

ENLARGING THE HARVEST

MATTHEW 9



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T . M . M O O R E

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Enlarging the Harvest: Matthew 9
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Matthew 9: Introduction

In Matthew 9 Jesus adds to His band of disciples and urges them to pray that God would increase their ranks, because the harvest is plentiful.

In these days of His earthly ministry, Jesus is bringing the Kingdom of God near to the world. He is establishing beachheads, laying a foundation, and showing the way the Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. In chapter 9, He continues bullying His way through Satan's domain, demonstrating that He has power over the devil and all the effects of sin. And He's adding to the ranks of His followers as He goes.

Which must have really irked the devil.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Depth Healing

Pray Psalm 103.1-6.

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The LORD executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.

Sing Psalm 103.1-6.

(Old 100th: [*All People That on Earth Do Dwell*](#))

O my soul, bless the Lord's great Name! His many benefits proclaim:
He pardons sins and heals disease, and from the pit grants us release.

With mercy rich and steadfast love He satisfies us from above,
Revives our youth, works righteousness, and justice serves for the oppressed.

Read and meditate on Matthew 9.1-8.

Prepare.

1. With what did Jesus connect the healing of this man?
2. What do we learn from this about the power Jesus wields?

Meditate.

Jesus continues His work of overturning the effects of sin by healing a man brought to Him, paralyzed on a bed. He responded to the faith of the man's friends in this matter (v. 2), which should encourage us about the power of asking, seeking, and knocking in intercessory prayer for others.

At first, Jesus did not heal this man physically. This was deliberate. He encouraged the man to "be of good cheer" because He had forgiven his sins. Forgiveness of sins and thus right of entry before God is of infinitely more value than relieving bodily discomforts. Do we rejoice in this as much as we should?

Naturally, the scribes began to grumble (v. 3), and they would have been right in their objection if Jesus had been only a man. But He was not, of course. He was the Son of Man (v. 6) and had been given power from God to forgive sins, for He Himself was God. Notice that Jesus saw into the inner thoughts of these men (v. 4). He knows what's in every one of us. To demonstrate His power to forgive sins, Jesus healed the paralytic and instructed him to get up from his bed and go home. Which he did.

Jesus' power over all the *effects* of sin demonstrates His power over *sin itself*. He doesn't just heal at a

superficial level, but to the depths of the soul. Jesus ran roughshod over sin throughout the course of His ministry, finally defeating sin and its most dire consequence – death – in His own death and subsequent resurrection. He wanted people to understand that the power of the Kingdom He was bringing near to them was power to overcome sin in all its expressions and forms. He wielded that power, and He taught us to seek it by seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God. That power works first in us to defeat the power of sin, then through us to drive sin out of our world and bring the goodness of God to light in the land of the living (1 Jn. 2.8; Ps. 27.13).

And we see the full effects of Jesus' works: People glorified God Who "had given such power to men" (v. 8). We have received this power indeed, in the Person of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.8). Jesus bore witness to the power of the Kingdom in true words and good works, bringing good cheer and forgiveness wherever He went. We who follow Him must take up this agenda as well.

Reflect.

1. Why is forgiveness of sins more a source of joy than healing from sickness?
2. What do we learn about the nature of the Kingdom of God from this incident?
3. To what should our good works ultimately lead (v. 8)?

It is easier said than done. Whether the sins of the paralytic were forgiven, only he who forgave them knew for sure. "Arise and walk": both he who arose and those who saw him arise were able to vouch for this. Hence there is a bodily sign in order to demonstrate a spiritual sign, though its impact is to curb the imperfections of body and soul. Jerome (347-420), Commentary on Matthew 1.9.5

Thank You, Lord, for forgiving my sins! Send me into the world today to...

Pray Psalm 103.15-22.

Commit this day to the Lord and His Kingdom. Ask Him to show you mercy, and to enable you to show mercy; to walk according to His Law; and to keep Him and His heavenly realm always before your mind.

Sing Psalm 103.15-22.

