



Matthew 9

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Tape #8008
By Chuck Smith

The gospel according to Matthew chapter nine as we continue our journey through the Word of God.

Now Jesus had gone with his disciples to the other side of the sea of Galilee. The sea of Galilee at that upper end from the area of Gadara to Capernaum is a distance of about five miles. So it's not that long of a journey. When He was there at Gadara, the land of the Gadarenes, there met Him those two men who were possessed by evil spirits who lived in the tombs and the other gospels will give us more details concerning the deliverance of these men. The demons were cast out of the men and they went into a herd of swine that was nearby which stampeded down the cliff and on into the sea and were drowned. And the people from Gadara, the little village that is there, came out to meet Jesus and they besought Him that He would leave the area. He was declared a public nuisance. He was bad for business. And so Matthew takes up the account now of their leaving Gadara so,

He entered into a ship, (9:1)

Interesting for me to note that Jesus didn't force Himself upon the people who didn't want Him. And I think that it is wrong for us to try to force the Gospel down people's throat. I think that our task is to witness to people of what the Lord has done for us, but surely not to try to coerce or force them to receive our witness even. And Jesus, rather than arguing the point with them, debating with them, just got into the ship,

and he passed over, and came into his own city. (9:1)

Now Mark's gospel tells us that it was Capernaum, and that was the headquarters for the ministry of Jesus while He was here on the earth. More of the miracles and all were done in Capernaum than any other of the cities, most of the gospels are centered around the ministry of Jesus in Capernaum and the area of the Galilee. But by this time was already called His own city.

And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: (9:2)

And we have described this oriental disease to you, it is one that attacks the joints of the body causing a constriction, causing extreme pain and paralysis. Extremely painful, paralyzing and thus, this man was in some of the further stages because now he was in a bed, had to be carried, he could not walk, he was immobile. And so,

Jesus seeing their faith, (9:2)

Now faith is an interesting thing and we don't always know whose faith it is. Here Jesus sees their faith and no doubt, referring to the faith of the friends of this man who brought him to Jesus. The other gospels tell us that when they got to the house where Jesus was, it was so crowded they couldn't get in so they climbed up on the roof and removed some tiles and let the man by ropes down into the room where Jesus was. But "seeing their faith,"...now in a little bit we're going to see the healing of the woman who was hemorrhaging and in that case, it was her faith. Jesus commended her for her faith. When the blind men came to Jesus later on in the chapter, He will say to them, "According to your faith, be it done." Now with the case of the centurion last week, it was his faith. When we get to the daughter of the ruler of the Jews in the chapter here, surely it wasn't her faith, she was dead. And you wonder if it was just a sovereign work of Jesus.

Jesus will work in response to our faith and sometimes He will work even though there may be a lack of faith on our part. He is sovereign, and He can do His work either through our faith or apart from our faith, and I think that that is good because we are so anxious to exalt man and exalt ourselves that we would even brag about how much faith we have and encourage people to come that they might benefit from our faith. And draw attention to ourselves rather than to Jesus. I think that that's why in the early church they had the elders. If they're sick, call for the elders of the church and that way, no particular person is singled out for credit or for praise or for prominence, but "the prayer of faith," that is, of the elders, "will save the sick." The Lord is the one that gets the praise, the Lord is the one who is glorified through the work and that is the

way it should be. That no man or flesh should glory in His sight. So when He saw their faith,
[He] said to the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins be forgiven thee. (9:2)

As we mentioned this morning, I think there was probably three responses to that. The response of the friends who were up on the roof probably still holding on to the ropes, who were saying, No, no, no, Lord, that's not why we brought him here, to get his sins forgiven. We brought him here so he could get healed. We want him to be able to walk. We're not interested so much in the forgiveness of sins. We do read of the response of the scribes that were there, the orthodox religious people.

Certain of the scribes said within themselves, [That's blasphemy, or] This man blasphemeth. (9:3)

Another gospel tells us that they reasoned and reasoned correctly that no man can forgive sins, only God. Now through the gospels, Jesus is proving that He is God. It is true only God can forgive sins because sin is against God. It may affect me, your sin may affect me, it may be that you cheated me, that's a sin. It may affect me but the sin isn't against me, the sin is against God.

