



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N37 September 10, 2023

MAKING GOD KNOWN

“Missional Prayer”

Matthew 9:35-38

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Prayer

I pray to God to know him, to lay my requests before him, and to find direction for my daily life.

“Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!”

Psalms 66:16-20



For what should Christians pray?

According to Matthew 9:35-38, taking the good news of the kingdom of God to all the people who needed to hear it was more than Jesus could do alone, so he enlisted the help of his twelve disciples (10:1-5). “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few,” he told them. In another place he said, “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest?’ I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (Jn 4:35). The job proved to be more than the twelve could do alone, so Jesus later sent out seventy-two (Lk 10:1, 2), then 120 (Ac 1:8; cf., 15). It didn’t take long for the number of believers to swell to 3000, then to 5000, counting the men only, all of whom, plus an equal number of women, he commissioned to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19, 20). Over the centuries the harvest has only become more plentiful, exacerbating the need for more and more workers.

When a team of workers faces an insurmountable task, what must be done? What must be done if their assigned task is to be accomplished on time? The answer is obvious. Additional workers must be added to their number. A biblical illustration of this can be found in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1-16). Although the story is a parable, it is nonetheless based on a common first-century agricultural practice. When his grapes were ready to pick, the vigneron hired seasonal workers to do the job. As the day went on, it became obvious to him that additional workers were needed to finish the harvest, so he went back to the marketplace to hire more. Of course, the point of the parable isn’t the vineyard owner’s hiring practices. Nevertheless, Jesus refers to an analogous situation in Matthew 9:37 – only with reference to a grain harvest. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few,” he said. Just as

more workers were needed to pick grapes, so also more workers were needed to harvest grain.

When it comes to the harvest, clearly no one can do everything, but everyone can and must do something. First, everyone must pray. Every worker must “Ask the Lord of the harvest . . . to send out workers into his harvest field” (Mt 9:38). And then everyone must “go beyond” into his or her neighborhood, church, and world in one way or another. The authors of *Irresistible Evangelism* are correct; “We are the messengers God is sending into the lives of our friends and family members, our neighbors and coworkers” (Steve Sjogren, Dave Ping, and Doug Pollock, *Irresistible Evangelism*, 60).

Going beyond is *first* a matter of the heart, having one like Jesus had, a heart of compassion for the lost. He saw the crowds of people in his world, and they reminded him of sheep without a shepherd. “Sheep are defenseless animals,” observes one writer. “Without a shepherd they are vulnerable to any attack. Even without predators they are in trouble if they have no shepherd, for they are not good foragers. They need a shepherd to lead them in green pastures and beside still waters (Ps. 23:2). Goats manage very well by themselves, but sheep do not. *Sheep without a shepherd points to people who are in great danger and without the resources to escape from it*” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 239, italics added). Unlike Jesus, when we see the crowds in our world, people in deep spiritual need living in darkness, we can feel anger instead of compassion. Thinking sinful people deserve condemnation, not compassion, comes easy.

Going beyond is *second*, a matter of mission. The harvest is the Lord’s; he has sent us to work in his harvest field. We need to see ourselves as people on a mission to “make disciples.” But the harvest is so plentiful; where should we begin reaping? Perhaps the best place to start is right around us in our own neighborhoods.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 9:35-38

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."

Read in another translation

35 Then Jesus went throughout all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were bewildered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few 38 Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest-ready fields." (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "teaching," "proclaiming," and "healing" in v. 35.
- Bracket "of the kingdom" in v. 35.
- Insert "kind of" between "every" and "disease" in v. 35 (cf. NET).
- Circle "compassion" in v. 36.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 36.
- Underline "harassed and helpless" in v. 36.
- Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 36.
- Circle "harvest" in v. 37.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 37.
- Circle "ask" in v. 38.
- Bracket "Lord of the harvest" in v. 38.
- Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 38.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What do we learn about the extent of Jesus' Galilean ministry from verse 35?
2. Would you say that the "good news of the kingdom" that Jesus preached and the "gospel of Christ" that Paul preached (Ro 15:19; cf., Php 1:27) are the same or different? Explain.
3. Jesus went around "*preaching* the good news of the kingdom" and "healing every disease and sickness." Does that mean he healed every sick person brought to him? Explain.
4. What did his *healing* have to do with his *preaching*?
5. Explain the use of *reason* and *comparison* in verse 36.
6. What do you infer about God from Jesus?
7. Jesus identifies a problem using *contrast* (v. 37). Explain the *contrast* and identify the problem.
8. Identify Jesus' *solution* to the problem.
9. Describe the sense in which God is "*Lord* of the harvest" and any inferences you might draw from it.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the timelessness of the problem, Jesus' solution, and whether you're part of the *problem* or part of the *solution*.

Commentary On The Text

Matthew 9:35-38 may be a short paragraph, but it occupies a strategic position in Matthew's Gospel. This observation is based largely on the similarity between 9:35, "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," and 4:23, "Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." One author writes, "These verses form an inclusio, creating a 'bookends' effect that sets off the material in the chapters between them. In chapters 5-7 Jesus is the authoritative Messiah in *word* in the Sermon on the Mount, and in chapters 8-9 he is the Messiah at *work* in the miracle stories" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 374, italics added).