Psalm 103.15-22 (Old 100th: [*All People That on Earth Do Dwell*](#))

Now as for us like grass we fail, though for a time our flesh prevail.
God's Spirit blows across our face and withers sinners in their place.

But evermore to those who fear the Lord brings loving kindness near;
His righteousness to them extends and to their children without end.

He rules upon His throne in heav'n; His sovereign rule o'er all is giv'n.
You angels, bless the Lord, rejoice, who live in strength to heed His voice.

All you who serve Him, bless the Lord, all you who heed His righteous Word!
Let all throughout the cosmos whole unite to praise Him, with my soul!

2 Called to Repentance

Pray Psalm 51.14, 15.

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

Sing Psalm 51.14, 15, 18.

[*\(He Leadeth Me\)*](#)

Deliver us, from guilt, O Lord, You Who have saved us by Your Word;
and let our tongues Your mercy bless, and sing of Your great righteousness!

Refrain v. 15, 18

Lord, open now our lips to raise to You sweet songs of joyous praise!
Thus let Your favor on us fall, and build and strengthen Zion's wall!

Read Matthew 9.1-13; meditate on verses 9-13.

Prepare.

1. To what did the Pharisees object about Jesus?
2. To what does Jesus call us?

Meditate.

Jesus added Matthew to His band of disciples, calling him from his work as a tax collector to become a different sort of collector by following Him.

Tax collectors were not popular in Jesus' day. They were Jews who worked for the Roman government, and thus were seen to be at the cutting edge of Roman confiscation of Jewish liberty and wealth. Matthew and his colleagues were looked upon as "sinners" – that is, as turncoat collaborators who were working against the Lord and His people.

Jesus doesn't call people to get their act together or to rebuild their reputation before they can follow Him. He calls them to repent. But to repent of our sins – to embrace a different attitude toward them, hating and despising them, and turning away from them altogether (Pss. 97.10; 119.59, 60) – we first need to admit that we are sinners. In Matthew's case, the daily glares and muttered condemnations of his neighbors, and the scorn of those from whom he collected the tax, would have let him know just where he stood in the eyes of his neighbors. He may well have agreed with them?

Had Matthew heard of Jesus? I think that's likely. The fact that he walked off his job to follow Jesus says that something happened within him that gave him new priorities and new hope. He immediately brought Jesus into his home for a meal (cf. Mk. 2.15), perhaps out of gratitude, or just to have the opportunity to get to know Him better (By the way, some scholars take Matthew's referring to *the* house, rather than *his* house, as an indication of Matthew's authorship of this gospel.). Notice, too, that Matthew invited "many tax collectors and sinners" to dine with them. Had he begun to identify his own Personal Mission Field?

Jesus did not come to call the righteous to repentance. What did He mean by that? His comment was

pointed toward the Pharisees, who supposed themselves to be righteous. Since, in their mind, they were doing just fine, they didn't need Jesus to help them on their way to eternal life. Jesus did not waste His time with people whose hearts were set against Him and whose minds were closed to His Word. Those who considered themselves well enough, thank you very much, didn't need the great Physician of the soul. It was those who were weighed down with guilt and shame, unable to deliver themselves from self-loathing, and knowingly involved in wickedness but helpless to escape from it – these are the ones to whom Jesus came preaching repentance. And these are the ones whose hearts He prepared to come when He called.

The irony of Jesus' quoting Hosea 6.6 is that He came with both – mercy *and* sacrifice. But only *His* sacrifice can lead to the mercy of God, and empower us for showing mercy to others.

Let us ever be ready, like Matthew, to leave our old and shameful ways behind, and follow Jesus as He leads us into His Kingdom and righteousness. And let us keep repentance as one of our primary disciplines for growing in the Lord.

Reflect.

1. What is repentance, and who needs to practice it?
2. Sin can be difficult to break free of at times. How can hearing Jesus in His Word enable us to do so?
3. How can you know whether your righteousness is Kingdom righteousness or self-righteousness?