When David had committed his sin in taking Bathsheba and the whole story that you know, as he prayed for forgiveness, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions," he said, "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned and done this great evil in Thy sight."

"Who can forgive sins but God?" So their response was a negative response, and this is the beginning of the opposition against Jesus that will grow among the religious leaders until He will finally be hanging on a cross. This is the very beginning of the opposition. It's going to grow more intense as the days go by. But it begins with Jesus saying to this fellow, Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven. For the fellow himself, I believe it was a tremendous relief. The burden and the guilt of sin rolled away. I don't care if I ever walk, I'm forgiven. The joy of forgiveness and of knowing that I am at peace with God. I can fellowship with God, my sins are forgiven. Jesus addresses the thoughts of the scribes:

Knowing their thoughts He said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? (9:4)

They were accusing Him of blasphemy. "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"

For what is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise, and walk? (9:5)

And as we pointed out this morning, it's a lot easier to say, Your sins are forgiven, because no one can tell whether or not anything really happened. It's an inward work of the Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, and I can't look at you and say, Oh my, your sins are just gone. I may say that but I don't really know, I can't see what's in your heart. There may be evil still there in your heart and so I can't observe the sins going away.

But if you are cripple, and I say to you, Rise up out of the wheel chair and walk, then I have an observable experience that proves there is authority and power in my words if you rise up and walk. If you don't, then that's sort of proof that there is no authority or power in my words, they are just empty words. So Jesus is going to prove that His words are with power and they do have authority. And that's the purpose. But Jesus took care of the greatest need first. The greatest need was the forgiveness of sins.

Now it is quite possible that the man's illness was directly related to his sin. There is that possibility. And thus, in the forgiveness of his sins, there was that immediate kind of a healing that began to take place within. But the greatest need is the forgiveness of sins because that takes care of the eternal issues and whether he ever walks or not is not as important as his being forgiven of his sins that he might spend eternity in heaven with the Lord. Whatever your need is tonight, and you may have some physical need, financial need, or otherwise, but the greatest need that you have is the forgiveness of sins and until that issue is settled, everything else is secondary. Thy sins be forgiven, primary. But now to prove that I speak with authority, I speak with power, He said to this fellow,

That you might know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, [that My word is powerful, I speak with authority] (he said to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house. (9:6)

And he arose, and departed to his house. (9:7)

The words do have power. He does speak with authority. I can now see the fellow walking down the street who was once bound up with this crippling palsy and I realize He speaks with authority and power.

And when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and they glorified God, which had given such power unto men. (9:8)

So let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they glorify your Father, and

here is Jesus doing just that. As they see the good work, they glorified God.

And Jesus passed forth from there, and he saw a man, named Matthew, who was sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. (9:9)

Now Matthew was a tax collector. And they were not popular men. They were usually shysters. They had a certain quota that they had to give to the Roman government and anything they could collect over that quota became theirs. So you can see how it had... basic within the whole system the graft and corruption built in. Now Capernaum was one of the major cities on the route from Damascus to Egypt. And there were taxes for entering a city, there were taxes on the goods that you were carrying through a city, there were taxes on the number of wheels on the chariots, they were taxes for going over bridges, there were taxes for... they figured tax on everything. The Congress is getting there, and everything was taxed. And Matthew was sitting at the receipt of customs, or he was a custom agent, collecting the customs for the goods that were coming in or passing through Capernaum. And sitting there at the receipt of customs, Jesus just called to him to follow Me. "And he arose and followed him."

Now this was not the first time that Matthew had been exposed to Jesus. He probably had been with Jesus on different occasions. He was probably attracted and drawn to Jesus. But now Jesus is calling him into a full-time kind of a ministry. To leave your job, the job security of a tax collector, and follow Me.

