Jesus Demonstrates His Power
Matthew 9: 27-38
(The following text is taken from a sermon preached by Gil Rugh.)

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Matthew brings together in chapters 8 and 9 a collection of miracles performed by Christ which are offered by Matthew as the credentials for the Messiah. Matthew 9:27-38 concludes this section. Matthew’s goal is to present evidence that Christ is indeed the one spoken of in the Old Testament as the Messiah of Israel. He shows Christ’s sovereign power over physical afflictions, over nature and over the spirit world. Matthew shows that Christ is the One who the prophets said would bring redemption and healing—both physically and spiritually—to the nation Israel. Some of the miracles recorded by Matthew are reminders of a section in Isaiah’s prophecy in which Isaiah said that the blind would see and the speechless would speak when the Messiah comes and rules on the earth.

Chapter 35 of Isaiah’s prophecy is a messianic chapter that shows the sovereign power and authority of the Messiah over the elements of nature. He wrote in verses 1 and 2, “The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it will blossom profusely.” In addition to the changes in nature, Isaiah also indicates that those with physical afflictions will be healed because the curse will be lifted from humanity as well. “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah” (vs. 5,6).

In his efforts to provide proof that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, Matthew draws attention to two particular areas which Isaiah mentioned, the eyes of the blind being opened (v.5) and the tongue of the mute being enabled to speak (v.6). Matthew will then lay the responsibility on the Jews and their religious leaders to evaluate both the teachings and works of Christ to see if He fulfills the Old Testament prophecies and is, thus, the Messiah of Israel.

The two miracles in Matthew 9:27-34 are unique to the Gospel of Matthew. None of the other gospel writers record these miracles. Evidently they occurred on the same day as the two preceding miracles, the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage and the raising of the synagogue official’s daughter. Since these miracles all occurred on the same day, they are a reminder that there is no limit to the power of Jesus Christ. He is able to perform one miracle after another as a sovereign display of His limitless power and authority.

1. Jesus Addressed as Son of David

Matthew’s record of these miracles begins in verse 27: “As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David!’” These blind men had heard that Christ was in the area. As He left
the home of Jairus, the synagogue official whose daughter had just been restored to life, they came seeking Him out and began to follow Him down the road. As they cried out to Him for mercy, Jesus did not immediately respond.

As these men ask for Jesus to have mercy on them, they address Him as “Son of David.” This is the first time this title is used of Christ in the gospels. It occurs six other times in Matthew’s Gospel and is used as a synonym for the Messiah. The reference is not merely to Jesus as a descendent of David, but rather as the unique Son of David, the One who was prophesied to rule and reign in glory. These two blind men recognize Him as such.

The impact and significance of this statement is indicated by two other references to Jesus as “Son of David” in Matthew’s Gospel. The triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem just a few days before His crucifixion is recorded in Matthew 21:9, “The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!’” By saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” the people were proclaiming Him to be the Messiah.

The reaction of the Jewish leaders is recorded in verse 15. “But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they became indignant.” They recognized the full force of the political and messianic implications in the title ascribed to Christ.

Therefore, when these two blind men in Matthew 9 cried out to Christ for mercy and acknowledged Him as the “Son of David,” they were acknowledging their faith in Him as the Messiah of Israel. That is the reason they turned to Him for help. Since they would have been familiar with the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah 35, the act of crying out to Jesus in their blind condition was a clear indication that they acknowledged Him to be the person He claimed to be. They had come to grips with the hopelessness of their situation and had cried out for mercy.

2. Two Blind Men Healed

In their plea for mercy from Jesus Christ, they were not saying that they deserved His help or that He was obligated to heal them, but they were merely asking Him for mercy. It is interesting that Jesus did not respond immediately to their cry, but allowed them to follow Him on the road crying out for help. When He finally arrived at His destination, which was an anonymous house, He went into the house followed by the blind men. Matthew 9:28 describes the confrontation: “When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’” The confrontation is about the personal issue of their faith in Him.

Personal faith is not always the issue when a miracle occurs. In Matthew 8 when Jesus healed the demon-possessed men in the country of the Gadarenes, there is no indication that those men had faith in Christ, but He healed them anyway. In Matthew 9 Christ heals another demon-possessed man and there is no indication of personal faith. However, Jesus’ general pattern is to draw an individual’s attention to Him in connection with healing the individual. When He healed without an indication of faith, He frequently dealt with the issue of their relationship to Him after they were healed.

