

Text: Matthew 9:35-38 (Pew Bible, pg.964)

Title: “Engage ... With the Heart of Jesus”

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION – Most of us here have had some exposure to *Star Trek*, either the TV series or the movies. Maybe your memories go all the way back to the Starship Enterprise and the crew of Captain James T. Kirk. I have to say that those early years of *Star Trek* were a little hokey for me. The younger among us have seen the movies that focus on Captain Kirk when he was a younger man, and that’s OK, I guess. In my book, the greatest days for *Star Trek* were the days of *Star Trek ... The Next Generation*. Captain Jean-Luc Picard is an inspiring leader. So I have to confess that just about every time I think about the title of this new sermon series I’m beginning today, I can’t help but think about the words of Captain Picard ... “Engage!” VIDEO CLIP.

Well, we can all live a full and meaningful life without ever hearing Jean-Luc Picard say, “Engage!” But as Christ-followers, we will never step into the full and meaningful life Christ has for us until we hear Him issue the urgent call to on-mission living ... Engage!

ILLUSTRATION - Imagine a scenario in which Jesus was not born about 4-5 B.C. as most scholars think He was. Imagine that Jesus was born, say, in 1980. And now 30 years have passed and according to the record of His life in the Gospels, at the age of about 30 Jesus stepped on the scenes with His public ministry. Imagine the same divine Person, the same divine mission, just a different day. What would Jesus do? Where would He go? How would He spend His time? What approach would Jesus use to fulfill the mission of His Father if He stepped on the scene not in 30AD but in 2013?

Would He launch a massive social media campaign? Would He immediately purchase airtime on the major television networks with a prime time special? Would Jesus rent out the largest stadiums in the county and hold huge rallies. Would He jet across the continent from one speaking engagement to another ... Fox News, 60 Minutes, Conan O’Brian? Would He join the parade of celebrities throwing out the first pitch at a Texas Rangers game? Would He be among the protesters in front of a Planned Parenthood facility?

I don't know about all of that. But I have an idea that you'd likely see Jesus doing what we're told He did in Matthew 9:35-38. Open your Bibles with me today to that text. Read text.

From my heart to you today, this is an urgent call for us all to engage ... an urgent call to on-mission living. Jesus is looking for people and for churches He can He can invade, indwell, empower and engage to fulfill the mission of redemption that He began when He stepped out of heaven with the mandate of the Father to make salvation possible for every human being of every generation and of every nation. He came to engage this world with His love, and He will not do it without His people ... His church. Now immediately I want you to notice...

1. THE MISSION OF JESUS (Matthew 9:35)

Matthew 9:35 - 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.

Look again at v.35. It says that “Jesus went...” He *went* because He was *sent*. You see, Jesus understood His mission from the Father.

Luke 4:18 - “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,

Matthew 9:35 - “Jesus went through...” – The way the wording is here it means that Jesus went through these places continuously and repeated. There was much to be done in these places.

Matthew 9:35 - “Jesus went through all the towns and villages...” – The Galilean countryside was covered with little villages and towns having from a few hundred to a few thousand people. Every town, every village was different. Each of them needed a visit from the Savior.

The fact is that though we live in a huge metropolitan area, we clump together in apartment complexes and housing sub-division and schools and college campuses and office buildings. If Jesus were doing his ministry here today He would be moving in and among those pockets of people. And if we're going with the Savior, we will do the same.

One of those places is your circle. One of those places is the place where God, in His sovereignty, has caused you to live this part of your life. Do you understand that Jesus is moving into your circle?

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching ... preaching ... healing...” – Notice carefully the order of Jesus’ activity. Teaching and preaching is so critical. The Gospel is information that has power and it must be told, it must be taught and preached. Jesus helped people, as we’ll see here, but the helping was simply the conduit through which the truth of the Gospel could travel into their lives.

But he healed as well. Why? Because he was concerned about physical needs. The word for “healing” is the word from which we get our word “therapy.” He helped people get better and stronger. And today Jesus does that through the caring ministry from His followers. But again, the meeting of the physical need is the path down which God moves to meet the greater need ... the need for forgiveness which Jesus purchased through His death on the Cross.

So Jesus was on mission, but He was fueled by something:

2. THE COMPASSION OF JESUS (Matthew 9:36)

Matthew 9:36 - When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus had a heart for the hurting. Jesus *went* because He was *sent*, and He was *effective* because He *sensitive*.

“He saw...” – He paid attention to the needs of people. We must see before we’ll do anything. How easy it is for us to be desensitized ... to look at needs and to not be moved.

