

What Kind of Man? Lord of the Harvest
From the Series, “The King and I – Matthew Tells Us About the King of the Universe”
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Introduction

In this article, we’re continuing our series, “The King and I – Matthew Tells Us About the King of the Universe.” Two-thousand years ago, Matthew met Jesus Christ. He decided that he wanted his friends to meet Jesus, too. That’s why he wrote his book. Two-thousand years later, and we can still meet Jesus. One way is to study what Matthew has written.

In order to understand Jesus, we need to understand the world he lived in. Our modern world is a unique place. It’s very unlike ancient days. For example, today, most people in the western world live in cities - gigantic collections of buildings made of concrete and steel. In 2020, in the United States, 85 percent of people lived in cities. That’s up from 65 percent in 1950.

Prior to that, people lived in small towns and on farms. In the days that the New Testament of the Bible was written, most people lived on farms. That’s why it’s hard sometimes for us to understand the world that Jesus lived in.

Let’s stop for a moment to think about what it would be like to live in those days. In the springtime, you hooked up an animal to a plow, and you broke up the soil. Not everyone owned an animal. Some had to go into the field with a wooden hoe. After a lot of back-breaking work, you planted. Then you tended your plants. You watched the skies to see if rain would come. If you were fortunate, the fall came, and you had crops.



Think about how exciting it would be to work so hard; to plow and plant and cultivate and watch - and then look to see an abundance of fruit and grain.

However, your work is not over. The fruit and the grain do not jump off the plants and walk into your barn. What next?

In this article, we're going to learn that Jesus is **Lord of the Harvest**. Let's read:

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 sickness. 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."
(Matthew 9:35-38)

"Lord of the harvest" Remember, Matthew wants us to meet his friend, Jesus. As we study together, we'll learn three things about him:

- His Methods
- His Heart
- His Goals

I. His Methods

Let's look first at his methods.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. (9:35)

A. Jesus went

The first thing we see is that Jesus **went**. "Jesus went through all the towns and villages..."

Historians tell us, in the days of Jesus, there were 200 towns and villages in Galilee. The towns had names like "Capernaum", "Cana", and "Nazareth". These population centers had an average size of 15,000 people. If you run the numbers, that's about 3 million people! The land was fertile, so there were lots of farms.

Jesus wanted to reach those people. How did he do it?

He could have sent angels. In Matthew 26, we will learn about the night that Jesus was arrested. When he was arrested, he told his followers **not** to defend him. He said he could ask, and his Father would send 12 legions of angels. (Matthew 26:53) A Roman legion had over 4,000 fighters. That means Jesus could easily call up 50,000 angels any time he wanted. The Bible tells us there are many more – that's just the "quick and easy" number.

50,000 angels could take care of a region like Galilee very quickly. **But apparently, angels would not be the best way to do it.** Jesus wants the best for all these people.

Or perhaps, Jesus could have rigged up a gigantic projector one night and spoken to everyone. He could have shown images in the skies. Or, he could have invented the television set and sent one out to every home. But, those methods wouldn't be the best way to reach people, either.

No, Jesus went – he went himself. What does this tell us? Apparently, Jesus thinks that the best way to reach people is personal contact. Think about that. How do we plan on reaching people? Is personal contact part of our plan? It was for Jesus!

B. Jesus taught

The next thing we learn is that Jesus **taught**. We read that he was “teaching in their synagogues...” To understand this, we need to know the significance of the synagogue in Jewish life in that day.

The Synagogue was the central meeting place of religion and local government. The Romans allowed the Jewish people to have a small amount of local management of their affairs. This included things like judging and punishing small crimes. That was done through religious leaders. There was no “separation of church and state” in those days. Those religious leaders all worked through the synagogue.

The Synagogue was also, as we would expect, the center of worship and learning. The religious leaders would lead the worship, and then they would teach. This occurred more than once a week, by the way - It was not just the Sabbath. Occasionally, a visiting Rabbi would come through, such as Jesus. In that case, the leaders might invite the Rabbi to speak.

Understand this: Jesus visited population centers: Towns and villages. In each of those, he would head for the Synagogue. So, he chose a **central place**. He worked on the assumption that anyone who was interested would come to him in the central place. Jesus offered personal contact, but he didn't feel obligated to chase people around. He didn't feel obligated to walk door-to-door. We'll learn in future chapters that he passed this method on to his disciples.

What does Matthew mean by “teaching”? “Teaching” meant “Teaching the Scriptures.” The Synagogue was the place where copies of the Scriptures were stored. On each meeting, the Scriptures would be brought out, and the teachers would read them. As they were reading, they would explain.

What does this mean for us? We are told that Jesus taught. That means he taught the Scripture. That's why we teach the Scripture to this day. It's the model that Jesus gave us. We must be faithful in teaching and learning the Scriptures.

C. Jesus Proclaimed

Next, we see that Jesus proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom. Proclaim means “announce”. It means “announce in a loud and prominent way.”

What did Jesus announce? The good news of the Kingdom. What is that? We live in a broken world - A world where sin dominates everything. Sin is rebellion against God. The good news is that God invites us back. He wants us to live with him in his kingdom. All you need to do is believe. Believe that God is good. Believe that he loves you. Believe that Jesus died for your sins. If you believe these things, you will repent of your sins. So, repent! That means turn away from your sins and ask God to forgive you. If you ask, he will gladly do it through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

What does this mean for us? We need to proclaim the good news!

D. Jesus Healed

Finally, we’re told that as Jesus went around, he was “...healing every disease and sickness.” Here we’re reminded that Jesus was the Messiah, the Great King. He wanted people to know that, so he presented credentials everywhere he went. That involved the ability to do miraculous things like healing.

