



COMPASSION

Small group questions

Matthew 9:35-38 – Compassion for the lost

Leaders – if the questions make no sense or you don't know the answer – please contact the preacher!

1. Life in 2017 – how has it become all-consuming?
2. Is there anything from the sermon or passage you didn't understand? Or something that stood out for you in a new way?
3. In v35 we are told that when Jesus went through all the towns and villages, he taught in their synagogues, *preaching the good news of the kingdom*. What do you think that 'good news' was? (And what was the sign of that?)

Jesus identifies the problem – people were like sheep without a shepherd

4. What is the reality for people without a shepherd?
5. Is this how we see those around us now? How can we better grasp this reality? How can we begin to see people around as they really are?

Jesus reacts – he had compassion on them

6. What was the nature of Jesus' compassion for them?
7. How will we come to share Jesus' compassion?
8. How would it change the way we live if we really began to understand the very real need of those who don't yet believe?

Jesus identifies the challenge – plentiful harvest, but few workers

9. What does Jesus actually mean by 'the harvest' and that there are 'few workers'? What kind of 'workers' does he have in mind?

Jesus urges the solution – ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers

10. Do you think that as a church we are good at asking the Lord to send more workers?
11. How can we deepen and increase our prayer life together? (Clue: it won't happen by Mark making people feel guilty for not praying... but it will happen as we begin to have _____??)
12. What will you take away from this sermon in our compassion series?

Date: 08 October 2017
Services: 730am, 930am
Series: Compassion
Passage: Matthew 9:35-38
Title: *Compassion for the lost*
Outline: Jesus identifies the problem
Jesus reacts
Jesus identifies the challenge
Jesus urges the solution

IT'S ALL CONSUMING

- Life in 2017 – exhausting, frustrating, irritating.
- Insufficient time for family, exercise, recreation, relaxation.
- Family members need to be somewhere, doing something, entertained.
- We're working longer hours to keep up, to ensure a future... but the NOW is slipping away.
- **Seniors** – life is often all consuming – next round of medical appointments, tests and physio, trying to make sure you can stay in your own home, keep driving, manage the house, pay the bills, look after the grandchildren when required, and have the occasional game of bowls or golf.
- **Baby boomers** – Hugh Mackay – *Advance Australia Where...* can't afford to retire partly because they've been borrowing and spending their way through middle age, and partly because they associate retirement with sitting on the balcony with a rocking chair and they rather see themselves as perpetually young. They want to continue to feel valued and useful, want to make a contribution to society.

So life for them is also **all consuming** – paying off the debt of the early years, trying to maintain an image of themselves... often caught between looking after young children and elderly parents.

- **The options generation** – the options generation won't commit to anything. Won't RSVP... // The answer to 'can you be here?' – is never YES – but 'that *should* be OK' Why? Because everything is....

...**subject to a better offer**. And the offers come thick and fast thanks to SMS or social media. So you could be heading off to the movies at 7pm with Mary, Naomi and Andrew... but by 7.15pm you're actually off in to see a band with Richard, Kate and Anne! ///

- Life is all-consuming... no matter what the age, stage, school, uni, job, no job...
- Sad – all-consuming – all too often – with the things of **this** world.
- ...with things that a 1000 years from now – won't matter; will seem trivial... irrelevant... //
- And while today – we in the west may be consumed with how we'll pay the mortgage or for the overseas trip... for many people in other places – both here and overseas – their life is all-consumed with how they will actually **feed** their family tonight... or how they'll get **clean water**, or where they'll **sleep** or how they'll keep **warm**, or how they'll get **medicine**, or how they'll keep clear of the **bombs** and **fighting** going on all around them!!! ///
- We need some perspective don't we!! ///
- Some perspective on what is important – on what really matters... perspective to help us sort through the mess of our lives... the mess of society... ///
- If Noosa council sent round a survey today asking what you considered was the greatest need in our community, I wonder how you'd answer?
- Or if the government sent round a survey – not on changing marriage laws... as this that matter was going to solve anything... but on what you thought was the greatest need in Australian society...