Luke's gospel tells us that he then had a dinner with Jesus as the guest, and he invited all of the other tax collectors in town, and the sinners. Matthew's gospel doesn't tell us where the dinner, whose house it was at, but in the next verse,

It came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, (9:10)

[Luke tells us it was Matthew's house, a going away party for Matthew as far as his public office and job was concerned,]

behold, many publicans

[or tax collectors, they were called publicans because they were public officers]

and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. (9:10)

We pointed out that opposition to Jesus had begun with the declaration to this fellow, "Your sins are forgiven." Now continued opposition to Jesus,

For when the Pharisees saw it, (9:11)

[that is, they saw Jesus sitting there with these publicans and sinners]

they said unto his disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners? (9:11)

He's associating with the wrong crowd. And they were finding fault with Him because He was associating with the publicans and the sinners. The publicans or the tax collectors were especially hated in Israel because they were considered quislings, in cooperation with the Roman government. And they were collecting the taxes for Rome, thus they were especially despised. But among the orthodox religious people of the day, the Pharisees and scribes, they would not so much as sit down and eat with the sinner because that would constitute to them a defilement; because when you ate in those days, it was not like a dinner today. You think of eating in a house and the table is set, and you got linen, napkins, and you got all of your table service, and the china and all of that, that isn't the way it was.

First of all, the table was very low, just above the floor level and you would lie around and eat. And there was the common bread, the loaf of bread and they didn't have it all sliced and devitalized like our bread today, it was good wholesome bread and tough when you pull it apart and you just pass the loaf around and just pull off a piece of bread. You didn't have knives, forks, and spoons, you just would take the bread and dip it in the various sauces. You dip it in the soup that was in the middle of the table. They didn't have the kind of rules that you only dip it once. So, eating was sort of a sloppy task. Sort of a mixture of touching the same food, and eating together from the same bowls, from the same dishes. And in their minds, it connoted a uniting of lives because we are eating from the common bowl of soup, we are eating from the common loaf of bread. We're dipping in the same sauces. If you were eating meat, you just grab hold of the meat and pull off chunks of meat.

We had this experience over in Tonga when we went over there to visit in Tonga and the king was having his feast and we were out there on the grass under these little thatched places that they had prepared

the meals, and the pig was there in the center and all of the food and so forth around it, no plates, no napkins, and so you just grab hold and pull off a part of the meat or whatever, greasy in your hands and I wasn't used to that kind of eating. And with no napkins to wipe it off, and you had to wear your nice clothes and I didn't have anything to wipe my hands on. Sort of a tough situation. But that's the way they ate. They would take a piece of bread at the end of the meal and they would wipe all the grease off with the piece of bread at the end of the meal, and then they'd toss it to the little puppies that were around.

And that's where they got the thing where the woman said to Jesus, "But the little puppies eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table," talking about that last piece of bread that was used to wash or to wipe your hands off with and tossed to the dogs. But they thought of this as becoming one with the other person because that bread that I'm eating, you're eating; and it's becoming a part of me, it's becoming a part of you so in a mystic sense, we're becoming a part of each other. Being nourished by the same bread, by the same soup, by the same sauces. So they would never eat with sinners because they didn't want to be associated or become one with sinners. And here's Jesus eating with them. And so they begin to criticize Him because He is eating with these publicans and with these sinners. They questioned His disciples.

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, [giving the reason,] They that are whole don't need a physician, but those that are sick. (9:12)

Jesus came to heal. Those that were whole, those that were well, they didn't need a physician. And so He was going where the sick ones were, mixing with them, they were the ones who were needing the physician.

But go and learn what that means, (9:13)

[and so He gave them a scripture out of Hosea 6:6,]

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: (9:13)

[and He said, Learn what that means, where God said I will have mercy and not sacrifice. God spoke about the importance of forgiveness rather than burnt offerings. God wasn't as interested in the religious observances as He was the heart of compassion and mercy towards others. Jesus said, Learn what that means. For God said to Israel, I don't want your sacrifices, I want you to be merciful. I don't want your burnt offerings, He's interested in your attitude of your heart. And so Jesus challenges them to go and learn what that means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

for [Jesus said] I am not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance. (9:13)

He didn't come to reform. He came to reach the sinners, to call them to repentance. Now,

There came to him the disciples of John, and they said, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples don't fast? (9:14)

They were questioning Jesus. We're John's disciples and we're fasting all the time. And the Pharisees are always fasting, your disciples don't fast, how come?

