

The Secret to Living Sent

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Thank you for welcoming us. My wife, incredible wife Jody, who is in the front of the church right now.

She'll be out in a second, I'm sure. Not awkward at all. Good to be with you. It's so fun to come to a church close to home. We just live down the street, down Solano Avenue in Albany.

And Gail and I were just talking about how she grew up. You could just throw a rock at her house from my house. And she assures me she's the oldest person in this church. So, congratulations.

So, my name is Andrew and we've been here in this area for a long time pastoring. We planted Solano Community Church in 2004 and then helped with our denominational church planting.

[1:13] And then most recently now working with the Bay Area Church Planting Network. And so, I get to be all over the Bay Area preaching at all different kinds of churches. It's nice to be close to home this morning.

The goal, just so you know what the Bay Area Church Planting Network is about, is we are seeking to saturate the Bay Area with churches through the work of church planting.

And we want to saturate the Bay with the gospel of Jesus Christ in that way. And we have this goal, which is to reach 1% of the Bay Area. This is a big goal. I inherited this.

This is, so get ready for this. We're going to reach 1% of the Bay Area by planting 250 churches that will plant 250 churches by 2050. How does that sound?

Are you in on that? Alright. So, the passage that I've chosen today captures a little bit of that heart of mission.

[2:13] And it also leans into something that we prayed about in our time of confession, which is that little phrase that came up in there, we have not cared for those without Jesus.

And that leapt out to me as I thought about our passage today. So, let me read this scripture with you. I'll read it to you. Matthew 9, 35. And then we are going to allow it to speak to our hearts this morning.

Matthew 9, 35. And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every affliction.

And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Pray with me. God, we invite you again into this place.

[3:17] You're here with us already. We know that. Thank you for the shed blood of Jesus, making it possible for us to have the hope of your presence in this room, amidst this community, and within our hearts.

And so we ask that you would amplify your presence this morning, as we open our hearts to understand these words in scripture, to submit ourselves to your call on our lives, to see you work through us, to bring your glorious gospel to bear on people who are lost and broken and hurting and suffering, all around us.

We invite you, Lord, to have your way with us, to work in us, to inspire us, to guide us, to lead us this morning. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. So this passage was important to me as really reaching back to a time early in my life. I was nine years old, and my cousin took me to see the movie *The Elephant Man*. You may know that story. It's a story of Joseph Merrick, who was a badly deformed man in England in the 1800s, and he was placed in a circus and treated like an animal.

[4:30] Now think of, you know, Charles Dickens kind of time frame. And the movie wrecked me. From age nine to eleven, I was unable to sleep in my own room through the night.

I would wake up in the middle of the night, and I would imagine Joseph Merrick walking to the room with his deformities. I would panic.

I would jump out of bed and run down to my parents' room. This went on so long that my parents decided to send me to counseling. And after maybe three sessions or so, I was cured.

In fact, the counselor did such a great job that for the next ten years, I didn't shed a tear for anybody. He closed me right up. Fast forward now to age twenty-one.

I'm working at a Christian camp. I'm supposed to be the supply truck driver, but the week before the camp starts, the chaplain backs out, and they look around the room, and they point at me and said, you'll be the chaplain.

[5:33] They were looking for anybody who just, I think, had a heartbeat at that point. And so I spent that summer engaged deeply in the lives of these high school students.

Seventy or so would come every week. They would tell me their stories. I would listen. I would pray with them. I would try to encourage them. And by the end of the summer, my emotional tank was absolutely full.

And I'm standing one particular day in a room, looking out at the students as they're playing soccer, and imagining and thinking about all of the struggles they were facing.

And I broke down. I started to cry. And then I started to weep and heave. And I called out to God, Lord, what do you want me to do? And what I got back was this simple phrase, give them Jesus.

Give them Jesus. And that was really the moment of my call to ministry. But there's a deeper part of the story. Later that day, I was driving to one of our work sites, and I started to think about Joseph Merrick, the elephant man.

[6:46] And I started to weep. In fact, I had to pull the car over. I was weeping so intensely. And I sat on the side of the road for 45 minutes, heaving and crying, connecting with a part of me that had been closed for a decade or more.

And I realized in that moment that those earlier days when I was in my bed waking up with terrors, it wasn't that I was afraid of Joseph Merrick.

It's that I was overwhelmed by his suffering. Short time after that, I come on to this passage that we read today.

