



### Prayers & Readings for this week

- ▶ Pray for all the young people in our church, especially those taking part in our Youth Service
- ▶ Katie asks for prayer for her family
- ▶ We remember those recently bereaved and those who are ill and receiving treatment
- ▶ We pray for the special needs of family members in our church; we cannot broadcast details but appreciate the assurance of prayers for one another
- ▶ Our continued admiration and prayers for the NHS staff and their support workers
- ▶ Pray for Ryan Smith and the team ministry in Paisley!

Monday      Reading John 16:16–33  
Pray for Brenda & Keith Hambleton & family

Tuesday      Reading John 17  
Pray for Diane Hallam

Wednesday      Reading John 18:1–24  
Pray for Nat & Christine Herbert & family

Thursday      Reading John 18:25–19:16  
Pray for Peter & Babs Hewitt

Friday      Reading John 19:17–42  
Pray for Anna Holme

Saturday      Reading: Catch up  
Pray for Dave & Chris Hoolihan & family

**Sunday 21 June**      Reading John 20  
Pray for Claire, Terry, Liam & Chloe Humphreys

This week will bring its own challenges. As pastor of a church, I am aware of the importance of being apolitical and thus avoiding making any sort of political statement. We live in a very strongly politically motivated society, especially the last couple of years. The recent events in the USA and ‘Black Lives Matter’ gatherings here – as is often seen – is a side to our modern internet and immediate impact world. Something happens; it is captured on video and immediately goes ‘viral’ and the impact across nations is immediate. There are good and bad sides to this. It is good for people to want to respond so that much needed change may come. On the other side is the unintended consequences of something being driven by impure motives. It can be quite a mixed bag!

As an observer (that could also be ‘bad’ if that is as far as I ever go), I see the need for justice and freedom for all, no matter what our skin colour, ethnicity or creed is. It is noticeable how in most demonstrations, however peacefully intended they may be, things get out of hand. It seems to me that it is very difficult to right wrongs without doing what people often refer to as ‘lesser evils’. It is a fact; crowds can be manipulated.

I have tossed this around in my mind in so many ways. How do we make something ‘right’ without committing other ‘wrongs’? And when opportunities come along to do something good, surely it must be God-given. I was also trying to work out which is more beneficial; to right the wrongs of the past or *doing* right from here on with everyone we meet? To be sure, every life matters a great deal to the Lord. The ‘gospel in a nutshell’ has that covered (John 3: 16).

No political statements today but hopefully a prophetic proclamation about the need to treat others as Jesus did! This would right a lot of wrongs. The way Jesus treated men and women from different backgrounds, cultures and religions would still be radical today. The way Jesus took upon himself ‘*the form of a servant*’ (Phil 2) must be one of the most outstanding challenges before our world today. His action in coming from highest heaven to the lowest of the low on earth, then rising to the highest place is the purest example of all.

What Jesus did, he did for all – ‘red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight’, as the kids’ song goes...

Truly, **Grace and peace to ALL!**



**Message:** Call to Action

**Reading:** Matthew 9 verse 35 to Matthew 10 verse 8

Good morning Brooklands, I pray that you and your community continue to remain safe and well during lockdown. A massive thank you for inviting me to share at your youth service. For those of you who may not know me, my name is Ryan Smith. I am part of the pastoral team at St Matthews in Paisley and my role is Children, Youth and Men pastor. I remember fondly the time I shared with you all while attending summer school at NTC last year. Although I cannot be there physically with you all again, I am grateful for technology that allows me to share Gods word from a distance.

A massive thank you to Antony for reading out my bible verses for me. In my reading and reflecting on these verses from Matthew 9 & 10, the more I read them the more and more I believe these are words for the church today. I believe these words are not just for you Brooklands, but the church as a whole. I'm excited to break these passages down and draw out Gods divine truths for us today. You might be thinking, these are two big passages to digest Ryan, there is a lot in there. And you would be right! There is a lot in them, but they complement and relate to one another so well, that it would be an injustice to approach them both separately.

So lets dive in! Matthew 9:35-38 is a very well known passage which I am certain you have heard preached a thousand times over. I want to unpack each part of the passages as we go. Starting with verse 35, it highlights how Jesus did not confine himself to one city or town but he took a circuit throughout all Galilee; and not only visited their larger and more principal cities and towns, but their villages also. All the while, healing and curing diseases in every place, whilst proclaiming the good news. What a ministry!

Verse 36 emphasises the compassionate heart of Jesus, when he looked around him and seen the people, he recognised they were harassed and helpless. What the passage says specifically is they were like sheep without a shepherd. That's important imagery and I'll come back to that point later on.

