

Series: **Leadership Sermons 2023**

Today's Title: ***"The Heart of Jesus"***

January 15, 2023 – *Matthew 9:35-38 & other passages*

Objective: To help people develop compassion and love for people who are spiritually lost and physically hurting.

Opening prayer

I'm excited – eager – overwhelmed – in some ways I feel out of place...like learning to do something new for the first time.

I believe the year ahead of us – and beyond – will open up our church to amazing things – that we will see God move among us and through us in ways we have only dreamed about!!

I'm an optimist – so I tend to minimize the difficulties and challenges of what is before us.

But I'm also a realist – and I know that whenever God uses His people for the kingdom – and whenever He brings His people to a greater place of faith – He rarely does that without cost – difficulty.

Like being forged through the fire...when God does a special work – a greater work in us – we will be stronger in the faith and we will experience the presence and purpose of God in much greater ways than we do today.

Next week I will begin a new series which will take us through **Acts 13-20**.

"The Original Church Planter" will begin next Sunday (Jan. 22) and take us to the July or August.

Last Sunday I introduced our theme for this year: **'All In'**.

Today – I want to talk about the desire and plans to plant a church – *but I want to help us see this through the calling and heart of Jesus.*

The love and compassion Jesus had for people – I want to encourage us to emulate His love and compassion.

Turn to Matthew 9:35-38 (p. 814)

In this passage we see the heart of Jesus.

Overview of **Matthew 9** and Jesus' heart for the lost and hurting.

We see the heart of Jesus – set in contrast to the heart of the religious leaders / establishment of His day.

The ministry of Jesus. vs. 35

The ministry we find in some churches does not align with the ministry of Jesus.

In our day of political correctness – of relativism – many churches talk of self-help practices, social causes, and many veer into political causes they believe aligns with the moral and ethical standards of Jesus.

But when we look at Jesus – and His ministry, we don't see those things.

We clearly see Jesus proclaiming salvation from sin, healing people, and teaching / training His disciples.

vs. 35

“And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.”

Don't pass over this verse as if it's just filling space in the text.

This verse contains specific details about Jesus' ministry.

Mark, in his gospel, has a narrower focus, but essentially says the same thing.

Mark 1:14-15

Now after John (the Baptizer) was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Mark is looking exclusively at Galilee, whereas Matthew had a broader view:

“Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages...”

But they are both showing us that Jesus had a message to proclaim.

It wasn't a message of social improvement – although Jesus addressed the needs of people.

Jesus' message was about salvation from sin – forgiveness of sin – the good news (“gospel”) of the kingdom of God.

When we talk about planting a church – we’re talking about reaching lost people by “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom...”

According to Matthew’s timeline – the next thing Jesus does is send out the 12 disciples to do this very thing.

Matthew 10:5-7

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Any church we plant will be a church that is committed to and passionate about the gospel of the kingdom of God – the good news of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins He offers by His death and resurrection – through faith and by God’s grace.

The vision and compassion of Jesus. *vs. 36a*

“When He saw the crowds...”

Jesus noticed people.

In my own life – I’m often too busy to notice people.

I’m too preoccupied – too engrossed in my own thoughts and activities – too self-absorbed.

I can go to the store – and not really notice people.

I see them – I acknowledge them.

But I don’t really notice them.

I don’t consider their life – their soul – their situation.

But Jesus did.

He saw them – and He saw them as image-bearers – eternal souls – people who needed divine love and truth.

Jesus had spiritual vision – He saw life – people – through spiritual eyes.

But He also had compassion for people.

“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them...”

Compassion Definition:

“Sympathetic consciousness of others' distress, together with a desire to alleviate it”

(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion>)

I submit to you that religious people / Christians are often the most compassionate group.

I've seen it in action – for compassion – as the definition states – is not just a thought / emotion / or feeling – but it has an active nature.

The compassionate person not only is sympathetic toward the pain and distress of another, but they want to do something about it – *“to alleviate it”*.

But, at the same time, religious people often lack compassion for those who are far from Christ and live in ways that are outwardly immoral and unethical.

Instead of compassion, religious people often have a sense of justice or judgment when we see a sinful person suffer.

In our mind we may think, *“They’re getting what they deserve.”* *“They made their bed, not they have to sleep in it.”*

In Jesus’ day the religious leaders were very judgmental toward sinners.

Their judgmental attitude had consumed them to the point they made sure not to associate with “tax collectors and sinners”. (Matt. 9:11)

But Jesus was different.

He didn’t think or act like the religious leaders of His day. Matthew tells us (vs. 36a) that Jesus had a much different reaction to people than the religious leaders – whether they were blatant sinners, tax collectors, or secular people who lived without religious convictions.

“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them...”

Compassion.

The love of Jesus for people – for sinners – for those pursuing righteousness – for all people – is a greater love than we can imagine.

When we speak of the love Jesus has for people – including those far from God – we need to remind ourselves that Jesus is God – sinless – Deity – the God-Man.

Who Jesus loves – God the Father loves.

The compassion of Jesus is seen repeatedly in the Gospels – especially Matthew’s Gospel.

Matthew 14:14

“When He (Jesus) went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had **compassion** on them and healed their sick.”

15:32 – regarding their physical needs...hunger

Then Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, “I have **compassion** on the crowd...”

18:26-27 – Jesus telling a parable

“So, the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’

And out of **pity** for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.”

20:32-34

Jesus called them and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

They said to Him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.”

And Jesus in **pity** touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed Him.”

Mark 1:41

Moved with **pity**, He (Jesus) stretched out His hand and touched him (the man w/leprosy) and said to him, “I will; be clean.”

