



June 18, 2023 Mt. 9: 35- 10: 8

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**ENTERING THE SCENE:**

Compassion comes about when we identify with someone else because we have “been there, done that”. Jesus, in his full humanity is able to be with us in whatever situation we face. He must have grieved terribly when he saw the desperation of God’s beloved people. He also knew that his mission was to help us identify our own abilities to share in his roles of teacher, preacher, and healer. Take some time now with this text and insert your name into the list of those called. Imagine yourself with the authority to drive out ‘evil spirits’ and healing those who are ill. How do you feel as you go about extending compassion to others?

Mt 9:35-10:8

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their **synagogues**, **preaching the good news of the kingdom** and **healing every disease and sickness**. 36 When he saw the **crowds**, he had **compassion** on them, because they were **harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd**. 37 Then he said to his **disciples**,

"The **harvest is plentiful** but the **workers are few**. 38 Ask the Lord of the **harvest**, therefore, to **send out workers** into his **harvest field**."

1 He called his **twelve disciples** to him and gave them **authority** to drive out **evil spirits** and to **heal every disease and sickness**. 2 These are the names of the **twelve apostles**: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. 5 These **twelve** Jesus **sent out** with the following **instructions**: "Do not go among the **Gentiles** or enter any town of the **Samaritans**. 6 Go rather to the **lost sheep of Israel**. 7 As you go, **preach this message**: 'The **kingdom of heaven is near**.' 8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.**

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Each of us has a harvest of faith that was planted in us by someone else. Who planted the faith in you, and what are you doing with the harvest?

**PRAYER:** Father, you continually provide us with a plentiful harvest. Today I come to you for the courage and inspiration to go out with the strength of my baptism to work in your fields. Help me to feel the same compassion that your Son did as he met others real needs. Give me a heart that is willing to live the good news in ways that will teach by my very life. Amen.

**WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:**

**SYNAGOGUES:** Jesus is acutely aware of the need to restore/revitalize the faith of his own people. He therefore takes every opportunity to bring the good news in their houses of study and worship.

*Is there any such urgency in our places of worship and study today? Where do you go to get revitalized or restored in your faith life?*

**PREACH / PREACHING / INSTRUCTIONS:** Preaching and teaching are two very different realities. Teaching brings information, preaching brings that information via someone’s own faith experience.

*Can you tell the difference between the two? What is the best way to know that someone has brought you into his or her very own faith experience as opposed to someone who is simply sharing information?*

**GOOD NEWS / KINGDOM OF GOD / KINGDOM / MESSAGE / RECEIVED:** The people were desperate for some good news about God for a change. Some were able to receive and welcome Jesus' understanding of God and God's kingdom, others were not.

*Why was Jesus' news good for some and not for others?*

**HEAL / HEALING / CLEANSE / RAISE:** Those in need, the sick and the those who had lost someone to death, vividly knew that they needed something.

*How does your awareness of your need help you to be open to new options?*

**DISEASE / SICKNESS / EVIL SPIRITS / SICK / DEAD / LEPROSY / DEMONS:** All these words describe life-threatening events in the lives of those hearing Jesus' 'good news'. People thought the demons were responsible for all negative things.

*What is it about sickness of both body and spirit that gives rise to this belief? How does this belief affect the way people deal with misfortune? Is there a better understanding in the good news of Jesus?*

**CROWDS:** The word that Jesus had power over disease, death and demons spread and we now find crowds gathering.

*Is there anything in your life that might induce you to be one in such a crowd today?*

**COMPASSION:** In Greek the word *splanchnizein* comes from the noun for "entrails," "bowels," "guts," and signifies a feeling coming from deep within the center of a person.

*When you see pictures of war refugees, storm victims and people sitting in the rubble of their homes, do you also find yourself with this same "gut" reaction? What does your experience do to help you understand Jesus' response to the needs of the crowds?*

**HARASSED / HELPLESS:** Those who are harassed and helpless are those who do not have power to make any changes in their oppressive situations.

*Who are the harassed and helpless today? Are you one on them in any way? If so, what does this text have for you?*

**SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD:** This metaphor is used frequently for political or religious leadership (Num. 27:17;; Ezek: 34:5; 1 Kgs. 22:17; 2 Chr. 18:16; Zech. 10:2; 13:7;). Matthew will use it in 10: 6; 15:24; 18:12 and 26: 31. Those who are supposed to lead are abdicating their responsibilities.

