

May 20th 2012 "Moved By The Need" Matthew 9:35-38

Although the subject of our message today is Moved By The Need, it is in reality about being moved enough by the plight of people in need to do something about it. Not just by people that we know but by people that we don't know and might never meet.

Now that's never going to be easy, because we live in a world where sad stories are presented so often to us through the media, that we become adept at distancing ourselves from this injustice, or that crisis, or that painful situation. It's not that we don't care. But it's all so overwhelming that if we were to think about it too much, we would soon find ourselves unable to cope.

**Consider for a moment these world new headlines from last week.
Bomb....Survivor in Norway....Moscow...Greek elections**

There is nothing any of us can realistically do to change any of those situations, so we have to be content with turning away from such sadness and getting on with our lives. But the danger is that we learn to deal with most situations that way, including those that God could use us in to make a difference. Be it the homeless in WA who at this time of year need extra blankets, or the Christians in Africa who have one untrained Pastor seeking to shepherd scores of churches.

We may still be compassionate for others but somewhere along the way we have stopped being moved by that compassion to act, even in the situations where there **is** something we can do.

So the first Key idea is that we **Should Be Moved With Compassion** even as Christ was in the account that we read from Matthew 9.

This account that comes at the end of a very busy period for Jesus.

Just a quick read through of chapters 8 and 9 will reveal that after the sermon on the mount in chapter 7, Jesus moves into overdrive as far as healing and helping others is concerned. In these two chapters you will read about 9 separate cases of miraculous healings, two amazing stories of His power over nature, and also His controversial calling of a hated tax collector to join His chosen band of disciples.

The thing to note is that several of these acts of kindness were met with arguments and opposition. In chapter 9 alone we see that this was the case with the healing of the paralyzed man who was lowered through the roof. The calling of Matthew. The healing of the little girl being interrupted by the healing of the

older woman. The disobedience of the two blind men he healed, and the accusations by the Pharisees regarding His healing of the demon possessed man that He had used the powers of evil to do it.

The point is that Jesus had already done so much for the crowds, and had suffered attacks and misrepresentation from some, especially the religious people of His day, for doing what He did—and yet we read in 9:36

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

After working His heart out for the crowds that were so fickle in their support of Him, and that included religious people who took every opportunity to have a go at Him, one would think that Jesus would walk away in disgust. But He didn't. Instead He was moved with compassion as He looked upon them. He saw their needs and He yearned to help them.

If as believers we are serious about being like Jesus, then we need to cultivate a compassionate heart for the crowds in our world who are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Crowds suggests a vast group of people that we don't know personally or have much in common with. It will always include those who will knock us and oppose us for trying to help or do what we believe Jesus wants us to do.

It suggests an unending task which seems to increase in size the more we enter into it. A task so big that our small endeavours seem like a drop in an ocean of need.

The compassionate heart of Christ for the crowds was an absolute necessity for the work He came to earth to do which was "To seek and save the lost, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

The compassionate heart of every follower of Christ—the compassionate heart of you and the compassionate heart of me—is also an absolute necessity for the physical and spiritual conveyance of God's very practical love and grace to the great crowds of lost in our world today.

And a major sign of having a compassionate heart is when we **See The Harvest With God's Eyes**. Look at 9:37:-

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

The compassionate heart sees the possibilities rather than the problems. Sees by faith the full harvest that is just waiting for the workers to bring it in.

It is so easy for us to be disheartened and discouraged about Missionary work whether it is what we do personally in the circles in which we move, or what we seek to do as a church in this community, or what is being done in the wider world of missionary endeavour. It's too easy to see the field as simply a field in which we are plowing our time, money, or prayers with limited hope of success.

But the reality is that the field is not simply a field...it is a harvest. This harvest is in the economy of God: He has sown the seed, He is sowing the seed, and He will continue to sow the seed, because He owns the field and the harvest is His. And He has graciously called us to partner with Him in the harvesting of His field.

There is an ongoing need for us to cultivate our faith in what God is doing and to see whatever we are doing for the sake of the Gospel as part of the harvest that God has already declared as being plentiful. We can be engaged in mission with confidence for the result is with God and not with us.

This is particularly the case in our praying and will be obvious to those who pray with us for a country such as China in our prayer walk today. Prayers for that country have been faithfully presented by millions of believers in millions of churches for decades. When the country closed its borders to Christianity in 1949 those prayers intensified. Many faithful prayer warriors who prayed for China died long before the news of Christian growth in that land reached the West. And that news was incredible. The growth of the church in China since 1977 has no parallels in history. Prayer is changing China.

God's harvest is already in our world and the third point is that we need to **Be Involved**. Indeed it's a privilege that we won't want to miss out on.

And the wonderful thing is that everyone can be involved because there are so many cogs in the machinery of God's harvester. Not long ago Judy and I paid a visit to the bell tower in Perth and there we could see the working of those great big bells. And what impressed me was all the different parts of the machinery that caused those bells to ring when someone below pulled on the ropes. That's a picture of the proclamation of the Gospel. A few people may be seen as pulling on the ropes but it is the input of so many others that causes the sound to go forth.

So we have the prayers and giving of the people who remain. The support and teaching and training of those who send others out. The large group of those who run the infra structure at home and abroad that enables the Missionaries to exist and serve. The Missionaries themselves and those who volunteer to work alongside them. The short term Missionaries and those who encourage, pray for and financially support them. The list goes on and on and on.

As followers of Jesus today, we are also included in this call. We are all workers sent to the harvest field, to the people and places where Jesus is not yet known. We are invited to be involved.

Such Involvement for Lisa Newman, who now works with her husband for Global Interaction in Cambodia, meant going. In her personal reflection she says:-

(Read from illustration: How could I not go?)

That last comment about getting to the end of one's life and thinking, "What a waste", is applicable to us all whatever God is wanting us to do. If He has called us to pray, and yet we miss many opportunities to really pray for His work, then we will one day regret that.

If He has equipped us to give and we end our days with money over that we could have used for the harvest and didn't, our sadness one day will surely be great.

If He has called us to go in some way and we chose not too, it will be our loss in the end that we will have to face up to.

We need to be involved because that is our calling as believers in Jesus.

Some of us are called to the field close to home, sharing with our friends and neighbours locally. All are called to pray and to give. Some are called to leave extended families and familiar comforts and to become cross-cultural workers for Christ for short or long time periods. God has chosen to involve us all in His harvesting. That's what this Mission Month is all about.

So in conclusion:-

The premise of this MOVED sermon series is that God is moving. Through understanding God's heart revealed in Scripture, through witnessing the way He invites ordinary people to join Him and through being confronted by the needs of the world, God is stirring in us a heart for mission. His Spirit is prompting, surprising, affirming and encouraging us to respond. What might that response be for you? Before you leave today, commit to exploring how you can continue to recognize the prompting of the Spirit, listen to what God might be asking of you and respond with obedience and faithfulness.