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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA
MAY 20, 2007
PASTOR MARK FRY

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: Let's look at Matthew 9 together.
2 We're in a discipleship series that is based on some spring
3 planting.

4 We have looking at some parables that Jesus used.
5 Jesus uses parables to each about the Kingdom.

6 A parable is something that has a truth beyond
7 itself.

8 If you take it literally, you're not going to catch
9 the meaning.

10 There's the kingdom of God is like a guy who sowed
11 seed. Big deal.

12 But if we think about that beyond itself, oh, sowing
13 seed, that's what the kingdom is like.

14 But Jesus uses this teaching method, and what we are
15 going to do is we are going to look in on the 9th Chapter of
16 Matthew.

17 We have four Gospel writers, that means good news
18 writers, four different people, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

19 Matthew is the first sequentially and in the 9th
20 Chapter we are going to pluck out this passage, but then I'm
21 going to show you the context it is taken from, because a
22 text out of context can oftentimes be a con. Let's look at
23 Matthew 9, beginning at Verse 35.

24 "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages,
25 teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news

1 of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness.

2 "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them
3 because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a
4 shepherd.

5 "And then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is
6 plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, ask the Lord
7 of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

8 "Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave
9 them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to
10 cure every disease and every sickness.

11 These are the names of the twelve apostles. First,
12 Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James,
13 son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Phillip and
14 Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the tax collector; James,
15 son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and
16 Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

17 "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following
18 instructions:

19 "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of
20 the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house
21 of Israel.

22 "As you go, proclaim the good news, the kingdom of
23 heaven has come near.

24 "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,
25 and cast out demons. You received without payment; give

1 without payment."

2 We'll pause here and hopefully learn some things and
3 then return to that text a bit.

4 So now that you have the scriptures there in your
5 hearts and in your hands, backtrack just slightly with me and
6 take a look at Matthew's Gospel from the beginning.

7 Matthew 1 has this amazing genealogy of Jesus. In
8 other words, we see all of the people that birthed other
9 people sequentially until the birth of Jesus, and that's
10 Matthew 1, and they are setting the stage for Jesus being
11 born. We learn about Joseph in Matthew 1.

12 And then in Matthew 2 we hear the Christmas story
13 and we hear about this danger element that is going on, this
14 dangerous element that the baby Jesus and his family need to
15 flee and so they go to Egypt, they are saved and they come
16 back.

17 And then in Matthew 3, we knowing nothing of Jesus'
18 life except for his infancy, and now we hear of his baptism.

19 He's a full grown adult, probably 29 or 30 years
20 old, and John the Baptist is making a ripple effect on the
21 world, and Jesus then goes to John the Baptist and is
22 baptized and he's led into the wilderness in that third and
23 fourth chapter.

24 So really not a lot is happening yet, you might say,
25 and yet so very much is happening.

1 He's led out into the wilderness for forty days and
2 Jesus is battle tested.

3 The devil tempts him in that wilderness experience
4 and he comes back and then he begins his ministry.

5 He's preaching and healing at the end of that fourth
6 chapter.

7 And then at the very beginning of the fifth chapter
8 we notice the longest sermon in the Bible, chapters five, six
9 and seven is the Sermon on the Mount.

10 The point being Jesus has not done a whole lot yet
11 really.

12 He's still is very young in his ministry, he has
13 called the twelve to be with him.

14 They have been watching him doing some healing.
15 They have heard his preaching, Matthew 5, 6 and 7.

16 He comes down from the mountain, it says in Chapter
17 8, Verse 1.

18 And then we see him doing some more miraculous
19 things.

20 We see him curing people and we see him forgiving
21 sins now. He's added another realm to his ministry.

22 He's recruiting his followers and he's teaching
23 them.

24 That leads us all the way through the 9th chapter to
25 the very end of the 9th chapter.

1 My point being Jesus has probably only had these
2 disciples with him for a brief period of time.

3 But they've seen a lot, three chapter sermon, a lot
4 of healings, a lot of miracles, some forgiveness.

5 And then when we zoom right into our text then, we
6 need to know that the disciples have been watching Jesus, and
7 they have been walking with Jesus, and they have been
8 listening to Jesus for however long a period of time that
9 was.

10 And they come upon this crowd that we notice then in
11 the 9th Chapter, beginning at the 35th Verse.

12 That's where we entered our story. Jesus went about
13 all of the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues,
14 proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every
15 disease and every sickness.

16 And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on
17 them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep
18 without a shepherd.

