pray. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.

Note here that while Jesus is wanting more workers in his harvest field, they're not just anybody. They must be God sent, not self-appointed. They must be men and women with a love for God and a love for his people.

[35 : 29] They must be men and women who know the Lord and who have been called by him. They to be his laborers. You know, at the end of Matthew's gospel, chapter 28, we read these words.

It says, Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted. And Jesus came and said to him, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Are you a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? If you are, then Jesus says you are to go and make disciples of all nations.

And we are to pray for more labourers. And as we pray, we need to be asking ourselves, what does the Lord want me to do? And as we pray, we need to be saying, here are my lords, please send me, if that's your will.

[36 : 50] Well, when Jesus saw the crowd, he had compassion for the crowd. He saw the opportunity for the harvest. he prayed for labourers.

You know, as we pray for our friends, our families, our neighbours, our colleagues at work, our students, we go to varsity with, as we pray for the work the church is doing, let's pray for more labourers.

But let us pray that we might be like Jesus with hearts of compassion, that we might see the opportunities of the harvest among those whom God has placed us, that the gospel may go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come even to New Zealand here.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord, we just thank you that you are such a compassionate God. that you are one who loves us deeply, has great compassion for us, that you're willing to take our burdens off us and to free us that we might live for you.

And Lord, I pray that for each of us listening tonight, that we might live for you, that we might see ourselves as laborers, willing to serve, that like Isaiah, we might say, here am I, please send me.

[38 : 38] Lord, help us to be a compassionate people. Help us to see not just a crowd, but to see a harvest that you want us to reap.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.