



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion
25 – The Sheep Without Shepherds

Announcements:

4/19 @6:30 -

Women's Bible
Study

4/20 @7:00 -

Corporate
Prayer

4/21 @6:30 -

Grace Group

4/24 @7:00 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: What is one thing that stirs in you a “righteous indignation” (something bad that makes you really mad!)?

READ: Matthew 9:35-38

On Sunday, we noted that our motivation to share the Gospel and participate in the heavenly “harvest” was to feel and be shown the compassion of Jesus. We should, like our Savior, have care and compassion for a lost world around us. As Paul would say we are to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). But the question that immediately arises is: how can I have compassion on such sinful people? The short answer is through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, but I believe that we can also look at what this passage says about what moved Jesus to compassion. In doing so we will be better equipped as we head off into the harvest.

There are really two parts of what Matthew says moved Christ to compassion. The first is that they were “harassed and helpless.” The word for harassed here (*esklymenoi*) has the meaning of “afflicted and pushed to the point of being at the end of your rope”. It is a full and complete harassment that leaves you with nothing (hence the HCSB’s translation of “weary”). Then, being here at the end of your rope you look around and then find yourself “helpless”. Again, while I don’t always dive into Greek, it is helpful here to do so again. More than *just* “helpless” the word here (*errimmenoi*) means something more like “helpless because you have been cast off, discarded and left.” It is helpless because your “help” doesn’t see fit to help you any more. So this then is a more full picture of the lost world around you. They are harassed, pushed to the limit by the world around them. Just look at the stress and how the world reacted to the recent COVID pandemic and this can be clearly seen. But then, in an even more tragic experience for them, in the midst of their harassed feelings they look to the things that they want to help them (wisdom, science, pleasure, anything other than Christ) and realize that those things too have left them. It is to these people that we bring the hope of the Gospel. And to such people it truly is Good News!

DISCUSS: In 1 Corinthians 6:11 Paul recounts the sinful ways of the world then tells his readers that “such were some of you”. In thinking of the world as “harassed and helpless” why do we need to be reminded both of the state of those around us AND how we were in the same boat?

The second half of what moves Jesus is fascinating. He says that the people are like “sheep without a shepherd.” This is partially a bit of an expansion on the idea for “helpless”, but I believe that there is something else going on as well. While not mentioned by name, Jesus seems to be calling out the Pharisees here. The people are helpless and the ones that *should* be leading and guiding them, the ones who *should* have been helping and caring for them, the ones who *should* have been directing the people to God were failing in their duty. We could read this as: the people are helpless, and shame on you Pharisees for not being the ones to guide them! The language of the Old Testament is filled with similar critiques and the sheep being without a shepherd is the great tragedy of the people of God (see Ezekiel 34:1-16 for a clear example). The language of the sheep not having a shepherd thus compounds the plight of the people. The people are helpless AND the ones who should have been giving them help are failing in their duty.

DISCUSS: In what ways are the people *still* like sheep without a shepherd? In what ways might we be guilty in this?