

THE HARVEST

jkroberts_us@yahoo.com
www.pacolethillsbaptist.org

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Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5

1. What motivates us matters.
2. As followers of Jesus Christ we should be motivated by what motivated Him.
3. First, and foremost, Jesus was motivated by His love for the Father and His desire to obey and please Him in all things.
4. Jesus was also motivated by His love for humanity.
5. My prayer is that God will use this message to:
 - a. Enlighten us—speak to our minds and hearts on a profound level.
 - b. Encourage us.
 - c. Enable us—to provide us with spiritual insight and understanding.
 - d. Energize us—to cause us to act on what God's Word reveals to us today.
6. In this wonderful passage of Scripture:
 - a. We see the ministry of Jesus summarized.
 - b. We see the motivation behind Jesus' ministry.
 - (1) Divine compassion.
 - (2) Man's condition.
 - (3) The harvest.
 - c. We see the method chosen by Jesus to involve His followers in His ministry.
 - (1) Divine command.
 - (2) Divine commission.

I. The ministry of Jesus.

A. There are several summary statements in Scripture that describe our Lord's ministry.

1. Luke 4:16-19

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

2. Luke 19:9-10

And Jesus said to him (Nicodemus), "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

3. Matthew 20:24-28

And hearing this (the request of James and John's mother), the ten became indignant with the two brothers. 25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

4. Acts 10:38-39

"You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

NOTE: How would we or others summarize our lives?

B. Here we find Jesus going through all the cities and villages:

1. Teaching in their synagogues.
2. Proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom.
3. Healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

II. The motivation behind Jesus' ministry.

A. Divine compassion.

1. "Seeing the people (crowds), He felt compassion for them."
2. The word compassion literally means to be profoundly moved to the depth of one's being.
3. Compassion is that attribute of God that causes Him to identify with us and to act on our behalf.

B. Man's condition.

1. Jesus felt compassion for the crowds because they were distressed (harassed and severely troubled) and dispirited (utterly helpless) like sheep without a shepherd.
2. Phillip Keller, in His book, "A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23," wrote, "It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways as will be seen in further chapters. Our mass mind (or mob instincts), our fears and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, our perverse habits are all parallels of profound importance. Yet despite these adverse characteristics Christ chooses us, buys us, calls us by name, makes us His own, and delights in caring for us."
3. We may not like the analogy, but we know it is true because God says it is.
4. Note Jesus' words in John 10.
 - a. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2 "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice." John 10:1-4
 - b. "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:9
 - c. "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." John 10:11
 - d. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 "I and the Father are one." John 10:27-30

C. The harvest.

1. Jesus used this analogy often.
2. He stated that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.
NOTE: A harvest of any kind needs harvesters because no harvest can harvest itself.
3. Any harvest is time sensitive, and that is true of the people we know who are not Christians.

III. The method chosen by Jesus to involve His followers in ministry.

- A. Up until this point Jesus' disciples were listeners and onlookers, observing and learning, but now their role was about to change.
- B. Their involvement was two-fold..
 - 1. He commanded them to pray earnestly and specifically.
 - 2. He commissioned them to serve.
 - a. He summoned them.
 - b. He equipped them.
 - c. He sent them.

APPLICATION

- 1. It is always good to ask ourselves the questions that are suggested by the Word of God.
- 2. We might ask ourselves:
 - a. Am I listening to, and responding to the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd?
 - b. Am I faithfully following Him? John 12:26
 - "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."
 - c. Am I confident that Jesus will care for and keep me?
 - d. Am I seeing those around me in the same light Jesus does?
 - e. Am I being impacted by their plight in the same way Jesus was?
 - f. Am I concerned enough about the harvest to earnestly pray for the lost?
 - g. Am I actively cooperating with the Lord of the Harvest?
- 3. As we approach the end of the Church Age evangelizing the lost will become more difficult, but that should not impact our compassion or our commission.