*Can you give any examples of people who are sheep without a shepherd today? Who are those who have the ability to respond but refuse to do so?*

**TWELVE / LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL:** The number twelve here refers to the original twelve tribes of Israel that by the time of Jesus had dwindles down to two. Matthew's gospel is concerned to restore this unity in order to be able to share the gifts of God with all creation.

*Have you ever had to do your own 'homework' before you could take on a bigger project? Which was the most difficult? Was it hard to stay focused because of the clamor of the need "out there"?*

**APOSTLES:** This is the only time in this gospel that Matthew uses this word. The Greek word *apostellein*, "to send" in not a commonly used word. In 1 Kgs. 14:6 it is used to indicate one sent by God with a message.

*Have you ever been an apostle? Do you know of any modern day apostles?*

**DISCIPLES / WORKERS:** A disciple is one under some sort of discipline who may someday become an apostle. In the meantime, they can also be the ones working toward a goal that the apostle is preaching about.

*Has an "apostle" given you some work to do as you are under the discipline of the gospel? If so, what is it?*

**HARVEST:** A harvest is the produce of someone's planting. Jesus sees that God has planted the hunger for faith in the people, and now he and his apostles are to gather up what God has produced.

*What have you 'harvested' in your faith life that was planted by another? Is it more satisfying to harvest or to plant?*

**SEND OUT / DRIVE OUT / AUTHORITY:** The apostles are sent out, to drive out, and are enabled by being given authority to do so by Jesus who receives his authority from the Father.

*How do you think the apostles felt as they ventured into this effort for the first time? Have you ever been sent on another's authority to accomplish some difficult feat? If so, what do you remember about it?*

**GENTILES / SAMARITANS:** (See information below) Jesus knew that he had to get his own "house" in order before he expanded his mission. This made it possible to keep the faith life of the people connected to their own faith history before they risked including the 'outsider'.

*Is this still good advice? Have you ever been in that situation yourself? If so, how might your experience help you to understand this problematic text?*

**FREELY GIVE /PLENTIFUL:** The great Rabbi Hillel of Jesus' day is quoted as saying; "He that makes worldly use of the crown shall perish." (*m. 'Abot 1:13; 2:20; 3:18; 4:5*). This is the realization that gifts from God are given for the well being of all.

*What gifts has God given you that you can freely share with others?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 9: 35 // Lk. 8:1; Mt. 9:36 // Nu. 27:17; 1 Kgs. 22:17; Jer. 50:6; Ezek. 34:5; Mk. 6:34; Mt. 9:37 // Jn. 4:35; Mt. 9: 38f // Lk. 10:2; Jn. 4:35; Mt. 10: 2f // Jn. 1:42; Mk. 3:16-9; Lk. 6: 13-6; Acts 1:13; Mt. 10: 6 // Mt. 15:24;Mt. 10: 7 // Mt. 3:2; 4:17;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Ex. 19:2-6; Ps. 100: 1-5; Rom. 5:6-11; Mt. 9: 36 – 10: 8; Revised Common Lectionary: Gen. 18: 1-15; 21: 1-7; Ps. 116: 1-2, 12-19; Rom. 5:1-8; Mt. 9:35-10:8;

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

Additional background for themes in today's reading can be found in:

**Harassed/helpless:** Gen. 21:15; 37:20,24; Ex. 1:22; Josh. 8:29; 10:27; Judges 4:22; 9:53; 1 Macc. 5:43; 7:44; 11:4,51; Is. 22:18; 33:12; 34:3; Jer. 7:15; 14:16; Wis. 5:22; Ex. 7:9-12; 5: 1,4,21;

**Sheep without a shepherd:** Ps. 100:3; Nu. 27:17; 2 Chr. 18:16; Judith 11:19; Is. 53:6; Jer. 23: 1-4; Ezek. 34: 4-16, 30-31; 2 Baruch 77:13; Ezek. 34:2-29

**Harvest is plentiful:** Mt. 3:12; 13: 39-42; Is. 18:4-5; 27: 12-13; Joel 3:13; 4 Ezra 4:26-37; 2 Baruch 70: 1-2;

*People will recognize us as speaking with authority only when they sense that, like Jesus, we are under divine authority ourselves, that our message is not our own, that our actual lives stand behind the message, that our words are meant to reveal God and not ourselves, that we love others enough to give up protecting ourselves, that our real concern is God's kingdom and not how we impress others, that we consider the community bigger than ourselves, and that we are willing to sweat blood rather than get bitter or walk away.*

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. Ministering with authority. The Catholic Messenger, 2/6/03. Page 10.

