

The Foundry

Devotions

Day 1

Matthew 9:35-36

The Workers Are Few

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming 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."

The Book of Matthew is the first book of the New Testament. It is an account of Jesus' life and ministry written by one of his disciples. Chapter 9 contains Matthew's own personal story in just a few words; when Jesus calls him to be a disciple. Before that Matthew had been a tax-collector. This was one of the most despised positions in the Jewish world, because tax-collectors worked for the Roman government. They often over-taxed their fellow Jews, paid the government and pocketed the difference. Matthew was simply called by Jesus, "Follow Me," and he did. This chapter also contains several accounts of miracles of Jesus, including healing a paralyzed man, a sick women, a blind man, a mute man and raising a dead girl to life.

All this time, Matthew and the other disciples are observing. They had answered Jesus' first call, and followed. They walked close with him and watched how he worked. Then we come

to the point that was our passage today. As Jesus looked on the crowds of people, the disciples saw their master deeply moved with compassion. The word in Greek for compassion points to an internal emotion, in the heart and stomach. We might say we've been "cut to the heart." The people Jesus was watching were harassed. This word in the original text is even stronger. It was a word meaning skinned alive, mangled, harassed until they were completely wore out. Have you ever been there? Have you ever seen someone else in that condition because they were apart from God?

Jesus told the disciples that the harvest was plentiful. Who was the harvest? The masses of people who needed to know that God loved them, and that Jesus thought they were worth saving.

In Chapter 10, Matthew's position changes from follower to worker. Jesus sends Matthew and the other disciples out to preach the gospel himself, to heal the sick, and to rescue those who were weary and harassed.

How long have you been a follower of Jesus? Is He calling you to become a worker? Where is the harvest He wants you to participate in? It could be at work, at home, with your neighbors, at the park, at a ball game or art class. It could be right in your back yard, or half way around the world.

Day 2

Prayer

Lord, you have saved me. You have given me the great gift of forgiveness, new life, and eternal life! Show me your heart for those who still do not know. In Jesus Name,

Amen

The Word of God

We read in the previous devotion about Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples who was taken from his old life, and transformed into a follower of Christ. Matthew carefully wrote down the good news about Jesus, and God has preserved this letter for two thousand years so that many more could hear. This text from Matthew includes the last words recorded in his letter. It takes place after Jesus had risen from the dead, when a large crowd is gathered around him.

Matthew 28

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This next passage is from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. Just like Matthew, Paul had been transformed from his old life as a persecutor of the church, to one of its first great missionaries. Paul had lived out Jesus's charge above, taking the good news about Jesus everywhere he could.

Romans 10:9, 14-15

9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved...

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how

can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Discussion:

Sometimes we make things more complicated than they really are. Why? Could it be because we don't really want to do what we have been instructed?

I remember laughing so hard at the sitcom Everybody Loves Raymond. After years of working hard at raising their three kids, the wife Debra finally finds out that her husband had employed a tactic of playing dumb. When she would leave him instructions about how to do a simple household chore, or take care of the kids, he would act confused and fumble around, asking too many questions until she just did it herself. When she realized he had done the same things with changing diapers...she lost it!

I still laugh about this today, until I think about myself and the church as a whole. Jesus was very clear in his instructions.

Go!

Into all the world.

Tell them about Jesus, teach them to obey, and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Then we look at the simplicity of salvation from Paul's letter:

Anyone who confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe that God raised Jesus from the dead will be saved.

It's so simple.

But when we feel the nudge of the Spirit to share Jesus with a coworker, but then we fight that prompt by telling ourselves: it's politically incorrect to say something like that.

And how can
they believe in
someone they
have not
heard?

Or when our son or daughter feels the call to go into missions, but we say: they need to remember how important a college degree, or a graduate degree is first.

Our heart might be burning to invite our neighbor to church, but then we think: they are probably too busy, they probably don't like church, they probably would be offended, they probably would be awkward around us from now on if they say no, the probably...

Jesus said Go! When I fill my mind with excuses, political and social rules, and my own prideful anxieties or cultural priorities, I am really telling God I know better than Him.

Listen to the plea in the letter to the Romans. "How will they know if no one tells them?" Jesus gave the command to everyone, not just a few select missionaries. The only reason we let ourselves think that it is only for a few, is because throughout the years, only a few have obeyed.

Never forget. The Kingdom of God expands one soul at a time. One person faithfully sharing with another, the incredible news of Jesus.