And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then shall they fast. (9:15)

As long as I'm here, as long as I'm with them, not a time for mourning, a rejoicing. Now the children of the bridechamber, in those days when a couple got married, they didn't go on a honeymoon. But they had open house for one week. And their friends would drop in and always food and always party atmosphere and those that would come and would party were called the children of the bridechamber. They were joining in the festivities. The bride and the groom were called king and queen for the week. And it was a time of celebration. And so while Jesus is here, it's time for celebration. The time will come, bridegroom will be taken and then they will fast.

And now Jesus shows the problems of reformation. An old system that has become encased in its ways. It's hard to change, it's hard to bring something new, it's hard to be innovative against the old traditions, the old ways. And He's talking about, the question is Him breaking the traditions. He's eating with sinners and publicans. His disciples aren't fasting. He's breaking with the religious traditions of the time. And He said,

No man puts a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the tear is made worse. (9:16)

Now in those days, they didn't have sanforized shrunk clothes. And so if you had an old garment that had been washed many times, of course it had shrunk, all it's going to shrink. But if you have a patch that you put in to that old garment, of new cloth that hasn't been shrunk, the first time you wash it, that new cloth will shrink and it will tear all around the patch. And so your tear actually becomes worse. So you just don't do that. You don't put a new cloth patch on an old garment.

And neither do they put new wine into the old skins: (9:17)

[Now they would put their wine into these skins, these bottles that were made of skins, and the old skins would become hard and brittle. And if you would put the new wine in the hard and brittle skins, as it began to ferment and the gases form and it would begin to expand, it would burst the old leather, hardened leather skins. So you just didn't do that. You put it into the soft, new leather skins which were pliable and could expand with the gases that were created through the fermentation process. So, you don't put the new wine into the old skins,]

else the skins will break, and the wine will run out, and the skins will perish: but they put the new wine into new skins, and both are preserved. (9:17)

It's interesting and tragic how that throughout the history of the church, we see constantly new movements being raised up. Why? Because the old get hard and brittle. We begin to develop the traditions. And we get locked into traditions. And God wants to do a new work, but it doesn't fit into our traditions, we can't find that in our by-laws. And it's amazing how that we can get so structured and so traditional that there is no room for the movement of the Spirit.

So throughout church history, we have found that whenever God wants to inaugurate a new work, He doesn't really try to reform the old system but He just goes outside of it and begins something new. The new wine, He creates a new skin for the new wine. And it, tragically, doesn't take very long to develop the rigid systems that preclude any fresh moving of the Spirit of God. And that's sad.

There are always those who feel that they have a mission within some of the old skins. And they feel that if they are careful enough in how they pour the wine in, surely they can bring some new life without bursting the skin. I'm skilled, I know how to do it, I've got a theory.

I've talked with many of the pastors of the church of England which is definitely an old skin which is rapidly bursting. It's just about gone, only two percent of the people in England go to church now. There are more Moslems than Christians in England. And these fellows are opposed to a lot of the traditions that were developed 200 years ago, 300 years ago, and they see the deadness and they're appalled at the things that are happening within the church of England; the ordaining of homosexuals and all of these, they're appalled at all of that. And I say, But why do you stick with it? Why not get out and start something new? Well, we feel that we have this... and they really don't know why they stick with it, except there is a certain amount of job security and all with the thing, but it's long dead. And God, when He wants to do a work, so often just begins something new apart from the old systems.

We see that here at Calvary Chapel, God just wanted to do a new work and the old skins couldn't handle it. They couldn't handle a bunch of hippie kids with long hair and granny glasses and the whole thing, and so God raised up a new skin where we could take these kids in and love them and teach them the Word of God and all. But let us beware lest we become rigid. I think God is just keeping me around to just guard against the rigid positions that churches usually get into, lose their flexibility and can no longer stay current with what's happening in the world. Blessed are the flexible, they shall not be broken.

