A Leader You Can Trust — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 9:35–36 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 25, 2026 · *What Man Is This?*

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All right. Well, thanks to Roland for leading us. If you've got a Bible, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 9. And if you don't have a Bible, there should be one on the chair underneath you, or underneath the chair in front of you.

It's election season. I don't know if you got out to vote last week. I think early voting ends October 30th, so there's still time for you to get out there and vote early. I would commend that to you. We're living in a democratic republic where you get to help elect your leaders, and leadership matters in a country just like leadership matters in any arena of life. Leaders have a way of making the lives of those beneath their leadership really good or really bad. And you can tell a lot about a leader by looking at the collective experience of those that they lead. If there's a collective misery in the lives of the people they lead, then it might be a sign that they're not really great leaders. And you see that in the case of a nation, you can see it in the case of a city, you can see it in the case of a family, you can see it in the case of a church — you can see it in the case of many, many different things. It's just a dynamic of leadership.

One of the best definitions of leadership that I've ever come across is from John Maxwell — there he is. John Maxwell says that **leadership is influence**. And I love that definition because it's such a powerful reminder that you don't need a position of leadership to be a leader. What effective leaders do is that they *affect* the people they lead. They influence them, for good or for bad. And one of the questions you want to ask yourself when it comes to the influence that you wield — as a man, or as a woman, or as any kind of social creature — is whether the influence I'm exerting over people is something that's for their benefit, or am I exerting influence in a way that's going to harm or hurt? You can ask that question as a mom. You can ask that question as a dad. I can ask that question as a pastor. **Leadership is**

influence, and effective leaders affect — meaning they act upon the ones that they lead. Whether you like it or not, you're having an effect.

And so what I want us to look at this morning is that dynamic in the life of Jesus. You may not think of Jesus as a leader, but a leader he was. And one of the things that we've seen developing in the Gospel of Matthew is a powerful contrast between the way that Jesus exerted his influence and the way that the religious establishment of his day was exerting influence — and not just the religious establishment, but even the political establishment of Rome and Caesar and all of those power players in the Roman Empire. The thing that Jesus was doing was very, very different, and it was a type of leadership. Jesus talked about himself as a Messiah. If you're not aware of that title, it was an Old Testament title for a king — a royal figure, a political figure who would inaugurate God's kingdom and bring about heaven on earth. Essentially, God's designs would be made manifest in the world. And what we're seeing in Matthew is that that kingdom is very, very different from what we see, and the way of that leadership is very, very different from what we typically see modeled for us — and what they saw modeled for them, whether through the Roman Empire or through their religious establishment.

So just to catch you up if you're new to the Gospel of Matthew: Matthew basically structures his gospel around five big teachings of Jesus. And on either side of those teachings are some actions — some encounters between Jesus and various different people. The first one that we looked at started in Matthew chapter 4. I think in verse 23, Matthew gave us this little summary statement of everything Jesus did in his life. And it said that he was going to all of the different towns and villages. He was teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease. And after Matthew gives that summary statement, he drills down into the specifics. In chapters 5, 6, and 7, he drills down on the teaching and preaching of Jesus with a sermon we know as the Sermon on the Mount — a very popular sermon. And then after Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount, we see Jesus go down the mountain, and he begins to heal sickness and disease. And he has these encounters that we've been looking at in this series.

And all of these encounters are trying to answer one really important question. It's the question the disciples ask after Jesus calms the wind and the waves. The disciples are in the boat, and they're amazed and afraid: **What kind of man is this, that even the wind and the waves obey his word?** And that was the question everyone was asking as Jesus had these encounters with people. Jesus was doing things that no one else would do. He was going places no one else would go. He was saying things no one else would say. He was saying things that were so scandalous that people accused him of blasphemy, because no one would say those things if they did not think they were God. No one can forgive sins but God alone — and yet Jesus says to a paralytic, "Take courage, son. Your sins are forgiven." No one can calm the wind and the waves except God alone — and yet they obey the voice of Jesus.

No one has that kind of power over Satan and demons — to cast a thousand demons out of a demon-possessed man, and they go into a herd of pigs and run over the cliff. No one has that power but God alone. And yet Jesus had that power.

And so you see this tension between who Jesus presents himself to be and what they expected Messiah to be. You see the tension between Jesus making these incredible claims and demanding this incredible loyalty and allegiance, and people acknowledging the power and yet being afraid of the implications, because it required their submission. It required their unconditional following of his leadership.

