

XMULTIPLY

Text: Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus took his mission seriously and gave his time and energy to preaching the gospel far and wide. At this point in history, God's people were still waiting for a king, like King David, who would come and restore them as a nation, and restore them to their "glory" days. There was a mixture of hopelessness and anticipation in the air. For hundreds of years there had been no prophet and they had no king. In addition, they were under Roman oppression, which limited them in so many ways. But they still held on to the promise of a new and powerful king, the Messiah.

John the Baptist was the first prophet to be raised up in centuries, and naturally, it woke the Jews up from their slumber and awakened their expectations again. John preached that they should repent and believe, because God's kingdom was about to arrive. Many of them responded to that message and were baptised. After Jesus was baptised by John, and the Holy Spirit came down on him, he began his kingdom ministry.

Jesus brought the kingdom of God to them through the proclamation of his message, calling them to believe, and he authenticated his message by doing many miracles. He demonstrated his power and authority over nature, over illness and even over the demonic forces that were at work in people's lives, by performing signs and wonders. This was all to demonstrate that he was the Messiah-king, and that his kingdom had come to earth in their midst, and yet he was also the sacrificial lamb that would be slaughtered in order to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Jesus intentionally preached far and wide, so that he could reach as many people as he could with his message. He took time to heal and deliver people because he had compassion on them, and he felt their desperate need for a shepherd to lead and guide them. The religious leaders of the time were not genuine spiritual guides, but were spiritually dead, self-centred, controlling leaders that enslaved the people with religion, and they did not lead their people to the true worship and blessing of relationship with God.

Jesus also cared deeply for the rest of the lost, and that they needed people to go out and find them and lead them to the knowledge of his kingdom too. Jesus stated the facts clearly: if people don't take the message out to the lost, the lost will not be saved. They are ripe and ready to hear the gospel, but if no one should take it to them, they will never hear it. It is that serious.

For some of us, it means that we *should go*, we should become missionaries and work the rest of our lives preaching the gospel in places that have not yet heard it. For others, our call is to reset our comfortable lives, and be willing to live this life, where we are, with all the responsibilities we have here, preaching the gospel to people in our everyday lives. Not all of us can pack up and leave, but we certainly do have a ripe mission field on our back-door step.

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Jesus didn't just tell us to "go", he instructed us to PRAY. We can't all move, but we can all be concerned with the mission of God and how far it is reaching. We can pray, support, contribute financially and be involved in a variety of ways. Committing to prayer is one of the biggest contributions we can make, because prayer fuels everything.

What we should be praying for?

1. That God would send out workers into the areas that need to hear the gospel.
2. That people will hear the call clearly and be willing to give up their comfort in order to go.
3. That God would cause Christians to *want* to give financially, to support emotionally, to commit to *long-term* prayer and encouragement, so that people who feel called to go can actually do it.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was Jesus so committed to getting his message, about the Kingdom of God, to as many people as possible?
2. Why do you think that the kingdom of God comes as a message to be believed and not by force?
3. Why do you think it would have been so difficult for the Jews to believe the message that the kingdom of God was now in their midst? (i.e. Compare their expectations of what they hoped their new king would look like, versus the king that they found in Jesus.)
4. What did Jesus mean when he said that the "harvest is ripe but the workers are few"?
5. Why do you think Jesus instructed us to pray and ask God to send workers out into the mission-field?
6. What does our prayer contribute to the mission of God?
7. In addition to prayer, in what other ways do you think we as a GC could participate in the mission of God? (i.e. What kind of support do the "sent" need? Why is a long-term commitment to support, encouragement and financial backing important?).
8. Does anyone in our GC feel as though they may be being nudged by God to some sort of cross-cultural mission? (Ask them what has prompted this sense of call, how long it has been going on, what makes them hesitant, what makes them excited, and how you as a group can help them to process the possibilities of being "sent".)

Spend some time praying for the 3 things mentioned above under the heading "**what should we be praying for?**"