And it all starts to make sense. My nine-year-old self couldn't hold the hurt so the Lord in his grace sealed me up for a time. But my 21-year-old self was ready to have my heart reopened again for a life of mission and ministry.

And what's evident from the scripture that we read and highlighted in my journey is that compassion is the secret to living scent.

[8:09] Compassion is the secret to living scent. Or if that's too churchy sounding, compassion is the secret to living a life of gospel mission.

I want to look at this in two moves today. First of all, mission begins with compassion. So the statement that I just made. And then we'll look at this simple statement that mission ends with action.

So mission begins with compassion. And the subtitle of this first point is See Like Jesus. See Like Jesus. See, this passage comes at the end of a string of healings.

If you look back in chapter 9 in Matthew, you will see Jesus at work in some of the most beautiful and powerful ways in the lives of people who are desperately hurting.

A father comes to Jesus with his bleeding heart for his daughter. A woman comes with her bleeding body and touches Jesus' hem.

[9:25] Two blind men stumbling through life in the darkness. Cry out to Jesus. Have mercy on us. And a mute man finally trapped in the prison of his own mind finally speaks as he encounters Christ.

And I would submit to you that that world is not so different from our world. We pass hundreds of people every day. whether it's driving in the car, walking down the street, in the workplace, in our

schools, wherever the Lord has us.

We pass image bearers left and right. And we consider them so often by their outward presentation. And in this world people figure out how to look good on the outside.

But what we often don't connect with is the truth that for many of them, maybe every single one, their lives consist also of pain and suffering and grief and loss and difficulty and trauma and horror. And deep down at the core they long for redemption. or to use the words that Jesus uses they are like sheep without a shepherd.

[10 : 58] Like sheep without a shepherd. Now Jesus looks on broken people and he says he has compassion. This is one of those words you probably have heard about.

It's one of those really powerful beautiful words in the New Testament. It refers to your entrails. It's a very visceral raw kind of a word conjuring up sort of the deepest expression of our emotions. And so there's Jesus feeling this rawness this emotion the disciples are watching it. This word is only ever used of Jesus in the New Testament and it's used four times of Jesus in the book of Matthew.

And what's really interesting is that outside of the New Testament the word is never used for a man. So we have here Jesus redefining what manhood is in this text.

The source of his compassion is that the people he's gazing at the people that are the crowd that's before him they're harassed and helpless. Now the word harassed comes from the same word that we would use to talk about flaying like flaying an animal.

[12 : 16] And the word helpless comes from the same word that you would use to talk about casting something aside. So these are sort of skinned and cast aside in the words of Jesus.

Jesus is able to see through whatever the veneer is on the outside to the core of what's happening on the inside. While I was actually working on this text a while back I went for a walk and I was walking down the street near my house and saw a mouse sort of staggering under this car came out from under the car and it was obviously traumatized going in circles and I paused you know wondering what was happening and then I see this cat peek out from under the car and it dawned on me what was happening and sadly the mouse didn't seem to be able to see anymore and so as it was going in circles it made its way back underneath the car and the two of them disappeared and I walked away traumatized and I kept walking and I continued to be traumatized

I couldn't shake the visceral sense of what I had just seen the rawness of a creature that was being harassed and that looked so helpless and later that day I kept having these moments of thinking back to that scene and so finally I said Lord why did you allow me to see that and then I opened up my scripture and looked back at this text and I thought oh that's why you're giving me an in the moment reminder of the harassedness and the helplessness that characterizes so much of our world and if I could feel that way about a mouse right how might I feel about the broken image bearers all around me it was a fresh exposure to the visceral nature of suffering there's this really poignant moment in the movie the elephant man some kids have joseph merrick cornered in a back alley and they're taunting him and beating him and he cries out to them he says

I'm not an elephant I'm not an animal I'm a human being I'm a man and in that you hear the cry of so many human beings amidst suffering and trauma every human being feels backed into a corner at some point you just don't get to escape this world without it and I'm continually humbled by the suffering that people have been through around me like all of us I'm tempted to think I've been through a lot and then I always encounter somebody who's had it worse abuse loss physical health mental health sin and let me just say you might have walked in here this morning carrying one of those and here we are talking about being the hands and feet of Jesus showing compassion to others but it's possible this morning that what you most need in this moment is the compassion of Jesus for you and so let me remind you that just as Jesus looked on that crowd he looks on you and if you just limped in here this morning barely making it know that this wonderful beautiful perfect man with the greatest love that there ever has been has trained that love on you so just keep moving towards him day by day and for all of us what Jesus is inviting us into is that we would open our hearts to the pain and the suffering that's around us and I get that for most of us that's a terrifying prospect just like when I was nine years old and I couldn't hold right the pain and the suffering of the elephant man and we close off our hearts so often because we feel overwhelmed by the pain and the suffering in the world around us and part of that is because we think that we have to carry it all but what