He asked the blind men in verse 28, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” When they replied affirmatively, they were acknowledging that none other than the Messiah of Israel could heal blind eyes. It is impossible to walk up to just anyone and ask them to have mercy on you and have your blinded eyes healed. He is drawing their attention to Him as a person.

There may be another reason why He waited to respond to them until after He went into the house. “Son of David” is a title with political overtones. Jesus did not want to stir up a political following at that time, so it may be that He waited to respond until He was in the more private setting of the home.

There was no great fanfare in Jesus’ actions. Verse 29 tells very simply, “Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘It shall be done to you according to your faith.’” They believed in Him, and their eyes were opened. It was just that simple. This is another indication of the miraculous power of Christ. On this particular day, He has already healed the
woman with the hemorrhage and raised a girl from the dead, yet there is no limit to His power in this miracle or to the number of people He can heal. His power is not about to run down.

Jesus touched their eyes and then they could see, but he gave them a strong warning. “And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them: ‘See that no one knows about this!’” (v.30). The word which is translated “sternly” is a strong word. They were not to tell anyone, but they immediately ran out and blabbed it everywhere.

Verse 31 gives their response: “But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout all that land.” By going out and announcing it to everyone, they increased the frenzy of the people in the region, which will make it more difficult for Him to carry on His ministry. It will intensify the opposition. He is concerned that the opposition must build to the climax of events at the crucifixion according to God’s timetable.

It is easy to appreciate the response of these men. If you had been blind and then were healed by Jesus and He said to you, “Go out and tell no one,” that would really put the pressure on. It is interesting to see that Jesus deals differently with different people. When Jesus healed the demon-possessed men at the end of Matthew 8, Jesus told the man from whom He had cast the demon to go back to his own country and tell his own people what great things the Lord had done for him and how He had had mercy on him. But now He tells the men who have had their sight restored not to tell anyone. This shows the purposes of God at work. These were different places and different situations. In the earlier example, Jesus was leaving the area. In this instance, He is back at Capernaum, His home region. He is concerned to keep down the enthusiasm of the crowds. He does not want a crowd reaction that will promote Him as Messiah, because they have not realized who He is in His person.

3. A Dumb Man Healed

After recording the highlights of this miracle, Matthew immediately moves on to another miracle. “As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him” (v.32). This man is unable to speak as a result of the demon that indwells his body.

It is obvious that Jesus cast out the demon from this man because of verse 33, “After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, ‘Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.’” As a result of this miracle, the multitudes are amazed. This is a significant event since nothing like this has ever happened before in Israel. First, it tells of the greatness of the power of Christ. Nobody questioned the validity of the miracle which was performed. Second, it tells something about the whole activity of demon possession.

The response of the religious leaders was to say that the power came from the demons. “But the Pharisees were saying, ‘He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons’” (v.34).

4. The Manifestation of Demons

While studying Matthew 9:27-38, I spent some time considering the different miracles where demon-possessed people are described. I was interested in determining the manifestation of their demon possession. My conclusion is that there seems to be no particular relationship between demon possession and physical illness. Sometimes when a demon inhabits a body, it results in physical affliction, such as the inability to speak, blindness or deafness. Sometimes the inability to speak, blindness or deafness is a physical problem only, not related at all to demon possession. There is no indication that the men who were recorded to be demon-possessed at the end of Matthew 8 could not speak. However, the demon-possessed man in Matthew 9 could not speak. Therefore, there seems to be no pattern in the relationship between demon possession and physical illness.

The reason I bring this to your attention is the need to be careful in making associations between these events. Sometimes people conclude that if someone is insane or if someone has a physical affliction, the insanity or other affliction indicates that he is demon-possessed. These situations must be evaluated as revealed in light of Scripture, and there is no pattern established to indicate such conclusions. This makes it clear that you cannot look at a person with an affliction and conclude that his affliction is the work of a demon.

Manifestation of demon possession in this way is unique to the time when Jesus Christ was on the earth. The casting
out of demons was not a part of the prophetic ministry of the Old Testament even though the prophets were men who represented God. Casting out demons is not a pattern until the time of Christ.