Lets keep going, verse 37 is probably the most known verse from this passage:

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

Another beautiful image. The reference to the harvest, is not a harvest of grain, but of souls, he meant that to the multitude of people that flocked to his ministry. The people expected the Messiah. They were prepared to receive the gospel; but the labourers were few. He directed them, therefore, to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth reapers, those who could harvest and cultivate this harvest. The wonderful truth is God is the proprietor of the great harvest of the world, and he only can send people to gather it in.

Verse 38 is a petition to the Lord, asking for more helpers, more individuals, to be sent out into the field. They could not qualify and send out ministers themselves; this is not our work, but God's. He alone is able to furnish with ministerial gifts, to work upon, and powerfully incline the hearts of people to this service, to call and send them forth into it, and to assist and succeed them in it. The request the disciples are directed to make is to put up this petition to bring together those God has called in their hearts in order to cultivate the great harvest. This calling of people is what we will now look at in chapter 10, where Jesus sends out the twelve.

I understand we are racing through these verses, but stay with me, this is good stuff. We are getting there. In chapter 10 verse 1 Jesus is calling his twelve disciples, and this is what it says, "*Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.*" This is Jesus preparing for that harvest we just talked about. He is gathering those in whom God has been preparing and is still preparing, and I want to pick up on this later again.

The next verses 2 & 3 names the twelve disciples who Jesus chose to follow him, his closest apostles. Love em or hate them, these are the individuals Jesus chose to follow him and directed to spread the good news across the world. Jesus' ministry on Earth as we learned above was limited geographically. Jesus separated his apostles from himself, and scattered them among the people. The masses of the people of Galilee had been deeply stirred by the teaching and miracles of Jesus, but they knew not as yet what direction was to be given to this popular movement. They were in a bewildered state, like shepherdless sheep, scattered over the hills and faint from running. The twelve were to assist him as under-shepherds in gathering these sheep.



The next verses is what is most interesting to me. Jesus gives them very specific instructions to avoid the town of the Gentiles and Samaritans, instead finding the lost sheep of Israel. Again that familiar imagery of lost sheep needing a shepherd. Verses 7 & 8 gives the order that "As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give." This is Jesus giving the world and the apostles a taster of the power of the Holy Spirit and what true faith can have access too.

I understand that is a lot to get through church, but it is important for us to have a fundamental understanding of the text, in order to understand how these passages speak into the world today. I have drawn out three main thoughts from my time spent in reflection of these verses of scripture.

My first reflection is the imagery used throughout these verses, the sheep and the shepherd. My question to you this morning is this, do you recognise the shepherds voice? Scripture often uses this imagery of sheep to describe people, and the shepherd being Jesus. The thing with sheep is they recognise the voice of their shepherd. They know it is a voice of safety. I heard this fascinating story about shepherds who swapped flocks, and when the shepherd called out to the flock that didn't know their voice, they didn't react. They didn't recognise the voice! The problem in the world today is there are so many voices that speak into our life which can drown out the voice of the shepherd. A sad truth is if we sometimes fail to listen to the voice of the shepherd. We let the voice of politics, the voice of family, the voice of doubt, the voice of commercialism, the voice of reality tv, the voice of online followings, speak over the voice of God. If we fail to listen to God, how do we then recognise it is him? What I am alluding to church is, don't let the voices of the world, drown out the voice of God. Spend time listening to his still small voice. Learn to recognise the tender voice of God.

This leads me into my second reflection, when we know the voice of the shepherd, we can recognise the call He places in our own lives. The harvest is plentiful church, there is a great harvest just out there, all God needs is those willing to step up and go. And I am talking to the whole church, but young people, this is a word for you. This is a call to action. All around the world

today, we are seeing people rising up to fight against racism and injustice which the world has let exist consciously and sub consciously for too long. Already, we are seeing that people's actions for change is having an impact all across the world. Young people, what call is God placed on your heart? Each and every Christian has a call in their life. A phrase that I encourage my young people with is: "there are no bench warmer Christians."

We are all called to be participants in Gods Kingdom building work. In the book of Ephesians 4:11 it spells out just a few of the ways Jesus calls people, be it apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers. These are all important roles which the church needs. What has God placed in your heart. Pray about it, seek it and live it!

My last reflection for us to think about from these verses is, God has given you all that you need by His Spirit. That same power that Jesus gave to the disciples, to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. We have access to it. We recently celebrated Pentecost, when the disciples first experienced the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church. Church, we have access to that same power. That same Spirit dwells within us. And here is the amazing thing church, that power is transformational, it is ground shaking and world changing. One of the most reassuring things for me during lockdown, is I know I may be limited by where I can go, but the Spirit of God is not. I may not be allowed to travel to my friends home or visit my family, but the Holy Spirit can. The Holy Spirit is not limited by the rules of lockdown, it is not affected by Covid-19.

God is on the move church.

If we are willing to listen to him, we will hear His call to action, to get ready for the great Harvest that He has been preparing by his Holy Spirit at work. I just have one question, will you answer the call?