The Jews were seething with envy that the Lord was spending time with publicans and sinners. He declared to them that the words of the law were being concealed under a cloak of faithlessness. He gave aid to the sick and medicine to those in need. For those who believed they were healthy, however, no cure was necessary. But in order for them to understand that none of his followers were healthy, he advised them to learn the meaning of "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." Hilary of Poitiers (315-367), *On Matthew 9.2*

Show me my sins, O Lord, and I will repent, so that I...

Pray Psalm 51.16-19.

Wait on the Lord to break you over any sins you have not confessed, then surrender to His good pleasure for the remainder of your day.

Sing Psalm 51.16-19.

Psalm 51.16-19 ([He Leadeth Me](#))

No sacrifice, no offering would You have us, Your people, bring;
but broken spirits, cleansed of lies, and pure hearts You will not despise.

Refrain vv. 15, 18

Lord, open now our lips to raise to You sweet songs of joyous praise!
Thus let Your favor on us fall, and build and strengthen Zion's wall!

Now build Your Church, raise high the wall of those who on Your mercy call.
And take our lives and let them be sweet sacrifices, Lord, to Thee!

Refrain vv. 15, 18

3 More on Fasting

Pray Psalm 22.23-25.

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

Sing Psalm 22.23-25.

(Darwall: [*Rejoice, the Lord is King*](#))

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,
Nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

Read Matthew 9.1-17; meditate on verses 14-17.

Prepare.

1. What do we learn about fasting from these verses?
2. What is the “new wine” to which Jesus refers?

Meditate.

This is the second time Jesus has spoken to the matter of fasting (cf. Matt. 6.16-18). In this case, He answered a query from the disciples of John the Baptist, who wanted to know why His disciples did not fast, when both John’s disciples and the Pharisees did. Jesus’ answer is important in a number of ways.

Jesus associated fasting with mourning and longing. His disciples would fast, He explained, when He, “the bridegroom”, was taken away from them. They would fast out of sorrow, but also in anticipation of rejoicing to see Him again one day. Fasting thus is a discipline that helps us to remember our loss, since Jesus was taken away from us by suffering and death, but also by His ascension. It also trains us to look forward to the joy we will know when He finally returns to consummate His marriage with us. We should practice fasting from time to time for these reasons, keeping in mind as we do the criteria for fasting already explained in Matthew 6.

Jesus’ use of the metaphor of the new wine is curious here. He uses it to contrast old and new – the old ways of Jewish law and tradition with the new ways of the Gospel. You can’t take a little Gospel patch and affix it to someone who’s still wedded to old ways – whether the old ways of Jewish traditionalism or the old ways of a life of sin. The Gospel patch won’t mend or save the old ways, and whatever new wine manages to get into the patched-on wineskin will ultimately be lost. For the new wine of the Gospel you need a totally new wine skin – a new birth and a new creation (Jn. 3.1-

16; 2 Cor. 5.17) – not a little patch-on to your old way of life.

This tells us a little about how the disciples of John and the Pharisees regarded fasting. It was part of their old wineskins – their old traditions, by which they sought to make themselves acceptable to God (cf. Lk. 18.9-12). Fasting was for them a kind of patch to renew their supposed righteousness and keep their old wineskins working. But all that has to be left behind to follow Jesus in the Kingdom of God. New wine – the Gospel – needs a new wineskin – new life in the Kingdom. Fasting continues, but with a different focus and application – not to save us, but to remember Jesus’ suffering and our salvation, and to help us look forward to and prepare for His glorious return.

Reflect.

1. Jesus indicates we should be fasting during this time we are separated from Him. How should we do that?
2. How is the new life we have in Jesus like a new wineskin?
3. As far as the Gospel is concerned, this is a case where the “new wine” is better than the “old wine”. Explain.

What he is saying is this: Until a person has been reborn and, having put aside the old person, puts on the new person because of my passion, he cannot observe right fasting and the precepts of temperance. Otherwise, through undue austerity one may lose even the faith one seems to possess. Jerome (347-420), Commentary on Matthew 1.9.17

Fill me with the New Wine of Your Spirit and Word, O Lord, and help me refresh others as I...