Neither is casting out demons a pattern after the epistles. Paul does not write to tell the Ephesians how to cast out demons and take care of problems in that way. He did not indicate that he had left Epaphroditus at Miletus sick because he had a demon. The manifestation of demonic activity by demons possessing people seems to have been unique to the time when Jesus Christ was personally present on the earth. It will again be a phenomenon in connection with the Second Coming of Christ to earth, particularly in the last three and a half years of the seven-year Tribulation.

Demons are very active and prevalent today, but I do not believe that there is the same recognition of them and openness of their activity as in the time when Jesus Christ was on the earth. I am not running around looking for demons, though I expect that they are at work in every place. I expect that they are keeping people distracted from the Word of God as I teach, blinding the minds of the unbelieving so they do not hear and believe the gospel of Christ. There is no question about that. But as far as recognizing their activity in special ways, we do not see that today, at least not in our society in this country.

The power of the gospel is God’s cure for demonic activity, but in Matthew 9 Christ shows that He has power over the demon world. Without fanfare, the demon is cast out and this man is free to speak. It is not explained why the demon manifested his presence in this man by making him unable to speak, but being demon-possessed and mute are related issues in this case. When the demon is cast out, the man is freed to speak. When demons do indwell a person, it seems that they manifest their presence with some kind of affliction. Yet many people have physical afflictions which are not the result of demons, but rather are simply the result of the presence of sin in the world because of the fall.

5. The Response of Religious Leaders

Do not overlook the reaction of the religious leaders in Israel to this event. The Pharisees were saying that He cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. This is a very important incident which will be developed more fully in considering the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit later in the Gospel of Matthew. But these religious leaders have the Son of God, Himself, present in their midst doing miraculous things in the power of the Spirit of God, and they evaluate it as the work of the Devil. They have taken the work of God and completely reversed it, crediting it to the Devil. They are saying that the Son of God is operating under the power of Satan. There can be no greater blindness and no greater obstinacy than to credit the work of God to the Devil in the face of full revelation and light.

It is important to see that these religious leaders do not deny the reality of the miracle. That denial waited for the blind people of more recent days who deny even the reality of the miracles performed. These religious leaders acknowledge that a great miracle has been done, but they just do not want to have to accept the person of Christ.

The Pharisees were responsible as religious leaders to evaluate the person of Christ, His teaching and His miracles in light of the Old Testament prophecies to see if He was indeed the Messiah. They failed in that responsibility by their refusal to consider the evidence. They did not consider the fact that a mighty miracle had occurred. They did not consider what Christ taught. They did not consider whether the events fit that which was prophesied by the Old Testament. They simply rejected it all.

Peter and John performed a miracle in Acts 4, the healing of a lame man at the temple. Because of this, Peter and John were arrested and brought before the ruling body of Israel. After the rulers talked to them, the two disciples testified regarding the power of Christ, and the rulers could say nothing against them. “And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply” (Acts 4:14). The man who was miraculously healed testified that it was the result of the power of Christ. What could the religious leaders say? The evidence was irrefutable.

Since a great miracle had occurred and could not be denied, the rulers were in a dilemma. “But when they had ordered them to go aside out of the Council, they began to confer with one another, saying, ‘What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it’” (vs. 15,16). Their decision is recorded in verse 17: “But in order that it may not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any man in this name.”
These men are not open to consider the evidence. Their only concern is that the gospel of Jesus Christ not spread and cut into their religious convictions and following.

The pattern of Satan does not change. The religious leaders are usually the most obstinate in their opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then the people who follow them are led astray. Jesus addresses more harsh words in the New Testament to religious leaders than to any other group of people. He speaks with compassion and understanding to the multitudes, but to the religious leaders who are leading people astray, He is uniformly condemning and critical, calling them open graves, hypocrites, liars, blind guides of the blind.

6. The Applications of Blindness

These miracles also have a spiritual application. Blindness is a repeated example in the Scriptures for the spiritual condition of the unregenerate person. Just as one who is physically blind does not see things in the realm of the physical, so one who is spiritually blind does not see anything in the realm of the spiritual. Close your eyes as tightly as you can and notice how everything is blacked out; you will see nothing because you are in darkness. That is what God says is the condition of the person who is spiritually separated from Him and is in spiritual darkness without any ability to see or to perceive truth and reality.

