

“Compassion, Grace, Sharing & Glory”

Matthew 9:35-38 & Romans 5:1-2 & 8

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Matthew 9:37-38 NLT “Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask God to send more workers into God’s fields.”

Barley harvest was my favorite. It required a precisely collaborated, large volume, combine. High moisture barley must be harvested in about a ten-day window. The crop needs to ferment sort of like making pickles out of cucumbers. Too wet and the lactic acid is diluted then butyric acid forms ruining the crop. Too dry and the fermentation process does not happen and the crop is ruined. Due to these factors, we hired a custom harvester, Purgett, to harvest our barley. Every day we checked the moisture of the crop and notified Purgett. They were following the ripening of the crop from South to North. When ripe, Purgett would roll into our farm with a cloud of dust, one huge combine pulling two power gravity boxes, an RV, and a pickup truck with a diesel fuel tank in its bed pulling two more power gravity boxes. We were prepared. The silo was prepped, the blower was in place, and four tractors with drivers were ready to hook up to the gravity boxes. The combine unhooked the gravity boxes then was off to the field to harvest. My favorite part was doing a dump on the run. Every second was precious, so the combine kept harvesting. The driver of the gravity box raced across the field to catch the combine, then matched speeds and positioned the gravity box the proper distant away from the combine. Communication was done with hand signals. When everything was in alignment, the operator would fill the gravity box while we were moving. Every seed was precious, so there was no room for error in speed or distance. The driver raced to the silo, unloaded the barley and repeat. I rode with my Dad, being taught by him before I had the skills to do the dumps on the run. If there were no breakdowns, it usually took 16 hours to harvest our barley. At the completion of the harvest, we would climb up and level the silo. You would sink in the greenish gold grain to your calves, so you went barefoot. The soft, cool grain felt good. The sweet aroma was refreshing. The birds were cheerful, singing from the feast of the kernels that didn’t make it to the silo. If the next farmers crop was not quite ready, then everyone gathered in our house enjoying a delicious feast of roast beef, corn, mashed potatoes and gravy; and of course, since we were a dairy farm, butter, milk and ice cream. I listened to the wild tall tales of the Purgetts. Harvest celebrations were abundant with smiles and laughter.

We are to be like harvesters: each excelling at their unique specific task and working in sync with everyone else; mentoring and teaching apprentice harvesters; finding the produce, the fruit, the harvest in others, that is their goodness and affirming them, encouraging them, nurturing them; and celebrating the harvest.

Of course, there would be no harvest if the farmer did not work in unity with creation to grow the crop. Likewise, our ability to harvest, that is to heal people, is a partnership with God.

Matthew 9:35-38 NLT “Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask God to send more workers into God’s fields.”

The harvest starts with compassion. Jesus has compassion for everyone. We are to have compassion for everyone. Compassion is defined as, “a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.” Jesus’ compassion is an emotional, physical, and spiritual connection with others that enables him to completely feel what they are feeling and fully understand them. Jesus’ compassion moved him to heal people, moved him to save us all through the cross, moved him to resurrect us all to glorious eternal life. We are to have compassion like Jesus. We are to heal people.

Jesus asked disciples and asks us to pray for more harvesters. Jesus’ disciples were likely surprised that they, themselves were the answer to their prayers. We are often God’s answer to our prayers. The world is a mess. The needs of many are urgent and great. Time is short. Send help God. Often God is sending those who are praying.

Are you praying for a world of peace, for bipartisan solutions? Perhaps God is calling you to make friends with people with different political views, to listen to them, to thank them for their good contributions, to dialogue with them, to find mutual solutions.

Are you praying for a world devoid of fear? Perhaps God is calling you to limit your consumption of fearful news and advertising that sells by creating fear. Maybe God is urging you to talk about the wonderful, loving, joyful things that are happening, talk about how people are helping each other, how our creativity is producing an abundance of solutions, to wipe away a tear and give a hug.

Are you praying for a world where all have the basics of life? Perhaps God is calling you to share.

Are you praying for worldwide unity? Perhaps God is calling you to let go of your judgements and accept that there are many different ways to be a good loving person.

Are you praying for community? Perhaps God is calling you to let go of your negative feelings toward the poor or another generation, for every group or person you view through your biased negative lens. Maybe God is urging you to let all of that go, so you can listen to them, understand them and have compassion for them.

Are you praying for emotional healing? Perhaps God is calling you to affirm, encourage and serve with those who are hurting.

What are you praying for? How will you partner with God to bring your prayer to fruition?

We are to have compassion for everyone even for those who are doing horrible things. Cleaning up our act is not a precondition for the love of God. God does not say if you would just do this or do that then I will love you. God loves everyone period. The Apostle Paul writes, **Romans 5:1-2 & 8 NRSV** “**Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. God proves God’s love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.**

Even our faith is a gift given to us by God. Faith is not something we muster up in our self. We baptize infants because of prevenient grace. God’s love for each of us precedes any human thought, feeling, or decision. God’s love for us exists prior to, and without reference, to anything humans may have done or not done. We live in misery until we accept grace, accept the unconditional, healing, resurrecting love God offers us and all people. Although rejecting God’s grace creates a miserable life even then that person is still loved, saved, and will be resurrected to joyful, abundant, eternal life by God’s grace. Until then we are called to have compassion for them.

The author, Anne Lamott, tells why she makes her teenage son go to church. “I make him go because I can ... I outweigh him by nearly 75 pounds. But that is only part of it. The main reason is that I want to give him what I found in the world, which is to say a path and a little light to see by. Most of the people I know who have what I want — which is to say, purpose, heart, balance, gratitude, joy — are people with a deep sense of spirituality. They are people in community, who pray, or practice their faith — people banding together to work on themselves and for human rights. They follow a brighter light than the glimmer of their own candle; they are part of something beautiful.”

Leo Tolstoy once wrote a story about a lonely shoemaker named Martin, who was promised in a dream that Christ would come to visit his shop. The next day Martin rose early, got his shop ready, prepared a meal—and waited. But the only one who showed up in the morning was an old beggar who came by and asked for rest. Martin gave him a room he had prepared for his Divine guest. Then, in the afternoon, the only one to show up in the shop was an old lady with a heavy load of wood. She was hungry and asked for food. He gave her the meal he had prepared for his Divine visitor. As evening came, a lost boy wandered by. Martin took him home, afraid all the while that he would miss the Christ. That night in his prayers he asked the Lord, “Where were You? I waited all day for You.” The Lord answered Martin: “Three times I came to your friendly door, three times my shadow was on your floor. I was a beggar with bruised feet. I was the woman you gave to eat. I was the homeless child on the street.”

You are saved by grace. God has compassion for you. God is healing you. You are called to have compassion, to heal others, to celebrate the goodness God is producing in each person.

Upon hearing the gospel for the first time a lady exclaimed, “It is a wonderful story! Do you really believe it? I don’t think you believe it or you would not have taken so long to come to us with compassion.”
Amen