

## Sheep with no Shepherd

Matthew 9: 35-38

Our text comes during a busy and exciting time in Jesus' ministry. These events took place early in His ministry, while He was gaining notoriety and popularity. Everywhere Jesus went, large crowds of people followed and gathered around Him. They were eager to catch a glimpse of Jesus, and hear Him speak with authority, while desiring to receive healing and provision.

As the chapter opens, Jesus had healed the crippled man. He then called Matthew, the tax collector, to follow Him. He was approached by Jairus, whose daughter had died. As they made their way to the home of Jairus, the crowd was heavy, and the woman with the issue of blood slipped through the crowd, touching the hem of Jesus' garment for healing. He then made His way to Jairus's house and raised his daughter from death. As Jesus departed, He was followed by two blind men, and He healed them. Departing from that place, the people brought a man who was possessed with a demon and unable to speak. Jesus cast out the demon, and immediately the man began to speak. After all of this, Jesus went about the cities and villages, teaching, preaching, and healing the sick.

Following this very busy season, we come to our text verses. There is no doubt that Jesus has done much leading up to this moment, but the text reveals the great compassion Jesus had for the multitudes. I want to discuss the [details](#) of this passage as we consider: [Sheep with no Shepherd](#).

**I. The Multitude Described** (36) – [But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd](#). Consider:

**A. The Confusion** (36) The multitude was [scattered abroad](#). This has the idea of “*sheep going astray, leaving the path of abundance and safety for an unfamiliar and dangerous path.*” As Jesus surveyed the multitude, He saw those who were scattered and confused. They were not traveling the right path, and yet they were seeking a means of provision for their lives.

- You will have to agree that we live in a “scattered” society, particularly regarding spiritual matters. The world and the adversary have sown seeds of doubt and confusion. The average person is not suffering from a lack of information, but from a lack of Truth. They have followed the path most traveled, and yet it has left them empty and longing for more. They have no peace or assurance in their lives. They are confused about salvation and acceptance to God.

**B. The Concern** (36) – [They] were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. As Jesus surveyed the multitude, He realized they had no sense of direction. They were simply following the crowd ahead of them, but they lacked leadership. There was no shepherd to guide their path. They were merely wandering aimlessly through life, willing to embrace whoever or whatever had the ability to meet their current need. There was no sense of purpose or meaning in their lives. There was no one to guide their path or shield them from danger. They were literally at the mercy of their environment, scattered sheep with no shepherd and no hope. *Ezekiel 34:3-5 – Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. [4] The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. [5] And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.*

- As I consider the needs in Jesus' day, I see a great parallel in our day. We live in a land that has been saturated with the Gospel. The average church member likely assumes the majority has heard the Truth, and yet our land is filled with those who are wandering aimlessly through life. They live in a state of confusion with no hope for the future. They quickly move from one program or movement to the other, desperately seeking provision and guidance for their lives. We live in a society filled with spiritually illiterate people.

- Sadly as with the prophecy in Ezekiel, the modern church must shoulder much of the blame. We have become program oriented and seeker friendly. We have abandoned truth in hopes of being culturally relevant. The church has developed the ability to provide everything to the world, except what they desperately need. Our world is filled with those who are seeking purpose, and we must meet our obligation to share the truth of the Gospel.

**C. The Compassion** (36a) – *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them.* This statement has always spoken to me. As Jesus surveyed the crowd that day, he was moved with compassion. The phrase means *“to feel deeply, to yearn; feeling sympathy, while showing compassion and pity.”* Jesus was compelled to act when He encountered those who were wayward and hurting. He could not ignore their needs or leave them in despair. Such compassion moved Him to action.

- As I read these words, I felt deep conviction. Are we moved with compassion? Am I moved with compassion toward the needs of others, especially their spiritual needs? I am aware of their need for salvation. I know that apart from a relationship with Christ they will die in sin and spend eternity in hell, separated from God. I know Jesus is the only way and the solution for the needs of humanity, but am I moved with compassion? Am I compelled to act when it comes to the needs of others? I pray the Lord will deeply burden us for the needs of others!

**II. The Mandate Declared (37-38)** – As Jesus pondered the great need of the multitude, He gave a mandate to the disciples. We need to embrace and heed this mandate as well. Consider:

**A. The Harvest (37a)** – Then saith he unto his disciples, **The harvest truly is plenteous**. This must have been a profound teaching moment for the Lord with His disciples. They had experienced the varied needs leading up to this moment, and now they are surrounded by a weary and confused multitude. Jesus wanted them to survey the crowd and recognize the great need before them. They were surrounded by those who were in desperate need of help, particularly spiritual needs.

- The harvest was plenteous in Jesus' day, and it remains plenteous today. According to [www.worldometers.info](http://www.worldometers.info), there are over 7.3 Billion people in the world today, with over 128 Million births this year alone. The NC Baptist State Convention estimates there are 5.8 Million unsaved people in North Carolina alone. We are living in a world of billions of people, with millions in our home state, who do not know Christ as their personal Savior! The harvest is plenteous!

**B. The Hindrance (37b)** – Then saith he unto his disciples, **The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few**. There were few who were willing to labor in the harvest. Jesus had few followers in His day who were willing to engage the multitudes who did not recognize Him as the Christ. There were many religious people, but few genuine laborers who were concerned with reaching the masses for Christ.

- Being raised on a farm, I know a little about harvesting crops. There is only a certain window of time to harvest or the crop will be wasted. That which is left in the field, unharvested, rots and perishes without being gathered. Like a crop in the field, we have only a certain window of time to reach those around us before they perish in the field, left unharvested. Our numbers are increasing annually, but those who are willing to labor in the harvest are decreasing. Crops don't harvest themselves, and those who need Christ will likely perish in their sin unless they are engaged by someone who is concerned for their desperate need. Few seek the Lord on their own.

**C. The Hope (38)** – **Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest**. The need was great and the laborers were few, and yet hope remained. Jesus challenged the disciples to pray unto the Lord for additional laborers in the harvest. He urged them to pray that God would raise up a generation that was burdened for the need of humanity, those who were willing to seek out the unsaved and share the Gospel with them.

- I have emphasized this great truth before, but I feel it bears repeating. While I would never discourage anyone to pray for the salvation of lost people, that is not the approach Jesus taught.

He didn't urge us to pray for those who needed salvation, but to pray for the laborers who would engage the lost with a willingness to share the Gospel. Again, few seek the Lord on their own. If we as the body of Christ are unwilling to share our faith with those who need to hear, their salvation is unlikely. One must hear the Gospel shared in the Word of God in order to be saved. While some search the Scriptures and are saved through that approach, the vast majority are saved through the witness of others.

- We must pray that God will send forth laborers. We need to be aware however, if we are unwilling to enter the harvest ourselves, our prayers will likely profit little. If you are committed to earnestly praying this prayer, don't be surprised if God begins to deal with you about entering the harvest.

**Conclusion:** This is a beautiful picture of the compassion of Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of our souls. He was moved with compassion for those who needed to see Him as their Savior. He came to earth in order to die for the sin of humanity, providing salvation and eternal life for all who will come to Him by faith. He was concerned with laborers entering the harvest. Should we not share His concern? I pray that God will begin to burden our hearts for those who need the Lord. Surely we all know someone who needs salvation.

If the Spirit has spoken to you about this great need, why not come and pray about that. Maybe He is leading you into the harvest. Maybe you are here and you can identify with the multitude. You may not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior. He stands ready to save you today if you will respond to Him in faith. Whatever the need is, I urge you to come to the Lord today!