And all of that drives us toward the end of chapter 9, where Matthew is heightening, I think, a contrast between the leadership of Jesus and that of the scribes and the Pharisees. We've been watching it build. The scribes and the Pharisees have been accusing Jesus of hanging out with the wrong people — you know, the sinners and the tax collectors. He was too friendly with those people. We've seen them question Jesus's approach to spiritual disciplines like fasting and prayer, and they said he's too lax. He's too happy. "Aren't you supposed to be sad as a Christian? Aren't you supposed to be miserable?" And Jesus wasn't miserable or sad. And then we saw last week, when Jesus healed this person who couldn't speak — he gave the man a voice — and when he spoke, the crowds respond with amazement, but the scribes and the Pharisees respond with an accusation. And they say, "Yeah, no doubt Jesus has power. No doubt he has incredible abilities that seem to come from God. But it isn't from God. Because if he's from God, and what he says about us is true, we don't like the implications of that. And so he's not from God. He's working for the devil. He's working for the ruler of demons."

And so what you see is the Pharisees respond to the crowds with accusation, with fear, with an attempt to preserve their influence and leadership. And then we're going to see Jesus respond to the crowds in a totally different way. And in that way, we're going to see a contrast between the leadership of Jesus and that of his contemporaries. And really it boils down to a difference in *why* they lead. One of the things you'll need to know if you're a leader of any kind — if you have influence of any kind — one of the ways you'll know that you're using your influence rightly is answering the question *why*. Why do I want this influence? Why do I have this influence? Because **why you serve is going to determine how you serve.** If you see your influence as a means to develop yourself, then you are going to lead people as means to that end. But if you see your influence as a stewardship from God to cultivate and empower the people God has put around you, then you are going to lead in a very different way. The Pharisees are going to be that first kind of leader. Jesus presents himself to be the second.

The text

So, Matthew chapter 9 — we're going to start in verse 35, and we're going to finish up the chapter.

> *Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages, (Matthew 9:35a)*

Remember, this is exactly what Matthew said in chapter 4. I think it's verse 23 — it's somewhere close to there.

> *Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:35–38)*

And I just want us to focus on verses 35 and 36, and specifically how Jesus responds to the crowds — his leadership. Again, his response was not, "I'm threatened that I'm losing influence, and so I'm going to tear down the person more popular than me." His response was: the people they have been leading have been destroyed by their leadership, and it's tragic.

He says of the crowds that they were **distressed and dejected**. Your translation may say something a little bit different. I think the ESV says "harassed and helpless." Others say something like "thrown down and weak." The words are really a compound that builds on top of each other. The way I would explain it is this: this word *distressed* is to be annoyed, to be frazzled, to be struck. Think of it like your sibling — your younger brother, in my case — annoying you until you lose your brain. Tapping your shoulder, doing whatever he does, smacking his food. You just lose yourself. You become another person, and you get very upset. That is the first word, *distressed*. The second word is *dejected*. It means to be thrown down to the ground, like you would throw down a piece of trash. There's nothing left. It's worthless. It's destroyed. It's no good. It's used up.

So that's kind of a silly analogy. I want you to take that and expand it. It's this idea of someone being so pestered, so annoyed, so harassed that they become worthless. They become good for nothing.

Another example I think of is with the sheep of my pasture — my literal sheep, not my family; my literal sheep, Gary and the girls, as we like to call them. One time last year they had just lambed, and we had some babies that were getting pretty old, and they were weaned, and they were in the — I'm sorry, they were not in the back pasture; they were in the

front pasture. And the neighbor's dog came over. It was a labradoodle — a big dog that's furry and looks like a poodle but it's not. And it was a baby puppy. And so he thought, *This is the best day ever.* And he just started chasing the sheep and tearing at their ears and tearing holes in their heads, and he thought he was having the best time of his life. And it stressed the sheep out. They were running so hard, they were running so long, that something happened, and they would basically just sit there and not move. And we couldn't figure out what was wrong. And it turns out that if sheep get too stressed, too pestered, too harassed, what can happen is that internally their organs will just shut down, and they will just die. They will just lie there and die, because their organs literally are falling apart.

