

“TO SEND OUT LABORERS”

Matthew 9:35–38

Key Verse: 9:38

1. Review who the Pharisees were and how they were responding to Jesus (3,11,34). What was their problem (see 3:7–10; 9:10–13,17; 12:1–2,9–10)? How might we be like them today, and how can we change?
2. In contrast to the Pharisees, where did Jesus go, and why was it so important for him to be among the people like this (35a; see 1:23; 2:6; 15:24)? What can we learn here about where ministry really happens? How can we practice being with people like Jesus was?
3. In verse 35b, what does it mean that Jesus was “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom,” and why was he also “healing every disease and every affliction” (compare with 4:23; see also 3:2; 4:17; 12:18–21)? Though we may be so busy, in what specific ways can we be both “proclaiming” and “healing” people?
4. How did Jesus see the crowds, and what does this show us about those times (36; see also 14:14; 15:32)? Think about the meaning of: “harassed”; “helpless”; “like sheep without a shepherd” (Num. 27:17). How might some people have seen these crowds? How does seeing people through Jesus’ eyes change us and our response to them?
5. What did Jesus say to his disciples (37)? Why did he say “the harvest” (John 4:35)? What does it mean to be a “laborer,” and why are there so few? Why is every believer called to be a kingdom laborer, and how can we do this wherever we are?
6. In light of this, what else did Jesus say to his disciples (38)? How and why should we all be praying like this today?

References:

Question 1

Matt. 3:7–10: “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father,” for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’”

Matt. 9:10–13: “And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this,

they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when he heard it, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Matt. 9:17: "Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

Matt. 12:1–2: "At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, 'Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.'"

Matt. 12:9–10: "He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—so that they might accuse him."

Question 2

Matt. 1:23: "'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)."

Matt. 2:6: "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

Matt. 15:24: "He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.'"

Question 3

Matt. 4:23: "And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people."

Matt. 3:2: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matt. 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Matt. 12:18–21: "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

Question 4

Matt. 14:14: "When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick."

Matt. 15:32: "Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.'"

Num. 27:17: "...who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd."

Question 5

John 4:35: "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?' Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are ripe for harvest."