

Matthew 9:35-38

When I am preparing to speak on a Sunday morning I often try to imagine you in my mind's eye. What are the people I am about to speak to doing right now? What were they doing this week? What is on their minds? Some of you I know quite well. Some very little. And there will be some here whom I have so far never met. But I do know that a thousand things are on your minds. You have myriads of concerns – money, work pressures, relationships, health, exams and more.

And why are you here? Again there may be as many reasons as people in this room.

Today we are going to complete our look at Matthew 8-9 and my aim for you this morning is to clear your head. Life is complex, life is distracting, life is confusing, life is sometimes hard – and frankly we get caught up in the busyness of life and lose sight of what our life is really about.

Remember Matthew is writing chapter 8-9 of his gospel to early Christians living about 30 years after Jesus death who felt a bit demoralised, and were in danger of losing their way. To clarify their thinking Matthew has collected, in chapters 8-9 a whole series of stories that in essence make one point – Jesus is in control – Jesus has authority – Jesus has all the authority of God.

Indeed Matthew 9:35 completes a bigger section of Matthew's gospel.



9:35

This summary is almost identical to a summary in Matthew 4:23. The two summaries act as bookends. Between them there are chapters 5-7 which describe Jesus' authoritative teaching, and 8-9 his authoritative acts. Matthew has been saying then – listen to him, trust him.

Then remember chapters 8-9 were three sets of three miracle stories. Each concluding with a call to discipleship.

8:18-22, 9:9-16, 9:35- 38 – the third call.

Remember the conclusion to each of the sets of miracles

First cycle – forgiveness

This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." (Matthew 8:17)

Second cycle – forgiveness

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." (Matthew 9:6)

Third cycle – surprise – opening a mouth!

... the man who had been mute spoke.... (Matthew 9:33)

- He forgives, he forgives, and he wants you to speak about it.

So Mat 9:35-38

Follows on from the healing of the mute man – he will call us to speak.

Completes Matthew 8-9 – the third call to discipleship.

Completes Matthew 5-9 – the completion of Matthew’s picture of Jesus’ authority.

1. What Jesus feels

Compassion – v36a

Uses the language of gut churning

Like the compassion of God

OT uses a word for compassion with related connotations – of the womb.

Ex 34:6 – definitive statement of God’s character

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, (Exodus 34:6)

Hos 11:8 – a supreme statement

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. (Hosea 11:8)

Isa 63:15 – a plea

Look down from heaven and see from your lofty throne, holy and glorious. Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us. (Isaiah 63:15)

- Jesus has come with all the authority of God, all the power of God AND ALL THE COMPASSION OF GOD.
- “Jesus doesn’t care about me” – not true
 - His burning passion is for your good.
 - “But it doesn’t feel like it” – the Bible full of answers to that
 - God doesn’t love Joseph?
 - God does love Job?
 - God doesn’t love Jesus?
- “Jesus doesn’t care about them” – not true
 - Every binge drinker on a Saturday night & Every self-satisfied professional
 - Every prostitute on the Cowley Road & Every wealthy home-owner on Divinity Road
 - Every wailing child in Littlemore & Every happy-go-lucky teenager in Iffley Fields
 - Every school boy or girl from Magdalen College School, and Cheney, and Cherwell, and Peers and Oxford Community School and St Gregory’s & Every elderly person in Marston, Botley, Kennington
 - Every student at Oxford University, and Oxford Brookes & Every homeless person at the shelter

2. What Jesus sees

He saw the true situation – v36

Harassed

Helpless - weak

Like sheep without a shepherd

Hungry, aimless, in danger

“The language pictures a predator mangling the sheep and throwing them to the ground.” Commentary

- Sometimes obvious
 - Plenty of obviously harassed and helpless people
 - Often not so obvious
 - Successful people often described as “driven”
 - Commonplace – certain drives are stronger than us – esp sex drive.
 - What drives us does not create contentment
- The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation...A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them – Henry Thoreau, 1854
- For many people “amusements” are to hide the emptiness of life.
 - Dominant narrative of “man the master” underlying recognition of “victim of driving forces”

We need a shepherd – Jesus.

He saw the potential – v37

The harvest is plentiful

- Our experience
 - Dozen years ago – started holiday clubs
 - Out that youth clubs – employed Richard Brewster
 - Out of that – conversions – seven baptisms? At least one other professed faith at university.
- Muslims in Oxford
 - A few years ago – almost no known converts from Islam in Oxford
 - Today – an Iranian group of 20 – two presently preparing to be baptised.
 - Annual meal of Muslim background believers – now may not fit in a home
- Our role in the world – shaping people to work in the world

He saw the challenge –

the workers are few

- Our vision for EVERY SINGLE PERSON to be a worker in the harvest field
 - Glorifying Jesus is the workplace
 - Glorifying Jesus in family
 - Glorifying Jesus in our life together
 - Some to devote themselves full time to being “full time gospel workers”

3. What Jesus does

Stops doing it himself and calls us!!!

Call to pray before action.

- What your life is about: knowing the compassion of Jesus, escaping the rat race and following the shepherd, working in his harvest field – PRAY.