Rather than concluding the previous section, another author argues that 9:35-38 introduces the following one. "Verse 35 is very similar to 4:23, and it may be that the two are meant to bracket the intervening section on the authority of Jesus for teaching and healing. But perhaps it is more likely that for Matthew each passage forms an introduction to an important section on the teaching of Jesus. Here he goes on to bring out the compassion of the Master and his call to prayer for the sending out of those who would bring in the spiritual harvest" (Morris, 238). But who says it has to be one or the other? Perhaps the paragraph functions in two ways, to *conclude* one section (v. 35) and *introduce* the next (vv. 36-38).

The paragraph is easy to analyze; it falls into three parts. The *first* (v. 35) contains a summary statement describing Jesus' ministry in Galilee expressed in three parallel participles: "teaching," "preaching," and "healing." Matthew goes out of his way to stress the scope of Jesus' Galilean ministry. Clearly Jesus wanted everyone to hear the good news, so he went through all the towns and villages, each and every one of the 240 of them. As he went, he preached the good news that the kingdom of God promised in the Old Testament was near because the king was at hand. Jesus' good news regarding the kingdom appears to be broader in scope than today's good news regarding salvation. Regarding the kingdom, one writer explains: "A key feature in Old Testament eschatology [last things] concerns a future kingdom that God will set up on this earth and which will be everlasting in duration. We can see this in Daniel 2:34-35, 44; Isaiah 2:2-4; and Micah 4:1-8. This kingdom is not simply a higher order of spiritual reality that coexists with the present course of affairs, but it is a complete *replacement* of present conditions on earth with a new worldwide and multinational world order. Promises found throughout the prophets regarding the future restoration of Israel are coterminous with this expectation of a worldwide king-

dom. Personal and national blessing are extended to Gentiles as well. Messianic prophecy also finds its fulfillment here. Daniel's future kingdom on earth, introduced in Daniel 2, is re-presented in 7:12-14, 27, under the rule of 'one like a Son of man.' God's rule from Zion over all nations in Isaiah 2 is revealed in Isaiah 11 to be the rule of a future Davidite, 'a shoot . . . from the stump of Jesse' (11:1), who 'will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom . . . from that time on and forever' (9:7)" (Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, 193, 94). Jesus identified himself as that "one like the Son of man" who had come in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. Jesus' message regarding the kingdom must have included the message of salvation, since no unrighteous person gets into the kingdom of God, and since one must be "born from above" to see it (Jn 3:3 NET). The fact that Jesus healed the sick regardless of their malady attested to the fact that he was the long awaited Messiah.

The *second* (v. 36) contains Jesus' expression of compassion for the crowds to whom he ministered. They were like shepherdless sheep harassed by predators and helpless to provide for their own needs. One author writes, "These crowds are experiencing distressing difficulties and are unable to care for themselves. The job of the shepherd is to make sure that the sheep are led peacefully beside still waters and that they lack for nothing, but these leaders are harassing the helpless crowds. They are suffering under the oppression of the occupying Roman forces, plus they have all of the daily concerns, heartbreaks, and difficulties of life beating down on them" (Wilkins, 375). What causes Jesus' deep compassion at this point, however, is not the number of sick people he has healed but rather the great spiritual illness of the people "whose lives have no center, whose existence seems aimless, whose experience is one of futility" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 260). The same is true of people today.

And the *third* (vv. 37, 38) contains his description of the problem facing him and his disciples and his solution to it. He frames it in the form of a *contrast*. On the one hand, "the harvest is plentiful" but on the other, "the workers are few." No matter how hard the workers work, they will not be able to gather in the whole harvest. His solution is simple. He does not challenge workers to work harder; instead, he asks them to pray that the one to whom the harvest belongs will send out more workers. "In an age like ours we would expect a call to more vigorous and effective action ourselves (and situations continually arise when that is the right course to pursue). But Jesus points to prayer as the really effective thing" (Morris, 240).

Word Studies/Notes

vv. 35-38 “By means of an almost verbatim repetition of 4:23, 9:35 brings to a satisfying conclusion the great complex consisting of the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7) and the miracles collection (chaps. 8-9). It reiterates the priority of teaching and preaching over healing (see comments on 4:23). To this summary Matthew appends material whose purpose is to introduce the second great compendium of Jesus’ teachings, the mission discourse of chapter 10” (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, 108).

v. 35 *of the kingdom* The “good news” Jesus preached pertained to the coming kingdom of God promised in the Old Testament (Da 2:44; cf. 7:13-14) and described in the angel’s words to Mary: “‘You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end’” (Lk 1:31-33; cf. Rev 20:4).

v. 35 *went around* The verb *went around* is in the imperfect, pointing to a continuing process (cf. Moffatt, ‘made a tour’), while the combination of *the cities* and *the villages*, reinforced as it is by *all*, indicates a comprehensive activity. This is what Jesus kept doing” (Morris, 238)

v. 35 *healing* Healing was one of Jesus’ works that authenticated his messianic identity (cf., Mt 11:1-6).