7. Blind Guides of the Blind

In Matthew 15, Jesus confronts the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of His day, and they were upset by His confrontation. “Then the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?’” (v. 12). Jesus responded in verse 14: “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” The spiritual picture that Jesus draws of the Pharisees is that they are blind with no perception, no understanding, and no vision in the realm of spiritual things. Jesus’ statement, “Let them alone,” is a reminder not to spend the bulk of one’s time with such religious leaders. They are set in their way, obstinate and opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The great tragedy is that they are blind guides of the blind. Those who have no understanding or perception of spiritual things are leading a whole host of people who also have no perception of spiritual things. What hope is there?

These religious leaders are sitting around with their eyes closed tightly. When you sit in darkness with your eyes closed, you begin to imagine all kinds of things. That is how such religious leaders function. Out of their vain imaginations they conjure up all kinds of things which they teach to the people. As a result, the blind follow the blind and neither knows where they are going in the spiritual realm. That is the evaluation of spiritual leaders who function apart from the Word of God.

John quotes from Isaiah 6 in his gospel: “He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them” (John 12:40). This is a spiritual issue. These people are spiritually hardened so they know nothing about spiritual realities. As a result, they are unsaved.

8. The Work of Satan

The work of Satan goes on wherever the Word of God is taught to keep people from understanding and believing the truth of the Word of God. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:3,4, “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” The work of Satan is to keep people from seeing the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that He died to pay the penalty for their sins and was raised because the penalty was paid. If you understand and believe those facts, you will be saved.

However, Satan does not want people to see that, so he does all kinds of things to confuse the issue. He tells them they ought to believe but they also need to be baptized to be saved, or he tells them that they need to join the church in order to be saved, or that good works or the sacraments will make them acceptable to God. He comes up with all kinds of things. Satan has preachers, priests, rabbis and all kinds of religious leaders to disseminate this false teaching. This blinds the minds of the unbelievers.
If you have been sharing the gospel with people around you, you have experienced the frustration caused by this blindness. You go over the gospel with them so clearly, but they fail to see it. It is like they are sitting there with their eyes closed tightly. You tell them that all they have to do is believe that Christ died to pay the penalty for their sins, but they fail to see it because they are blinded. It is the work of Satan to keep them blinded. Religious activity is a key element in his work to keep a veil over people’s faces so they do not understand the gospel. The blind are trusting their blind leaders, and neither knows where they are going.

9. A Bankrupt Church

The Apostle John addressed the spiritually bankrupt condition of the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3:17: “Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.” These religious people are totally unaware of their needs. “I have my religion,” they say, “and you have yours. I have my beliefs, and you have yours.” They do not understand that they are blind and have nothing. They are spiritually bankrupt before God. Jesus tells the church in Laodicea in verse 18, “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”

The point of this is that everything we need is in Christ. Isaiah said that we can buy without money because there is no cost. We must simply come to Christ and believe in Him. You are not told to come to your church, to your priest, to your preacher or to your baptism. You are told to come to Christ. But the world is blind to that. They live in spiritual darkness. Multiplied millions of people are on their way to hell because they are blind to spiritual reality. A key element in their blindness is their religious leaders who themselves are blind.

These events parallel the spiritual condition of those who are lost in sin. They are spiritually blind, under the control and domination of Satan. This is not to say that every unbeliever is demon-possessed, but every unbeliever is under the dominion of Satan who is working in and through them to accomplish his purposes.

When a person comes to Christ, he is given spiritual vision and freed from the power, authority and dominion of Satan. He is transferred, as Paul wrote to the Colossians, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. A total change takes place. These men crying for mercy are reminders of Peter’s words in 1 Peter 2:10, “you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” These men who were lost in their blindness had no mercy. When they came to Jesus Christ, they became the recipients of His mercy and His healing. That is true of all who have come to Christ, they become the recipients of His mercy.

10. The People Described

From the miracles of Matthew 8 and 9, Matthew now moves into a section that will carry through chapter 10. It is important to see the connection that is made here. Jesus has been working with the multitudes who are so spiritually destitute and who manifest their needs by many of their physical conditions. This brings to mind the tremendous needs people have. Matthew summarized the ministry of Christ in Matthew 9:35: “Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.” This verse is almost verbatim from Matthew 4:23, where Matthew speaks of the ministry of Christ as being one of teaching, proclaiming and healing.

