

# Lord of Harvest

---

(Matthew 9:35-38)

## I. Introduction

- A. There's an old story about an older preacher visiting a large metropolitan church
  - 1. He asks the young preacher, "*Is there a place I can rest between services?*"
    - a. The younger preachers replied, "*Well, I never get tired when I preach!*"
    - b. Reply, "*If someone preaches and someone listens, someone gets tired!*"
  - 2. I don't know why, but preaching is exhausting (*not as much as a real job...*)
    - a. Years, we'd go to Millard and Clarita's Sunday evening after church
    - b. Everyone had a great time—and I'd fall asleep (*somebody gets tired*)
- B. In our daily reading for Wednesday, Jesus has just finished Sermon on Mount
  - 1. In Matthew, the Sermon on Mount marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry
    - a. In **Matthew 4**, Jesus is baptized, tempted in desert, and calls apostles
    - b. There is a very brief summary of Jesus teaching and healing in Galilee
    - c. But it's with Sermon on the Mount the ministry of Jesus really begins
  - 2. So Jesus doesn't get time to rest once this sermon is delivered (**Matt 8:1**)  
*When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him.*
    - a. Jesus hits ground running after Sermon on Mt— *no nap in front of TV*
    - b. It's interesting the **kinds of people** who come to Jesus as he begins

## II. Those Who Seek Jesus

- A. Jesus is first approached by a man suffering from leprosy (**Matt 8:2**)  
*Man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean"*
  - 1. **Irony:** There is this huge pressing crowd around Jesus— *a leper shows up!*
    - a. Lepers didn't generally show up in the middle of a large crowd
      - 1) Lepers had to shout their presence to warn others (**Lev 13:45**)
      - 2) Good way to get to the head of the line; might try that in Wal-Mart!
    - b. This man must be desperate to get to Jesus—Jesus is his only hope
  - 2. Jesus here touches the leper— maybe first contact he had since he got sick
    - a. One thing you don't do is touch lepers— but Jesus touches the leper
    - b. He also heals the leper—happens only twice in OT (*Miriam and Jesus*)
  - 3. You can tell right from the beginning that Jesus is no average rabbi

B. Jesus is approached by another leper of sorts— Roman Centurion (**Matt 8:5**)

*When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help.*

1. Centurion was from Capernaum, which was now Jesus' home (**Matt 4:13**)

a. A centurion was an officer in the Roman army who commanded 100 men

1) There were ranks of centurions (*much like our Lieutenant - Colonel*)

2) But even the junior centurions were Roman; this man is not a Jew

3) Luke explains he contacted Jesus thru Jewish officials (**Luke 7:3**)

b. As a Roman, he was even more untouchable than was the leper

1) Somehow he heard about Jesus; somehow he came to some faith

2) Maybe it's an act of desperation; maybe he saw something (Calvin)

*This officer had been healed by God before his servant was healed by Jesus*

2. Jesus offers to go with the Centurion, but the officer declines (**Matt 8:8-9**)

*Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.*

a. Later in the chapter, the apostles are "amazed" Jesus calms storm (**8:27**)

1) His mother and father were amazed at him in the Temple at age 12

2) The crowd were amazed, Pilate was amazed, Pharisees were amazed

3) Jesus was amazed at the LACK of faith in Nazareth in **Mark 6:2**

b. Here Jesus is amazed that this non-Jew expressed such great faith (**8:10**)

*I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith*

1) Almost anticlimactic— servant was healed "at that very hour" (**8:13**)

2) Maybe the great miracle in this story is the Centurion's faith!

c. It's easy to see why church tradition connects the Centurion to Cornelius

C. Skipping down a bit, Jesus calls a tax collector to be His apostle (**Matt 9:9**)

*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. "*

1. It might have been a toss-up who is the biggest outcast of the three

a. Matthew collected taxes from merchants selling goods in the marketplace.

1) Tax went to Rome (and Matthew) and was passed onto consumers

2) The more the tax, the more things cost in the marketplace.

b. Matthew was both a Roman sympathizer **and** why things cost so much!

c. You can see why "tax collectors and sinners" becomes a single phrase

2. The Pharisees questioned Jesus choice of dinner companions (**Matt 9:11**)  
*When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’*
  - a. The Pharisees were holy men who remained holy by avoiding sinners
  - b. Why would Jesus seek sinners out? *It was sinners that he came to heal*
    - 1) Jesus isn’t saying the Pharisees are so holy they have no need of Him
    - 2) He is saying He came to save all sinners, even those avoid by leaders
  - c. Episode of MASH has Frank Burns ballistic when N. Korean in surgery
    - 1) Burns says, *“This man is the enemy! We can’t operate on enemy!”*
    - 2) Hawkeye says, *“I’ll operate for 2 reasons; he sick and I’m a doctor!”*
  - d. Jesus tells Pharisees *“These guys are sick and I’m the Great Physician”*

**D. Point:** Who were the people Matthew depicts as being drawn to Jesus?

1. The last people you’d expect were the first ones drawn to Christ!
  - a. A leper who outcast and unclean (*popular theology said it was his fault*)
  - b. Centurion who was part of the Roman force occupying the Holy Land
  - c. A tax collector who cooperated with Rome and got fat off good people
2. These folks saw a spiritual need and were drawn to Jesus like bees to honey
  - a. Pharisees felt no spiritual need—they didn’t know they needed a doctor
  - b. And so they not only rejected Jesus; they tried to turn others away as well
3. **Question:** Who will be drawn to Jesus today? *Maybe some of same folks?*
  - a. The people who came to Jesus were people whose lives were in a mess
    - 1) Respectable folk like the Pharisees kept Jesus at a distance
    - 2) Could the church be too busy today being respectable to be helpful?
  - b. Is the church like Jesus touching lepers, Centurion’s and tax collectors
  - c. Or are we more like the Pharisees that criticized Him for doing so?

**E.** Blake Hightower describes himself as a hard-drinking, hard-hearted man

1. He knew there was something missing, but he didn’t know what that was
  - a. Then Blake met Jesus in the person of *“the lawnmower man.”*
  - b. Maybe Blake reminds us of how we are to let people see Jesus today
2. Let’s let Blake tell his story about meeting Jesus (**Show Video**)

### III. Conclusion

- A. **Matthew 9** ends with Jesus continuing his ministry through Galilee
  - 1. He looked at the crowds and saw individual people with needs
  - 2. To Jesus They looked harried and helpless like sheep without shepherd
  - 3. Jesus invites us to join Him in the harvest (**Reading: Matt 9:35-38**)
- B. Does it sound like Jesus is asking for more foreign missionaries? He is.
  - 1. Does it sound like he is asking for more preachers and elders? He is.
  - 2. But you know what He may be asking for more than anything else?
    - a. More people like “*Lawnmower Man*” who show Jesus in daily life
    - b. People that are willing to point the lost sheep to the good shepherd
    - c. People willing to become Jesus in the lives of those who are lost
  - 3. You might not be up to missions in Uganda or relief work in Haiti
  - 4. But you can push a lawnmower and love someone till they see Jesus
- C. “*Lord of harvest, send forth reapers!*”