

MATTHEW 9:35-38 EVERY LAST ONE

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

What if a large cloud of noxious gas were leaking from train cars outside of Lemmon and the cloud were headed directly here? How would the Emergency Management Office seek to notify and evacuate everyone in town? Radio, TV, sirens, facebook, email, texting, phone calls? The surest method, especially at night, would be to have crews go door-to-door to contact all.

In our text, Jesus had a special message to deliver to all the people—the news of the fulfillment of God's longstanding promises of mercy, rescue, forgiveness, and blessing. Consider:

1) The promise given to Adam and Eve following sin, the promise of the bruising/crushing of the head of Satan/the Serpent by the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:14-15).

2) The promise given to Abraham (patriarch of the Israelite people), "In your Seed, all families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3).

3) The promise given to the people of Israel, that the Lord would send "His Servant," and that the Lord "would lay on Him the iniquity [guilt] of us all" (Isaiah 53:1-12).

4) The promise given by the last prophet, John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus saying, "I am not the Christ." "There is one coming after me, mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to loose." [And seeing Jesus pass by], "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:19-29)!

These promises, this greatest message ever, was being fulfilled at that very time with the life and upcoming death of Jesus. He was sharing that special news with the Jewish people. *He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom.*

He went with His disciples from community to community. How big of a task was it? The land of the Jews at Jesus' time was less than 1/10th the size of South Dakota. And if Matthew meant just the region of Galilee, the area would be even smaller, maybe 30 x 50 miles. The communities were much closer together than ours. Commonly the farmers and shepherds lived in the towns and went out to the country.

Why go to **all** the cities and villages? Answer: Jesus wanted none to be missed. Everywhere that there are sinners, there Jesus wants His presence and His Good News to be announced. Jesus is not just concerned about "some," or "most," or "the really good." He is concerned about all. Jesus cares for all. He is interested in all. He wants each one of you to be in His flock. His view misses no one, not even those trying to hide from Him. Nor on the Last Day will He not miss any. All will be judged. He wants you to be saved, part of His Kingdom.

Jesus went to the synagogues of the cities and villages. A "synagogue" was a gathering place, particularly on Sabbath days, to hear God's Words, promises, and mercies in the Savior to come. The "syn" at the beginning of synagogue means "with." Synchronized watches that are set at the same time with one another. Synthetic material is fabric that is made by combining several substances with one another to make a new product. A synphony ("syn"phony) is a large musical group in which the instruments sound with one another. And in our church life, the word synod means those traveling on the same road with one another. It was natural for Jesus to "teach" the truth and glory of God's kingdom and forgiveness at the synagogue (but not the only place). He was teaching and also *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*. To 'preach' means to "proclaim aloud," to declare an important message, to be a "herald." A king's herald announced proclamations and declared the arrival of the king. We have a hymn, "Hark, the *herald* angels sing!" Jesus Himself was heralding the Good News of God to each community. He was not just a

herald doing a job. “There, I’m done.” Some people do their work like that—their heart is not in it. Paul tells us, *Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men (Colossians 3:23)*. That is the same fashion in which Jesus was teaching and preaching. It was not just a job; Jesus was concerned about each one.

Jesus showed His heartfelt concern with miracles of *healing*—“therapy”—*for every sickness and every disease among the people*. He did not simply teach/preach and walk away from the sick and the hurting. His heart reached out to them. There was nothing He couldn’t heal, then and now—crippling, bleeding, blindness, deafness, muteness, demon possession, even death. His heart reached out, and reaches out, to each one. His compassion is the driving force behind all that Jesus came to do—a love and concern for all. He has a heart of compassion for you too. He indeed knows what weighs on your heart right now, what besets your body right now. His compassion reaches out to all suffering and all sufferers of this life. He knows what is best for you and what is not best for you. The need of spiritual healing far surpasses physical healing.

When Jesus doesn’t seem to be helping, it’s not that He doesn’t care about you, or can’t help you, or won’t help you. Jesus cares for you. At the pool of Bethesda, He healed one crippled man. Surely there were others there as well. At the cross, Jesus did not heal the two thieves on next to Him. The Apostle Paul earnestly prayed three times that the Lord remove the “thorn in the flesh” that tormented him. The Lord’s answer was, “My grace is sufficient for thee/you. My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul said “Therefore I glory in my weaknesses, for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). In His compassion, Jesus does not always grant physical healing. His heart leading you to trust Him totally for forgiveness and eternal life in heaven.

He was moved with compassion for them. He suffered with them. The word in Greek which we translate “compassion” refers to ‘the turning of one’s insides’ with emotion. For example, when something pitiful confronts you, if you see an animal or person, badly beaten and torn, you can feel it in your gut, can’t you? Jesus, your best friend, feels that way for you, and for each one. It led Him to the cross, that He might win for you a righteous record and an empty grave—sins forgiven! death defeated!

When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, *because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd*. The crowds of people with all their needs were like sheep without a shepherd. Cattle can survive if they are free to roam, can’t they? They survived that way for years, before barbed wire, was strung. How well would sheep survive if set free? How able are they to defend themselves? How smart are they to avoid trouble? When Jesus saw the crowds, and when he sees you—no matter how tough and survival oriented you think you are—He sees weary sheep. Weary—sheep that have hides torn, skin flayed, sheep beat up by life and struggling. Weary and also “scattered”—literally thrown down, helpless, exhausted, spent, dismissed by life and left for dead. Do you feel so weary and scattered, mangled by life, and left behind? Does it sometimes seem, like your world is changing too fast around you; or sometimes does it seem like your world is the same old thing dragging on day after day after day. Does it sometimes seem like every day is a losing fight with other people, with your own body, or your inner self. Does it seem like there is no solid foundation under you anymore? Does it seem like you’re a misfit, all alone even in a room full of people; or like you’re just a clone, being molded to think and act like everyone else? Jesus cares for you, as weary and scattered as you are. He cares for each person. He is your Savior

We need such comfort and such a message. We need those, whom the Lord sends, to heal sin-sick and hurting souls, to “bring in the “harvest” with His Word. We need laborers in His kingdom. Laborers are few. Pray for laborers to carry out this heartfelt harvest of souls. Pray for shepherds to heal the weary and scattered sheep with Jesus’ compassion and forgiveness. Pray for congregations that have no shepherd to care for each soul. Don’t wait until St. Luke’s needs a shepherd. Pray for more harvesters and more shepherds now. The Lord is concerned to reach and to save each soul from more than a noxious cloud of gas, but noxious sin and eternal death. He is concerned for every last one.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---