Pray Psalm 22.26-28.

Praise the Lord for His salvation, and ask Him to help you in making His Good News known to others in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 22.26-28.

Psalm 22.26-28 (Darwall, [*Rejoice, the Lord is King*](#))

The suffering King shall eat and praise with us the Lord.

Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.

Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord;

All those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.

The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

4 Grace and Faith

Pray Psalm 31.1-5.

In You, O LORD, I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed;
Deliver me in Your righteousness.
Bow down Your ear to me,
Deliver me speedily;
Be my rock of refuge,
A fortress of defense to save me.
For You *are* my rock and my fortress;
Therefore, for Your name's sake,
Lead me and guide me.
Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For You *are* my strength.
Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

Sing Psalm 31.1-5.

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*](#))
In You, O Lord, I refuge take; let me not come to shame!
In righteousness deliver me, according to Your Name.
Incline Your ear, my prayer to hear, my Fortress strong to save!

For You my Rock and Fortress are; in Your Name lead and guide.
You rescue me from ev'ry net which wicked men might hide.
My Refuge strong, my spirit long in Your hand shall abide.

Read Matthew 9.1-26; meditate on verses 18-26.

Prepare.

1. How do you see both faith and grace at work in these two incidents?
2. Why did the people ridicule Jesus?

Meditate.

These two vignettes are very precious. Three of the evangelists record them – Matthew, Mark (5.21-43), and Luke (8.40-56). Together, they present a lovely study on grace and faith, each of which finds its focus, font, and fruit in Jesus. Let's have a closer look.

A ruler came to Jesus, worshiped Him, and bid Him come and heal his daughter, who had “just died”. This man was probably a synagogue leader; thus, he would have been familiar with the Scriptures and well aware of Jesus and His growing ministry. But it took the crisis of his daughter's death to move him to seek the Lord's help.

Faith is like that. It can spring to life within someone, who suddenly realizes that he has reached the end of his rope, and needs help from somewhere beyond this world. This man came to Jesus out of sorrow and grief, but mostly for the sake of his daughter, that she might live again. Faith was at work

in this man, but it was the grace he saw in Jesus that led him to seek the Lord.

Along the way to heal this man's daughter, Jesus brought healing to a woman of faith, who saw in Him her only hope of deliverance from a serious physical malady. She was not seeking notoriety, only healing. Yet Jesus called her out and commended her faith. He did not have to heal her, and he did not have to heed the ruler's urgent pleading. But faith taps the spigot of grace, even as grace moves the heart to faith. When that woman returned home healed, she would not have boasted about her faith, any more than the ruler of the synagogue would have boasted about his. Both had faith, but their faith was drawn out from within them by the Person of Jesus.

The ruler and the woman believed Jesus in the face of the unlikely, if not impossible. The people laughed at Jesus, choosing to believe their eyes and experience rather than His Word. In the end, His Word proved true, and the scoffers were "put outside".

The lesson is clear: Faith turns to Jesus and taps into grace, not by looking to the world and its ways, but by believing Him for what to everyone else seems impossible. Thus grace responds to and increases faith, as Jesus acts to bring healing and salvation.

Reflect.

1. How do faith and grace work in your experience of walking with Jesus?
2. What can keep us from having faith like this ruler and this woman?
3. Why do people today laugh at the idea of believing in Jesus? How should our lives serve to silence such laughter?

Not unjustly did the Lord order them to be sent outside. He showed that incredulous and unbelieving people of this kind are to be excluded from the promise of eternal life or from God's kingdom by him who is the Author of life and the Lord of the heavenly kingdom. Chromatius (fl. 400), Tractate on Matthew 47.7

Give me faith today, Lord Jesus, so that I will...

Pray Psalm 31.19-24.

How do you expect to know the goodness and healing power of Jesus today? Thank Him in advance, and set your heart to follow Him in everything you do today.

Sing Psalm 31.19-24.