“He had compassion...” – The word means “to be moved in the inward parts.” He couldn’t look at a desperate situation and not be moved down to his very core. When is the last time you let yourself be moved like this when you saw a need? So many times we build a wall around our hearts because we don’t want to be moved, because we know if we’re moved we might have to do something about it ... and we don’t want to be bothered with that.

Now Jesus had compassion on them...

“Because they were harassed...” – In the days of Jesus this word “harassed” would have been used to describe someone who had been on a long journey. They were exhausted ... ready to quit. They just couldn’t go on any more.

“Because they were ... helpless...” – This word was used to describe someone who had been knocked down. People feel knocked down ... by sickness, by poverty, by divorce, by unemployment, by hunger, by depression ... knocked down.

“Like sheep without a shepherd...” – Jesus saw people like sheep who were scattered and confused. They didn’t know which way to go. They need a shepherd. And by the way, when you see people with the eyes of Jesus you will see past the shell that often misleads people. You might look at a successful business man or woman and think they’re OK. Beneath that mask of self-confidence you will often find people who are hopeless, helpless, harassed. They need the Good Shepherd Jesus.

So what would it look like if you and I ... our church ... began to engage our city and our world with the heart, the compassion, the love of Jesus Christ? I mean, if we really took this seriously ... if our energies were truly focused on following Jesus in this way, what might it look like? How might our church begin to look like Jesus and be like Jesus to our city? Remember that Jesus is looking for people and churches that He can invade, indwell, empower and engage in His mission.

When Jesus ascended back to heaven after His death and resurrection He left His followers with the very clear charge that they were to penetrate their world with the love and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He did not envision the church being like a luxury cruise ship on which believers would vacation, being served by others, until they arrived at heaven’s shore. No, Jesus envisioned the church to be more like a Navy battleship with every person on board serving in a task that related to the overall mission of the ship.

Here are some steps we can take to engage ... to respond to Jesus’ call on our lives and on our church to on-mission living:

To help us all get on the same page starting next Sunday we’ll be distributing the book ***I AM A CHURCH MEMBER BY THOM RANIER***. This book will help us see ourselves as church members in the role of the crew on a battleship rather than tourist on a luxury ship. We’ll give one

copy to each household with additional copies available for purchase. We'll discuss the book in A2C groups starting September 8.

To get us started on the mission of engaging our city with the love of Christ, we have planned **LOVE FORT WORTH WEEKEND (October 4-6)**. The goal is to involve every SMBS unit in meaningful acts of service out in the community on that weekend ... engaging our city with the love of Jesus Christ. We'll come together to celebrate on Sunday, October 6 hopefully with many of the new friends we have served in our city.

Church, there should be a difference in our community because we are here. I'm so thankful for the great strides we have made in recent years. But envision with me how much more could be done if we saw and felt the way Jesus saw and felt ... if we engaged....

COLLEGE CAMPUSES – Here in Tarrant County there are approximately 95,000 college students. In many respects we need to think of them like an unreached people group that needs to be engaged. I'm happy to announce to you today that we have a new college minister joining our staff. His name is Matt Geddie. He is uniquely gifted with a passion and understanding of what it takes to engage campuses with the love of Jesus Christ. He already has developed inroads to TCU like we haven't had in a long time.

ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS – We have hundreds of children, teenagers, teachers and administrators who walk on to at least 50 middle and high school campuses, and at least that many elementary schools across our area. Do you see your school not just as a place to study or work, but as a place to engage with the love of Jesus Christ?

THROUGH OUR NEW WEST BUILDING – This new building God is giving us, and that will open in November is not a clubhouse for our holy huddle, but a connecting point with our community. One of the first major events we will host in the new building will be a Thanksgiving Dinner for our neighbors. We're also looking forward to hosting a luncheon for the business owners and leaders in this part of the city to encourage the continued revitalization of our community.

THROUGH THE MERCY CLINIC – This year we opened the Mercy Clinic. God put it on the hearts of several of our people to help people here in the surrounding community with their medical needs. Hanging on the wall of the Mercy Clinic are these words of Matthew 9:35. People are coming to faith in Christ through this vital ministry. They need more volunteers.

THROUGH COMMUNITY IMPACT – We need to take community impact to the next level. It's not just the "come and get" kind of help, but the "go and give" kind of help. I think about our Kids Hope partnership with George C. Clarke and the 60 mentors that we are providing. We've been asked by another local elementary school to develop a similar partnership with them. That means we'll need dozens more mentors. Each of those children is a link to a home here in our community. I think about the Freedom School that we hosted this summer for sixty boys and girls from our community whose parents wanted them to get some summer tutoring and mentoring. We had them for six weeks, and during that time at least 12 of them prayed to receive Christ. Of course for decades we have been involved in feeding and clothing through our Community Ministries. Just over a dozen years ago we started the Fort Worth Pregnancy Center, located just down the street

here. In a few short months we will host the Christmas Store once again, where we assist families with Christmas presents for their children. Scores of you are involved in one of these engaging ministries where we seek to serve others and share the Gospel. But we need another wave of volunteers to come on board.

