



## Introduction:

In Matthew 9, the harvest Christ spoke about depicts the people of the earth (Matthew 9:37). The harvest represents people who were and are in need of God's love and redemption (Isaiah 49:6). We learned previously that to gather God's harvest, we must begin at home (Matthew 9:1). Do you know people close to you who need to have a relationship with Christ? Remember, it is God's desire for souls to be reaped out of the harvest, but He desires to do it through believers as His witness (Matthew 9:38; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Have you ever thought, "What if my knowledge of God and His story of redemption could literally change the course of another person's life and eternal destiny?" You know, that is exactly what God's plan is – reconciling individuals who will then pray for "all men" and witness to "all men," which gives them the opportunity to "come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1, 4). If we don't reap the harvest it will decay and corrupt. It will become waste that is of no benefit, not being collected to be used for its true purpose (Revelation 20:14-15)? So, how can we actively participate in God's harvest, seeing souls brought to Christ?

## The Focus:

- **Every believer can be used by God to bring in the harvest. How?**
  - **By being a friend to the lost.**
  - **By getting your eyes on the harvest.**

There is a phrase often used when discussing planning and preparation – "Failing to plan is planning to fail." By virtue of one's neglect to plan, they are by their actions preparing to be unsuccessful in their endeavor. As followers of Christ and His ambassadors, if we don't proactively engage in seeing souls saved, then Satan and his world system will be glad to enslave and destroy them (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). We can't be about our agenda. We must be about God's plan and purpose. With every harvest there is a time to "plant" and a time to "pluck" (Ecclesiastes 3:2b). For us to gather the harvest, we must give our attention to and be in the field, ready to labor. If we get caught up in our own tasks and comfort, we become distracted and lose sight of how God desires to use us. And if this happens, we will suffer loss (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Steve Hawthorne stated, "You can do something other than working with God in His purpose, but it will always be something lesser, and you couldn't come up with something better." What's better and more important than what God is doing today? As previously stated, God is reconciling people through the witness of His ministers of grace (2 Corinthians 3:6). How much better of an opportunity does one have than to befriend those who are lost? That's what Matthew did (Matthew 9:9-11), and so did Christ (Matthew 11:19). We are not called to be separate from those who engage in sin, rather we are to separate ourselves from the darkness they are engaged in (Ephesians 5:11). If we who have the light (1 Thessalonians 5:5) only spend our time with others who have light, how will those in darkness see their need (2 Corinthians 4:3)? Maybe we should have a "Matthew" party. Invite and hangout with those that the

religiously pious would look down upon, Christ did (Matthew 9:10). Let's be known as "friends of sinners."

Throughout Matthew 9, there was a group that continuously opposed Christ, which caused them to constantly miss the harvest. They were the scribes and Pharisees. Sadly, they resemble some people who are a part of the body of Christ today (1 Corinthians 3:1, 3; Matthew 9:3, 11, 34). The scribes and Pharisees were a very inwardly focused bunch – worried about their positions, their traditions, their preferences, the running of their religious system, what seat they had, etc. If we take our focus off of Christ and the harvest (people and their needs), we too will become inwardly focused. When we fail to live life according to God's purpose, we become consumed with our plans and agendas forgetting the work to be accomplished in the harvest fields. Part of not missing the harvest has to do with our perspective of church.

Church is where we go to learn, to be instructed, to strategize, to formulate, to become united; and as we leave the church, we enter the game where we are able to apply what we were taught. Did you know that most of the people in this chapter were not reached in the synagogue (the church)? They were reached in their homes, in their places of business, and in the streets of the city. Jesus taught in the synagogues, but when he reached people, it mostly happened outside of the synagogue. Christ did His work "*among the people*" (vs. 35), and as He ministered unto them He was affected, causing Him to be moved with "*compassion*" (vs. 36). Are your eyes on the harvest?

### **Response to the Sermon:**

Pastor Dan concluded the message by talking about how God has challenged him on prayer, in how he can be used by God to engage in His harvest. He said that for the longest time he prayed, "Lord, save souls this Sunday in church." He said that God greatly convicted him about that. He said what he previously prayed was vague and abstract. He thought to himself, "I'm praying for people I don't know – praying they will somehow make their way through the door of the church, and then have a desire to walk in front of tons of people they don't know, go up to a guy they don't know, and admit they are not going to heaven. And all the while I'm praying, I may not have invited one person to church the week before or shared Christ with one person." That's really honest of Pastor Dan to tell us how God has been working on him to change him. How has God challenged you through the course of this study? As a result of God's working in his heart, he said his prayers sound more like, "Lord, give me opportunities to witness for you this week. Lord, help those that I invite to church to come and hear the gospel and be convicted of their need of You." Over the course of this study in Matthew 9 on the harvest, how have your prayers changed? How are you engaging with others concerning the gospel? Remember, the gospel has the power to alter the entire course and trajectory of one's life (Romans 1:16). Do you believe this truth? Go! Be God's ambassador!

### **Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:**

Christ said to His disciples, "*Ye are the salt of the earth...*" (Matthew 5:13). Under the Levitical law, Israel was to salt the meat offering (Leviticus 2:13). In Psalm 34:8a it says, "*O taste and see*

*that the LORD is good...*" We know that the Levitical things were a "*shadow of good things to come*" (Hebrews 10:1). And Christ was the true meat offering (John 1:29).

If Christ is the meat offering and we are the salt of the earth, what does this mean regarding our representation of Jesus and our presentation of the gospel?

What does Paul say should be coupled with what we think and say (Colossians 4:6)? How does Paul say that grace is to be prepared and delivered to those who are lost and in darkness (Colossians 4:5-6)? Why is this important as we listen and learn about someone's story (Colossians 4:6)?

### **Application Questions:**

As we have studied Matthew 9, there have been many truths, principles, and practices that have come out of our study. The last two points that were drawn out of this chapter were very helpful in reminding us of the importance of the harvest and how we are to keep from missing the harvest – befriending the lost and keeping our eyes on God's harvest. By doing these two simple actions, we will always be focused on people and their needs. As well, through prayer, we will better know how we can help them address their needs, directing them toward Jesus Christ.

Why must we never forget to do these two things within our church and within our families?

What are some ways that you can be a friend to the lost? Thinking of some ways you can befriend the lost, think of someone you know that could use a friendly deed and devise a plan of how you can do it before the end of next week. What are you going to do?

If we are going to live according to God's desire and purpose, what are some practical things you can do to keep your eyes focused on the harvest of lost souls? From your list or from someone in your group's list, seek to implement at least one of these into your life on a regular basis to help you keep your focus on God's harvest.

**Prayer:**

- Pray to have a heart of compassion for all men, as Christ had. Pray that we would remember that Christ died for all, therefore, the gospel is to be proclaimed to all (1 Timothy 2:1, 4).
- Pray fervently for the souls that are lost, especially those that we know personally, because Satan desires to keep them by fear in bondage and blinded from the truth of God's way of reconciliation (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).