Psalm 31.19-24 (Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*](#))

How great the goodness You reserve for those who fear You, Lord,
Who rest in You and boldly stand before men in Your Word.
You cover them from plots of men; You shelter them, O Lord!

Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown His steadfast love to me!
In my alarm I cried to Him; He heard my fervent plea!
In fear and dread with You I pled; You heard and rescued me!

O love the Lord, all you, His saints! He keeps us faithfully.
But all who act in sinful pride His wrath shall surely see.
Be strong and let your heart not fret; wait on Him constantly!

5 They Got That Right

Pray Psalm 29.1, 2.

Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Sing Psalm 29.1, 2.

(Toulon: [*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Give praise to God, you children of the earth!
Tell of His strength, proclaim His glorious worth!
Give to the Lord the glory due His Name!
Worship in holiness; His grace proclaim!

Read Matthew 9.1-34; meditate on verse 27-34.

Prepare.

1. How many different ways do we see the power of Jesus at work in these verses?
2. How did people respond to Jesus' good works?

Meditate.

My dad used to say – if one of his sons ever did something right in an athletic game – “Oh, well, a blind hog'll find a ripe acorn every now and then.” Then he'd smile, and the twinkle in his eye told us that he was proud and loved us.

I want to start at the end of this passage, with the blind hogs getting something right. First, though, let's remember Caiaphas, the high priest, who said to his colleagues concerning Jesus, “You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish” (Jn. 11.49. 50). Of course, we know what Caiaphas was thinking. But John hastens to add, “Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad” (Jn. 11.51, 52). In other words, the blind hog found a ripe acorn.

Well, so did the Pharisees in Matthew 9.34. Of course, they intended to refer to Beelzebub, which they will do again in Matthew 12.22ff. But the fact of the matter is that, yes, Jesus *did* cast out demons by the ruler of the demons, because *He is the Ruler of the demons!* And also of physical bodies, blind eyes, and mute tongues. He is the Lord of everything and Ruler over all!

Again we see the interaction of grace and faith, as Jesus healed the two blind men in response to their crying out to Him and believing He could heal them. Their faith didn't go very deep, however. Jesus commanded them to keep quiet about this, but they – in excitement and joy – blabbed it all around. They should have obeyed Jesus, submitting their affections to His Word. But, like many of us at times, we let our feelings run us around, rather than rest on the plain teaching of God's Word.

In the healing of the demoniac, we see faith and grace at work in a different way. Here there is no indication of faith on the part of the demoniac. There *is* faith shown by those who brought the man

to Jesus, and that was enough to engage the healing grace of the Lord on the man's behalf.

The people are amazed and marvel at the wonders they've seen; but the Pharisees have a different "explanation". They got it right, but not so's they know or believe it. Blind hogs.

Isn't much better when we see Jesus, hear His Word, rejoice in His grace, wonder at His power and love, and obey by faith? He Who rules eyes, tongues, seas, winds, and demons knows what's best for us. Let's work hard to listen to Him.

Reflect.

1. What do we learn from these verses about the power of faith?
2. How far-reaching is the power of Jesus? How should that encourage us?
3. Why do we need to keep our emotions in subjection to the Word of Jesus?

Their conduct in immediately proclaiming it every where is worthy of blame: for the notion entertained by some, that Christ forbade them for the purpose of exciting them the more, has been already refuted. There was, no doubt, some reason for forbidding it, which is unknown to us; and those men, through inconsiderate zeal, spread the rumor before the proper time. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Matthew 9.30

Help me to hold fast to Your Word, Lord Jesus, and to work hard so that ...

Pray Psalm 29.3-11.

Look ahead at the things before you today, and thank the Lord Jesus that He is sovereign over them all. Seek His blessings and peace on all everything you do today.

Sing Psalm 29.3-11.

Psalm 29.3-11 (Toulon: [*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Over the waters, over thunder's roll,
God's voice creation's mighty pow'rs controls!
Cedars collapse at His majestic Word.
Nations are shaken by our mighty Lord!