But let's zoom out beyond our community, city and county to our nation and our world. We should engage...

THROUGH SHORT TERM MISSIONS IN 2014 – We had about 125 adults, youth and children go on one of our partnership mission trips so far this year. Let's double that number next year. Begin preparing now. Send your child or student. Go as a family. We're committed to providing a wide range of opportunities all the way from an extreme mission adventure to something a little closer to home and less expensive.

Let me speak just a word to the many in our church who are training and studying at SWBTS. We cherish this rich distinctive in our church ... that there are hundreds of men and women who are preparing to go to an on-mission life for a vocation. We want to pray for, encourage and support you as the next generation of leaders in churches around the country and around the world. But we want you to get involved as well.

What would happen if each of us got up every morning and walked with Jesus into our circles at work and school or whatever we're doing that day, on mission with Him? What if every SMBS group, choir, A2C group or Bible study spent some of their time and energy outside of their group engaged in one of these ministries out in our city?

Now back to our text in Matthew 9. We've seen the mission of Jesus and the compassion of Jesus, but there's also something here about ...

3. THE VISION OF JESUS (Matthew 9:37-38)

Matthew 9:37 - "The harvest is plentiful..."

Jesus sees the potential. Nonbelievers are not only like sheep who are in trouble. They are also like wheat that must be harvested. We're talking here about the potential of salvation coming to great numbers of people. And the heart and mind of Jesus is filled with this vision ... and it should fill our hearts and our minds.

Maybe you've looked at your life and wondered if you could ever be fruitful in this way ... that you could be part of the harvest ... of gathering in some of these who need to be saved. But Jesus went to the Cross to die for our sins, and rose again victoriously from the grave. He sent the Holy Spirit to continue on His work when He ascended into heaven. And the Holy Spirit gives power to believers to go into a great spiritual harvest, until everyone on the face of the earth has the opportunity to hear the Gospel and be saved.

So Jesus sees the potential; but He also sees a perennial problem:

Matthew 9:37b - “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

Jesus knew what we know. It will always be a struggle to find people who will willingly, gladly go into the harvest. And if we obey Jesus the way I’m challenging us to obey Jesus it will require lots of time and money given by lots of people. But God has already provided a system for this. It is called the tithe. The work of the Lord in the Old and New Testaments was to be supported by God’s grace through the giving of God’s people.

CHALLENGE – If every member gave a tenth (a tithe) their money and their time, we could make a huge impact upon our city and our world. We could engage our city and our world with the love of Christ like never before. But it cannot be done with spare time and pocket change.

But Jesus has something else in mind when it comes to the labor shortage for the harvest. And He has in mind a way that will bring the maximum glory to God. He said...

Matthew 9:38 - Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

The word “ask” literally means “to pray urgently.” In fact, it means to beg and plead. So an indication that God is going to bring in a great harvest in our church, or any other church, will be a great movement of our people towards prayer. I don’t know what it will look like, but we must rebuild and re-launch an extensive ministry of prayer in our church. Maybe that will be where you plug in.

Matthew 9:37-38 - “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

CONCLUSION

The Bible says that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as ransom for many. And through that ransom being paid for our sin, Jesus envisioned an army of Spirit-filled servants being unleashed to engage the world with His love.

ILLUSTRATION – So many believers are like this sponge in this bowl. You are sitting and soaking. And you’ve wondered why, in spite of the fact that you go to Bible studies and seminars and read Christian books, something is missing in your life. It’s true for believers and it’s true for churches. Think of this water as the grace of God. It’s the inflowing of the grace of God in our lives that fills us with great love, joy and power in living. But like a sponge that soaks up water, we need to be wrung out. If not we sit, soak, sour and stink. Is that what has happened for you? One way to get wrung out is for God to take us through some kind of adversity where we are wrung out, and we need God’s new grace flowing into our lives. I pray that’s not what has to happen. Another powerful way for this to happen is to engage in a life of service to where you are wrung out with the demands of ministry. Then you experience the fresh inflow of God’s grace as you go to Him, only to be wrung out again in service.

Jesus is looking for people and for churches He can He can invade, indwell, empower and engage to fulfill the mission of redemption. I don't want Him to pass me by ... I don't want Him to pass us by. How about you?