

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 9:35-10:1 | The Lord of the Harvest
Sunday September 17, 2023

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 9.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we studied the amazing story of two blind men who knew something that the crowd didn't know and even the disciples didn't know—Jesus is the Son of David.

Meaning that Jesus is the King of kings and the Savior of the world.

We saw how Jesus tested these men and then healed them of their blindness.

We also learned how Jesus healed a demon-possessed man—who was mute.

The demon prevented this poor man from speaking.

Now, the interesting thing about these two miracles is that Matthew didn't provide any details. *-Nor are they found in the other Gospels.*

So, the emphasis was not so much on the miracles, but on the response to the miracles.

LW KEYPOINT 1:

*Jesus performed miracles so that people would believe His Gospel message.
Belief in the teachings of Jesus is the primary function of His miracles.*

After the miracles, we saw two different groups of people respond in two different ways.

The crowd spoke about Jesus.

The crowds were amazed but didn't believe.

The Pharisees spoke against Jesus and refused to believe.

And we closed last week's sermon on whether or not we'll believe.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we have a significant shift in Matthew's Gospel.

Jesus moves us from his miracle ministry to His discipleship ministry.

Until this point, Jesus had done all the work while the disciples watched.

In Matt. 1-4 we *met* Jesus—

We learned the genealogy of Jesus—which proved that Jesus has the credentials and bloodline of the Messiah.

In ^{chapters} ~~Matthew~~ 5-7, we *hear* Jesus teach with His Sermon on the Mount.

In ^{chapters} ~~Matthew~~ 8-9, we *see* Jesus in action, healing the sick, casting out demons, and raising the dead.

For the past year and a half—70 sermons—Matthew has directed our attention to the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

But like a great player who becomes a coach, Matthew shifts our focus to how Jesus trains His disciples for ministry.

In Matthew 10, we'll see how the work of Jesus expands through replication.

Today, we'll learn Jesus' ^① model of discipleship, ^② how this is important for us as the Church, and ^③ lastly, what our individual role is — as a disciple.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

+ **Matthew 9:35**— 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 9:36**— When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.

+ **Matthew 9:37**— Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few.

+ **Matthew 9:38**— Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

+ **Matthew 10:1**—Summoning his twelve disciples, he gave them authority over unclean spirits, to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness.

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

+ **PRAY:**

The Lord is good to everyone.

He showers compassion on all his creation. (Psalm 145:9 NLT)

+ **EXEGESIS:**

+ **Matthew 9:35**— 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— *Jesus continued...*

The first thing I'd like us to notice here from last week is that Jesus continues...

Jesus continues regardless of the attacks from the Pharisees.

They couldn't deny the miracles— so they denied the source of the miracles.

They said that Jesus, God in flesh and bones, worked miracles because He is demonic.

Notice here—that Jesus doesn't care what these men said about Him.

He knew they were wrong.

Not only that, Jesus didn't have anything to prove, nothing to hide, and nothing to lose.

So Jesus continued fulfilling the mission.

What's Jesus' mission?

Matthew 9:35— *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.,*

→ Primary responsibility

Jesus' mission was teaching, preaching, and healing. How?

Matthew 9:35— *Jesus continued going around to all the towns and villages,*

One question that we should ask ourselves is—how long did it take to go to all the towns and villages?

Verse 35 is a summary verse.

The picture here is that Jesus is in a continuous rhythm of teaching, preaching, and healing.

Can you imagine the sheer exhaustion of going from town to town and dealing with the same problems but different people?

~~At that time,~~ there were just over two hundred cities and villages in Galilee.

The difference between a city and a village was that a city had a fortified wall to protect its people, and a village did not.

In the 200-plus cities and villages lived over three million people.

So, for Jesus to visit all these places, it took months—maybe even a year.

But look what Jesus did when He got to each town...

+ **Matthew 9:35**— *teaching in their synagogues,*

Synagogues were the center of Jewish life.

Synagogue literally means, “A gathering together.”

The Yiddish word for synagogue, *schul*, is similar to our English *school*.

When ten Jewish men lived in a community, a synagogue could be formed.

So, the larger the city the more synagogues.

The synagogue was similar to the local church today.

There are some differences—

The synagogue was a place of worship, a town hall, and a courthouse.