God speaks and lightning streaks across the sky.
By His decree He shakes the desert dry.
Speak, Lord, and life to beasts and men is giv'n.
Forests dissolve, and glory rings in heav'n.

Sovereign, the Lord sat o'er the raging flood.
Sovereign forever rules our gracious God!
God will His people bless with strength and peace:
Lord, may Your holy Word to us increase!

6 Laborers for the Harvest

Pray Psalm 28.1, 2.

To You I will cry, O Lord my Rock:
Do not be silent to me,
Lest, if You are silent to me,
I become like those who go down to the pit.
Hear the voice of my supplications
When I cry to You,
When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.

Sing Psalm 28.1, 2.

(Angel's Story: [*O Jesus, I Have Promised*](#))

I cry to You, our Savior, O, be not deaf to me!
Lord, speak to me with favor, lest I should dying be.
Hear now my supplications when for Your help I cry;
receive these, my oblations, before Your throne on high.

Read Matthew 9.1-38; meditate on verses 35-38.

Prepare.

1. What two metaphors does Matthew employ in these verses? How is each appropriate?
2. What did Jesus say about the harvest?

Meditate.

Writers are always admonished not to mix their metaphors, but Matthew violates that precept here with a metaphor of his own and one from the Lord Jesus.

Notice how aggressive Jesus was in bringing the Kingdom to the people of the land: “all the cities and villages”, “teaching” and “preaching”, “healing every sickness and disease” (v. 35). He had come for this purpose, and He was not going to waste any time. He shows us what it means to seek first the Kingdom and righteousness of God. As Jesus was sent, so He sends us (Jn. 20.21). What can we learn from these two metaphors about working our own Personal Mission Field?

Jesus worked so hard because He was so compassionate toward people. He saw them as “weary and scattered” and having no one to shepherd them to safety and health (v. 36). We are all like sheep to Jesus, and He is our Good Shepherd (Jn. 10). The image of a shepherd is one of God’s favorites in referring to Himself and His relationship to His people. Matthew applies that image to Jesus, drawing on this Old Testament trope to describe Jesus’ motive and method in ministry. As Jesus served to shepherd the Lord’s flock, so also must we.

Then Matthew records Jesus’ own words regarding this situation. Jesus saw a great harvest of souls to be gathered into the Lord’s barn (vv. 37, 38). There was more work here than He and the disciples together could accomplish. The harvest is always plentiful, and there are never enough people willing to go among the lost like Jesus did, doing good and sharing Good News. We need more laborers for the harvest, so let us ask the Lord to send such laborers – literally, to “thrust them out” – who will follow Jesus’ example in gathering the Lord’s harvest and flock.

And as we pray, let us pray that God would use us, in our own part of His field, to care for His sheep and reap the plentiful harvest that is even now ready to be gathered.

Reflect.

1. What is involved in being a shepherd to someone else?
2. Is the harvest still “plentiful” today? How do you know?
3. What can you do to be a more consistent shepherd and laborer for the harvest?

Clearly the Lord has pity on these people held in the sway of an unclean spirit and burdened by the law, because no shepherd was about to restore to them the guardianship of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of this gift was indeed potentially abundant but not yet harvested by anyone. The bounty of the Spirit overwhelms the multitude of those who take hold of it. For no matter how much it is gathered by everyone, it abounds in fruitfulness. Hilary of Poitiers (315-367), *On Matthew 10.2*

Today, Lord, use me as shepherd and harvester as I...

Pray Psalm 28.6-9.

Praise Jesus, our Good Shepherd, and seek His strength, help, and protection for the work of the harvest today.

Sing Psalm 28.6-9.

Psalm 28.6-9 (Angel’s Story: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#))

Blessed be the Name of Jesus, for He will hear our prayer.
His strength protects and shields us with mercy and with care.
In You our heart rejoices; You help us by Your Word.
To You we raise our voices to praise and thank You, Lord.

