

## Matthew 9:35-38

I have preached on Matthew 9:35-38 many times, but the Lord has helped me to see it in a brand new way this week.

Jesus went (35)

He saw" (36)

He had" (36)

He said" (37)

### I. Christ Went To the People (vs. 35)

He took the primary responsibility to minister to the people's spiritual need by going to them. Wouldn't the salvation story be totally different if Christ waited for people to come to him?

What would have happen if he sat out on a stone and waited for the hurting, the needy, the spiritually sick to come to him?

What would happen if today the Holy Spirit did not come to us to convict and to lead us to grace and forgiveness?

Christ took the first step to go to the people so ministry could occur. He took the initiative to enter their setting. Galilee during Christ's time was not all a placid and peaceful setting. It had large cities, teeming with people from many nations. It use to be called the Galilee of Nations.

Christ intentionally entered into the lives of these people:

He worshipped with them in their synagogues

He went to weddings with them

He worked with them on their fishing boats

He helped harvest the fruits of the field

He laughed with them when one of them made a joke

He cried with them when one of them died

Christ knew who they were and their personal pains because he purposely entered their daily lives.

Some of the most meaningful ministries I have been involved in, have been outside my comfort zone.

Do you really think all of the situations Christ found himself in made him totally comfortable?

Preaching in synagogues where people did not believe as he did? Caring for the sick and diseased?

STORY(American): Allan Emery came from a very wealthy family. He had an experience which made a deep impression upon him. His father received a call saying a well-known Christian had been found at a certain place drunk on the sidewalk. Immediately his father sent his chauffeured limousine to pick the man up, while his mother prepared the best guest room. Alan watched wide-eyed, as the beautiful coverlets were turned down on the exquisite, old, four poster bed, revealing the monogrammed sheets.

"But, mother," he protested, "he's drunk. He might even be sick."

"I know," his mother replied kindly, "but this man has slipped and fallen. When he comes to, he will be so ashamed. He will need all the loving encouragement we can give him."

It was a lesson the son never forgot.

Christ went to them with all sorts of methods

Three separate words were used to describe Christ ministry to the people: He was involved in Teaching; Preaching; and Healing.

It's really not necessary to spend time defining what each one of these mean in ministry, but I believe there is a significant lesson here:

Christ was willing to employ whatever means possible to minister to the people

In some situations he was only able to study the scriptures with them. Sometimes they allowed him to preach in their own

synagogues. Sometimes people would come to him and without hardly a word he would reach out and touch them, healing the wound.

I wonder how many opportunities for ministry we miss because we are stuck on only one method?

I wonder what would happen if we were so in tune to the moving of the Holy Spirit that we were willing to do whatever it took to bring someone to Christ?

## 2. Christ Really Saw them (36)

Have you noticed that there is a difference between hearing and listening? I used to find myself coming home from work and sitting down in my chair and kind of spacing out. For the longest time I could hear a constant sound in my ear, but too tired to figure out what it was. I would sound like a fly buzzing in my ear. Finally I would hear one of my young children, saying: Mummy, you aren't listening to me!!

I was hearing but not listening!

There is also a difference between seeing a person, and actually seeing who they really are!

Christ actually saw them individually. He didn't just see a group of people, a crowd. But He looked into every single soul. I wonder what Christ was thinking when He saw the people? It gives me great comfort to know that God does not see me as just a number, but He knows me, He understands me, He feels for me.

Christ saw more than what is observable. Most of us are pretty good about hiding our true hurts and pain. People can smile, yet inside they are weeping because of the severe internal pain.

One of my most favourite New Testament word pictures is the story of the prodigal son walking home with his head bowed low with shame. His father sees his son, who has spent all his money, ran with the wrong crowd, and miserably failed his family. The loving father looks past the sin and despair and sees the son that he loves and rushes down the road to put his arms around him.

Jesus saw them as having no shepherd. Sheep are dumb, helpless, dumb, vulnerable, dumb, powerless, dumb. Sheep without a shepherd are aimless and lost, hopeless and forsaken, unprotected and feeble. They don't know where they are going and don't know what to do. They live from event to event with no real purpose. They are easy prey for the enemy. They are so dumb they would look up towards the sky during a rain storm and actually drown if their loving shepherd were not there.

I wonder what would happen if we made it a point to ask God to help us see people from the inside instead of the outside. Would that change the way we prayed for them? Would that change the way we respond to them?

