

The workers are few

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness.

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

It would be a good thing if we could be like Jesus. First in this passage, He sees people. It says He has compassion on them – one dictionary definition puts it like this:

a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

He sees them as ‘faint’ or ‘weak’ – from the original text. Not just physically maybe, from following Him around the country but spiritually.

He sees them as sheep without a shepherd. This links strongly to Old Testament writings which see Israel as having been abandoned by the shepherds – the scribes and priests.

Ezekiel 34

34 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?"

³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.

⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or healed those who are ill or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.

⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals.

⁶ My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

We need to see people in the same way – compassionately because they are like sheep without a shepherd – faint and weak from lack of knowledge and understanding about our God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Then He saw a great harvest and the need for people – us?! – to work in the fields.

The harvest doesn't depend on our techniques, but on God's sovereign purpose. He has planned a harvest and He calls us to get involved as reapers. Wow. He could have used angels but He chooses to ask us to be involved in working with Him, the Lord of the harvest.

So what next?

What can/should I be doing?

- See people like Jesus saw them and be compassionate
- Be prepared to tell anyone about your own faith and about Jesus, who He is and why you believe in Him.
- Pray for more workers
- Listen in case God is calling you to work somewhere you maybe hadn't considered