Our strength are You, O Savior, our strong defense and sure.
Anointed with Your favor, we rest in You secure.
Save us, and bless us, Jesus, upon us turn Your face;
With shepherd’s care, Lord, keep us forever in Your grace.

7 Beachheads

Pray Psalm 145.1-3.

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness is unsearchable.

Sing Psalm 145.1-3.

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*](#))

I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

Read and meditate on Matthew 9.1-38.

Prepare.

1. How many different works did Jesus do in this chapter?
2. There is a focus in this chapter on preparing others for doing such works. How do you see that?

Meditate.

In Matthew 4, Jesus bound the devil in preparation for ransacking his domain. In chapters 5-7, Jesus set forth His agenda: bringing the Kingdom of righteousness to earth in fulfillment of the Law of God. The sermon on the mount reveals Jesus' strategy for plundering the devil's domain and reconciling the world to God. In chapters 8 and 9, Jesus set about establishing beachheads for the Kingdom, preparing the world for that great day when He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, and the Kingdom of God would invade and begin to overcome the kingdoms of men (Dan. 2.44, 45).

Chapter 9 shows us more of what we saw in chapter 8. Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, enlisted followers, and continued casting a vision for the great harvest of souls that is to be gathered. He proclaimed His message against the backdrop of Pharisaical traditions. And He demonstrated His power over even the most intractable of maladies. All the while, He persevered in preaching and teaching in the synagogues of Galilee, as multitudes gathered to hear Him.

And nothing could stop Him from doing all that He came to do.

Jesus prepared the world for the coming of His Kingdom. He functioned as the Herald of the Kingdom, and He showed us a type or template of what the Kingdom would entail. All that Jesus did in these chapters is in some manner foretold in the Psalms and prophets. By His death and resurrection He would defeat sin and death, thus clearing the final beachhead for the coming of the Spirit. In His ascension He received the Kingdom, and by pouring out His Spirit He bestowed the Kingdom on His people (Dan. 7.13-18). Their pursuit of the Kingdom would follow the examples and path Jesus set for them in the gospels.

We need to pay careful attention to the works and words of Jesus, because they show us how we should think about the progress of His Kingdom in our own lives. By the power of God at work

within us, the effects of sin are overcome and rolled back, and the teaching and presence of righteousness advances.

Reflect.

1. What do we mean by saying that Jesus was establishing “beachheads” by His words and works?
2. What kind of “harvest” was Jesus thinking about in this chapter?
3. What should they do who are laborers in that harvest?

An abundant harvest signified the multitude of people. The few laborers signified the dearth of teachers. He commands them to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. These are the laborers of whom the psalmist speaks: “May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy! He that goes forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.” Jerome (347-420), Commentary on Matthew 1.9.37

Lead me forth into the harvest today, O Lord, as I...

Pray Psalm 145.10-21.

Review the works of Jesus in chapters 8 and 9. What opportunities for Kingdom words and works will you have in the day ahead? Seek the Lord for strength and boldness in following Him.

Sing Psalm 145.10-21.

Psalm 145.10-21 (Brother James’ Air: [*The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want*](#))

Your works shall thank You; all Your saints shall bless and praise You, Lord.

Your reign we bless without restraint; Your power fills our words.

Our children we shall educate in all Your splendor, Lord.

Your Kingdom evermore shall be; You reign forever, Lord!

Your works You do so faithfully, according to Your Word.

The falling You uphold and the oppressed You rescue, Lord!

The eyes of all look up to You to meet our needs each day.

Open Your hand, provide the food we need, O Lord, we pray!

Kindness and righteousness You do, O Lord, in every way!

Be near to all who call on You; all those who fear You, bless.

Preserve all those whose love is true; save us in our distress.

Our mouths will speak with praise of You; Your holy Name we’ll bless!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What do we mean by saying that Jesus established “beachheads” for the coming of the Kingdom?
2. Why is it important that we pay careful attention to Jesus’ works and words?
3. What “harvest” was Jesus referring to in chapter 9?
4. Who are the “laborers” for that harvest, and what do they do?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from Matthew 9.1-38? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.