

WAYPOINT
MONDAY, 1/30

Read Matthew 9:35.

I can only imagine what our world looked like before Jesus' ministry began. The so-called "shepherds" of Israel had long since abandoned the flock entrusted to them by God. Ezekiel 34 says that these shepherds did not strengthen the weak, heal the sick, or bound the injured in the flock. They did not seek those sheep that had strayed or were lost. These sheep were left to fend for themselves, scattered across the land alone and vulnerable to being prey for their enemies.

We are often like sheep--easily distracted, vulnerable to sin, and unable to move through this life without trusted guidance and divine direction. As sheep, we will follow where we are led. If our shepherd is not God, then our guidance comes from our own personal pursuit of what our society's value most. Either way, we will be led.

Jesus was given to us as a gift from our Creator God as a shepherd for His people. Jesus was called to teach us to live in love within a community of faith. Through Jesus' intervention in this world, we can establish a new covenant with God. This intervention meant that Jesus as our shepherd would actively search for lost sheep and provide them a new opportunity to live by faith. This intervention was everything Jesus was willing to do to spread the Gospel of hope and eternal life to all who would listen.

Matthew 9:35 describes His intervention in detail: He would walk from village to village, teach in synagogues, proclaim the good news, and heal people. Jesus was diligent and focused to ensure He did all He could to reconnect all with God. As His disciples, aren't we called to do the same? Are we doing enough??

Praying Together:

"Creator God, I am picking and choosing what parts of discipleship I'd rather be responsible for. I do what is comfortable and easy. I am often a Christian of convenience instead of one who places priority on what it takes to be an obedient disciple. I need Your patience as I learn how to focus on disciple making and as I let go of my anxiety and allow God to move through me to impact other people's lives. Help me to fulfill what You have called me to do. Amen."

WAYPOINT
TUESDAY, 1/31

Read Matthew 9:36.

It is not enough just to do the tasks we are called to do. We are called to invest our hearts, our stories of God's presence in this world, and the triumphs and trials of our own faith. We are called to be a source of love, the likes of which many have never seen before, just like Jesus did. We catch a glimpse of what Jesus saw when he looked upon the abandoned flock., a.k.a. the crowd.

He knew the extent of loss they had experienced, like sheep without a shepherd. He could see that they had been left struggling for far too long. They were vulnerable to harassment and death without a shepherd's guidance. Above all else, Jesus had compassion for them. Compassion is what arises when we are confronted with another person's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering. It did not matter who the person was, whom they were related to, or how good or bad they were. He had compassion for all of them. They were all of

God's children. By God's grace, any one or all of the crowd could be forgiven for their sins. Jesus saw their circumstances and was motivated to end their suffering.

Compassion is twofold. On the one hand, we must open our eyes to truly see those who walk without our Shepherd. On the other hand, we must be motivated to seek the lost and do what we can to end their suffering in Jesus' name. When was the last time you did all you could to alleviate suffering in our community? In our world?

Praying Together:

"Lord, build the strength, the courage, and the intuition within me so that I can see what You see in me and in others. Show me how to identify suffering in ways that only You can see. Let me be an instrument of Your peace, Your love, and Your healing. Amen."

WAYPOINT
WEDNESDAY, 2/1

Read Matthew 9:37.

Imagine how it must feel for Jesus the Shepherd to look at His worldwide flock and know that there is much to be done to save them all. It will take dedicated disciples to make many more dedicated disciples. It will take compassion and a shared sense of grace and love to encourage conversion. It will take perseverance and time to trust in God to make the much-needed difference in people's lives. But the ability to make a difference in this world through our faith is worth the work.

So when Jesus tells His disciples that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. He uses a farming analogy to explain that there are so many people out there to be cared for and brought to God, but few people willing to go out there and do the work. As disciples, we know that there is much work to be done. We even know we are responsible for making disciples, but few of us will dedicate our time to this task.

What causes us to hesitate when there is much work to be done? Many of us may be afraid of rejection and/or failing, or we are concerned about making mistakes that may hurt someone else's faith. We may be doing the minimum amount of work to be considered a disciple by those around us and feel we have nothing we can teach others. Still others may not want to take their eyes off their own lives long enough to invest in someone else's.

What gifts do we have that we can use to help others in their faith? What example can we set for those who could learn from our struggles and celebrations in faith?

