

# SEE THE WORLD AROUND YOU

By Michael Thomason

## SCRIPTURE

Matthew 9:35-38

*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

## OBSERVATION

Wow! In this passage we read that Jesus had laser focus on the will of His Father. It really gives us a glimpse into the heart of Jesus. Even after spending time in the cities and villages Jesus was probably tired but He still looked at the crowd with compassion. The same Christ who looked at the crowd with compassion is the same Christ who lives in you. The compassion that is spoken about is not something that is natural for you and me, but it is something that Jesus puts inside of us and then flows through us to the people with whom we come in contact daily.

When Jesus saw the crowds, He was gripped by the suffering that each one was enduring, and that reality moved Jesus to feel compassion. In this crowd there were no doubt people who were harassed, helpless, weary and worn-out. In my attempt to try and picture the crowds that Jesus saw, my mind takes me back to a mission trip I took to Africa. The traffic was as heavy as any large city during rush hour. The sidewalks and businesses were as packed as Walmart during a black Friday sale, and this was not isolated to a specific stop. There were literally people in every corner and sidewalk we went down. I remember trying to slow down in the midst of all the hustle and business to actually make eye contact with someone, and when I did, I saw helpless, weary and harassed people—people who were just trying to survive another day. There was a sense of hopelessness unlike anything I have ever seen in a crowd; they seemed to not have any hope for tomorrow. In fact, it was not possible for them to even think of tomorrow because the day was filled with enough difficulties. As it seemed the crowds were pushing in on me at every side and I began to attempt to take in all that was going on around me, I began to truly understand the compassion Jesus spoke of in this text. My heart was forever moved with compassion, and I have never been the same since. I believe that this

was the compassion of Christ flowing through me. It not only forever changed my outlook on the people in Niger, West Africa but also the people in my hometown and the people at my work.

Christ felt deeply for the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd. The majority of people in Africa have never heard the name of Jesus and how He died on the cross for their sins. If these people go through their lives never hearing the gospel, the Bible tells us that they will experience the judgement of God during the final harvest. And how can these people hear the gospel if the laborers do not go and preach? If the laborers are not willing to go, then the crowds will remain lost and in a state of hopelessness.

Because Jesus saw the world around Him in this way, it moved Him to say, “Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” From this verse we can see that Jesus was not asking us to pray for the harvest. The harvest was there; it was all around Him and it is all around you and me today. Jesus was asking us to pray that the Church would do what it was created to do and work the harvest! God’s plan all along was to use and send “laborers” to the ends of the earth to spread the gospel. It is our privilege as Christ-followers to devote our lives to spread the gospel for the sake of others, both here in our hometown and to all nations. This passage forces us to wrestle with some very difficult questions.

- Is your life consumed by love for Christ and for the crowds, the people who are lost and do not know that Jesus died on the cross for them?
- Have we become too comfortable in our daily routine to see the suffering of the crowds? Are we too self-absorbed to see the crowds as Jesus did, consumed by the pursuit of money, a good job, nice car, or a comfortable life that we have become blind to the fact that Jesus saved us to be His laborers among His harvest? We need to use this unique opportunity during COVID-19 to examine our lives and the things that we value. Maybe this is an excellent time to realign your life with Jesus and start viewing people and crowds around you as He does.
- Do you see the crowds around you as being harassed by the evil one, as helpless people, sheep who are in desperate need of a shepherd to guide them?

## **OBEDIENCE**

- Begin by praying specifically for the people whom God has put in your life who are seeking hope. Pray that God would send many laborers from Harmony Hill into the worldwide harvest.
- Show compassion and love for people, expecting nothing back in return.

- Be intentional about starting conversation with a friend or family member, specifically those with whom you haven't spoken in a long time, letting them know you are praying them.

## **PRAYER**

I pray that Jesus will open our eyes and our hearts to be able to see the helplessness of the crowds, to see that the crowds are lost sheep in need of a shepherd. I pray that Jesus would allow His compassion to flow through us and into the crowds, that we would not just view them as people who live in the same city or who work with us, but as people made in the image of God.