v. 35 *every* Not that Jesus healed every single sick person in Galilee but that he healed people regardless of their malady. It “may mean every illness that was brought to him, or ‘every kind of disease and sickness’ (GNB). It is a comprehensive expression that brings out Jesus’ mastery over all ill health” (Morris, 238).

v. 36 *compassion* “Jesus’ human emotions reflect a deep, *gut-level* ‘compassion (a reasonable, idiomatic English equivalent for a term [from Greek *splanchnos*] that could refer to bowels and kidneys) for this sea of humanity” (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 166). “In the New Testament this verb is always used of Jesus or by Jesus in his parables; it is particularly associated with him. H. Köster comments, ‘outside the original parables of Jesus there is no instance of the word being used of men. It is always used to describe the attitude of Jesus and it characterises [*sic*] the divine nature of His acts.’ He finds in Matthew’s use of the term ‘a Messianic characterization [*sic*] of Jesus rather than the mere depiction of an emotion’ (TDNT, VII, pp. 553, 554)” (Morris 238, 39).

v. 36 *harassed/helpless* “The translations employ a variety of expressions: ‘worried and helpless’ (GNB); ‘harassed and helpless’ (NASV, REB, NIV); ‘distressed and downcast’ (NASB); ‘harassed and dejected’ (JEB). The imagery is that of shepherdless sheep, sheep wounded and torn either by hostile animals or by thornbushes and the like, and then prostrate and helpless. *Harassed* is probably as good a translation as we can find for the first term, while “*cast down* is almost exactly what the second conveys” (Morris, 239). “Of particular significance is the fact that both Jeremiah and Ezekiel present ‘David’ as the future good shepherd of Israel (Jer. 23:5; Ezek. 34:23) who will replace the worthless shepherds. By manifesting compassion for the distressed flock and the lost sheep (see Matt. 10:6; 15:24; 18:10-14), Jesus is presenting himself as the promised ‘David’” (Hare, 109).

v. 36 *shepherd* “The language of ‘sheep without a shepherd’ echoes Num 27:17 and Ezek 34:5, in which the shepherd is most likely messianic (cf. Ezek 34:23)” (Blomberg, 166). “The leaders in Israel’s history had also been likened to shepherds. Joshua was appointed leader after Moses, so that ‘the LORD’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd’ (Num 27:17). But that is what Israel is like in Jesus’ day. The leaders have not fulfilled their responsibility to guide and protect the people, and therefore the people are ‘harassed’ and ‘helpless.’ These crowds are experiencing distressing difficulties and are unable to care for themselves. The job of the shepherd is to make sure that the sheep are led peacefully beside still water and that they lack for nothing, but these leaders are harassing the helpless crowds. They are suffering under the oppression of the occupying Roman forces, plus they have all of the daily concerns, heartbreaks, and difficulties of life beating down on them” (Wilkins, 375).

v. 37 *harvest* “The harvest may refer to a literal crop of grain or the like, but here it is used metaphorically of people. Jesus does not spell it out, but he is speaking of people who are ripe for inclusion in the kingdom” (Morris, 239).

v. 38 *of the harvest* The harvest field, as well as the harvest itself, belongs to the Lord, but the harvest must be gathered in. “It is one of the functions of the workers in God’s field that they pray for more workers to be sent into the field” (Morris, 240).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Help is needed to harvest a bumper crop, so ask God to send more workers into his harvest field and get to work.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

The prayers of a young child are precious. They pray for a horse, not to get caught hiding their brother's favorite toy, or for more cake. They're sweet and innocent and filled with childlike faith. I know as parents we can be tempted to restrict what they pray for, and I fully understand there's a fine line that crosses over into disrespect, but why would we ever want to get in the way of their conversation with God? We don't want to foster irreverence, but let's encourage them to open their heart to our Savior. Many of us stick with general family prayers for meals and bedtime. It's almost like we feel it's a requirement, so let's get it done and move on. I want to encourage you to begin a renewed prayer life with your family today, and here are a few things to consider. Most people wake up in the morning and grab their phone. Instead, let's wake up and go to God. One new habit you might encourage is to begin your morning on your knees thanking God for the day. You can also gather as a family and pray before you scatter to different jobs and schools. Another habit is to encourage your child to pray aloud. Can't find their favorite Bluey shirt? Stop and pray with your child. Late for school? Pray in the car as you're driving. As prayer becomes more comfortable, natural and consistent, build into your regular routine praying for your sponsor child or missionaries your family supports. God tells us to pray for those on mission. As you disciple your child, know we're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Matthew 9:35-38

1. How did Jesus feel about the people? Why?
2. What problem did Jesus notice?
3. What did Jesus encourage the disciples to do?

What Do You Think?

Jesus talked about sheep and harvests because those things were familiar to people then. What are some modern-day comparisons Jesus might make today?

What Do You Do?

Let's do what Jesus says to do! As a family, spend time each day praying for God to send people to reach the neighbors and nations. Ask God what your part might be in His plan.

CORE COMPETENCY: Prayer

I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things and find out what He wants me to do.

MEMORY VERSE: Habakkuk 2:14

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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