It reminds me of one of our members. When he heard that I got sheep, his face fell, and he said, "Man, I'm so sorry." He says, "I've always just heard that sheep are looking for a place to die." And he was very accurate in saying that, because that's all they do — they look for a place to die. But that's the perfect picture of this word. It's **harassed to the point that you become helpless.** You're good for nothing. You just sit there and die.

And that is the state of the crowds, because they did not have a good shepherd. The state of leadership in the first century — the spiritual leadership that was taking care of those crowds — had weighed them down with so many burdens and so much stress and anxiety that they had devolved and become dejected to the point that they were literally good for nothing. They might have been living and moving and going about their life, but they were totally destroyed. And Jesus looks at the crowds, sees them in that way, and has compassion, because they didn't have a shepherd.

When a good shepherd is absent

And we read that and go, "Oh, that's cool. What a cool analogy." You know — Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we're the flock. And that's fine. Nothing wrong with that. But if you were a first-century Jewish person and you heard Matthew say they were "like sheep without a shepherd," immediately your mind would have gone to an Old Testament prophecy in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 34, you have a prophecy — really a judgment — from the Lord through Ezekiel. He says to Ezekiel, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel." And he rebukes them. He says, "Woe to you, you shepherds of Israel, because you have not done your job. You have been absent as a shepherd, and as a result judgment has come."

And so I want us to understand this text in light of that Old Testament context, because we're not going to understand what Matthew's doing — and we won't understand what Jesus is doing — without that context. So turn in your Bible to Ezekiel chapter 34. If you don't know where it is, it's after Jeremiah and Lamentations and before you get to the little bitty stuff in the back. Or you can just go to your table of contents and find it that way.

In Ezekiel chapter 34, you have this oracle of God against the shepherds. And it's going to, I think, chronicle for us what happens when a good shepherd is absent. And as we look at these things, what I want you to imagine in your own life is those fields in which you walk. You have influence of some kind — in your home and in your church, in your workplace, among your friends, with your neighbors, in your city. There is a stewardship of influence that you carry. And what we're going to see in our text today is what happens when that leadership is neglected. When a good shepherd is absent, certain things happen to the welfare of those you're given to lead — those you are put around to influence. They become hurt instead of helped.

So Ezekiel 34 — let's pick it up in verse 2:

> *"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy, and say to them, 'This is what the Lord God says to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding themselves! Shouldn't the shepherds feed their flock? You eat the fat, wear the wool, and butcher the fattened animals, but you do not tend the flock.'" (Ezekiel 34:2–3)*

Underline these phrases here:

> *"You have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bandaged the injured, brought back the strays, or sought the lost. Instead, you have ruled them with violence and cruelty. They were scattered for lack of a shepherd; they became food for all the wild animals when they were scattered." (Ezekiel 34:4–5)*

Because they were without a shepherd, they experienced certain things. And the first thing that happens is they get scattered — which in your notes I'm describing with the language of *straying*. When you neglect to watch over that which God has entrusted to you — **what you don't watch will later stray.** Without fail, every single time.

This is true of children who do not have dads or moms paying attention to their welfare — to their mind, to their soul, and to the desires that are driving them to and fro. This happens inside of a marriage, with a spouse who has desires that, when they are not satisfied or ordered rightly according to God's design, will lead them astray, to try to satisfy those desires in different ways. When people in a local church fall through the cracks, that experience of being neglected and forgotten can drive them away. They can become scattered throughout the city of Abilene. And it's true in so many other arenas of your life. As a business leader, if you're not paying attention to the mission and the vision of your organization — they call it mission drift. The mission will start to drift, and you'll be really busy. You'll be doing all kinds of things, but you're not doing the most important things. You're not doing the things only you can do. Because what you don't watch will later stray.

That's what Ezekiel is saying. *You had a job. You were my shepherds. And instead of tending the flock, you served yourself. You used people as a means to an end. You exploited them to enrich yourself.* You were a leader, and you were effective, right? You were wealthy. You were prominent. You were respected. But you came to that place of prominence and largesse by tearing people down on the way. *You took the people I gave you to care for, and you exploited them and used them and abused them, and now they're scattered. And I've come to rebuke you. Woe to you, shepherds.*

So **what you don't watch will later stray.** And what happens when they stray? It says they became food for the wild animals when they were scattered.