Even as far back at the 8<sup>th</sup> century there are examples of homilies that could be used for preachers needing inspiration. A collection of 7 such homilies exists in the Hiberno-Latin sermons used in Celtic Christian circles. In one of them we find: "Arouse him (Mt. 10:8) and drag him from his body and give him terrors and horrors and lead him to the terrible places where he will see all the trials."

O'Loughlin, Thomas. Journeys on the Edges: The Celtic Tradition. Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books. 2000. Pg. 117.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1570753377/theark>

Even though our reading today has Jesus forbidding the disciples to go to pagan (non Jewish) territory, both Luke (10:30-37; 17: 11-19) and John (4:4-42) portray Jesus as friendly toward Samaritans. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century a cruciform church was built at the site of Jacob's well near Shechem to commemorate Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well recounted in John 4:4-42.

Rabbi Tarfon said, "The day is short; the task is great; the laborers are idle; the wage is abundant, and the master of the house is urgent." *m. 'Abot 2:15*.

The *Didache xi-xii* teaches ('if the prophet (apostle) demands money, he is a false prophet'). P. Aboth i.13 warns against utilizing the position of teacher for personal profit and glorification.

Real believers in the word of God by their faith become the real living loving presence of God, doing the wondrous works of God by their immediate sacramental presence, not as a remote link in a chain of causality. Pg.116

The same Spirit is alive and the same Christ finds his healing presence where believers moved with compassion assist their sick and bring the gifts of their healing presence. Pg. 190.

Parr, Raymond. Process Person Presence. Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1990.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0883472635/theark/>

A true spiritual authority challenges us with our own potential, our own vision, our own promise of glory. A true spiritual authority leaves us busy thinking out won thoughts rather than merely mouthing his. The one sure way to spot false authority in spiritual matters is the suggestion that your troubles are over and that you have arrived, that the work of your imagination is complete. A true spiritual authority leaves us with our own work to do. There is no final ending.

Jones, Alan. Exploring Spiritual Direction. Boston. Cowley Pub. 1999. Pg. 104.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/156101172X/theark/>

As Bread for the Journey we have learned to feel the timing :of people, of communities, as they become ripe aid ready, each in their season, for healing. There is a deeper. timing at work, *karios*, a fullness of time when. abused women have had enough and are ready to stand up and make a new life; When parents have, seen :enough children, turn: to drugs and so resolve to become mentors for those young girls and ‘boys who need guidance and courage; when people, tired of being isolated, gather :together. to build a community center, a weaving cooperative, a day care center. When they come to us, they are saturated with the fullness of all their dreams and disappointments, resurrections, and resolutions. At last, in this very moment, the harvest is ready, and they want now, this day, to begin to build a better world. We have learned to know this moment; if we are prepared to join them when they are ready, flush with courage and kindness, with a single act of generosity, the right gift at the right time, whole worlds can truly be saved.

Nepo, Mark. The Book of Awakening. Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000. Page 68.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1573241172/theark/>

The gospels make is clear that even though the disciples were not fully developed healers, they could nevertheless do some healing and casting out of demons on their own while Jesus was still with them. Pg. 44

Healing and proclaiming the good news are signs for Jesus of the presence of God in himself or anyone else.

Galipeau, Steven A. Transforming Body & Soul. NY. Paulist Press. 1990 Pg. 140.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0809104423/theark/>



Rembrandt painted Bartholomew as a fierce Christian protagonist. His same means ‘son of Talmi’. According to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century church historian Eusebius, a traveler in India discovered a Hebrew manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew left by “Bartholomew, one of the apostles.” Later medieval accounts have the apostle traveling intensively through Asia, preaching the gospel in India and Armenia, where he is said to have been flayed alive and then beheaded. Anne T. Wolllett. Bible Review 3/05 Pg. 28.

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

John R. Aurelio. **Colors** by Crossroad Pub. NY. 1993. **Brothers** : Page 127. **The Fish**: Page 145.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0824513614/theark/>

Aurelio, John R. Fables for God's People. Crossroad, NY. 1988. **THE RICH MAN AND THE BEGGAR**: Pages 36-7.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0824508610/theark/>

William J. Bausch. Storytelling Twenty-Third Pub. Mystic, CT. 1984.

**REALLY SEEING**: Page 32.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0896224562/theark/>