The building itself was usually on a hill and was recognized from a distance by a long pole high in the air, much like a church steeple.

The reason for this was so that a visitor in town could always find his way to the synagogue simply by traveling toward the pole.

What did people do once they arrived?

Philo (a Jewish scholar) wrote, “Synagogues are mainly for the detailed reading and exposition of Scripture.”

↳ Explanation, interpretation, illustration

We see the practice of reading and explaining the Scriptures in the book of Nehemiah.

+ **Nehemiah 8:1 NLT**— *all the people assembled with a unified purpose ... They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had given for Israel to obey.*

+ **Nehemiah 8:2 NLT**— *...Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law (Hebrew Bible/scroll) before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand.*

+ **Nehemiah 8:3 NLT**— *He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened closely to the Book of the Law.*

+ **Nehemiah 8:4 NLT**— *Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform that had been made for the occasion.*

+ **Nehemiah 8:5 NLT**— *Ezra stood on the platform in full view of all the people. When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet.*

Nehemiah 8:8 NLT— They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.

So Jesus did the same thing—He read the Scriptures and explained them slowly and carefully as he went from town to town teaching in their synagogues.

We have an example of this in Luke's Gospel.

Luke 4:16 NLT—He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read.

Luke 4:17 NLT— The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written:

Luke 4:18 NLT— The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free the oppressed,

Luke 4:20 ^{CSB} NLT— He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Luke 4:21 ^{CSB} NLT— He began by saying to them, "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled."

Those passages provide insight as to why we teach the way we do here at River Bible Church.

We read the word of God, explain the word of God, illustrate the word of God and then move on to the next verse—just like Scripture teaches.

Not only did Jesus teach...

Matthew 9:35— *preaching* the good news of the kingdom,

What's the difference between teaching and preaching?

Teaching is done to train, imparts a skill, and provides knowledge.

Preaching is the idea of proclaiming a message for everyone to hear.

What's the message?

The Good News!

So when Jesus preached, He not only not presented the OT laws, but he proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

When Jesus preached the Good News of the Kingdom, He was unfolding the mysteries mentioned in the OT but not explained.

He was providing new revelation about God's plan of redemption.

Preaching gets personal.

This is why we don't like to be preached at or to.

We don't want anyone telling us that we need to change the way we live.

We don't want anyone telling us that what were thinking or doing is wrong. (sinful)

So, today's church also has a dual task like Jesus:

1. We are to teach the whole counsel of God's Book.

Teaching is where Jesus always began and teaching is where we must start as a church.

That's why our mission—our main assignment and vocation— here at RBC is to teach in a way that you would “Experience God Verse-By-Verse.”

2. We are to preach the Gospel!

We are to proclaim the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sins.

That's why our vision is to “Share Jesus Day-By-Day.”

We strive to be a Great Commission church.

Matthew 9:35— and healing every disease and every sickness.,

After studying all the miracles of chapters 8 and 9 for the past three months, we're very familiar with Jesus' miracles.

We've discussed how the miracles verified Jesus' teaching and preaching.

We've discussed how they are intended to bring people to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Savior.

One thing we haven't mentioned yet is the impact of Jesus' miracles on the disciples.

Jesus went out of his way to make sure the disciples were witnesses of His miracles—Why?

To build their faith!

Jesus wanted to make sure they know that they knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was Lord.

So, we can look at Jesus' teaching, preaching, and healing as pillars of Christian ministry.

And guess what?

Christianity gave birth to universities (teaching), churches (preaching and teaching), and hospitals (healing).

Matthew 9:36— *When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them,*

God is a God of Compassion—He's always been compassionate.

Psalm 25:6—*Remember, O Lord, your compassion and unfailing love, which you have shown from long ages past.*

Psalm 40:11—*Lord, you do not withhold your compassion from me. Your constant love and truth will always guard me.*

Psalm 51:1 NLT—*Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins.*

Why is compassion important in today's passage?

Because the Scribes and Pharisees were not compassionate.

They've lacked compassion for a very long time.

The prophet Ezekiel says this...

Ezekiel 34:2 NLT—What sorrow awaits you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep?

Ezekiel 34:3 NLT—You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve.