> *"My flock went astray on all the mountains and every high hill. My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and there was no one searching or seeking for them." (Ezekiel 34:6)*

This is the way I think it looks in our context today. You have a teenager who has legitimate desires to be accepted and significant and cool. And if they do not have leadership to aim them in the right direction, so that those desires are met in a godly way, they can find themselves straying into other fields where those desires will be met, but they will be harmed. They will find acceptance. They will find significance. But they will find it through people who do not love them — people who want to consume them like these wild animals; predators who intend their harm. And they will become exploited and drained and cast aside as though they're worthless when they've been used up.

And this is the fate of so many people, as I think about my own life and my own experience — where a good desire, a God-given desire to matter, to be significant, to be loved, drove girls, or drove guy friends of mine, into fields where bad people, bad voices, preyed upon them. And when you don't watch, that's what happens. What you're supposed to watch will go astray.

It happens inside of a marriage when your spouse has some needs that you've been neglecting, and you've just been so busy — so busy providing, so busy doing this and so busy doing that — that unbeknownst to you, something started to drift. The intimacy just dried up. It just kind of disappeared one day, and you didn't know until it was too late. And you looked down and — bam — where are you now? Where are things now? That's what happens in the void of leadership.

And so these spiritual leaders of Israel were given a stewardship to watch. And when they didn't watch, the sheep began to stray onto the mountains, into the different fields. And then they were consumed. And as a result, the sheep were — in your notes I'm using the language of *mutilated* — they were marred and harassed. It's the same word that Matthew uses in

Matthew chapter 9. They were mangled — there it is. **They were mangled and harassed. They go missing and grow helpless.**

And if that's not a perfect picture of what happens to people in the absence of good leadership: they drift. And when they drift, they find themselves among people who hurt them, who drain them like vampires, sucking the life out of them so they can take it for themselves. And then they go missing. You know — where did it go? "We used to be such great friends." "You missed a couple of Sundays, and now I feel like I haven't heard from you in a year." Where did the intimacy go? Where did the friendship go? They went missing. And what happens? They become helpless, just like a lost sheep that gets up on the mountain, gets tossed on its back, and can't do anything to put itself back, right? It's a cast sheep. And what it's going to do is just lie there and die, because that's what sheep do. They find a place to die.

That's what happens in the absence of leadership. The sheep — your flock, your people — are mangled and harassed. They go missing and grow helpless.

And all of that you see in Matthew chapter 9. They were distressed. They were dejected. They were in all of the different towns and villages. And what does Jesus do? He seeks them out. He strengthens them. He heals them. And he secures their life.

1. When they wander, seek them out

So let's turn back to Matthew chapter 9, and we're going to see Jesus do everything that these bad shepherds failed to do. He is going to seek after them. He is going to nourish them. He is going to strengthen their weakness.

> *Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. (Matthew 9:35)*

And so, just to make it practical for you — and again, this is true if you're a man, a woman, anyone with any kind of influence — **when your people wander, seek them out.** Seek after people when they wander — in your home, in your church, in your business, in your friendships. Be paying attention.

It says that Jesus continued to go — oh yeah, the aim of a good shepherd here. I forgot about that one. If you're taking notes, you know how I roll. Just skip right over it. Doesn't matter.

This phrase here — "Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages" — this verb tense is more than what it looks like. It's this idea that Jesus committed himself to this practice. It's not a weekend-warrior type of thing. This is essentially saying this is all that Jesus did for three years of his ministry. He traveled, he preached, he taught, he healed, and

he went and did that in all of the surrounding villages. In other words, it wasn't just Capernaum. And he made a name for himself, so people came to him.

That's what we like to do: "If people want the help, they can come to me and get the help." Jesus went to them. In fact, after the healings in Capernaum, they wanted to make him king, and they were like, "This is it. We're going to make you, like, Boss Hogg." And Jesus says, "No, I'm leaving," because it was for this purpose I was sent. *God sent me to go to these different towns and villages so I can teach and preach the gospel.*[1]

And he uses these two words — *towns* and *villages*. He never mentions the big, big cities. Capernaum was a big city, but the other big cities aren't ever mentioned. And I think that's instructive. Jesus was going to places like Roby, Texas. Robert Lee. Even Rotan. Even a place like Rotan, where there's nothing good — I'm joking. Even small towns, even the places that normally get neglected — Jesus was going to these places. Why? Because that's where the lost sheep were. It wasn't because the towns were so fancy. It's because the sheep had been driven out — the lost sheep of Israel. He said, "My mission is for the lost sheep of Israel."