- Noosa's greatest need? Not jobs or a better local council or activities for young people...
- It's not better roads, less roundabouts...
- It's not **more** development or **less** development...
- It's not even more **entertainment** or better **education** for young people... nor better **housing** and more help for the poor!
- **and Australia's** greatest need...? Not gas supplies or better energy prices or a better exchange rates... or a royal commission into the banks...
- **America's** greatest need? - is not better gun control
- **The UK's** greatest need is not a better Brexit strategy or a new prime minister...
- **Syria's** greatest need is not an end to the tribal warfare...
- Here's the issue... look with me at v36 – *When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*
- Jesus' compassion – for a crowd that is forever turning up. They keep coming up to Jesus. Various needs, all different backgrounds – very diverse group.
- Jesus doesn't notice the external things – like what people were wearing that day and where that meant they fit in with the demographic... He's not thinking of which generation people belong to...
- He sees things as they really are... He sees what's really happening...
- Let's have a look at what he sees...
- ...he sees people who were *harassed and helpless* – Harassed – a **violent** word... someone said as if skinned – cut badly – damaged and bleeding... attacked by odd wolf or bear or lion.
Helpless – thrown to the ground. Bruised, battered and in need and no one to look after them
- That's what people are like who have no shepherd....!
- No one watching over them. No one providing for them. No one leading them or feeding them. No one walking through the valley of the shadow of death with them....
- This is what people are like without Jesus the Good Shepherd.
- Many are damaged from sin and helpless.
- People feel like they have been torn apart.
- Jesus is not impressed by any façade or mask. He sees people for what they are – who they are. //
- He sees them and he feels compassion. //
- ...for they are like sheep without a shepherd - like sheep without a shepherd. Which means they were people in very great danger – without the protection, the care, the leadership of a shepherd – think Middle Eastern shepherd with their flock of 30-40 sheep – the shepherd knowing each by name... – sheep wouldn't last longer than 24 hours without a shepherd... /// That is how he saw the crowd.
- do you know this isn't the first time the Scriptures mention the plight of people as *sheep without a shepherd*?
- The prophets foresaw it and the Lord through Ezekiel criticised Israel's leaders for failing to tend the flock.
- *The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?' Ezekiel 34*

- And this is what Jesus identifies again now - some 500 years later.... The leaders have abandoned the flock - and the flock is in danger - harassed and helpless!!
- Jesus' reaction?
- **compassion**.
- And the word used here is an unusual and remarkable word - comes originally from the guts - the lower bowel... then it came to mean the area when strong emotions are felt - churning - anger or jealousy...
- Strong emotions.
- It was never used of the Greek gods - they were unlikely to feel *anything* - they certainly weren't stirred by human suffering!
- But it's used of Jesus - in fact ONLY of Jesus or by Jesus in the NT - to indicate that **he's deeply disturbed in his guts with love and pity** - and this emotion - this **compassion** is one that will always lead to **action**.
- Jesus uses it in his stories - eg Good Samaritan - Prodigal Son - the father had compassion on his son.
- Always an *active* thing.
- This is what leads him to step out of heaven - not considering equality with God something to cling on to and taking the nature of a servant... - he sees our need /// and he comes down to shepherd us and to lay down his life as the Good shepherd for his sheep.
- Jesus feels this gut-wrenching emotion of love and pity and mercy.
- ...because here were harassed and helpless people - bruised and broken... without direction or purpose, without nourishment, without protection... lost and lonely. //
- And that is how Jesus sees the people of Noosa... those who don't him.... Those who have yet to meet him.... the people you catch the bus with, your next door neighbours, the others in your village...., the people you work with, study with; shop with up at the Junction or out at the Civic or down at the Plaza...
- The people at work, those at school, those at UNI, those in your club...
- That is the reality he sees.
- We look at them and see mostly well-to-do, content people, going about their work... doing the best they can for their families, making provision for the future.... Going on holidays, taking their overseas trips... all looks pretty fine...
- But the reality is different... if they do not know the Lord Jesus...
- And I'm asking you this morning - to see those people as **Jesus** sees them... *harassed and helpless - like sheep without a shepherd*...
- Lots of needs - yes
- But - the **greatest** of needs? - is Jesus - Jesus as their shepherd - their ruler - where all their needs will be met. ///
- And I want to ask you... Do you feel *any* of Jesus' compassion?
- Do you stroll down Hastings St and - think - harassed and helpless - not because of the toddler giving their parents a hard time... but because they are sheep without a shepherd?
- Do you feel compassion for those at the supermarket - not because their trolley won't work or because they're having trouble with the self serve - but because they are sheep without a shepherd?
- Do you feel compassion for those as Lions or Rotary or View club or Probus or book club or bowls... **because they are sheep without a shepherd?** //

- Do you believe they're missing out because they don't know Jesus?
- Do you believe they've missed the point of life?
- Do you believe they're missing forgiveness?
- Do you believe they are in eternal danger if they don't know Jesus?
- Do you see them as harassed and helpless?
- The Lord's NOT their shepherd... and they lack - everything of significance... They walk through the valley of the shadow of death alone!

