

Matthew 9:35-38: Seeing the Lost as God Sees Them

Attention

- 1) When I began preaching I preached often on the need and responsibility of evangelism and taught classes on how to do it.
- 2) I've come to believe that is generally ineffective; disciples will teach others; church-goers won't; instead, focus on making disciples.
- 3) Discipleship is about learning from and imitating the Lord. The Savior's evangelism was based upon His view of the lost. **9:35-38**

I. He Felt Compassion for the Lost (35-36)

A. What the Lord Felt

- i. There were times when the Lord looked with anger at men because of the hardness of their hearts. **Mk. 3:1-5**
 - a) Jesus could be scathing in His criticism and condemnation of impenitence and hypocrisy. **Mt. 11:20-24; 23:15**
 - b) But while Jesus hated sin and the persistently sinful, His general attitude toward the lost was compassion and sorrow.
- ii. Jesus loved people, all people; He came to earth to die that all men might have opportunity to be saved. (cf. Jn. 3:16)
 - a) His self-described mission was "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10), to save not to condemn. **Jn. 12:47**
 - b) The Lord's love was not limited to the lovable or "worthy" among men; He loved the ungodly: you and me. **Ro. 5:6-8**

B. What We Should Feel

- i. The Lord never asks us to do what He has not already done; Jesus is the role model for how we should live, think, and feel.
 - a) We need the same heart of compassion toward those who are held captive by Satan and ignorant of truth. **2Ti. 2:24-26**
 - b) There is a difference in the way Jesus and His apostles dealt with the wayward and the persistently wicked. **1Th. 5:14**
- ii. Every person around us is an immortal soul created by God, destined to spend eternity in Heaven or Hell. Imagine the scene!
 - a) If you do not love the lost and are unconcerned for them, you do not have the heart of God.
 - b) We can cultivate greater compassion by doing what Jesus did; work with people, teach them, and you'll love them. **35**

II. He Saw Potential Among the Lost (37)

A. What the Lord Saw

- i. Jesus knew that the greater part of humanity will be eternally condemned, punished in everlasting fire. **Mt. 7:13-14; 25:41**
 - a) He experienced firsthand the rejection, ridicule, and risks of working with uninterested, dishonest, and worldly people.
 - b) But He also knew the potential hiding amid the rest of the world; He knew some could be taught and saved. **Ac. 18:9-10**
- ii. Jesus taught enormous crowds; He preached to literally thousands of people at one time, more than once.
 - a) Yet what did He have to show for it after three years? Just one hundred and twenty disciples on Pentecost. (Ac. 1:15)
 - b) Was it worth it? Aren't you thankful the Lord believed it was worth it? If just one soul can be saved from Hell, it is worth it.

B. What We Should See

- i. Sometimes, perhaps oftentimes, we allow rejection to discourage us; we think there's no one to teach, or it's not worth it to try.
 - a) The Lord saw more potential than we do in the world, but even He knew that the potential would be realized in few.
 - b) Nevertheless, the few are the ones Christ is seeking, and the souls of those individuals are worth the effort to find them.
- ii. "The harvest is plentiful;" those are the words of Christ; not everyone will be saved, but some still can be. **2Pe. 3:9**
 - a) The Lord waits patiently so that every willing soul will come to repentance; our continued existence indicates opportunity.
 - b) We'll never reach the lost if we think there is no one who will turn; we must see the potential and value it as God does.

III. He Prayed for Laborers to Go After the Lost (38)

A. What the Lord Prayed

- i. You might expect this passage to end with the Great Commission: Go into all the world and preach the gospel.
 - a) But it doesn't end with a command; instead, the Lord calls His disciples to prayer; prayer is essential in evangelism.
 - b) We usually pray for opportunities, but Jesus exhorted them to pray for workers, willing hearts to go and teach the lost.
- ii. Prayer in the teaching of Christ is a means of bringing our hearts in harmony with God, making it our will to do His will.
 - a) E.g. Your will be done on earth as in Heaven; Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; Lead us not into temptation.
 - b) These prayers require something of us, a certain character of heart as well as behavior that corresponds to our request.

B. What We Should Pray

- i. You can't pray for laborers to seek the lost if you are unwilling to participate; this prayer requires us to have God's heart.
 - a) We pray for opportunities, but the early Christians knew the opportunities were there; Jesus had already told them so!
 - b) The early saints prayed for boldness and help in teaching the lost. **Ac. 4:29; Eph. 6:17-20; 2Th. 3:1-2**
- ii. It isn't wrong to pray for opportunities, but it requires less of us; if we see no opportunities, we prayed, but there were none!
 - a) On the other hand, if we pray for laborers, we realize opportunity is irrelevant; the word must be preached. **Eze. 2:3-5**
 - b) Time spent sowing the seed is not wasted, even if none obey; this is the gospel, not a business. **1Co. 3:5-7; 1:17**

Action

- 1) The world is dying because of sin; there are some out there who will listen and turn; pray for workers, and be willing to work as well.
- 2) Are you one of the few the Lord is seeking? Are you will to humble your heart, turn your life toward Him, and obey? **Mk. 16:15-16**