And so in your life, what you want to be thinking through as you exercise your influence is: *Where are my people hiding?* And we hide in all kinds of different ways. Sometimes we hide through our silence. We just get more reserved — there used to be a lot of communication, and now there's not a lot. People hide by just distance. They check out. They stop showing up at places. They stop showing up at church. They stop showing up at the parties. They stop showing up at the coffee shop. When they hide — wherever they hide — go seek them out. That's what a good shepherd does. **When they wander, go seek them out.**

2. When they're weak, make them strong

But he doesn't just seek them out. What does he do? He also strengthens them when they're weak. And so **if your people are weak, then you want to make them strong.**

How does Jesus make them strong? Matthew mentions three different things. Jesus taught in the synagogues, he preached the good news of the gospel, and he healed every sickness and every disease. And so you see there a summary statement of everything Jesus did in his ministry. And Matthew boils all of it down to two big pillars.

He had a message of hope — that God's kingdom is coming, and you can receive the kingdom. And you can receive the kingdom even if you're poor in spirit, even if you are harassed, even if you are humbled, even if you're the one who's been beat down, put upon. In fact, you're more likely to get the kingdom. Remember the Beatitudes: Blessed — happy — are the poor in spirit. Happy are those who mourn. Happy are those who hunger and thirst. What Jesus was doing, for people who felt hopeless, was saying, *No — have hope. Have hope, because it is in this position that you are most ready to receive the kingdom of God.*

When you have empty hands, then you can grab the kingdom that has been offered to you today.

And you want to have that kind of message for the people in your life who are likewise. People who are grieving — you want to come alongside and not say, "Oh, it's not so bad," but to say, "There is comfort in the kingdom. There is coming a kingdom where death will end, where all sad things will come untrue, where this brokenness will finally cease. I know it doesn't make sense. I know this is terrible. And I weep with you. But I weep not as other people weep, who have no hope, because we have hope. We have a kingdom. We have a King who has already come, who has shown himself victorious over death. And so that's where I want to point your gaze."

And when people are feeling shame and guilt, the answer is not, "Well, you bad person," you know, whatever you say. And you certainly see this in your most intimate relationships — especially when you've said, "I told you so." You're so tempted to say, "If you just would have listened. If you just would have done differently." You think they don't know that? You think they're not already beating themselves up? **The gospel is good news for sinners.** It is good news for people who've made a mess — that there is hope, there is healing, there is cleansing, there is forgiveness. While we were still weak, Christ died for the ungodly. That's the gospel message.

So strengthen people when they're weak with a message of hope. **Strengthen people with a message of hope, not a message of despair.** This is especially tempting for men. I was thinking about this at our men's retreat yesterday. We're so inclined toward "be strong" — self-sufficiency, self-reliance. I want to make my kids tough. And tough they should be, and responsible they should be, and none of those things are bad. But when that impulse in you causes your first response to be one of harshness — when what people typically hear from you is not gentleness, not compassion, not hope, but condemnation, accusation: "You're not good enough. You never do it right. You're never what I want" — when that is your default posture, you have lost the way of Jesus. You are not leading as Jesus led. You're using your influence to tear people down. And he used his influence to bring people hope, to build them up. Not in themselves — not "Hey, your sin's no big deal; hey, just be true to yourself." That's not at all what I'm saying. But he's saying, "No, there is hope and healing for you in Jesus. It may require repentance. It may require change. But he does not condemn you. He does not cast you out. A broken reed he will never despise." And so bring a message of hope.

And then finally, **bring a ministry of healing.** It says that Jesus healed every sickness and every disease, and he repeats *every* for a reason. Again, these words *sickness* and *disease* — or *disease* and *sickness* — are important. The best analogy I can think of is a car — even though I'm not a mechanic, and I'm about to make myself look stupid. When your drive shaft

is crooked or out of alignment, then the bearings in the drive shaft get worn out. They get warped. They get — I don't know what they get. They get jacked. I know that because mine went bad, and it cost a lot of money to fix it. And so I'm imagining I spent all that money because they were just making it better.