19 Out of compassion for the crowd Jesus will send the
20 called.

21 It is very important that you notice who is harassed
22 and helpless, because it isn't the disciples.

23 They have been walking with him and living their
24 lives with him for however long a period of time, we don't
25 really know, but when Jesus sees the crowd, Matthew says he

1 had compassion on them because they were harassed and
2 helpless.

3 That's what a crowd looks like, harassed and
4 helpless, but that's not what a disciple looks like.

5 So there is a very interesting distinction that is
6 drawn then.

7 I was doing a little bit of fun research this week
8 in a Bible commentary and it was talking about the Greek word
9 for harass.

10 I love that word harass. There are times when I
11 feel harassed, or I think I do.

12 Harassed, you know, it's just a brutal word, but
13 here is the Greek word, the harassed and helpless reference
14 are weak translations of the Greek into English.

15 With both verbs written in the passive tense, they
16 mean that the crowd has been flayed or skinned.

17 They are harassed and helpless. They are just cut
18 open.

19 I have a friend who was raised on the farm and
20 sometimes he uses the word, I'm just shelled.

21 It's like a piece of corn that has just been
22 shelled, just cut open.

23 That's what the Greek word is. They are flayed
24 open. They are just gutted, is really what he's saying here.

25 More than literally it means that they are

1 prostrated, they are akin to being wounded.

2 The crowds are in such dire condition because they
3 have no leadership, he says.

4 That's what makes a person gutted. No leadership.
5 They are like sheep without a shepherd; a body without a
6 head.

7 So that's an interesting notion, that harassed and
8 helpless is not just I've had a bad day, it's more than that,
9 and then to look into it, it says Jesus had compassion on
10 them.

11 Jesus had a deep visceral response to people who are
12 portrayed as damaged goods.

13 Confronting the consequences of failed leadership,
14 he declares it's time to gather up the broken lives of these
15 people for a harvest.

16 Jesus' experience of compassion, it says he's moved
17 with compassion, is something that happens to him way down in
18 the pit of his stomach, the commentary says.

19 The root of the middle passive verb for this means
20 into his vital organs and bowels. That's how deep his
21 compassion is.

22 So, in other words, Jesus can't watch the evening
23 news without getting sick to the pit of his stomach, because
24 he sees the crowd harassed and helpless.

25 That's how deeply he's moved when he sees people

1 that aren't in his discipleship group.

2 It almost kills him. In fact, it will. The story
3 will play out.

4 To be moved with compassion is to be churned to the
5 very core of one's physical being, to one's guts and all in
6 the Greek.

7 He's filled with compassion because he saw these
8 people that were harassed and helpless, much more than
9 intellectually acknowledging or emotionally feeling the
10 suffering of the crowds, Jesus is described in terms of
11 having a sematic connection to what these people are going
12 through.

13 You've said been there, done that. In Jesus' case
14 he's really been there, really done that, into the pit of his
15 gut.

16 He longs for the people that don't know who he is.
17 He undergoes an intersubjective internal invasion of their
18 suffering and he is compelled by God to do whatever it takes
19 to alleviate it.

20 Isn't that a cool way to look at that text?

21 So he sees these people that are harassed and
22 helpless, and instead of going, okay, time out, disciples, I
23 want you guys to go over here and have a little picnic while
24 I go out and take care of all these people, what does he do?

25 He sends them. That's a little different kind of a

1 notion here, but here is the deal.

2 They are harassed and helpless, but the disciples
3 are not harassed and helpless; the crowd is.

4 Not only is a disciple not harassed and helpless,
5 but they are also not powerless.

6 We see this then in Chapter 10, Verse 1. He sees
7 the situation of the crowd. He calls his disciples over.

8 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and he gave
9 them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to
10 cure every disease and every sickness.

11 He gave them authority. He doesn't call the
12 qualified; he qualifies the called.

13 And he gives them an unending, limitless supply of
14 his guts.

15 And he equips them and he says, okay, you guys have
16 been watching me preach, teach, heal, forgive, it's your
17 turn, and he throws them the key to the car. It's your turn
18 to drive.

19 Those are what the disciples are invited and
20 encouraged to do.

21 And I don't know if you're anything like me, I
22 suspect maybe you are, but you're kind of going, all right,
23 I've heard a little bit of this stuff about being a disciple,
24 and I'm on that boat, I think, I've got my doubts once in a
25 while, I can go with the disciple thing, I want to be a

1 learner, but to be a doer? An apostle?