Ezekiel 34:4 NLT— You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the injured. You have not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost. Instead, you have ruled them with harshness and cruelty.

Ezekiel 34:5 NLT— So my sheep have been scattered without a shepherd, and they are easy prey for any wild animal.

Ezekiel 34:9 NLT— Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord.

Ezekiel 34:10 NLT— This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I now consider these shepherds my enemies, and I will hold them responsible for what has happened to my flock. I will take away their right to feed the flock, and I will stop them from feeding themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths; the sheep will no longer be their prey.

So, Ezekiel provides a background and how the Scribes and Pharisees got to where they are.

Jesus shows up...

Matthew 9:36— When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.

So, as a good Shepherd, it's like Jesus is standing on a hill and see the hurt and pain on all their faces. Why?

Matthew 9:36— because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.

The picture here is that God's people were harassed by the Scribes and Pharisees.

Harassed literally means "flayed."

Their skin and flesh are torn, mangled, battered, bruised, ripped apart, worn out, and exhausted.

Jesus saw the crowds as ~~hopeless~~. They saw themselves ~~hopeless~~.

They were also helpless.

And the reason they were ^{hopeless} helpless is that they did not know the Bible.

They should have known it.

They've had the OT for centuries.

But instead of focusing on God's truth, the ^{shepherds} Scribes and Pharisees demanded that rules be kept instead.

The ^{so called shepherds} shepherds of the first century were more concerned about their rules and traditions than the grace, love, and forgiveness found in God's Word.

The Scribes and Pharisees exploited the people they were entrusted to serve.

Matthew 9:36— like sheep without a shepherd.

In other words, God's people were leaderless.

Today, the same thing happens.

social

Many pastors, ministers, and priests intentionally keep people out of God's Kingdom.

How? First, Religious cults disguised as Christian.

Second, pastors are doing the same thing as the Scribes and Pharisees— not teaching the whole counsel of God.

They're too busy trying to be funny, clever, hip, and cool.

The result? Leaving the flock starved. —starving them of ~~the~~ God's word.

Matthew 9:37— Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few."

So, what is the harvest that Jesus is talking about?

He uses that term three times in two verses.

Many of us have heard that this "harvest" represents lost people.

But God reveals a very different picture throughout Scripture.

The harvest is God's judgment on lost people.

The apostle John says it this way...

Revelation 14:14 NLT— Then I saw a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was someone like the Son of Man. He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

What does the sickle remind you of? Grim Reaper!

Revelation 14:15 NLT— Then another angel came from the Temple and shouted to the one sitting on the cloud, "Swing the sickle, for the time of harvest has come; the crop on earth is ripe."

Revelation 14:16 NLT— So the one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the whole earth was harvested.

In other words, the whole earth was judged for its sin.

Matthew 9:37— ~~Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few.~~

What is preventing people from hearing the Gospel before judgment day?

Answer: Not enough workers.

Who will share with them that...

John 3:16— God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:17— For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:18— Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

Workers who will tell them that...

Romans 6:23— For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Payment that is due

Workers who will warn people of the false shepherds...

Matthew 24:24—For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

Now, the metaphor of the harvest points to judgment on sin.

But Jesus chooses to use it in a positive direction.

Jesus is focused on gathering people into His kingdom to avoid judgment.

So, although the harvest for salvation was plentiful, the workers were few.

→ His illustration.
We understand that one person is not physically able to go out into a massive field with thousands and thousands of acres of grain and singlehandedly bring in the harvest.

To do that, many people are needed.

And it can't just be anybody to help bring in the harvest—we've seen Jesus turn down people who thought they wanted to be disciples.

Matthew 9:38— Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."

Here, we come to a passage that is taken out of context and often misunderstood.

We often hear preachers put the guilt trip on their church using this passage.

If you won't pray for missionaries, if you won't go yourself, then God's hands are tied.

I hear stuff like that and think, “nothing’s changed but time. These guys are acting just like the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day.”

If pastors don’t use guilt—they deflect to humor—they say really corny things like, *If it’s going to be, it’s up to me!*

Question: Does Jesus say things like that?

No. And the reason He doesn’t say things like that is because he’s not taking his own words out of context.

Many times, this passage is preached like it’s all about us as the church.