But that's what Jesus is doing. What does *disease* mean? It means things are not functioning properly. It's not straight. And because it's not straight, it's out of alignment, and so it's broke. And because it's not functioning properly, things are getting worn out. The fuel mileage is going down, because it has to expend more effort, because things aren't aligned. And that's what happens in the human soul. That's what happens in the human body physically. If your body's broken physically — if your mind's broken, twisted, turned in on itself — one problem is the disease. The other problem is what the disease creates. It creates weariness. It creates despair. It creates all sorts of sickness. And the word translated *sickness* just means *weakness*. That's why I said, when they're weak, make them strong.

Because we get weak. We get weak because we persist in seasons where we're not whole, and we keep going anyway. *I'm not right. I'm not right up here. I'm not right in here. I'm not right in my body. But I've got to keep going. I've got to keep pressing on. I cannot quit.* And so what happens as you persist in that compromised state? You become weak. You become weak spiritually. You become weak emotionally. You become weak physically. And Jesus heals that. He strengthens the weak.

And how does he do it? Well, one way to do it is with your message. But the other way is just with your help. You offer aid. You come in. I tried healing this guy with acne, and it didn't take away his disease. So I can't be Jesus, who touched a man with leprosy and immediately he was cleansed. I wish I had that power. I would start a business, and I'd be rich. But I can't do that. I can't take a woman with a bleeding problem of twelve years who touched the tassel of my garment, and she'd be healed. I don't have that kind of power. And there's a whole big debate anyway about signs of healing — is there still power to heal? — and I'm not going to get into the debate. That's beside the point.

All of those miracles that Jesus performed in Matthew 8 and 9 were not miracles that pointed to themselves. They were miracles that pointed to something else. All of the miracles of Jesus were signs. They were pointing to something greater. And we can give that greater miracle. We can point people — we can connect people — to the miracle of God's power in Christ. You think about counseling — I think about counseling, and so much of what counseling is, is straightening out what is crooked. It is literally walking with people, giving them the strength and the wisdom and the context where they can find their way back to power — find their way back to Jesus, who has the power of God. And then the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, comes into their life and gives them strength again, so that they can function as they should. And that's the ministry of the church. It's not just a ministry of teaching and

preaching and giving people hope. It's a ministry of healing as well. And that's your ministry, if you have influence — to the degree that you have it — with your children, in your family, in your workplace, and every other domain.

3. When they're worn out, make them secure

And so Jesus would seek them out when they wandered. He would give them strength when they were weak. And finally, when they were worn out — when they were distressed and dejected — **Jesus made them secure.** And he did so in one way in Matthew 9, and in a much bigger way in the remainder of the gospel.

So I want you to go back to Ezekiel 34, because this is mentioned in Ezekiel, and I think Matthew is connecting what God said through Ezekiel to what Jesus fulfills in his ministry. Later on in Ezekiel 34, basically the Lord says, *Because you have failed, I am going to take the sheep from you, and I'm going to give my sheep a new shepherd.* And he calls that new shepherd *the servant David*.[2] Verse 11:

> *"For this is what the Lord God says: See, I myself will search for my flock and look for them. As a shepherd looks for his sheep on the day he is among his scattered flock, so I will look for my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered." (Ezekiel 34:11–12)*

Verse 25:

> *"I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate dangerous creatures from the land." (Ezekiel 34:25a)*

So there you go, guys — you have an excuse to kill your daughter's boyfriend right there. No, I'm joking. I'm joking. Not *kill — eliminate*. Eliminate. Still joking. Don't eliminate. He may be a great guy.

> *"I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate dangerous creatures from the land, so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the forest." (Ezekiel 34:25)*

So that what? So that they may live securely — where? In the wilderness, and sleep in the forest. *They're in a bad way. And I may not be able to fix that bad way right now, but I am going to secure them by removing all of these dangerous threats.*

> *"I will make them and the area around my hill a blessing: I will send down showers in their season; they will be showers of blessing." (Ezekiel 34:26)*

And so he talks about this Davidic servant. This is Jesus, right? Remember what the blind men said when Jesus walked by them? They said, "Have mercy on me, Son of David." And so already Matthew's connecting the dots. This is the servant David. This is the Davidic servant. This is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. This is the Good Shepherd that God has promised. And he is going to establish a covenant, and that covenant is the new covenant. It is a covenant of peace. It is a covenant in which our sins are forgiven and death is destroyed. We are forgiven of sin. The law of God is written on our hearts. We follow God with a new heart — a heart of flesh and not a heart of stone.

