

## **The Most Amazing Race: A Race to Serve**

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### **Matthew 9:35-38**

A farmer was out plowing his field one spring morning. The spring thaw had just occurred and there were many muddy valleys in the field. Through one particularly wet place his tractor became stuck in the mud. The harder he tried, the deeper he became stuck. Finally, he walked over to his neighbor's to ask for help. The neighbor came over and looked at the situation. He shook his head, and then said, "It doesn't look good, but I tell you what. I'll give it a try pulling you out. But if we don't get it out, I'll come sit in the mud with ya!"

Have you tried "mud-sitting" with a friend?  
Sometimes I believe it is the best thing you can do!

If you have been watching the Amazing Race you will notice that the contestants are sent out in pairs. No one does it alone. I think that is one principal that the creators of the show got right and that they must have learned from Jesus. The creators of the Amazing Race knew that as the contestants went along on their journey, they would need someone who would be willing to "mud-sit" with them. They would need each other for a variety of reasons: to encourage, inspire, cry with, help each other out, mud-sit.

Jesus knew the same thing about us as we go along on our MOST AMAZING RACE. We need others to journey with us, to mud-sit if you will. And other people need us to journey and mud-sit with them.

As I was reading over the scriptures for this week, I noticed some interesting things about the passage found in Matthew 9:35-38 that I had not noticed before.

I wanted to share them with you as we investigate our third Pit-stop this week in our MOST AMAZING RACE.

Our third pit-stop is **SERVE THE WORLD**

Let's look at the passage in Matthew 9:35-38 to get some help on how we are to do exactly that – **SERVE THE WORLD**.

We are not going to look this passage up in our bibles this week unless you brought an NIV bible with you.

You will notice as you read different translations of the bible that different words are used to describe the same thing and I really liked how the NIV has this passage.

So I want you to take out your sermon notes and you will notice that the passage in Matthew is written for you on the top of your notes.

**READ MATTHEW 9:35-37**

Now I want you to underline four two letter statements found in that passage.

**Jesus went – he saw – he had – he said.**

Let's look at those a little closer this morning as we learn what it means to SERVE THE WORLD like Jesus did.

### **First - Jesus went.**

1) Christ went to the people.

He took the primary responsibility to minister to the people's spiritual need by going to them.

Wouldn't the salvation story be totally different if Christ waited for people to come to him?

What do you think would have happened if he had sat out on a stone and waited for the hurting, the needy, the spiritually sick to come to him?

Wonder what will happen if we sit and wait for the people to come through our doors so that we can minister to them instead of us going where they are.

Jesus took the first step to go to the people so ministry could occur.

We need to do the same thing Jesus did – we need to go to the people so ministry can occur.

2) Jesus went and took the initiative to enter their setting.

Galilee during Christ's time was not all a placid and peaceful setting. It had large cities, teeming with people from many nations.

But Jesus intentionally entered into the lives of these people:

- He worshipped with them in their synagogues
- He went to weddings with them
- He worked with them on their fishing boats
- He helped harvest the fruits of the field
- He laughed with them when one of them made a joke
- He cried with them with one of them died
- Christ knew who they were and their personal pains because he purposely entered their daily lives.

Do you really think all of the situations Jesus found himself in made him totally comfortable?

But he went anyway.

Some of the most meaningful ministries you will ever be involved in may be outside of your comfort zones.

Recently our Servants in Missions went to Indiana to serve some of the people whose houses had been damaged by flood waters.

While they were there, they slept on air mattresses on the floor.

A couple of our servants had to wear Hazmats suits in order to remove insulation – they got extremely warm and dehydrated because the weather was hot and those suits are quite warm.

One of them, a friend of mine from another church, got sick from the heat and dehydration and he had to end up going home.

Another one of the servants said that the odor from mildew knocked you over.

Yet they recognized that these were some of God's peoples in need and they took the initiative to enter their settings in order to help.

Because they did – the servants received notes on their doors thanking them, the people whose houses they worked on thanked them.

In fact one person said that they had been on mission trips themselves and never dreamed they would be the ones in need of this kind of help but they realized that they had received so much more than they ever gave.

The family whose house Kevin, my husband, had worked on gave him this dream catcher with a note attached that said: *Thank you for helping to make our dreams come true.*

They weren't in an ideal situation, wasn't always comfortable – but they served anyway.

### **Second – He saw.**

Have you ever noticed that there is a difference between seeing a person and actually seeing who a person really is?

1) Jesus actually saw each person individually.

He didn't just see a bunch of people, a crowd.

He looked into every single soul.

Sometimes I like to wonder what Christ was thinking when He saw the people?

There is Billy, I love that little boy so much. I wonder how his game went today?

Oh, there is Christy, I want her to find spiritual healing so much.

There is Tom, I wish for him peace in his pain.

It gives me great comfort to know that God does not see me as just a number, just one in a crowd –

but He knows me, He understands me, He feels for me.

Just like he does for each one of you.

2) Christ saw more than what is observable – He looked beyond.

Most of us are pretty good about hiding our true hurts and pain, aren't we?

You can walk by people who are smiling – ask them how they are doing and they reply – FINE - yet inside they are weeping because of the severe internal pain that they are enduring alone.

Perhaps you have met someone like that – perhaps you are someone like that.

You wish with all your heart that someone, anyone would truly **see** you and know your heart.

The New Testament tells a beautiful story of seeing more than what is observable:

It is the story of a prodigal son walking home with his head bowed low with shame. His father sees his son, who has spent all his money, ran with the wrong crowd, and miserably failed his family.

The loving father looks beyond the sin and despair and **sees** the son that he loves and rushes down the road to put his arms around him.