2 The Greek word apostle means sent one. Oh, no, no,
3 time out, I'm not qualified, I'm not worthy, that stuff that
4 Jesus did, and maybe twelve select people, but then when we
5 read the story closely in Luke 10 he sends out 70 and he
6 gives them the same exact thing.

7 And when we read this story in the Gospel of Mark he
8 sends them out in teams of two.

9 So you don't have to do it alone, but we need to
10 look at a real interesting concept that a lot of us lose and
11 miss and, I don't know, I think it's the enemy's grasp on our
12 culture, and it's the enemy's grasp on our churches, but if
13 you look at 1st Corinthians 1, God doesn't call the
14 qualified, he qualifies the called.

15 And some people will go, you and pastor Wenda are
16 the only two that are called, and some of us used to think
17 that way, and part of it was control, part of it was ego, and
18 part of it was just plain stupidity and deception to think
19 that only people who go to school get called; that people who
20 go and get ordained are called.

21 But notice what Paul writes in 1st Corinthians 1,
22 beginning at Verse 26.

23 He's writing to people in a church and they don't
24 have any pastors.

25 "Consider your own call, brothers and sisters. Not

1 many of you were wise by human standards, not many of you
2 were powerful, not many of you were of noble birth. But God
3 chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God
4 chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God
5 chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are
6 not, to reduce to nothing things that are."

7 Here is the key worse.

8 "So that one might boast in the presence of God. He
9 is the source of your life in Christ Jesus."

10 What we have been led to believe is it's about
11 self-esteem.

12 What that specifically says is consider your own
13 call, but as you consider your own call, you have to realize
14 that it's not you; it's the one who called you.

15 "He is the source of your life in Jesus Christ, who
16 became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and
17 sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is
18 written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

19 So, in other words, what is happening is when we
20 start having those default feelings of I'm harassed and
21 helpless and worthless, God has us right where he wants us,
22 because then he can work with us.

23 And I can only imagine these disciples that are
24 going along and he goes, all right, you guys have seen this
25 stuff, now you are going to go do this stuff.

1 And if they are a good Lutheran group, or whatever,
2 they're like no way, you guys do that, Simon and Thaddaeus,
3 Matthew, you guys go, we'll sit this out.

4 But notice he even has Judas doing it. He doesn't
5 say, okay, everybody but Judas get in line, we are going to
6 send you out.

7 My take on that is he sends them out two by two, and
8 whoever was with Judas did a really good job, he was a real
9 good team player, and they go out and miraculously it works.
10 The operating system works.

11 As we read, it's on-the-job training they have been
12 having, on-the-job learning as disciples, Jesus says, okay,
13 it's your turn to drive, but you're not going to have to
14 drive alone, I'll have a partner for you, I'll have a
15 teammate.

16 But also in Mark 6 and 7 he sends them out two by
17 two.

18 Also in Matthew 28 he sends them out. He says go
19 and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name
20 of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and, lo, I am with you
21 always.

22 You're not doing this by yourself. You might feel
23 sometimes like you're harassed and helpless or hopeless, but
24 you never are.

25 Remember John 14? I will not leave you orphaned.

1 In other words, the work you're doing is not your
2 work, it's my work, and you can do it. You can do it.

3 In fact, you must do it. If you don't do it, it
4 won't get done.

5 It's interesting, I'm at the age in my life where I
6 have to do some doctor stuff now, I'm over fifty, so you kind
7 of get the fifty thousand mile checkup and all that.

8 I had the first stage of that last week and I have
9 the other things scheduled for June 11th.

10 I'm ready to write it on my calendar in red ink,
11 where I get to spend the night drinking the go lightly stuff
12 and have my insides looked at.

13 That gives me a new understanding of that Greek word
14 of Jesus' compassion for me; the deep into the bowels, as it
15 were.

16 But it's interesting, isn't it, because human
17 agencies, they run us through all kinds of different
18 screening processes, and we've put a lot of that on the
19 church, are they good enough.

20 But these agencies, I read a great quote, it said
21 they will screen you out, cut you out, delete your file,
22 reject your application, they won't give you the time of day,
23 or else they will just make you wait.

24 In other words, they go by the numbers, but God goes
25 by the book instead of the numbers.

1 And the book says if you are baptized, and if you
2 believe, you are a follower, a disciple, and an apostle.
3 You're not a pew potato. You're sent.