And all of that is accomplished by our Good Shepherd. That Good Shepherd is Jesus. He accomplishes that through his death on the cross — a death of atoning sacrifice for sin. And three days later, God raises him from the dead, so that death is destroyed through death. And having destroyed death — the sting of death is sin[3] — he has gotten rid of the wild animals. He has gotten rid of the predators through his own sacrificial death on the cross. And that establishes this covenant of peace. That's what Jesus is doing. And Matthew wants us to connect those dots, and he does later in the gospel.

But in Matthew chapter 9, it's a little more reserved. You see Jesus do two things. One, he feels compassion. And so when they're weak, you want to make them strong with a level of compassion — **mercy for their hurt.** The word translated *compassion* is the Greek word *splanchnizomai*. It means to come from the guts. It kind of sounds like that — *splanchnizomai*. It means to come from the guts.

The best analogy I have for this comes from my experience as a shepherd. One day the sheep that we had — Gary and the girls — lambed out some babies. And not every baby's created equal. There are the weak ones and the strong ones, and the coyotes always go for the weak ones. And I thought my fence was fixed, and it wasn't. And I was away, and one of the coyotes got in under the fence line and killed one of my baby lambs. And when I came and saw that little lamb with her guts torn open and intestines spilling out on the ground, and the look of fear in her eye, which had been frozen in time because it was the last thing she felt — I felt so heartbroken and so sad. And at the same time, I felt inner destruction, and literally my guts went out. I felt absolute rage for the predator who did that.

And it just so happened I had scared him off before he came and finished the job. And so I went up into the bathroom. The only thing I had ready was a .270. And I sat there and waited for this little animal to come home. And when it came, I shot that little coyote in the shoulder with a .270 bullet, and her eyeball popped out of her eye. And I never felt more righteous. I felt so great. *Serves you right, you animal. You terrible animal.* And I know this isn't online — this will never be online. But it felt so righteous, so good.

And that's what you see in Ezekiel 34. Although Jesus isn't shooting coyotes, there is this compassion for the broken and for the hurting, because the bad shepherds are the reason

this happened. That happened because I was not a good shepherd. But there's also this rage and this wrath and this judgment on the bad shepherd. So **there is mercy for the hurting, and there's judgment on the leader.** And that's what Jesus is showing here. He had compassion on the crowds.

And that's where you want to end up as you minister to people who have been destroyed by your bad leadership — not by you, but by the absence of what you failed to provide. The predators are accountable for what the predators have done. But there is a sense in which you should have mercy. And if you're not careful, there's an inclination, when people are hurting, to say, "Serves you right. I tried to tell you. I tried to warn you. If only you would have listened." And maybe that's true. I'm not saying you minimize, belittle, or pretend like the sin isn't a problem. But the way of Jesus is mercy for people in their hurt. **When they hurt, show them mercy.** Find some tenderness and gentleness in your soul, because that is the way of Jesus. The Bible says it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. And so show mercy for their hurt.

And then also help them — **give means to actually help.** Every time the word *splanchnizomai* is used, immediately following, Jesus does something. He doesn't just feel something. He does something with what he feels. In this case, he prays. He gets his disciples and says, "Hey guys, let's pray to the Lord of the harvest. Let's pray that he sends out laborers." And that's what happens. God raises up the disciples. Jesus sends them out.

The other time it's used is with the feeding of the five thousand. They went out and taught and preached and did all sorts of things, and the movement spread. It was super popular. And Jesus says, "Hey, let's go get away and rest." And before they can get away and rest, the multitudes follow them. And Jesus teaches and preaches in the hills all night long. And when the sun goes down, the disciples say to Jesus, "Man, this is a desolate place. There's no food. Send these people away so that we can get some sleep." And he says, "No, you feed them." He says to the disciples, "You feed them." And they're like, "How? We've got nothing." He says, "Go and see what you have." And that's what they do. And what do they bring him? They bring him two fish, five loaves. Five fish, two loaves — I went to seminary to learn this stuff. I think it's two fish, five loaves. I'm just going to commit: two fish and five loaves. And what does Jesus do? He multiplies it. He makes it more than enough.