Christ is proclaiming the good news of the gospel of the kingdom. He is here to announce that the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom God had prophesied in the Old Testament would be established upon the earth for the nation Israel. He is teaching them about Himself and about the kingdom, claiming to be the Messiah. He heals the sick in order to demonstrate that He is the Messiah who will rule over that kingdom. His ministry at that point centers on the kingdom that had been prophesied to Israel.

11. Sheep Without a Shepherd

Matthew continues in Matthew 9:36, “Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were
distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus has been confronted with the multitudes as they come to Him with their needs, and He looks around and sees the multitudes. Then He is moved with compassion for them. The work translated “compassion” is the strongest word in the Greek language for compassion or pity. It is that inner pity and compassion which grips a person and moves him to meet a need. Jesus is stirred as He sees the people in their spiritual condition.

The concept is interesting that as the Pharisees credit the work of Christ to the Devil, Jesus will deal very harshly with the religious leaders who are leading the people astray. Yet as He looks at the multitudes, He is moved with pity because they are distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.

Two interesting words in this verse note the helplessness of their situation. The word which is translated “distressed” describes someone who has been harassed and has become weary. It originally meant someone who had been flayed, then the word came to mean to have the skin torn. It pictures sheep who have wandered off on their own and have brushed against the rocks. Their skin is torn and scraped as they wander around aimlessly without shepherds to care for them and fall into the gullies.

These people are also described as being dispirited, a word used of corpses lying on the ground. It describes sheep who have been scattered around and, left without a shepherd, have wandered away on their own. They have been battered and bruised and are exhausted, spread out in a hopeless condition. Sheep cannot survive in that way. The picture is of sinners who have been left to themselves without godly shepherds. They are spent, exhausted, helpless and hopeless. That is the picture Christ uses to describe them.

Jeremiah describes a similar picture in Jeremiah 50:6,7: “My people have become lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray. They have made them turn aside on the mountains; they have gone along from mountain to hill and have forgotten their resting place. All who came upon them have devoured them; and their adversaries have said, ‘We are not guilty, inasmuch as they have sinned against the Lord who is the habitation of righteousness, even the Lord, the hope of their fathers.’” The religious leaders had been instrumental in turning the people away from God.

Recently I was reading an article in the news about a bishop in England being challenged about his not believing in the resurrection and the deity of Christ. In the midst of the challenge he was asked, “Do you really believe this is what the bulk of the people believe?” He replied, “No, the leaders are always more liberal than their people.” This testimony is from the leader himself.

I would dare to say that the same is true in the churches where unbelieving men are pastors. Those pastors are more liberal than their people are. On one occasion I was talking to one of these liberal pastors. When I asked him, “Would you tell your people what you believe?” he said, “No, they would throw me out!” The shepherds lead the sheep, and by their subtle influence they turn away the young people who grow up in that ministry. The people are like sheep without a shepherd.

Ezekiel speaks to the same issue in Ezekiel 34: “Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them’”’” (vs. 1-6).

Then in succeeding verses God goes on to speak about the shepherds and the sheep. In Matthew 9 Jesus is alluding to these passages. He sees the people as wandering, lost sheep, distressed and without hope. A large part of the responsibility rests on the shepherds who have been guilty before God of leading the people astray.

Jesus is saying that He is the shepherd, the One who desires to draw them back and restore them. He is referred to in John 10 as the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. He is the One referred to in Hebrews 13 as “the great
Shepherd of the sheep.” Matthew has already referred to Christ in this connection in Matthew 2:6: “And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.” Jesus has come as the chief shepherd, and He sees those shepherds who had responsibility for the people and who have abused them and have not led them as they should have been led. He sees the people of Israel as scattered, bruised and exhausted.

12. A Plentiful Harvest

In Matthew 9:37 and 38, Jesus changes the analogy: “Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’” After using the analogy of the shepherd and the sheep, He now refers to the harvest and its workers. As He describes the harvest, He indicates that it is plentiful. There is no lack of a harvest. He is referring to the nation Israel. The problem is that there are few workers. When you have a lot to harvest, that means there is a lot of work. The more harvest you have, the more work there is and the more workers are needed.