Benny Hester wrote some moving and beautiful lyrics to a song to describe our Father God on that front porch looking for His rebellious sons and daughters...

"Almighty God...the Great I am...immovable Rock...omnipotent powerful, awesome Lord...Victorious warrior...commanding King of Kings... Mighty Conqueror

and the only time...the only time I ever saw Him run

Was when He ran to me... Took me in His arms... Held my head to His chest..Wiped the tears from my eyes and said -

Son, do you know I still love you?!

I wonder what would happen if we made it a point to ask God to help us see people from the inside instead of the outside - to look beyond.

- Would that change the way we prayed for them?
- Would that change the way we respond to them, the way we serve them?

### **Third – He had.**

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

1) Jesus had or felt compassion not just commitment.

Christ wasn't just committed to the people.

He had something far more compelling: He had compassion.

I can be committed to my husband for life...but if I don't have love and compassion towards him, all we have is a contract between us. There is no love, no compassion, no mud-sittin.

I can be committed to you as a pastor, but if I don't care for and pray for you, serve you and mud-sit with you, because I really do love you, all we would have is a cold, administrative relationship.

We as a church and as individuals must do the same thing.

We must not just be committed to the people of this community and beyond; we must be moved with compassion.

So how do you do that:

- Ask God to open your eyes to truly see his people, to give you a new picture of their pain.

- Begin praying often with a heart filled with compassion for the people you meet, the people you run across, the people you encounter.
  - Pray as you walk along the sidewalk.
  - Pray for families in the grocery store, at the school games, sitting next to you at church.
  - Pray for the person waiting on you in line.
- Enter into their world and reach out with the loving hands of Christ to them.

Years ago a hymn writer named Robert Murray McCheyn wrote:

It is the part of a man to be overcome by what he sees. When you sit by the fire on a winter evening, hearing the pelting of the terrible storm, the rain and the sleet driving against the window, if you think of some houseless, homeless wanderer, your heart is a little moved, you heave a passing sigh and utter a passing expression of sympathy. **But** if the wanderer comes to your door, if you open the door, and see him all wet and shivering, the sight affects the heart, your heart flows out in a thousand-fold greater compassion, and you invite him to sit before the fire. When the full bloom of health is upon your cheek, if you hear of some sick person, you are a little affected; but if you go and see, if you lift up the latch of the door, and enter in with quiet step, and see the pale face, the languid eye, the heaving breast; then does the eye affect the heart, and your compassion flows like a mighty river. We must be more than just committed.

2) Being moved with compassion may mean stepping out of our comfort zones just as Christ did.

Christ had compassion on the people he encountered because He entered their world.

- To touch the leper was to deem Jesus unclean as per the Law of Moses
- To heal the woman with an abnormal blood emission could be embarrassing
- To continually be begged for healing must have been taxing
- To eat with the prostitutes and tax collectors might have been times of being uncomfortable
- To be constantly on-call to teach by example was draining

Because we know that Jesus was the Messiah and therefore fully divine, I sometimes think we forget he was also fully human.

I'll bet there were times when Jesus was not always in a comfortable place, times when he was physically exhausted, emotionally drained. It was compassion that drove Him and it must be compassion that drives us.

### **And last – Jesus said.**

If you look at verse 37 you might quickly skip over a very small but important word – THEN.

**Then Jesus said.**

The Bible tells us that after Jesus had experienced life in the villages and cities, after he had taught in the synagogues and preached the Good News that God had sent the Messiah, after he had healed all sorts of people of blindness and leprosy, after he saw each person individually, after he had experienced and shown great compassion,

**THEN JESUS SAID to his disciples:**

*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.*

Christ did not present a clear and powerful presentation to his disciples of what it would take to evangelize and serve the world until he himself had gone through the process.

Until he saw the people  
 Until he felt their needs  
 Until he experienced their pain  
 Until he was gripped with compassion  
 Until he served.

- 1) Life-changing lessons can only be effective if life-change has occurred in the teacher.

That has also been said like this – you can only give what you got. Whenever I prepare a sermon, the sermon has to first preach to me before I can preach it to you.

Otherwise, it is just a bunch of empty words with no meaning.

In order to reach out and serve the world with the love and compassion that Jesus showed, you have to have experienced that love and compassion of Jesus for yourself.

Jesus had modeled for the disciples what it meant to go to the people and enter into their settings, to see each person individually and to see more than just what you observe, to have compassion and not just commitment, to leave their comfort zones.

And as he modeled this – he and his disciples experienced life-change.

And once you experience this life-change – THEN JESUS SAYS – now go tell others, go serve, go and make disciples of all nations, go and preach the Good News.

Now that you have experienced life-change

Now that you know the difference Jesus can make in your life

Now go tell others – go serve others.

**Go serve the world!!**

I met with my Stephens and Matthew Ministers recently and they each shared their stories of how their meetings had been going with the nursing home and home bound members that they visit.

I was so touched by their compassion and love as they reach out and serve those they minister to.

But I was even more moved by how they each told of how they reach out even further to include others that they run across as they are doing ministry. I wanted you to hear just one of those stories yourself as they serve outside of our church walls.

(servants speak)

A couple of weeks ago I read to you from the beginning of the book of Matthew where Jesus **first** words to his disciples were – Come and follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

In essence, what he was saying was – Come and follow me and I will show you how to go and serve the world.

The last 2 verses of the book of Matthew records Jesus' **last** words to his disciples before he ascends to heaven - he says - Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit –teach them to obey all my commandments.

In essence, what he says is – Go and serve the world.

If Jesus first words to his disciples were go and serve the world and his last words were go and serve the world.

What do you think his words would be for us – his followers – today

**GO AND SERVE THE WORLD!!!**