It’s about us getting our missions and evangelism in place.

Question: Who is doing the work here?

Matthew 9:38— Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest— to send out workers into his harvest.”

The Lord of the Harvest is a title that represents Jesus’ role as judge.

And it’s the church’s responsibility to pray to Him.

Why? Because it’s the Lord doing the actual work—he’s the one doing the sending.

Our job is to pray before the work is done.

And then it’s the Lord who lays it on the hearts of those He has gifted to do the work.

Our job is to pray.

Did you know that revivals begin with prayer?

Maybe there is too much singing in church today.

Maybe there's too much doing.

There is definitely too much eating.

Perhaps there is even too much preaching.

One thing that we know for sure is that there is not enough praying—corporate and private.

Waiting on the Lord is a crucial part of serving Him.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus didn't command the disciples to pray for the lost?

Their first prayer is for workers.

Why is that?

Because when we pray for workers, we can't help but notice how God is changing our own hearts for work.

Those that Jesus calls to pray for workers eventually become the workers themselves.

And our closing verse shows us how it all started.

Matthew 10:1—Summoning his twelve disciples, he gave them authority over unclean spirits, to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness.

Wow, that sounds familiar!

Jesus has taught and trained these men—He has put them through seminary for years.

Today is their day of ordination.

It's time for the next phase of Jesus' training—internship.

Every good seminary has an internship.

Mark's Gospel provides more details.

Mark 6:7 NLT—And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits.

Mark 6:8 NLT— He told them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick—no food, no traveler's bag, no money.

Mark 6:9 NLT— He allowed them to wear sandals but not to take a change of clothes.

↳ Jesus is training the Disciples how to Trust in Him.

Mark 6:10 NLT— "Wherever you go," he said, "stay in the same house until you leave town."

Mark 6:11 NLT— But if any place refuses to welcome you or listen to you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate."

Mark 6:12 NLT— So the disciples went out, telling everyone they met to repent of their sins and turn to God. — MESSAGE FIRST — TEACHING

Mark 6:13 NLT— And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with olive oil.

↳ the miracles prove/validate the teaching

Being an intern is where you get beat up, bruised and bit—because it's easy to romanticize ministry.

This is another verse where our prosperity preacher friends take things out of context.

The first question we have to answer is who is talking to whom...

Matthew 10:1—Summoning his twelve disciples, he ~~gave them authority over unclean spirits, to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness.~~

Jesus gave the twelve disciples supernatural power.

It's important to note that this verse is simply describing (descriptive) of what happened.

It's not prescriptive—meaning Jesus did not give you and me this supernatural authority.

This healing power WAS only give to the Disciples.

There are major differences between what Jesus tells His disciples to do here and what we are to do today.

For example...

The audience is different—Jesus sent the Disciples to the Jews.

We, on the other hand, are to go unto “all the world” (Matt. 28:19–20),

Second, the message is different—The Disciples preached a message: “Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

Our message is John 3:16—*For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

Third, the means is different—Jesus gave the Disciples supernatural powers.

We, on the other hand, are to pray, call for the Elders in the church and anoint the sick with oil—James 5:14.

Do you see what I mean between a passage being descriptive vs. prescriptive.

One hot thing on Miracles ...

There is a reason that miracles become less and less in the book of Acts and the Epistles.

There is a reason the apostle Paul couldn't heal himself or heal Timothy.

Did they not have enough faith, as today's prosperity preachers proclaim?

Of course not—miracles served as Messianic credentials—proving that Jesus is God.

 **PREACH:**

What does this mean for you?

Unbeliever/Not a Christian—judgement for your sins awaits.

Believer/Disciple—You are called to pray for workers so that Jesus will send them out to into the harvest.

By praying, we are to listen to what our responsibility is as well.

Here's where the local church comes in—

The church's responsibility is to feed —tend— and feed the sheep with God's Word. (John 21:15-17).

As you are fed spiritual food, you will become encouraged and empowered to do your part.

That's one of the reasons we don't have one or two formal ministries that we support.

We support you in your individual ministry to the VV.

We don't have one or two ministries coming out of RBC—we have dozens upon dozens—all to the glory of God.

PRAYER

BENEDICTION

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58).

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