## 3. He Had Compassion On Them (36b)

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

- literally: He was gripped with compassion. Greek verb means suffered within. The Greek understanding was that the bowels were regarded as the seat of violent passion, such as anger or love. The Hebrew understanding was that the bowels were regarded as the seat of the tender affections.

Today we would say the heart is the seat of anger or love.

- I love you with all of my heart.

Recently I have been doing some study on the proper way to observe people I found that you are not only to observe what they say, but just as important you are to observe what they did not say.

Did you notice that the scripture does **not** say: When he saw the crowds, he felt commitment towards them.

Christ wasn't just committed to the people. He had something far more compelling: He had compassion.

I can be committed to my husband for life...but if I don't have love and compassion towards him, all I have is a contract.

I can be committed to Clive as a leader, but if I don't care and pray for him because I really don't love him, all I have is a cold, administrative relationship with him.

We as a church must not just be committed to the people of this community, but we must be moved with compassion.

How:

1. Ask God to give you a new picture of their pain.
2. Begin praying often for the people you meet
3. Enter into their world

Christ had compassion on them because He entered their world.

Being moved with compassion may mean stepping out of our comfort zones:

To touch the leper was to deem Christ unclean as per the Law of Moses. To heal the woman with an abnormal blood flow could be embarrassing. To continually be begged for healing must have been taxing. To eat with the prostitutes and tax collectors were times of being uncomfortable. To be constantly on-call to teach by example was draining.

It was compassion that drove Him.

Most of the time when we read this passage, we feel we are not even at the meat of it until we read verse 37: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

There are really great lessons on evangelism in that passage but that is not for this talk you will be pleased to know!

But in the context of this passage we quickly pass over a very important word: **Then**

4. Then He said. Christ gives a wonderful lesson to His disciples on evangelism.

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the Harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his field. (37)

I understand that Christ was God and knew all things, but He was also man and developed as he grew physically and spiritually.

The Bible said after he experienced life in the towns and villages after he taught them in their own synagogues, after he preached to them the Good News that God had sent the Messiah, after he called the children to him, after he raised a mother's son to life again, after he saw each one of them individually, after he experienced tremendous compassion for them

The Bible said, THEN he said to his disciples, The Harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (37)

I went through that whole process to say this important lesson: Christ did not present a clear and powerful presentation of what it would take to be an effective evangelist unless he had gone through the process!

- UNTIL they saw the people
- UNTIL they felt their needs
- UNTIL they experienced their pain

· UNTIL they were gripped with compassion

Life-changing lessons can only be effective if life-change has occurred in the teacher.

Have you ever listened to a preacher give a professional sounding sermon on something that you knew he/she didn't possess themselves? Have you ever listened to a how-to lecture from a teacher, but the teacher tell you he has never done it?

Christ had experience first-hand and had been affected by his experience before he had the ability to pass it on to the disciples:

Don't expect to have a passion for people until you go to them  
Don't expect God to give you a heavy burden for your neighbour until you get to know their needs.

Don't expect God to put you in charge of hundreds, when you are slow to be in charge of a few.

Don't expect God to let you have evangelistic success until you are willing to be gripped with compassion for the lost.

Jesus' response to their needs gave Him an opportunity for successful ministry

After He cast the legions of demons out of the man in the cemetery, the man began following Christ and telling everyone on the way what Christ did for him.

When he healed Peter's mother-in-law, the whole town showed up. My guess is that he didn't miss that opportunity to preach the gospel to them

After he healed the man with leprosy, the man told everyone what Christ had done.

When he fed the 4,000, don't you think he had their attention when He preached?

When Jesus showed His authority over nature by walking on the water, don't you think the disciples would have taken notice of His power?

When He healed the woman of the issue of blood by a touch, don't you think the medical community of the day paid attention after they had failed to heal her?

When Christ gave respect and worth to the little children by saying, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' don't you think these children always wanted to be around Him?

Conclusion:

In his book, *The Yoke of Christ*, Elton Trueblood quotes a letter from a school girl who probes the depth of her soul. She writes: "I've been thinking much this year about the importance of caring, of the passion of life. I've often realized that it takes courage to care.

Caring is dangerous. It leaves you open to hurt and to looking like a fool. And perhaps it's because they have been hurt so often that people are afraid to care. You can't die if you're not alive. And then who would rather be a stone? I have found many places in my own life where I keep a secret store of indifference as a sort of self-protection."

That's a penetrating insight -- a secret store of indifference.

We're to care, because Christ cared - even though it is painful. But with the help of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit all things are possible. AMEN