Goodness and mercy does NOT follow them all the day of their life... and they will NOT dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

- **Do you feel compassion for them???** ////
- Well - what's the answer??
- Look with me at v37 then *Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few"*
- They were like sheep without a shepherd... Answer - **we need shepherds**... under-shepherds of the great and good Shepherd Jesus!
- And I don't think this just means paid professional ministers...
- I think it means people like you and me - ready to care and shepherd and teach and love - and guide people to Jesus the Great Shepherd!!
- But there are very few workers - very few workers for the harvest - it's under-resourced... there is a great need for people to work among broken damaged shepherd-less people... massive need.
- So what's the answer - recruitment drives...?
- Bright shiny ads on TV?
- Training programmes?
- Attractive remuneration packages??
- No - none of that
- the answer surprises us... the first answer - the **most important answer** to the very great need... is... to: (look with me v38)
- *"Ask" - "ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field."*
- **Huge job. / Tiny workforce. / So pray. //**
- You might say "hang on Mark - surely there's something **practical** we can do!?"
- But there's nothing more practical than prayer! It is the power of the powerless.
- Jesus says... there's work to be done - it's urgent work, vital work, eternal work.
- Therefore: **Pray.**
- He is **commanding** us to **pray** - regularly.
- He's the **Lord** of the **harvest**.
- He's in **charge**. It's **his** field. **His** harvest. **His** work.
- So we ask **him** who is in charge - **please send out workers... !**
- The great mission of sending people out starts with **prayer!**
- Mission starts with - prayer and prayer meetings.

- Dick Lucas – lunch time meetings at St Helen’s in the city – Tuesday – only started after some men from that church had been meeting and praying for 7 years!
- If we have compassion for the harassed and helpless of Noosa, we need to pray.
- If we want to see hundred and thousands of people come into the kingdom – we need to pray.
- The call to pray – is more important than **strategy meetings** and **fund raising**... – more important than the **buildings** we’ve built and celebrated – than Vision 2020....
- **All of us are to pray.**
- Do you think we pray enough here in this church?
- If you’ve caught a glimpse of the reality that Jesus speaks about here – **you will begin to pray.**
- Our job is to pray..... to pray with urgency and kind of desperation... the word translated ‘ask’ is closer to ‘beg’!
- We’re all to do the hard work of prayer.
- Pray for your friends. Family. That God would raise up women and men to work among them.
- Let’s pray that God would raise up people and send them out.
- And of course – it is a **dangerous** prayer – because you might just be the answer to your own prayer...
- Wouldn’t it be great if he sent out many of **us**...!
- He may – or may not – **send** you.
- He may – or may not – **call** you to this work...
- Noosa – somewhere else in Australia – Europe – Africa...
- (I want you to notice by the way, what Jesus does in the passage next? – sends out the 12 disciples into the field...!) ///
- But here is a call this morning to lift our eyes...
To lift them from **ourselves** and our own little **worlds** we often inhabit...
...to lift our eyes out of our **books** and our **travel brochures** and our **devices** for a moment...
to lift our eyes even from our own **challenges** and **problems** and **anxieties**
and to see around us – people – **living, breathing, real people**.... Who’s greatest need is to be **cared for, loved, provided for, led by, fed** by Jesus the Good Shepherd.... And under him – by an under-shepherd of some description – to be **guided – shepherded – nurtured** – towards him.
- And then when we’ve lifted our eyes... to see them... and our eyes are opened to the reality of their situation – that they are harassed and helpless – lost and dying... then friends – surely – if we have understood that – and understood Jesus’ compassion – his gut-wrenching compassion for them....
- ...then surely – we will begin to feel a **gut-wrenching compassion of our own!!! //**
- And then when we feel **that**... then perhaps – with a passion and a fervour we’ve not felt before – we’ll beg the Lord of the harvest – to send more workers...
- Please Father – send more people into our communities of Noosa – who can gossip the gospel like we’ve learnt in our recent seminars... who know how to answer people – who can talk about Jesus – lovingly – naturally – urgently – send more workers.
- Please Lord – also send more **paid** workers – to replace those we’re losing – and generously provide the funds to do so...

- Please Lord – send more workers into this very ripe and ready harvest field – right here in Noosa – and around the nation – and around the globe!!

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."