

NBC Chapel 10-28-20

Rev. Susan McKeithen

I am blessed to work at Nazarene Bible College. I get to use the gifts God gave me in the area of administration, I get to work with, and for, wonderful Christian people, and I am one of the many people of the NBC family, who make things happen here at NBC, so that those people who have answered the call to ministry, are equipped to do so.

The scripture I would like to bring to you today is from Matthew 9:36-38 ...

*“When he saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*”

This has always been a favorite passage to me. This passage is often preached with a call at the end to become a missionary. I was a 24-year-old, when on one Wednesday evening during a church service, a missionary speaker brought a message and said, “Who is God calling to be a worker in the harvest field?” God spoke to me and said, “I am calling you Susan.” It was a clear call, audible inside my head. I said “yes” to that call, and 37 years later, after many countries lived in and visited, living overseas for 24 years, my answer is still “yes, Lord, send me out as a worker in the harvest field.”

As I read this favorite passage again this week, I was impressed with the words, *“He had compassion for them,”* and God spoke to me in a new way. The Bible says

that Jesus was going *through all the towns and villages, teaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, healing every disease and sickness*. But when he saw the crowd, he had compassion for them *because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*.

Jesus saw the need, that the crowd felt harassed and helpless, and Jesus had compassion on them. Well, when one is doing Bible study, we are taught that one always must read the Bible passage in its context to find the meaning of it. One has to read before and after the passage to see what just happened and what then is to come. The Bible says Jesus had compassion for them. Well, I would have guessed that after saying that, Jesus would have then started healing their diseases and sicknesses showing compassion. Wouldn't you assume that? But the passage is written differently. The healing of every disease and sickness and the preaching of the good news of the kingdom, came BEFORE the Bible says, Jesus had compassion for them! Well, then what does the Bible mean, that Jesus had compassion for them. What else could He have done? Wasn't preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease enough?

We see in verse 37 of this passage in chapter 9 of Matthew's gospel, that Jesus then said to his disciples, *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

You mean showing compassion was giving his disciples a job to do? You mean showing compassion was involving them in the solution to the problem?

Remember, the problem was this... the crowd felt harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd.

I can so easily apply this passage to us today. This year has been a year of feeling harassed and helpless. I don't think it would be far-fetched to also say that this year might have been a year when many people felt like a sheep without a shepherd – without guidance, without direction, not knowing what was going to come next.

So, what was Jesus asking of the disciples? Well first, he stated the facts – *“the harvest is plentiful”* – in other words, there are a lot of people out there in our world that need help. Then Jesus states another fact, but *“the workers are few”* – in other words, God is looking for more “workers” to help those people in our world that are lost, helpless, and harassed.

Jesus looks to his disciples and asks them to do this, *“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”* Jesus asks the disciples to call on God in prayer to send out more workers.

You see, it was always in God's plan to use His children for His kingdom work. I have definitely heard us here at NBC pray for more students to enroll. NBC is concerned for enrollment numbers. We exist to prepare God's called ones.

But behind the request of praying for more students or for higher numbers in enrollment, is God's plan, *“Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into*

*the harvest field.*” Those students who come to study at NBC have heard God’s call and are answering that call by taking our classes!

As God’s people, ask God in prayer, to send out more workers, and God’s hand will be moved, and He will start calling more workers to handle the plentiful harvest. I was one of them, and was as surprised as could be, when God called “my name” to be one of His workers in His harvest field!

Psalm 103:2-4 says, “...*he redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.*” Besides looking up in prayer asking God for harvest workers, we each also have our own redemption story. We are each “*crowned with love and compassion,*” the Psalm says. As Christians, we are given these qualities of “*love and compassion*” to spread to those around us.

Colossians 3:12 says, “*Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*”

In these days of the pandemic, show a little love to your fellow man. Find ways to show compassion. For Tim and I, we reach out to immigrants who don’t have English language skills and don’t know God personally. Through giving English classes, immigrants from many nations have come to know Christ right here in KS and MO. A matter of fact, one of those immigrant students from our English class, felt the call of God and answered that call, by enrolling as a student at NBC in the Hispanic Pastoral Program just this past weekend!

Also, recently, by mobilizing our church to give school supplies to the neighborhood elementary and middle school, we discovered even more immigrant families who we never knew were only a mile away from where we live. 40% of the families whose children go to that school are Spanish speakers.

There are so many people who need our love and compassion (*the harvest is plentiful*), whether that be at my father's independent living facility which I visit every day, or whether they are our immediate neighbors who might not have faith nor a church family, we say to God, like Isaiah did, when the Lord said to him in chapter 6, "*Who shall I send and who will go for us?*" and Isaiah responded, "*Here I am! Send me.*"

As Jesus looked out and saw the need – as our passage in Matthew 9 says, "*When He saw the crowds*", may we also have eyes to see and ears to hear the cries of the helpless sheep living around us. Together, as God's compassionate, loving people, the plentiful harvest will be taken care of.

PRAYER:

Open our eyes Lord to the people with need around us.

Fill us with Your love and compassion so that we may share it with them.

We pray for more workers for the harvest field as you asked your disciples to pray.

Help us be willing to be one of those workers, available to be used by You in Your harvest fields.