4 It's kind of like the graduates. You're graduates,
5 now get out there and do it.

6 And I used to kid our kids when they were younger,
7 it was back in the day when that Karolyi guy was the coach of
8 the Olympic team and that girl that broke her ankle was doing
9 the vault thing the year America won all the golds in the
10 summer Olympics, her name was Kerri Strug, and I remember
11 Coach Karolyi, "You can do it, Kerri. I believe in you," and
12 he had that broken English accent.

13 That's what Jesus is saying. You can do it. I
14 believe in you.

15 And what he says in John 14:12, and you will be able
16 to do it if you believe in me.

17 It's cool stuff. The forgiveness. The healing.

18 I look at the graduates and I get teary eyed because
19 some of that has already happened in the lives of this senior
20 class in Elkhorn, the healing.

21 And I'm crazy enough to believe part of it was
22 raised from the dead, shouldn't be alive, shouldn't be
23 functional, and yet a whole lot of people, you see, were
24 leaning in on Jesus and that promise for healing, and it
25 happens, you see?

1 There is a great quote from Romans 5:8, a slight
2 rendition of it is while we were yet suffering from a
3 pre-existing condition, Christ died for us.

4 While we were suffering, Jesus entered into our
5 suffering in the most dramatic of ways and died for us.

6 It's interesting, because not only does Jesus die
7 for our pre-existing condition, but he also lives with
8 compassion in the presence of our suffering.

9 He can't watch the evening news and keep eating his
10 food. It makes him physically sick.

11 And yet we have gotten so used to it that there is
12 almost a little demonic thing in us that makes us want to
13 watch more of it.

14 I used to really like this CSI show on TV. I think
15 it's the highest rated show on TV on Thursday nights.

16 Wenda asks me, "How can you watch that show? I just
17 can't watch that show."

18 Part of me wants to say, "Oh, come on, it's just a
19 TV show."

20 But what I learned last night, we were watching the
21 Suns game and we shifted over and for some reason CSI was on
22 and it was really kind of grotesque.

23 Wenda said, "I don't know how you do it. I can't do
24 this."

25 I'm going to challenge myself and I'm going to quit

1 doing it.

2 Why do I need to see that stuff? And why have I
3 gotten so callous that it does not bother me?

4 I don't need to see the inside of some guy's
5 stomach, some guy's bullet wounds and all that and just get
6 real clinical and look at it, this must be the path the
7 bullet took, and isn't that cool.

8 Then we want to go to the next level, that was cool,
9 now I'll go to another scary movie, and I'll go to another
10 scary movie, and another scary movie, when the scariest movie
11 I watch is the 5:30 news.

12 We see that stuff, but we have gotten so calloused.
13 That's not the way Jesus is wired.

14 When he sees it, his guts churn, and what does he do
15 about it?

16 He enters into it and he sends those who believe in
17 him out into the midst of it and he says cure it, heal it,
18 pray into it, preach into it, cast it out.

19 He doesn't say just sit and watch it, because what
20 will happen is you'll get anesthetized to it.

21 The great physician won't be able to work with you
22 because you have too much anesthetic in you.

23 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,
24 cast out demons.

25 You received without payment, now give without

1 payment.

2 That's the best theology you're going to find right
3 there.

4 In other words, you can't buy, money doesn't buy
5 what I give you, so you can't dare charge for it, and he
6 tells all of them, all twelve.

7 An anonymous journal I have has a great quote in it.
8 It says God does not expect us to clean up our act before we
9 can worthy to approach him or receive his love.

10 If you have a grief-broken heart because of the loss
11 of a loved one, it's covered under the policy that Jesus
12 provides.

13 If you are a drug addict, crack head, junkie, that's
14 covered, too.

15 If you are manic-depressive, or chemically
16 dependent, those are covered.

17 If you are a sex addict who can't get enough of
18 pornography or prostitutes, that's covered, too.

19 If you have a gambling addiction or an alcohol
20 addiction, it's covered.

21 If you are in an unfaithful relationship with
22 someone who is not your spouse, that's covered, too.

23 Perhaps you don't have major issues like these to
24 deal with in your life, but maybe your life just feels a
25 little bit complacent or empty.

1 An empty life is also covered. No questions asked
2 by Dr. Jesus.

3 He doesn't run you through a bunch of qualifications
4 to get in this room.

5 He doesn't keep you waiting in the waiting room. He
6 doesn't delete your file.

7 He welcomes you into his embrace, Dr. Jesus, and
8 then, you see, he's got a whole staff of people that work
9 with him, 12, 70, all of us, teaching, proclaiming, curing.

