

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Matthew 28:18–20 | 1 Peter 3:14–17 | Ezekiel 36:25–27

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 02.09.25

SUMMARY

In this passage, the gospel writer wraps up a series of episodes that highlight the remarkable healing ministry of Jesus. As is the case here, Jesus' healing is accompanied by preaching and teaching—all of it was motivated by his compassion for the people (v. 35). He likened the people to sheep without a shepherd (v. 36). The Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day who should have served as the shepherds, held the people in contempt; they kept their distance from the "ordinary" people believing they would become defiled by coming into contact with them. Then, comparing the people to a harvest, it's these very people—the weak and vulnerable compared to the proud and mighty—that Jesus says are ripe for the taking; God had prepared his harvest, a people to be brought into his storehouse. Jesus notes, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few," meaning that just as one person cannot singlehandedly bring in the harvest from a multi-acre field, Jesus would enlist his followers to join him in the harvest of people in need of grace. Jesus' message is simple: the kingdom of God calls upon men and women of the church of every generation to help bring in the harvest. Preachers, teachers, missionaries, and ordinary believers—all of us are called to participate in the harvest. With Jesus' call to action, he also calls his followers to pray to the "Lord of the harvest." This language signals that though we are called to participate in gathering new believers, our work is in vain if we don't entrust our work to the Lord himself. We are called to be obedient in our harvest efforts but ultimately rely on the work of the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of the people.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Matthew 9:35–38.

The church often believes evangelism is the work of pastors, preachers, and missionaries. How can you—irrespective of your vocation—participate in "gathering the harvest" of men?

If the work of changing someone's heart ultimately lies in the hands of the Holy Spirit, why should we evangelize? What purpose is it to participate in the harvest if it's ultimately up to the Lord who comes to him?

If there's one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today's themes in what you bring before God.