

## **THE LORD OF THE HARVEST**

### **MATTHEW 9: 36-38**

#### Introduction:

Jesus saw the multitudes with the eyes of His Father. When He looked upon them, He saw them in relationship to their Creator and Father. When He responded to the multitudes, He responded with the heart of the Father. This is truly a fitting word for a moment like this. Interestingly Jesus then identified His Father and our Father as the Lord of the Harvest. This helps us understand God's response to the broken and lost people of our world.

Our attention is drawn to the Lord of the Harvest. The Lord of the harvest is the God of Israel, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By speaking this word concerning the Lord of the harvest, Jesus was seeking to draw His disciples into His concern for the multitudes. He wanted them to see what He saw, and to feel what He felt. They had a tendency to see problems when the multitudes came together with their many physical and spiritual needs, but Jesus saw what the Father saw. He saw them as a field that was ripe for harvest. He saw them as sheep in need of a shepherd. He saw great potential for the kingdom of God. He wanted his disciples to get under the burden

with Him. He wanted them to share His burden with Him, and to join Him in the work of ministering to the multitudes.

## I. HIS AUTHORITY.

When our Lord speaks of the “Lord of the harvest”, He is calling attention to His position in relationship to the multitudes, and His authority. He is “LORD!” We must never forget this.

1. He has the authority of an Owner in relationship to the harvest.

The field and the harvest that is in the field belong to the “Lord of the harvest.” Jesus saw the multitudes as being like ripe grain in a field—they belong to the Lord and should be gathered for Him.

2. He has the authority of a Master in relationship to the workers.

This word also relates the Father to the workers in the field.

He calls them and He sends them.

His relationship to the multitudes must never be overlooked.

## II. HIS CONCERN.

The concern of the Lord of the Harvest is expressed through His Son. When Jesus saw the multitudes coming to His ministry, He was moved by

compassion. This means that there was something deep within Him that responded with concern. Jesus actually used two pictures to pinpoint the cause for His concern. He saw them as without a shepherd, and He saw them as a field of grain ready to be harvested. Our focus is primarily on the harvest.

a. He is concerned because of the potential.

Think of what it means to the individual when a person is brought to the Savior. O the potential in each person for good.

As sheep they have the potential of a satisfying relationship with Him. As grain they have the potential of bringing pleasure to Him.

Think of what it means to the world when a person is brought to the Savior.

What a difference it can make in the world when people are won to Christ.

It is of special interest to study the three times Jesus spoke of the harvest in this way. The first time was in Samaria. It was spoken to the disciples

to call their attention to the spiritual potential. He said, "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold I say

unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." John 4:35. When the disciples looked at Samaria,

they saw only spiritual darkness that would make any work

difficult. When Jesus looked at the same people, He saw potential.

He saw a people that could be gathered to and for the Lord. He saw

a harvest.

The next time our Lord used this figure was in the Gospel of Matthew. As Jesus went through the villages, He saw the people "scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). The situation looked so dark and hopeless. But Jesus saw in the situation a harvest potential. He said "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few". (Matt: 9:37) Jesus was able to see in broken and bruised humanity a potential for God--He called it a harvest.

This is the essence of our text. Our Lord saw in the spiritual blindness and poverty of the Gentile dominated section of the holy land a potential--a harvest.

Can you see the potential? Our Lord is concerned about this potential. He can look beyond what is to what might be. The people are like ripened grain ready for the harvesters.

b. He is concerned because of the vulnerability.

This is the other side of the figure. If there is a potential in the harvest, there is also vulnerability. This is what keeps the farmer from sleeping well during the harvest season. He knows that there is only a brief time for harvest. If you do not gather the grain at just the right time, all of the potential is lost. This is a concern to our Lord.

This is true of every unsaved person you know. He or she has a tremendous potential. They are like a harvest ready to be gathered to the Lord. They are a

potential member of the people of God. But if they are not gathered to the Lord, all of that potential will be lost. What might have been never will be!

Have you ever stood beside a grain field that was ready for harvest when it has been beaten down by a storm, or burned by a fire? There will always be a deep sense of loss. This vulnerability of humanity concerns our Lord.

You will never understand the need for harvesters unless you understand the concern of our Lord. His concern for mankind is to become a part of our motivation. We are to become workers because of his concern. He is the one who is gathering a people for Himself. The harvest is His. It really does concern Him to see the ungathered harvest.

The sheep are vulnerable, defenseless. Any wandering wolf can make a meal out of them.

The fields of grain are vulnerable to a storm, or a freeze. They are vulnerable to a thief who would steal them away.

False teachers and false religionist are gathering the multitudes while we neglect our responsibility.

Someone says that we have too many churches—this is why many of them are half-empty. No! We have too few workers. There is not a shortage of

prospects for gathering in our city—not to even consider the rest of the world.

### III. HIS METHOD.

#### a. He does His work through men.

But our statement reminds us that his laborers are few.

This was obviously true then. If these seventy included the Twelve, they were the only laborers to help harvest the whole world. It is still obviously true, if you take all the people who know the Lord and put them down beside the field of the world, they are so few. But if you take those who are actively working to gather the harvest, those who are actually sharing the Gospel with others consistently, they are really few.

We are hesitant to attribute any need to God. But as the Lord of the harvest He does have a need. He needs workers. In His great plan of redemption and salvation, He does His work of reaching the lost, of gathering the harvest through men. It is true in the final harvest, which we know as the great Judgment, that He will gather the harvest through the angel. But the harvest of salvation is gathered through redeemed men like us.

#### b. He does His work in answer to prayer.

Actually prayer should be seen as preparation for the work. The workers are called out of the prayers. The twelve are admonished to pray, but then we turn to the next chapter and they are being sent forth into the harvest. Jesus is no longer the only worker—now there are thirteen. They continue to pray, and soon the Lord sends seventy-two others into the same field. They continue to pray so on the day of Pentecost He sends three thousand more. So be prepared to be a part of the harvest.

Martin Luther had a friend who felt about the Christian faith as he did. The friend was also a monk. They came to an agreement. Luther would go down into the dust and heat of the battle for the Reformation in the world; the friend would stay in the monastery and uphold Luther's hands in prayer. So they began that way. Then, one night, the friend had a dream. He saw a vast field of corn as big as the world; and one solitary man was seeking to reap it—an impossible and a heartbreaking task. Then he caught a glimpse of the reaper's face; and the reaper was Martin Luther; and Luther's friend saw the truth in a flash. "I must leave my prayers," he said, "and get to work." And so he left his pious solitude, and went down to the world to labor in the harvest.<sup>1</sup>

This leaves me with some questions for us on this day—

1. Are you able to see what Jesus saw when He looked upon the multitudes?
2. Do you feel the urgent need of the multitudes?

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<sup>1</sup>*The Gospel of Matthew : Volume*. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (357). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

3. Do you share the burden of the Lord of the harvest?
4. Have you felt an inner push toward the field?
5. Are you moving toward the field with all haste?