



**Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture**

**SERMON TEXT:** Matthew 9:35-38

**KEY POINT(S):** The Church is here to use its gifts and meet the desperate need the world has for Jesus.

**FOR LEADERS**

- *Last week of Communities!* – Well, it has certainly come quickly, but the end of our Communities Season is upon us! Spend some time in your group this week looking back on the season(s) and giving thanks to any areas where God has clearly moved or you’ve seen fruit!

**GETTING STARTED**

- ⇒ **Communities Video** - Watch this week’s Communities video!
- ⇒ **Icebreaker** – “Name something that you secretly wish was edible.”
- ⇒ **Opener** – “What was one thing that stood out to you from the message this week?”

**A HEART OF COMPASSION**

In our passage this week, we receive a stunning view into the heart that God has for the lost. Ryan explained it in the message by observing that the most frequently-mentioned emotion for Jesus in the Bible is compassion.

**Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 9:35-38.**

- [1]** In your opinion, what is this passage trying to communicate by calling people “harassed and helpless?” What did that mean for people in Jesus’ time, and what does that mean for people today?
- [2]** Ryan mentioned that the most often observed emotion for Christ is compassion. What are some concrete ways in which Jesus expresses this compassion for people?
- [3]** The command for Jesus’ disciples in this passage is to “pray to the Lord to send laborers.” What role has this prayer played in your own life, personally? Where are you praying this prayer today?

We see the compassion that Jesus feels toward the people in this passage because they lack someone to shepherd them, and this actually echoes God’s denouncement of Israel’s leaders in Ezekiel 34 that Ryan mentioned in the sermon.

**Ask for a volunteer to read Ezekiel 34:1-6.**

- [4]** According to these verses, what actions does a faithful shepherd do for his sheep?
- [5]** Practically, what do these types of actions look like today?

*Leaders: The big point of the sermon this week is rather simple – we (The Church – Jesus’ disciples) should have the same heart that Christ has, which is compassion for the lost. Likewise, this desire to love those that need Jesus should produce in us a sincere desire to want to serve. We should all be praying the same prayer that Jesus calls his disciples to pray in this passage – that the Lord of the harvest would send out laborers. But there are two parts to this prayer: first, that we depend on Jesus to send out the workers that the world desperately needs, and also that we, ourselves, would be faithful to go out and work the fields.*

Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

A CALL TO ACTION

In verse 37, Jesus says that, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” Ryan went on to explain that faithful churches are those that understand this mission to make disciples, knowing that the workers are indeed, “few.”

**[6]** Notice that Jesus urges the disciples first to pray before going out to work the “fields.” Why do you think he does this? What do you think this call for prayer says about the way Jesus thinks about ministry?

*Leaders: 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 will be helpful here to help you understand this!*

**[7]** What do you think it is that sometimes causes churches to forget their mission as disciples of Christ? How can we guard against this in our own?

**[8]** If someone were to honestly observe your life right now, do you think they would conclude that you are someone who takes this passage seriously? What “harvest fields” does God currently have you in, and what are you currently praying for in regard to your own mission field?

**[9]** In what way(s) are you currently serving within the church that you call home? Is there more that you feel you could or should be doing and, if so, what’s holding you back?

**[10]** In the sermon, Ryan also mentioned the importance of rest. What types of rhythms do you have in place to ensure that you are able to rest well, and what does rest look like for you?

*Leaders: It's easy for churches (especially churches that are as big as Emergence!) to get so caught up in the little details that they all but entirely forget the heart of what it is we're called to do. Ryan explained this in the sermon, but at the end of the day, we can talk and talk all day long about how to “best carry out the ministry,” but the at the end of the day, are we actually DOING ministry, or just talking about it? He used the example of his kids cleaning his room to illustrate this.*

*Additionally, it's important that we understand what rest truly is as a church, and that we rest well. It's difficult to talk about rest as a church, because it's usually the folks serving the most faithfully that entirely overlook rest and end up in the most danger of burning out, while it's the laziest among us (often talking about how we should be doing things “better” and never actually serving) who are the most strict about their boundaries, their rhythms and schedules, and not over burdening themselves by “serving.” At the end of the day, the questions is pretty simple – if you claim to be a part of Jesus’ church, which “part” are you?*

LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

**[11]** In what way has God uniquely gifted you, and how did you personally come to understand this as your gifting?

**[12]** As Ryan mentioned in the sermon, true spiritual growth cannot come without serving. Why do you think this is, and how have you found this to be true in your own life?

*Leaders: There are many ways in which we can confirm our spiritual gifting! Ryan mentioned a few, including: finding an area where serving feels like an energizing joy rather than a draining burden, finding fruit in our gifts, and others affirming our gifts. He also stressed the importance of not letting a lack of certain gifting become an excuse for not serving. For example, we should all be sharing our faith, encouraging one another, exercising hospitality, and giving generously to the Lord. These are all spiritual gifts, which means that some will be exceptional at one or more of them, but we are ALL called to do these things as disciples of Jesus.*

PRAYER

**[1]** Pray that the Lord would send out laborers into the harvest, starting with you!!