Praying Together:

"Christ Jesus, what an example you have set for us all! I have so much to learn from the way You love me. Your sacrifice has inspired me to serve others in Your name. Help me open my heart and mind to You so I can grow in love and mercy. I pray I can model Your grace to all I encounter. Amen"

WAYPOINTS
THURSDAY, 2/2

Read Matthew 9:38.

After showing His disciples the “fields” of people ready to embrace the hope of the gospel, Jesus commands His disciples to do something in response to the need. “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field,” Jesus said.

If you think about it, this is an interesting request. Why is Jesus asking them to ask Him to send workers out? Why doesn't He just send the workers out? Do the disciples need to ask God to do something that He already wants to be done?

To get to the bottom of what Jesus means, let's look ahead to Matthew 10. Following the scene where Jesus shows the disciples the “ripe fields,” Jesus sends them out into the harvest. In fact, the word “send” Jesus uses in Matthew 9:38 is a strong word meaning more like “drive”. Jesus compels them to go out to meet the very needs to which He has opened their eyes before.

Back to the slew of questions I posed for us, Jesus already has plans to send them. So, why then does He ask them to ask Him to send out the workers? Is it a means of preparing their hearts to be ready to go out? Is it to get them to fully participate in the ministry of reaching people? Is it a way of training them to always be in cooperation with God to fulfill His purposes? Yes.

I'm not sure it has to be just one clean answer. I think Jesus was preparing them to be the workers who would go out. He wanted them to have a mindset of increasing the reach by partnering with Him in fulfilling the Great Commission. We have to remember that before long, Jesus will be resurrected and ascend to be with His Father. Jesus' ministry will be entrusted to just a few workers. Those workers must be about the work of recruiting, training, and sending new workers.

Of course, this requires God's faithful activity as well. It is God who reaches out to us and calls us to our own ministry. Without His grace, this work would be impossible. This is why we ask. As Kingdom workers, we must get used to and even become dependent on God. We often resist the idea of depending on someone, even God, but it is essential for true success in ministry. Just look at Jesus' words to His disciples in John 13-16. Four times Jesus tells them to ask anything of Him that will help accomplish the mission, and He will do it for them. The church should be more willing to take Him up on His offer.

The truth is the harvest is bigger than any one person or church can handle. The world-wide church needs to be engaged and crying out to God together to be sent out with His help to reach our broken world.

Praying Together:

“Lord of the harvest, we ask You to send out workers. We know there is such great need in our world for You and the hope You bring. We pray that You would call us and that You would show us our purpose and how we can do our part in the harvest. We want to bring You glory and see the broken made whole, as You have done in us. Amen.”

WAYPOINTS
FRIDAY, 2/3

Read John 4:31-34.

The context for our passage today is important for us to understand. The exchange here between Jesus and His disciples follows His interaction with the woman at the well. If you remember the story, Jesus meets a woman while waiting for His disciples. They have a conversation, and in it, Jesus opens her eyes to who He is. She leaves Jesus and goes to her town to share with everyone who will hear what Jesus has done for her and that He could be the Messiah.

The disciples, meanwhile, are a little confused. They had gone into town to get Jesus some food. When they urge Him to eat, Jesus starts talking about some other food He has in His possession. I'm sure they were a little frustrated. Jesus then tells them about His food. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work," Jesus said. What Jesus is saying here is that what fuels His life is to do His Father's will. It is what drives Him and motivates everything He does.

Think about that for a moment. What fuels you to do the things you do? Is it some vision of success? Is it to gain a sense of security? Is it to win the approval of others? What is the driving force behind your life? Be honest with yourself.

What fueled Jesus was to do God's will. It was to bring God glory by finishing the work He had begun. It kept Him going amidst obstacles. Jesus had His sights set on the cross so that those broken in sin might be saved through Him. It was to bring restoration to a sin-sick world. In doing this, the world will see the awesomeness and majesty of God.

I am humbled when I consider Jesus' laser focus on His Father's will and glory. If I'm honest with myself, I'm motivated by a myriad of different desires. Some desires are good and in alignment with Jesus, while others are less good and the result of being influenced by the world. I feel a sense of conviction, that I need to turn my motivations over to the Holy Spirit. I need to ask that God purge my heart of the lesser motivations. Truth be told, those worldly motivations don't do anything to add to my life; in fact, they often do the opposite by placing burdens on me that take away from me. I want to ask God to purify my desires so that I am influenced by the greater motivation of doing His will--"His good, perfect and pleasing will," as Paul says in Romans 12:2.

