

# Weeping for the Harvest

## **Matthew 9:35-38**

Brett has shared a lot of stories from the life of singer/hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, that great blind songwriter, who is known as “the queen of gospel music.” More than her music, Fanny had another noble quality about her which was appealing, and that was her burden for souls.

One night, in the summer of 1869, she was speaking to a large audience in the New York Bowery Mission. While she was speaking to them she was impressed, over and over again, that some mother’s boy must be rescued that night, or he might be eternally lost. Therefore, she made a pressing plea that if there was a boy present who had wandered from his mother’s home he must come to her at the end of the service.

The service ended, and a young 18 year old man came forward, and asked, “Were you talking to me, Miss Crosby? I promised my mother that I would meet her in heaven, but as I am now living, that will be impossible.” She knelt down, spoke and prayed with the boy, and in a few minutes he stood up with a gleam in his eye, saying, “Now I am ready to meet my mother in heaven, for I have found God!”

Several months later, Miss Crosby remembering the events of that hot summer night, and the boy’s conversion from a life of hopelessness, wrote the immortal words:

“Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,  
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave  
Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen,  
Tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

The late R. G. Lee was once asked, “What do Southern Baptists need more than anything else?” His instant reply was, “More than anything else Southern Baptists need to be like Jesus.” I think most of us would agree. If we are going to be laborers for the harvest, and be like Jesus, we need to understand what He saw, how He felt and prayed and what He said and did. Matthew 9:35-38 gives us that picture.

### **I. We Must See What Jesus Sees (Matt. 9:36)**

“But when He saw the multitudes,”

Matthew tells us what Jesus saw about the crowds: “**they were weary and scattered.**” The NIV says “they were harassed and helpless.”

“**Weary**” comes from a word that literally means “to be skinned.” Do you every feel so weary and faint and harassed that you’ve been skinned?

“**Scattered**” means to be cast down or thrown out and utterly helpless, like a child orphaned on the streets.

Jesus also “**saw**” that the people were “**like sheep having no shepherd.**” Sheep are dependant animals. They need defense and care. Their “shepherds” were not concerned with them.

The D. L. Moody was in London during one of his evangelistic crusades. While he was there, several British clergymen visited him. They wanted to know how and why this poorly educated American was so effective in winning people to Christ. Moody took the three men to the window of his hotel room. And he asked each in turn what he saw. One by one, the men described the people in the park below. Then Moody looked out the window with tears rolling down his cheeks. One of the ministers said, “Mr. Moody, what do you see?”

And Moody said, “I see thousands of souls that will one day be lost forever if they do not find the Savior.”

The reason why Moody had such a powerful ministry is because he saw what Jesus saw. He viewed people with compassion. And he treated them with compassion.

## II. **We Must Feel What Jesus Feels (Matt. 9:36)**

**“He was moved with compassion for them,”**

You know that feeling you get in your stomach when you are going down the first drop of a roller coaster? It’s the same feeling when you hear horrible news. Your stomach feels like it has just been kicked in. The New Testament has a Greek word for that feeling; it is “*spagchnizomai*.” It literally means to yearn in the bowels or guts. We translate it, “**compassion.**”

This word is used 17 times in the Bible in 12 different verses. The only person that this word is associated with is Jesus. It says that Jesus felt this way when He encountered the sick (Mt 14:14), the hungry (Mt. 15:32), the blind (Mt 20:34), the lonely leper (Mk. 1:41), the demon possessed (Mk 9:22), those who lost loved ones (Lk 7:13), and the bewildered (Mt 9:36).

Our English word “**compassion,**” means to feel the pain of another person in your own heart. Jesus was sick at heart, burdened and broken over his lost city and nation. In Luke 19:41, as Jesus looked over Jerusalem he was moved by their spiritual condition. “**Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it,..**”

As you look over our city your heart should be moved by the condition of those who are lost. Oh how we need brokenhearted people who will weep over their lost neighbors, friends and family. How desperately we need people who will weep over their cities and communities.

Years ago a young Scottish preacher was working hard but producing such meager results in his ministry. He decided to visit the church where

years before the saintly Robert Murraby McCheyne died at the age of 30, but not before he had moved Scotland to it's depths by his preaching. The Visitor asked the old sexton at St. Peter's if he could tell him the secret of the amazing influence of Robert McCheyne. The old man led the young preacher into the vestry. Sit down there, he said. Now put your elbows on the table. He did so. Yes, that was the way McCheyne used to do it. Now put your face in your hands. Now let the tears flow. "That was the way McCheyne use to do it," said the sexton.