Now while he was speaking these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, (9:18)

[Now we are told in the other gospel that the man's name is Jairus, and he is a ruler of the synagogue there in Capernaum. And he worshipped Jesus,]

saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay your hand upon her, and she shall live. (9:18)

Now here is an expression of great faith: "Lord, my daughter is dead, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." This man is a ruler of the synagogue. It is his task to make sure that the Mosaic laws and the traditions are kept. But it's amazing, when your little daughter is dead or dying, that in desperation you'll break with tradition and you'll seek Jesus and seek the help of Jesus. Doesn't matter what the others

say, my little daughter is dead and she's more important, she's twelve years old, she was the only child that he had. The love and the light of his life.

And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. (9:19)

And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood

[or she was hemorrhaging, and this condition had been going on for]

twelve years, and she came up behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: (9:20)

For she had said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. (9:21)

Twelve years, now a woman was considered unclean when she was in her menstrual period. And she would sit on a bed or lie in a bed, that bed would be considered unclean. Anybody who sat upon it would be looked upon as unclean. Whatever she touched would be unclean during this menstrual period. And here is this woman who has been in this condition for twelve years. If anybody touched her, they would be unclean. Now there was a crowd around Jesus, the other gospels say they were thronging Him. There was a pushing, shoving, had they known that this woman was in the crowd, she would have been in trouble. With her condition and being unclean with a crowd pushing and shoving and touching her, they would be unclean, so she—though in her mind had said, I know that if I could just touch the hem, a part of the garment with a little tassel on it, if I could just touch that, I would be healed. Now she had established a point of contact for the releasing of faith. And I think that there is a certain value to that. I think that so many times our faith is sort of passive; Oh I know the Lord can do it, yes, I believe that God has the power to do it, Oh, I do believe that, but we never activate the faith. We never say, I know the Lord is going to do it now. Or setting a time, I know that the Lord is going to do it, and setting a place where I will release that faith, activate the faith, she had done that, she had set a point of contact. The moment I touch the hem of His garment, I know that I'm going to be healed. I know the blood is going to stop flowing.

And so she made her way through the crowd. Got close to Jesus, touched the hem of His garment, and immediately the issue of blood ceased.

Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. (9:22)

Just the healing, she instigated, she was the pursuer of Jesus, came and just touched.

And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, (9:23)

When someone died, they would hire minstrels; basically, they were flute players. They could make such a wailing noise with the flutes that the Roman government limited them to ten. You could never have more than ten flute players because they could make such a wailing noise of those things. And somehow they felt that the more noise, it expressed the more grief. Then they also had professional wailers. Women who were extremely skillful in wailing. And they would hire the wailers to come in, and they would go into this sing-song type of wailing with these flutes screeching, and it was a noisy thing that was going on. It would announce to the whole neighborhood that there was mourning and grief that was being experienced by the family as the result of the loss of one in the family.

Then there were the tearing of the clothes. You read, And he rent or he tore his clothes. Now there were some thirty-nine rules concerning the tearing of your clothes. You had to tear them over your heart, you had to tear them down to the skin, and the tear had to be big enough to get a fist through, those are a few of the rules, you could not sew it for two weeks, and then you would have to sew it very loosely so you could still see the skin and it wasn't until after a month that you could go ahead and really mend up the garment that you had torn. And they had all these kinds of foolish rules of just how the garment was to be torn, where it was to be torn, and the whole bit. But again, it was a sign of grief, the ripping of the clothes was a sign of grief, exposing of my heart, my heart is breaking and grieving in on you. Rip and had to rip it over your heart. So they were all there, the rippers, the wailers, and the flautists. And when Jesus came in to the ruler's house, he saw the minstrels, the people making a noise, and

He said unto them, Give place: [Cool it] for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. (9:24)

Interesting, again, now opposition developing. They start laughing at Him. Laughed Him to scorn. They turned on Him. After all, they'd been hired to come and do the wailing and He's going to put them out of a

job, and so, their wailing, it shows how deep it was because now they're laughing Him to scorn.

But when the people were put out, [He said, Get them out of here] he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. (9:25)

And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land. (9:26)

Other gospels will give us other interesting details and we'll get them when we get to the other gospels.

But when Jesus departed from there,

[Isn't this interesting, a day in the life of Jesus, busy man.]

two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. (9:27)

And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? And they said unto him, Yes, Lord. (9:28)

And He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. (9:29)

And their eyes were opened; and Jesus immediately charged them, saying, Don't let anybody know it. (9:30)

Keep it quiet. He didn't want any premature movement of the people to acclaim Him as the king and look in to Him to overthrow the Roman government.