Compassion / pity = Gr. “from splanxna, 'the inward parts,' especially the nobler entrails – the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys. These gradually came to denote the seat of the affections” (WS, 111).

See Strong’s #4698 (splanxnon).

We don’t say, “*I love you with all my bowels.*”

But saying, *“I love you with the pulsating, bloody muscle in my chest.”* Really isn’t that much better – medically or biologically speaking.

When we think of these expressions through medical science, they are a bit odd.

But these are expressions we use – and the ancient Jewish / Hebrew people used – are not based in science, they’re based in how life makes us feel.

The expressions are based on feelings, not on medical or biological data.

Here is how one pastor explains this...

“And the Hebrews talked about the heart, and they talked about the bowels, and they had something in mind. They talked about the heart as the seat of thought and action and will.

Proverbs 16:23 - “The heart of the wise teaches his mouth”

Prov. 23:7 - “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he...” - NKJV

Matthew 15:19 - “For out of the heart come evil thoughts”

Luke 6:45 - “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Romans 10:10 - “For with the heart one believes”

Hebrews 4:12 - “The thoughts and intentions of the heart”

The heart, then, is the initiator in Hebrew thinking.

There you find the root of thought and action and will.

The bowels in the Hebrew thinking are the responder, the reactor. The Hebrew expressed attitudes and emotions in physiological symptoms, not in abstractions.

And so, when they wanted to express something they felt very deeply and were very pained about, they said, *“I hurt in my midsection.”*

Now we understand that. Our midsection responds to pain. When we see a horrible accident or a disaster, we get sick in our stomach. Sexual feelings, fears, needs, we feel anxieties here.

We have ulcers, colitis, upset stomachs because here is where emotion grips us.

Jesus literally said that He was wrenched in pain in His midsection when He saw these people.”

(<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2269/the-harvest-and-the-laborers>)

You tell me...

Does God care about you?

Does God care about those who are lost?

What about those who are hurting?

Those who lack physical and material things?

Here’s how Peter used this Greek term.

1 Peter 3:8

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, **a tender heart**, and a humble mind.”

God calls us – commands us – to have compassion for those who are spiritually lost.

A deep sympathy for their distress and a desire to alleviate their sorrow.

The reason for Jesus' compassion. vs. 36b

What motivates your compassion?

It is the same things that provoked the compassion / pity of Jesus?

“...because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Matthew uses some very strong, descriptive words here.

“harassed” = Gr. – skinned alive – mangled - annoy

“helpless” = Gr. – to cast off – throw away – toss aside

The picture is graphic – people who have been flayed – mangled – have been tossed aside – like trash – waste.

These are metaphors – nobody was literally skinned alive here – but it speaks to the depth of their pain, loneliness – and inner suffering.

The people were hurting, spiritually lost, and lonely.

Never forget – no matter the persona they put forth – people who are spiritually lost – far from God – are lonely – empty.

They may have all the world has to offer – but the most important thing – the thing we were created for – they don't have – a relationship with Almighty God – one of His own!

“All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?

Father McKenzie
Writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear
No one comes near”

(Beatles, “Eleanor Rigby” lyrics)

Do you see the people of Tucson – or Oro Valley?
Do you have compassion for those who are far from
Christ?
Do you realize the pain and emptiness of a life without
Christ?

Not long ago I came across a Barna study.
In that study, it revealed some sad things about the
spiritual temperature / spiritual health of the Tucson
area.

***Tucson is like Portland and Seattle and S.F. regarding
spiritual climate.***

● # of unchurched – San Fran is #1 – Tucson is # 12
– worse than Portland at #13 – *There are approx. 850,000
people in the Tucson area who don't attend ANY kind of church*

(<https://www.barna.com/research/churchless-cities-where-does-your-city-rank/>)

● **Post-Christian** – meaning Christianity does not influence the culture (out of 100 U.S. cities)

Springfield, MA is #1 – most post-Christian city

Tucson ranks at #16

San Francisco is #17.

(<https://www.barna.com/research/post-christian-cities-2019/>)

● **Least Bible minded:** On a scale of 1 = very Bible minded – and 100 is the least Bible minded (out of 100 U.S. cities)

#1- Chattanooga, TN

Tucson is #80

Albany / Schenectady, NY is #100. (<https://www.barna.com/research/2017-bible-minded-cities/>)

● **Poverty** – Tucson is the 6th poorest metro area in U.S.

● In many ways, we are similar to the Pacific NW U.S.

There is a lot of work to do here!

There is a huge need for more churches – to reach the lost!!

Even if we filled up our sanctuary – and had 3 services each weekend – there would still be a huge need to plant churches!!!

Over the years, dozens of studies have shown:

A new church will reach more non-churched / more unsaved people than an existing church.

Peter Wagner, a missiologist, author, teacher, and leader of various Christian organizations, says:

“Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven.”

(Source: C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, p. 168)

Apply it...

The application today is the last point – found in **vs. 37-38**.

In the verses that follow – in **chapter 10** – the disciples will realize their prayers for God “to send out laborers into His harvest.” is a prayer for themselves!!!

Jesus says this to His disciples right after Matthew tells us about Jesus’ compassion for the people.

But Jesus doesn’t tell His disciples, *‘Now go talk to all those people!’*

He will tell them that in the next few verses.

First, Jesus tells them to pray.

Ministry needs the power of prayer. vs. 37-38

Read vs. 37-38

Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

Nehemiah 1:4

“As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”

1. Monthly church plant prayer gatherings
2. Church plant page on our website:
cdobible.org/church-plant

Close in prayer