And so when you're dealing with hurting people — I know how it is. I know they drain you. I know they cost you your time. They cost you your energy, your emotional and physical capital. And — who cares? Get over it. You've got to show compassion. That's the way of Jesus. And then give something, even if it's all you've got left to give. You come home, dads, and you're worn out. Get over it, and give what you've got. Give something, and trust that the Lord is going to use what you've got. Moms, you're frazzled. You're almost all the way to crazy town, because you've been talking to kids nonstop. You haven't had an adult

conversation in ages. Give something. Give what you've got in the Spirit of God. Give it to Jesus. Give it through Jesus, and let him use it to actually help. I mean, give someone a ride. Pay someone's water bill. Take your kid to the movies. Teach him how to dress for prom — I don't know. Find ways to intervene in people's lives where they hurt. That is what our Lord does, and that's what we've been called to give.

Jesus eventually has compassion that drives him to the cross. He tells his disciples right before his death, *Here's what's about to happen. They're going to strike the shepherd, and when they strike the shepherd, the sheep are going to scatter.* And that's what happened. The Romans arrest Jesus. They crucify him, and the sheep scatter. Peter denies him three times. Judas sold him out for thirty pieces of silver. And even though Jesus had every right to say, "You guys are worthless," he doesn't do that. He doesn't give up on them. He says, "After I have risen, meet me in Galilee." And that's what happens. He's crucified. They scatter. He rises. He tells the women, "Tell the guys — run the play." So they go back to Galilee, they meet him there, and what does he do? He restores Peter. And he meets the disciples on the mountain in Matthew 28, and he says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So now you go and do what I've done with you. You go and make disciples of every nation — baptizing, teaching them to obey all the things I've been doing. Go. You go do that. And I am with you to the end of the age." *I am your Shepherd. Now you go be a shepherd.*

Invitation

And that's what we're called to do. All of us like sheep, Isaiah said, have turned to our own way. We have all gone astray. We have all drifted. And Jesus met you in your brokenness. Maybe it's right now. You just happened to show up this Sunday, and the Holy Spirit is saying to you, *I have you here for a reason. I have you here so that you can be reminded you are loved by someone. You are not too far gone. You are not destroyed.* There is a hope and a future if you would repent and come to the Shepherd, and let him strengthen you and restore you and secure your life.

Some of you have been Christians for years, and you've been a bad leader. And the response this morning is not Jesus beating you up and saying, "If you would have done differently, this wouldn't have happened to your kid." I'm not here to make you feel all that. First off, I have no idea — and neither do you, so be very careful with that. But the point is, **Jesus is the Shepherd when you're not the shepherd. He is sufficient when you're deficient.** And if you will repent and turn to the Shepherd and let him bring you into his pasture — let him straighten out what is crooked, let him strengthen what has grown weak, let him do what only he can do — even if you've got only this much to give, give him what you've got. Give him your fish and loaves, and let him do what the Shepherd alone can do.

And watch as he positions you to be the leader your children need — whether it's a dad or a mom, an uncle, a grandma. All of a sudden, Grandma, now you're mom and dad at the same time, and you can't remember the last time you could touch your toes, and you're like, "How can I do this?" With the help of the Good Shepherd. That's what Matthew wants us to see.

We will all fail in our leadership if we try to use people to serve ourselves. But if we will model our Shepherd, who served others by sacrificing himself, then we will have his presence and power to provide for others what he has provided for us. And we'll do it merely by connecting them to the source of that goodness and grace.

And so as we respond, this is an opportunity for you to ask the Lord what that would look like in your life. If there's some way I can pray with you or for you, I'd be happy to do that. If you're not a Christian, and this morning the Lord would be calling you to repentance and faith, then there is salvation in no other name than the name of Jesus. He has done what you and I could never do — what no one else would ever do for you, he has done in his crucifixion and through his resurrection.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "after the healings in Capernaum, they wanted to make him king"; after the Capernaum healings the crowds "tried to keep him from leaving them," and Jesus answered that he must preach in the other towns, "because I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:42–43; Mark 1:35–38). The crowd's attempt to "take him by force to make him king" came after the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:15). Source: Luke 4:42–43, Mark 1:35–38 and John 6:15 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "later on in Ezekiel in chapter 34, 25"; the promise of a new shepherd, "my servant David," is Ezekiel 34:23–24 (God's taking his flock from the failed shepherds is 34:10). Verse 25, the covenant of peace, is read just after. Source: Ezekiel 34:10, 23–25 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "having destroyed death, which is the power of sin. The power of sin is the sting of death"; 1 Corinthians 15:56 reads "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." Source: 1 Corinthians 15:56 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