[17 : 33] Jesus is reminding us here is that ultimately he's the one who carries it our job is to be open to it so that it'll catalyze movement in our lives but in that moment of panic we often times feel and ask the question well if I open my heart to the pain and the suffering and the world around me where will I go with it and the answer that Jesus has for us this morning is that you will go on mission one of the misconceptions we have about emotions is what they're for and what I find in life more and more as I get older is that the emotions are simply to catalyze action in my life it's like a it's like a signal on the dashboard that's calling me to pay attention to an opportunity or to something that needs to be taken care of and when we shut down our emotions out of fear we lose a measure of the motivation and the energy that we need to live a life on mission and

Jesus is showing us what it means to be an emotionally open human being who faces the pain and the suffering of the world as it is and transforms that into action that's the invitation Jesus is making for us this morning compassion is the secret to mission our emotions are to become like the pulses of energy that catalyze movement in our lives we were just walking we walk and pray Jody and I every night and yesterday we walked by the same homeless person for the 50th time and we finally looked to each other and just like why don't we do anything about this and so we made a plan right and there's something about being open to the people around us that catalyzes action that fuels the compassion fuels the mission so that's the first point that we take from this passage is that mission begins with compassion see like

Jesus and that takes us to the next part which is that mission ends with action and if you wanted a subtitle for this one is do like Jesus so see like Jesus and do like Jesus and we're right here in the center of the very purpose of Jesus Jesus is the activity of God in the world that's the incarnation and so when we get this this sort of binary process between seeing like God seeing with God's heart and then acting like Jesus we're starting to move right into the center of what it means to be a Christian in the world this is what chapter nine has been about all these beautiful encounters with Jesus and he's so lovingly heals the brokenness of the father and the woman and the blind man and the mute man and and then at the end of that we have this sort of summary passage that we're looking at

Jesus is facing the crowd he's overcome with compassion imagine him standing there here's the crowd he's weeping and the disciples are here and they're watching this scene take place and they're thinking to themselves wow amazing as he's looking at this crowd of suffering people and Jesus instead surprises them he turns to them and he says hey pray that somebody would do something about this he's engaging what their hearts when you pray you open your heart and so he invites them the genius that Jesus is he says let's start by having you pray that God would raise up somebody to do something about this and then after they pray he says oh look

God's answered our prayer it's you fast forward to chapter 10 and he called to him his 12 disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction and a few verses down these 12 Jesus sent out instructing them they become the answer to the prayer he invites them to pray and in that they are invited on this I mean do you this is the most incredible thing God Jesus is standing there having compassion and you're wondering how he's going to fix it and instead of fixing it himself he says come with me let's engage in this together it's the invitation for all believers to be a part of the incredible mission that God is carrying out in the world to reach people who are broken who are harassed!

[23 : 13] and helpless like sheep without a shepherd with the beautiful powerful gospel of Jesus Christ that's a huge invitation it's a beautiful invitation it's a glorious invitation and Jesus made it to you over the last month couple of months we had the honor of shepherding one of our neighbors toward Jesus before he died this is a you know we live in Albany classic sort of Berkeley Albany whatever that means to you probably he believed it and we had this long you know years long relationship and finally at one point I was standing in the front yard and we had a conversation I said I said Greg why don't why don't you just read the gospel of Mark and then we'll get together and talk about what you discover there and time went on and he didn't invite me to get together and talk about the gospel of

Mark but he kept texting me all of his insights about the gospel of Mark and then he went on to Luke and he just kept reading and he kept sharing with me what he was learning until finally one day I get this text from him I may or not finish reading the Bible but hear me clearly Andrew and Jody I have found God but I also for the first time with clarity have found Jesus shortly after that he was diagnosed with cancer we spent numerous times with him in the hospital and I can affirm that until

his last day he hung on to his shepherd Jesus Christ moment by moment in fact as he moved towards his passing into a much better place it was a moment of joy when we got that text and sadness shortly thereafter when we heard about his cancer but