But, when they were departed, they spread abroad his fame in all that country. (9:31)

As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man who was possessed with a devil. (9:32)

And when the devil was cast out, the dumb man spoke: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. (9:33)

This is something new. Cast out demons. He makes the mute to speak.

But the Pharisees

[Again, continued opposition from the Pharisees and it's growing.]

Now they're saying, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. (9:34)

And they're accusing now His work of being wrought through Satan. As we move on into chapter twelve, we will come upon this again, and then the warning by Jesus concerning the unpardonable sin. But it's starting and when we get there, we'll point out the progression of what is known as the unpardonable sin. Here it's beginning; attributing the works of Jesus now to Satan.

And Jesus went about all of the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. (9:35)

Excitement. Thrill. Multitudes coming. Multitudes being healed, being touched by the Lord.

But when he saw the multitudes, [great crowds] he was moved with compassion, because they fainted, (9:36)

[they would come from long distance, they were weak, they were fainting]

and they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. (9:36)

They weren't finding in the religious system what their souls were searching for. They were finding it in Jesus. For deep within the heart of man, there is a search for God. And unfortunately, many religious systems keep men from God rather than bring men to God. So many times, you hear preached the loyalty to a denomination. A loyalty to a church, rather than a loyalty to Jesus Christ. And it's almost as though we're in competition with some other church, rather than working together for the common good of the kingdom of God. He was moved with compassion. They were like sheep that were scattered. They didn't have a shepherd to watch over them, to lead them.

And he said to his disciples, The harvest is truly plenteous, but the labourers are few; (9:37)

And then He commanded them,

Pray ye therefore the Lord of harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. (9:38)

Here is a tremendous harvest. People are scattered, people are mixed up, people are confused. Confused concerning God, there's a hunger that is there, but they're confused. Confused many times by the religious systems. And Jesus said, "Pray the Lord of harvest will send forth labourers."

I believe that we are probably on the verge of another tremendous harvest. What is happening is phenomenal, I don't understand it. I'm standing back and watching in amazement, in wonder, as our Bible School is just growing by leaps and bounds. We have over 375 young people registered for this next

semester and that's from about forty two years ago. God is raising up labourers for the harvest. But not only do we have our Bible School at Twin Peaks, but we have over a hundred in the Extension school down in Vista. We have over a hundred in the Extension school in Fort Lauderdale. And again, over a hundred in the Extension school in Finger Lakes, New York. And God is raising up labourers, it's exciting. It just makes me wonder, What in the world is God preparing for? It's thrilling. Pray ye the Lord of harvest that He will raise up labourers. I do believe that the coming of the Lord is very, very close. We'll be talking about this on New Year's Eve as we look at the world and world conditions and we look at Bible prophecy. And I believe the coming of the Lord is very, very near. And I've always felt that before the Lord came, He was going to give one final strong witness to the world, one final opportunity for men to either accept or reject. And it looks to me like the Lord is gearing up for that final witness. And it's really exciting. We're living in exciting times. Pray that the Lord of harvest will raise up labourers into His harvest.

Father, we thank You for this beautiful insight that Matthew gives us into the life of Jesus and a day in the life of Jesus. And Lord, we have been attracted by Your love, and by Your works. We've been drawn to You by Your Spirit. And we thank You Lord that You have spoken words of comfort to our hearts, You've cleansed us from our sin, You've touched us, and we've touched You. And Lord, we feel Your love, and we thank You that You did not separate Yourself in an exclusive, little religious group but that You were willing to sit down with sinners in order to bring them to salvation. Thank You Lord that You sat with us and You brought us to salvation. And Lord, may we go out as Your representatives into this needy world with the good news of the kingdom of God. And Lord, give us we pray the same compassion that You have, when we go by the colleges, the high schools, and we see the multitude of young people like sheep without a shepherd, scattered, wandering aimlessly through life. Oh God, give us a real compassion for them that we might reach out to them with Your love, sharing Your truth. In Jesus' Name, Amen.