

Pray For Non-Believers

PASTOR RYAN SHATZER

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

MATTHEW 9:36

When you see a group or crowd of people, what is your initial reaction? What word would best describe your feelings? Indifference? Excitement? Frustration? How about compassion? Where would that word rank on your list?

The Greek word used here by Matthew for “felt compassion” is the strongest word for pity in the Greek language. It refers to being shaken to our core, where you can feel for someone all the way down to the pit of your stomach! It’s a feeling that goes beyond sympathetic feelings to genuine empathy that touches us beyond our emotional state but to a physical level!

Do you see the difference? Have you ever “felt compassion” for someone like Christ did for the crowd of people? If so, did this empathy move you to do something?

This is the beauty of our Savior’s heart, because, instead of feeling indifferent, frustrated or even disgust for the helpless, hopeless and lost crowd wandering aimlessly throughout life, instead Christ’s humanity overwhelms Him so much that He is moved to teaching and action.

Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”

MATTHEW 9:37

What’s interesting about Jesus’ teaching here is the application mentioned is not what we would initially expect.

You see, when Jesus teaches the disciples about the GREAT spiritual harvest that is set before them and ALL the MANY spiritual needs that people have in their lives and then contrast this great work with just how few workers are available and are willing to help meet these spiritual needs, you would assume Jesus would teach His followers to go and get busy! But instead, He commands us, first, to pray.

40 Days of Prayer • Day 7

Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

MATTHEW 9:38

Later on in Matthew 28:18-20, we will be commanded to go, but right here we are first commanded to pray. This is because the harvest is so big, and the needs are so great that it is bigger than just one person. If we want to reach the world we must continue to multiply. This idea was taught in vs 35 when Matthew summarizes Jesus’ entire ministry in a sentence. Despite all the people Jesus taught, healed and ministered to, there were still crowds of people who didn’t see Him for who He ultimately was.

Thankfully, by God’s grace we are evidence that faithfulness to this command works. We, too, were once like this crowd of people in vs 36 who were helpless, hopeless and like a sheep without a shepherd. Luckily for us, He, too, looked upon us with compassion and sent out faithful believers who were willing to do the work of the ministry. Now we are living reminders that God is STILL sending out laborers into the harvest, and that our prayers really do make a difference!

THREE CHALLENGES FOR YOU TO REFLECT ON TODAY:

- Will you pray daily for the Lord to reach, teach, and unleash more workers for His harvest? I know some people who set an alarm on their phone every day at 9:38 that reminds them of this verse to pray for more kingdom workers.
- Is there someone in your “crowd” you need to “feel compassion” towards and minister to in some practical way?
- How is your heart towards the crowd? How do you see people who are lost, suffering, and enslaved by sin? Do you have a heart of compassion? If not, will you ask God to help you see others as He sees them?