That is the point Jesus is making. The issue is not a lack of harvest, but a lack of workers to bring it in. Jesus is in the midst of the nation Israel. The leaders have already begun to reject Him. The multitudes are there, but there is no depth to their commitment. These are the same people who in a short time will turn Him over for crucifixion. You may wonder what kind of harvest these people really are with their hardened hearts, but He says there is a ripe harvest.

Do not overlook an important point here. We often get taken up with the opposition. We see those who are opposed to the gospel, but we fail to see around us all of the religious people who are being abused by leaders who are not shepherds. These people are being led astray from the truth instead of being led to the truth. They have committed themselves to a religious system and religious leaders who are blind guides of the blind. What a hopeless, pitiful condition!

Do you see a ripe harvest? Multitudes of people around us need to be reached. Do you see people without good shepherds? Some have shepherds who have mistreated them. Christ saw them and felt compassion for them. The people Jesus was concerned about were the religious people from Israel.

Christ says there is a big harvest, and there are not enough workers. Thus His command in verse 38: “Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” There is no doubt whose harvest this is. God has prepared it and has fitted the workers for the harvest. In this analogy there is a great relationship between the sovereignty of God and human responsibility. He is the Lord of the harvest, the One who brings forth workers. But our part is to pray that the Lord will send forth workers. Doesn’t He know that the harvest is ripe? Of course He does! He is the one who ripens the harvest. Doesn’t He know that workers are needed? Of course He does! Then why does He want me to beseech Him?

13. Those Who Pray Should Work

This is amazing. God uses our prayers to accomplish His purposes. One result of my praying is that it burdens me for the need. In Matthew 10, Christ takes these disciples who are praying for workers in the harvest and makes them the workers in the harvest. As we begin to pray for God to send forth workers for the harvest, we find that this sensitizes us to the need of the harvest. We realize there is a harvest and that there ought to be workers, then that realization opens us up for God to use us.

How do we see the harvest around us in our city, our state and our world? Let us consider the people right around us. It is easy to be burdened about the people in China, and those people do need to hear the gospel. They need workers there, but God has given us a harvest here. We have multitudes of people all around us who need to hear the gospel. We need more people sharing the gospel with more people in the harvest fields right here.

Sometimes we look at people committed to false cults and false religions and say, “Well, when Christ comes, they will know they were wrong!” We become hardened to them, and that should not be our approach.

I wonder if the disciples were seeing the multitudes as Christ was seeing them. Do you see the multitudes in that way?
As they drive by in their nice cars and go to their nice jobs as a part of the socially acceptable group in society, do you see them in their spiritual condition as beaten and bruised, deceived by false leaders? They think they are all right. They think everything will come out all right in the end. They really believe they are going to heaven, but they are just being misused and abused. God says they are on their way to hell. They are hopeless, lost, and blind, under the control of Satan. Do we really see them like God sees them? Until we do, we do not have any vision for the harvest.

It is easy to pray, “O God, give me opportunities. Provide open doors.” But I sometimes wonder if the Lord can really take us seriously. Here we are with a harvest so ripe that it is rotting, and we are asking God to give us opportunities to share the gospel. The harvest is there. Workers simply need to be thrust out into the fields.

Oh, that the Lord would help us to see the people as He sees them: blind, destitute, hopeless, under the domination and authority of Satan himself, needing to hear the good news of the glorious gospel of Christ. If we do not see the harvest around us, who will? Jesus Christ, Himself the Son of God, was in a body on this earth. He said that there are not enough workers. He was here in the flesh. Couldn’t He do the work? Couldn’t we just sit back and watch Him do it? No, because He told the disciples that there are not enough workers. He told them to pray that the Lord of the harvest would thrust forth workers into His harvest.

God intends to work through His people. We cannot be a part of the harvest apart from the power of God in our lives, but God has ordained to use human beings who have come to Him for salvation as the harvesters. What a glorious privilege! I can think of no place in the world that I would rather be than right here, because there is a ripe harvest here. There are so many people whom God has prepared for the glorious message of the gospel. Our burden needs to be for more workers to be thrust out into the harvest.