It has been said, "The reason we have so many dry baptistries is because we have so many dry eyes!" Remember Psalm 126 says, **"Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him."**

Maybe that was one of the things that made Paul's ministry in Asia so powerful. In Acts 20 Paul tells the Ephesian elders about his service to God, how he lived while he was with them, **"serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials..."** And he says, **"Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."** And in Romans Paul writes about his concern for his fellow Jews saying, **"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers."**

Do we feel what Jesus feels? He feels compassion for the lost, the weary, the scattered. Jesus loves those who are lost like sheep without a shepherd. How about us? Do we feel what Jesus feels?

But what do we do if we don't feel that way? Keith Green used to sing these words, *"My eyes are dry, my faith is old, my heart is hard, my prayers are cold. And I know how I ought to be, alive to You, and dead to me. Oh, what can be done for an old heart like mine? Soften it up with oil and wine. The oil is You, your Spirit of love, please wash me anew in the wine of your blood."*

### III. **We Must Pray What Jesus Prays (Matt. 9:37)**

"Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Jesus says, **"Therefore pray. . ."** We cannot force compassion. We cannot make ourselves feel what Jesus feels. Compassion can only be acquired by opening our heart to a personal, experiential touch from the hand of God. Through prayer and through God's Word we come to know God more. And the more we get to know God and His Word, the more we will know His heart for lost people. Then we will come to see people as God sees them.

It is through prayer that we will gain the compassion we need to see the harvest as it truly is, it is through prayer that we will see that there is great

potential in the harvest and it is through prayer that we will feel what Jesus feels. And it is through prayer we will ask for the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers.

In the days of Christ's ministry on the earth the laborers were "few" and they still are today. How can we ask God to send forth someone else without first saying, "Lord, send me?" It is impossible to pray regularly for the salvation of a loved one, a neighbor, a friend or a co-worker and not be moved to do something. We cannot help but be moved to be the "someone" that God would use.

It is impossible to earnestly pray for the Lord to send laborers into the harvest and not make ourselves available to be a part of the answer. When we pray that God would send someone, we place ourselves at His disposal to be one of the workers in reaching the lost. In the text we see that the ones whom Jesus had commanded to pray for laborers became workers themselves.

We must pray as Jesus prays. The writer of Hebrews says this about Jesus, **"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."**

Do we pray as Jesus prays? If so it will lead us to the last point. We will do what Jesus does.

#### **IV. We Must Do What Jesus Does (Matt. 9:35)**

**"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."**

What did Jesus do? He went out teaching and preaching the good news of the kingdom. He went out ministering to people's needs. And in the very next chapter He sends out His disciples to do the same.

Christians, were we made to be spectators or players—fans or followers? Being a fan of Jesus is not the same as being a follower. You and I are invited to step up from the crowd of the curious to join the team of the committed! Christianity is not a spectator sport. Christians are not to merely be 'fans' of Jesus. We are to be followers of Jesus. We must do what Jesus does.

During the reign of Oliver Cromwell, the British government began to run low on silver for coins. Lord Cromwell sent his men on an investigation of the local cathedral to see if they could find any precious metal there. After investigating, they reported, "The only silver we could find is in the statues of the saints standing in the corners." To which the radical soldier and statesman of England replied, "Good! We'll melt down the saints and put them into circulation!"

That's what we need today. We need God to melt down the saints and put them into circulation. We need God to melt down our hearts with His love and put us out into His harvest field.

Adrian Rogers went so far as to say, "There are two types of Christians: soul-winners and backsliders." Is he right?

Let's begin to pray today that God would change us. Let's begin today to repent of our sin of apathy and indifference. Let's begin to sow in tears that we might reap a harvest with joy.

In two weeks we will have our Harvest Sunday. On that day God is going to ask us to make a commitment to pray for the harvest. Specifically I am going to ask you to write down the names of three lost people that you can begin to pray for. So over the next two weeks here's your assignment: Ask God to open your eyes to the harvest. See the people in our life. Which ones do not know Jesus? Ask God which three people in your life He wants you to begin to pray for.