10 John 14:12, the one who believes in me will do the
11 works I do, in fact will do greater works than these.

12 Some of us have seen some of them and it just
13 buckles your knees when you see them.

14 It's the most wonderful thing in the world.
15 Healing, proclaiming, curing, casting out, raising,
16 cleansing.

17 I think it's important for us to remember that it is
18 always the crowd that is harassed and helpless.

19 And I get quite tired with people who kind of take
20 on the posture of the crowd, this victim thing, and they
21 claim discipleship, but they're just kind of not only is
22 there an unworthiness, but there's kind of this thing that
23 gets in there of poor me, I'm so helpless and harassed.

24 One of the ways out of that is to be sent, but
25 notice it's interesting because disciples and apostles are

1 sent, but they are not spent.

2 There's going to be those times. I feel harassed at
3 different times, and I've felt helpless.

4 But it's interesting, isn't it, in the twelve step
5 program mostly the first step towards help is to admit
6 helplessness and powerlessness. I can't do this.

7 When you do that, God has you right where he wants
8 you.

9 So we have this wonderful thing, occasionally
10 harassed, but never helpless or hopeless.

11 I want to do something at the end of the message
12 today that ties this in.

13 I intentionally came back here when the parents and
14 the graduates were up here, because I wanted to look into the
15 eyes of the parents.

16 And I noticed some of you parents when you were
17 doing that blessing you closed your eyes so that you didn't
18 cry.

19 I have a son who graduated from high school two
20 years ago.

21 Some of the experiences he had in his life have made
22 me cry.

23 And some of the experiences that these graduates
24 will have will make you cry, if you only knew everything
25 about where they are going.

1 If you don't feel helpless, you should, but that's
2 not a bad thing.

3 To be helpless and powerless is to be right where
4 God wants you to be.

5 And then, you see, we can give them over to God, and
6 so you were doing a blessing on your kids.

7 I would invite anybody who has as a parent felt
8 helpless, or harassed, raise your hand, at one time or
9 another, harassed by the kid that you're graduating maybe.
10 Helpless. Good. Thanks be to God.

11 What we want to do is we want to send some apostles
12 out to pray with some of you parents, and so how can we do
13 this best, Pastor Wenda?

14 Can we have the apostles come first, or the parents
15 come first, so that we can pray for you, because, believe me,
16 if you don't feel helpless now, there will be those times
17 when they go to those college campuses and when you don't
18 know everything that is going on, and I've heard the whole
19 deal that my kids tell me everything.

20 My kids are my best friends. You maybe need to do
21 some work on that. You are the parent; they are the child.

22 We're all disciples and apostles and we need to lean
23 into this grace that we have of praying for each other and
24 curing some of this stuff.

25 PASTOR WENDA FRY: I'm kind of stuck on that thing

1 you said earlier about out of compassion for the crowd Jesus
2 sends the called.

3 So I'm thinking the apostles come up, bless them,
4 and then during "Beautiful One" they go out and pray for the
5 harassed.

6 If there are some apostles that would be willing to
7 be sent out to the parents today and lay a hand of blessing
8 on them, they already did that for the kids, but they need
9 it.

10 Would you be willing to come up and we'll bless you
11 and then during the song you can go out in twos, maybe bring
12 a partner.

13 PASTOR MARK FRY: It is being sent, and you don't
14 have to be spent

15 PASTOR WENDA FRY: As you can see, we need all the
16 help we can get, we completely forgot about the gifts that
17 the graduates should get.

18 So we are going to ask a blessing upon these and
19 during the song they will turn and just raise your hand if
20 you want a blessing.

21 They will pray for your and your graduate, or if you
22 are just a mom and dad today who aren't going to be able to
23 seed your kids and you feel a little helpless about that,
24 they will pray for you as well. Let's bless these apostles.

25 Thank you, Lord, for your word today that tells us

1 that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

2 Thank you for your word that challenges us as your
3 disciples to consider our call and to go out and to relieve
4 that compassion that you feel in your gut, Jesus, for us, to
5 be a part of that compassion in this world, and we are
6 thinking of the parents of the graduates today, Lord.

7 We know they might feel a bit helpless, a bit
8 emotional, and we ask that you would work mightily through
9 these apostles right now as they go out to lay hands of
10 blessings upon these parents.

11 May you increase our faith as we do this, Lord. We
12 want to become your disciples, through Christ. Amen.

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