I wonder if you will join me in praying for new desires that reflect Jesus' heart.

Sending Prayer:

"Jesus, I am moved by Your example. You know my heart. You know the motivations that drive all that I do and say. Some of these desires are good and others are unhealthy. Awaken the desires that need to grow, and open my eyes to the desires that need to be set aside. I want my heart to reflect Your heart. I want to be fueled by Your will and the desire to bring You glory. This is the life that is truly life. Amen."

WAYPOINTS
SATURDAY, 2/4

Read John 4:35-36.

Jesus refers here to a common saying in the agricultural world of the first century. "It's four months still to harvest," the farmers would say. They would say this, of course, just after having planted the seeds. They would have worked to prepare their fields to receive the seeds and then planted them. At that point, they would have to wait at least four months for those seeds to produce a crop.

Jesus said there is no need to wait for the crop of people ready to experience God's Kingdom. The fields are already ripe! Jesus has just sown the seeds of God's Kingdom in the Samaritan towns, and they are already beginning to bear fruit. The transformation of the woman at the well is a perfect example.

I wonder who in your life has yet to experience the thrill of God's Kingdom and might be ready to hear about the hope you have in Jesus. I wonder who needs you to plant seeds that God can then nurture.

Jesus says something very beautiful here. When we go about His work of reaching people with the Good News, we get to share in the joy of the Kingdom. This makes me think of the language Jesus uses in Matthew 25 in the Parable of the Talents. In the story, a master entrusts some of his wealth to his servants. Two of the servants put the money to work as the master had asked. When the master came back, both the servants and the master celebrated together at the success. In fact, the master says, "Come and share in your master's happiness!" There is an invitation to share the joy God experiences when someone is adopted back into His family.

I wonder if how you are serving God is allowing you to share in His happiness. I wonder what God might be calling you to that if you stepped into it might allow you to share in His joy.

Sending Prayer:

"God, You are a God of joy. Jesus told story after story in Luke 15 of Your rejoicing when the lost were found. Your heart overflows when one of Your own turns to You for life. I want to be a worker in the harvest. I want to do Your work so that I can share in Your joy. I want You to say of me, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Come share in My happiness.' Amen."

WAYPOINTS
SUNDAY, 2/5

Read John 4:37-38.

Like in Matthew, Jesus is sending His disciples out into ministry. He is dispatching them into fields ready to be harvested. He is clear that the readiness of the people to respond to the Good News of God's Kingdom is not of their doing.

The disciples have yet to do much for God's Kingdom. To this point, they have largely followed behind Jesus. They watched Him do all the work, all the amazing things. That will change soon when Jesus sends them out to do some of the very same things He was doing. For now, they are going out to gather fruit whose seeds they did not plant.

In this case, Jesus was the One who planted the seeds. He was preaching and teaching in Samaria. The disciples would go out and help reach the people who were ready to respond.

One observation from this passage is that the Kingdom is about teamwork. While in the world, we often pursue personal glory in our accomplishments. In the Kingdom, we are all working toward the common goal of doing God's will and bringing Him glory. When this is the goal, it doesn't matter if you are the one who plants the seeds of the gospel in the heart of another or the one who helps lead them to Jesus. Both roles are important when it comes to accomplishing the goal. Both will receive the same blessing from the Lord of the harvest.

The Kingdom work is about our cooperating with one another, and, most importantly, with God and the work He is doing. We know when it comes to leading people to Jesus, we don't have the power to change a person's heart; only God can do that. We can be messengers of the Good News--seed planters and servants who reflect Jesus' love. In this way, we point others to Jesus, but the true harvesting of hearts belongs to the Lord.

So regardless of the role, consider it a joy to be harvesting in the field because the lives of those we play a role in serving will experience abundant life in Jesus.

Sending Prayer:

"Father, thank You for inviting me to be a part of the harvest. I admit that I have some fears about sharing my faith. Give me courage to be willing to plant the seeds of faith by telling my story. Help me serve as a guide to helping someone know what it means to walk with You. I am Your servant. Amen."