

How Does Jesus See Memphis?

Matthew 9:35-38 teaches us how to engage the mission of the King in Memphis.

35 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.

36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;

38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Sermon Outline:

I. He went (9:35 - proximate to the pain)

We see Memphis the way Jesus does as we go as He went. Jesus went to the cities and the villages. He left where He was in order to draw near to people in their pain. Since Jesus possessed a pedestrian mindset, so should we. However, oftentimes we do not go because we do not want to see the pain.

II. He saw (9:35-36 - harassed, helpless)

We see Memphis the way Jesus does as we see as He saw. Jesus saw that people were harassed and helpless as sheep without a shepherd. What is true of sheep? They are particularly dependent. Sheep are helpless. They cannot protect themselves. They are utterly dependent upon their shepherd for protection and feeding. He sees the harassed — harassed by the pressures of busyness, exhausted by the pace of life, and led astray by many false ideologies. He sees the helpless, unable to really do anything about their own problems.

III. He acted (9:36 - compassion).

We see Memphis the way Jesus does as we feel as He felt (Matthew 9:36). A missional lifestyle is energized and compelled by the compassionate heart of Jesus for people. Compassion literally means to be moved in the gut. It is sympathy plus action. Jesus was moved at the core of His being. When He sees lives that are broken by sin, it arouses His deep, soul-level compassion.

IV. He said (9:37-38 - the people are ripe)

We see Memphis the way Jesus does as we say what He said. How easy it is to see people as problems to be solved rather than a harvest to be reaped. Jesus says that the harvest is plentiful and that the great need is for more laborers.

V. He sent (Matthew 10:1-2, 5, 16)

We see Memphis the way Jesus does as we send as He sent. Jesus called the original 12 disciples to Himself and sent them out on mission. He continues to send His followers on mission and says, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (10:16).

Discussion Questions

1. Since Jesus went to “all the cities and villages,” what does this imply about our ministry vision for our city? What are some ways in which believers in Memphis today should be involved in the mission of Jesus Christ?
2. Why is it important for us to know from verse 36 how Jesus felt when He saw the crowds? How does His mercy for the lost and the least challenge us today? How would you describe your attitude towards the harassed and hopeless people in Memphis? Do you tend to view people as problems to be solved or as a harvest to be reaped?
3. If we realize how compassionate and merciful the Great Shepherd has been towards us, how might our conduct change towards others who are harassed and helpless in our city? (See verses 37, 38)
4. Of what does the ministry of Jesus consist? What happens when we fail to include all three elements in our mission to the unbeliever? What happens when we fail to include all three elements in our ministry within the church? *“Preaching is the proclamation of a person, teaching is the explanation of principles, and healing is the mitigation of human pain.”*
5. Describe how our city would be different if it experienced more fully the compassionate ministry of Jesus through us.
6. What is one way that God is calling you to unleash a greater amount of compassion upon your neighbors in our city?

Reflect on this quote from Frederick Buechner and discuss where God is calling you or your group to compassionate action in ministering the gospel in word and deed in our city: *“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”*

Going Deeper Through Prayer

1. How easy it is to not see people as they really are. People outside of Christ are perishing and in need of a shepherd's care. Have you truly seen how spiritually destitute your friends are? Pray that God would give you eyes to see others as God sees them.
2. Will you pray "to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest"?
Make it very personal: How about your children? How about yourself?
Do you and I have the audacity to pray Isaiah's prayer?
Isaiah 6:8 – Here am I Lord! Send me!
3. Someone has wisely said, "Winners of souls are first weepers for souls."
Would you pray for the Lord to give you and your group
His compassionate heart for the lost and the least of our city:

*"Let me look on the crowd as my Savior did,
Till my eyes with tears grow dim.
Let me view with pity the wandering sheep
And love them for love of Him."*