

## Matthew 9:35-38 July 6, 2014

**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." **1** He called his twelve disciples to him ... **5** These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ... **7** "... preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'"

"You walk down hospital halls - past countless rooms, and through the open doors - you see so much *sickness*, so much *hurt*, so much *pain*. You see broken limbs wrapped in casts. You hear the quiet *whirr* of machines that are helping people to breathe. You see IV bags dripping antibiotics into patients to help cure them of, well, who knows what awful sickness they're battling?" [Pastor Jonathan Bauer, WELS Hymnal Project Weekly email]

What do you feel at the sight?

Do you ever get a similar feeling as people stream past you down grocery store aisles? ...when others crowd into line with you at the fast food restaurant? ...while they pump gas at one of the islands near the one you've parked?

What you can't see can hurt even more than what can be seen.

**See 36.** "Jesus' heart ... saw a world of sickness, hurt and pain ... A place where you could hear the cries of people who were filled with guilt and only [knew] a God who would hate them for their sins. Jesus could see lepers whose decaying bodies didn't bother them as much as the loneliness and rot they felt in their hearts. He walked among people with healthy limbs but breaking and broken homes and lives." [ibid]

Matthew in one word captures how Jesus felt when he saw this. *Jesus' insides come spilling out on the page*. Does that sound too graphic? Please don't get turned off, but rather drawn in, by what we hear. What Jesus was feeling comes out in translation as "*compassion*." The Greek language captures "*compassion*" by picturing: Jesus' insides were all stirred up. "Gut-wrenching," we might say. Emotions welled up in here [**ball-up fists by midsection**] for Jesus.

What generates such raw, powerful emotions?

Crowds of people who had been harassed spiritually, soul's left reeling. Here again the Greek language puts the scene in pictures: People gouged & wounded inside. People thrown around - "put through the spin cycle" of man-made religion and left dizzy and discombobulated. That is what Jesus saw.

Do we feel the same way when we look at the world? What if we see – really see – people down to their soul's hurts, needs and cares! And reply in compassion born from our Lord Jesus' compassion.

**See Vs.35-38** You and I know the kind compassion described here. We know it because we've received it from the Lord. Take a moment to be refreshed by the Lord's compassion shown to you.

Here is one of the most comforting of all our Savior's qualities. Why? Jesus was compassionate in every sort of way we've failed to be. You know when you've lacked compassion, maybe harboring an unforgiving attitude. You see now the times you have been blind to the interests of others, maybe ignoring or neglecting them in favor of looking out for your own good. Jesus is compassionate to us even though – and in all the ways – we have failed. He forgives - and credits his perfect lifetime of compassion to our record. Listen:

- “The Lord is compassionate and gracious... he does not treat us as our sins deserve... as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear [the essential meaning being: believe] him.” – Psalm 103:8-13
- “Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning... The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him.” – Lamentations 3:22-25

In our verses that message is capsulized in the description: “the good news of the kingdom.” The good news of the kingdom is the guarantee: Jesus will gather all who trust in him into His eternal kingdom – where all brokenness will be undone, all wounds will be removed, all the work of the devil overthrown, and the Lord will shepherd us forever.

May the Lord grant us a heart like his own – a heart that breaks at the sight of those still outside his kingdom. They are outside not because He wants it that way, but because they remain lost in their unbelief. May our Lord grant us compassion like his, so that...

We are moved to pray!

[Note: Here's where our section today really enters into a new topic - the sending out of workers to reach out to lost souls. Today's section of Matthew ch.10 is centered mostly on individuals who give their full time to this effort. Next week we'll talk more about how every Christian has a personal part in reaching out to lost souls. Even today's section brings in “action” for every Christian to undertake: support of those who give their full time to the work of preaching & teaching.]

**See Vs.38** Pray! Our Lord Jesus urges us to pray a very aggressive request. Think launching. Can you envision something being hurled out? But not aimlessly or at random. Directed and purposeful. It's the Lord at the controls. He prepares, calls and sends out workers, in order to reach out to lost souls.

He also sets the pattern for their work. Right at the opening scene of our verses, Jesus – what do you see? – He is teaching and preaching the good news of what he came to do and what he came to secure for us. It's the teaching and preaching of that good news which he wants repeated & multiplied through the workers he sends out.

We see Jesus in ch.10 send out the 12 disciples to preach this message (10:7). After Jesus' ascension, they remained at his command. (Acts 5:41-42) The apostles each day – at church and in homes – never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

Break out in prayer for the Lord to keep launching out workers to multiply the effort: the teaching & preaching of the good news of Jesus.

Be prepared for the Lord's way of answering your prayers.

Very specifically: boys/young men, think about if serving as a pastor might be something for which God has given you the gifts. This is a step far before making a final decision. I'm talking about being open to the first step: studying with that possibility in mind.

Dads & moms, think about if one answer to your prayers for workers may be your son for preparing for a Call to serve as a Pastor-missionary. Another answer for workers could be your son or daughter to serve in a teaching position at one of our church's elementary schools or preschools, or even in a teaching role beyond our shores.

May God stir up compassion in us –compassion from him – compassion like his – compassion that opens our mouths to pray for the ministry of the Word. Compassion that moves individuals among us to offer themselves for ministry. Compassion to inspire from us every form of support and type of participation in getting God's saving Word out.

Here's an example of that support. [Holding letter from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Pres. Wendland] Pray for the 23 men assigned from the Seminary in May: **“These graduates are sent to the hurting, to the lost, and to the people who know about Jesus but are worn down.”** “Crowds of hurting, broken people are gathered in our towns. ...many don't know they need Jesus, that they are dying without him. With Jesus' eyes we look at these crowds and have compassion on them.”

“Pray for us!” That is what Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians (2 Thes. 3:1). We heard it earlier in our service. He was asking for the prayers of the God's people for their ministers. Take your bulletin with you and use the Bible verses at the top of p.7 to encourage you: pray for us – me included – ministers of God's Word today. Pray “that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly” & “pray that we may be delivered” from all the forces that oppose our efforts to share God's Word.

Yesterday, I read another time Paul asks for prayers in his behalf. To the Christians in Rome, he wrote: “I urge you, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me” (Romans 15:30). He asked that they pray:

- for his rescue from harm at the hands of opponents to God’s message.
- That he might serve God’s people, and eventually come to see them and be refreshed together with them.

In the same way today, support me – support Pastors Kiecker, Gehl, Rockhoff, Lange, Guldberg – support pastors and missionaries of our church across the world – joining us in our struggle by praying to God for us.

Jesus urges: pray for workers to go out. Paul requests: pray for the workers that are out already laboring in the work of teaching and preaching. And I today ask you very personally: pray for me.

There were stats I saw recently on how many Christian pastors in the full time ministry end up resigning. I don’t recall the exact numbers. I do recall: the numbers in our church body were lower than the percentage in Christian churches in general. Praise God for that! But recognize the fact that Satan will continue to attack both God’s message, and God’s messengers who faithfully carry it to others. Please, pray.

**[Indicating the Bible]** Here is God’s gospel truth. He in grace has brought you to know it. There are souls all around who still are without the good news of Jesus. May the Lord grant you compassion born from His compassion, to support with your prayers – and all your varied offerings – the work to share his saving gospel truth! Amen.