I look at 1 Thessalonians 2:19 where it says for what is Paul says for what is our hope or joy or crown or boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming is it not you for you are our glory and joy Paul's glory and joy was in the people that he had been blessed to be a part of throughout the course of his ministry sadly learn that 80% of believers in the US never have the joy of shepherding somebody towards Jesus they never have the joy of shepherding somebody towards Jesus and I want more I think part of my burden in this passage is wanting more for you wanting more for me in that incredible invitation that we have been given to be a part of Jesus rescue mission in the world is to be accepted and embraced there's a lot of reasons why we don't you know we sometimes look at it we say well wasn't this just for the twelve or maybe it's just for the pastors or the special people and the answer is no the twelve were really just examples for us of what it was going to be like now there are a few things that were just separate to them like writing scripture and stuff you don't get to write scripture but this element of evangelism this living on mission is they are our example or you say what if

I can't heal or cast out like it says in Matthew 10 cast out unclean spirits and if you said that you would be right you can't do those things but God can and your invitation is to pray that he would for the specific person who's in front of you right now that's all you have to do that's all I have to do and then sometimes we say well what if the people don't want to hear it I mean this is the Bay area right I've been we've been here Jody was born in Berkeley I've lived here for 20 something years we know what it's like to be in the Bay area and we know right that nobody in the Bay area wants to hear about Jesus right and so we shut down when actually it says in Matthew 10:37 the harvest is plentiful and that's a promise from the lips of Jesus and as creative and as smart as we are in the Bay area I don't think we can circumvent the promise of

Jesus he says the harvest is plentiful here the problem with our mission isn't the readiness of the people to receive it as much as it is there's too few of us engaged in doing it that's what the text says Matthew 10:37 the second part says the laborers are few the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few when we do engage we don't dig in what's interesting to me I thought about this yesterday day as I was reflecting on this text he's using farming imagery if we know one thing about farming it's hard work right and that's the image that he uses to talk about what it means to be engaged in mission in the lives of other people it's like farming You gotta get up early you pabst [29:07] I didn't mean it to be pabst which is a type of beer but here's what it is and let me just invite you as I go through this really briefly to ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your recollection I love what Karen said about our imagination to bring into your imagination the faces of the people he's calling you to minister to and if you want to indulge me even further I would invite you to open up your phone and open up a note ignore the notifications that have come in the last few minutes and write down their names and here's how you engage in relationship with people you begin with prayer you just pray we can always pray for somebody every day we can pray for somebody that's the P and then the A is ask when you ask somebody about their life you are affirming their value it's a way to reflect that they're image bearers because you care about who they are and so you're already starting to show them what the gospel is and then you can bless them

Jesus gave the ultimate blessing of his life when we bless people with what we have in their brokenness and suffering then we are reflecting we're mirroring the work of Jesus so they begin to taste it so that hopefully someday when they see what Jesus did they'll connect the dots or even that what you are doing will help them to see the sacrifice of Jesus so pray ask bless and then share is the next one this is when you simply tell them about your relationship with Jesus whether it's way in the past or something that happened this last weekend you just don't hide it under a bushel that Jesus is important to you in your life and then the last one is tell pray ask bless share and tell where you tell people the gospel what Jesus has actually done on their behalf and by this means we can engage in a daily kind of farming roll up your sleeves work of mission and it's all motivated by a heart there's nothing more wonderful than helping a harassed and helpless person discover

Jesus as their shepherd because that's what Jesus says is the antidote they're harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd in the movie the elephant man ends with this poignant scene in a hospital he's finally gotten out of the circus he's in the hospital and they don't know if he

can understand anything which he's very intelligent but he just is deformed and they don't know what to do so they start trying to teach him things and one of the things they do is they read scripture and they come to Psalm 23 you know what Psalm 23 says the Lord is my what my shepherd I shall not want and as they are reading it to him Joseph Merrick starts quoting the rest he makes me lie down in green pastures he leads me beside still waters and at the end he says it's my favorite Psalm it's my favorite Psalm and in that moment you know that this harassed and helpless man has found his shepherd this is the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ and you and I have the incredible honor of partnering with Jesus to share it in a harassed and helpless world so God would you help us do just that I know when we come to this topic so often we are filled with fears we anticipate things going wrong we we don't know that we are capable I just pray this morning that you would wipe all that away and connect us to the deepest most important element which is that you love people and you want to love people through us you want us to be your hands and feet so help us to be your hands and feet in this place where there's just so much oh thank you for this church Lord thank you for this church present in this place of greatest need faithful serving you now help us to do it all the more help us to live in dependency upon you but but in action to love just as you have loved us for your glory in Jesus name we pray amen