In our series, “What Kind of Man Is This?”, Jesus has shown us a number of things about himself.

We’ve said that he’s the **Lord of Life**, who can heal the most terrible disease. He healed Leprosy, a terrible disease that eats away a person’s flesh. He healed people who were paralyzed. He healed a woman with a fever. He healed blindness. He raised a young girl from the dead.

We talked about what it would take to do this. You would need to know exactly what the problem was. The human body has 30 trillion cells. You would have to know where they all were and how each one was supposed to function. You would need the blueprint of the body to make sure that all those cells wound up back in the right place. And remember, most of the times Jesus healed, he did it in an instant. You would need amazing power to do that. Jesus could heal because he was the Lord of Life.

Life does not exist in a vacuum. Every piece of our universe is part of a great machine. We learned that Jesus is Lord of that machine. He sits above all the parts. He controls it all.

Because he is Lord of the machine, he is Lord of Nature. He is the one who stood up before a raging storm and told it to be quiet. When he did, the rain stopped falling. The waves of the sea stopped pounding. The air became calm. Jesus can do this because he is Lord of Nature.

We then learned that Jesus is Lord of the Supernatural. Jesus is the one who was confronted with two demon-possessed men. Between them they had been controlled by a legion of demons. Again, that's over 4,000. The demons cowered in fear at the sight of Jesus. With a word, Jesus sent them all away. He could do that because he is Lord of the Supernatural.

Put together, this makes Jesus Lord of All. No mere mortal man could do all these things. Jesus was God visiting the face of the earth.

What does this mean for us? This makes Jesus worthy to be the Lord of Our life. If you've never made Jesus the Lord of your life, will you make him the Lord of your life today? He is worthy. Let us tell you how. There will be important links at the end of this article.

Are you unconvinced? Do you want more reasons to make Jesus the Lord of your life? Let's move on to learn more about Jesus.

II. His Heart

Let's learn about Jesus' heart.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)

When Jesus saw the crowds, we're told that he had compassion on them. That tells us something about the heart of Jesus.

Different cultures describe emotions in different ways. In modern Western culture, we tend to associate emotions with the heart. The word that we translate as "compassion" refers to the gut. So, when the ancient Hebrew people pictured compassion, this is how they described it. Compassion was something you felt deep inside you, in the core of your being.

Why did Jesus feel compassion? Because when Jesus saw the crowd, they were "harassed and helpless". These are the kinds of words that might be used if someone was whipped. When the Romans whipped someone, it was vicious. Their whips didn't just have rope or leather. Sometimes they Romans included sharp things like bone fragments - Things that would cut and tear. Every lash of the whip was a cut. Sometimes, pieces of skin were torn off. Sometimes muscle and even bone were exposed after a whipping. Some people died from the injuries caused by a Roman whip. People who survived were so brutally injured, that they could barely walk - if they could walk at all. If no one could help them to their feet, they might just be dragged away and thrown into the street. Those victims were helpless.

That's the picture here. Jesus looked at people and saw pain. He saw injuries caused by a broken world. He saw people who could not help themselves. And he felt compassion.

We're told that the people were like "...sheep without a shepherd." Sheep are odd little creatures. The animals that appear on farms cannot exist in the wild. Technically they should be extinct. A sheep against almost any predator is a goner. Even the stronger males will go down when they're confronted by something with teeth and claws.

And this is a problem, because sheep get lost easily. When they get separated from the flock, they might as well have a sign on their backs that says "eat me".

Worse, sheep aren't very bright. Some predatory birds will land on the back of a sheep and just start eating. The sheep knows that something hurts, but they don't know what to do about it.

What's the answer to this? A shepherd. Sheep need someone to guide them and protect them. To Jesus, the crowds looked like poor sheep - and he felt compassion.

What does this mean for us? It means we're learning about the heart of Jesus. Jesus feels compassion for you.

Sometimes in life, we hurt. When you're hurting, Jesus sees. Sometimes we feel helpless. When you feel helpless, Jesus sees. When you hurt, when you feel helpless, Jesus feels something deep in his gut - He feels compassion.

At that point, Jesus will be motivated by his compassion to do something. That something will be based on your unique path. Jesus is the great Shepherd, and he cares about his sheep. He loves you. He is certainly capable of jumping in and removing your pain. If that's what's best, that's what will happen. But sometimes, Jesus has something better for you.

If that's the case, Jesus will act the way good shepherds act. The good shepherd spends time among the sheep. If it's cold, he wraps his shawl around himself and stands in the cold. If it's rainy, he gets wet. If the sheep are threatened by predators, the good shepherd pulls out his rod and attacks - Even if he risks injury to himself. If nothing else, the good shepherd walks with the sheep.

Many know the passage:

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; (Psalm 23:4, ESV)

The Good shepherd walks with his sheep. They are never alone.

That's what we learn about the heart of Jesus. He feels compassion. He feels compassion for you. That's another reason why you can make him the Lord of your life.

III. His Goals

Having learned these things about Jesus, let's learn about his Goals.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:37-38)

The goal of any farmer is the harvest. That's why they prepare the soil. That's why they plant the seed. That's why they cultivate. That's why they water and fertilize.

What is the harvest for Jesus? You! You and I are the harvest. The harvest is all the people who will live with Jesus forever in his kingdom. That's why Jesus is the Lord of the Harvest.

The harvest, we're told is plentiful. It's not just you and I – It's a whole lot of others.

When we started though, we mentioned something important: The harvest does not walk into the barn all by itself. Workers must go out and help.

Now, notice something. The first thing we learned about Jesus was his methods. The first thing we learned about his methods was that he went. He went to teach, to proclaim, and to heal. Remember, personal contact appears to be a very important part of the process for this master farmer.

Jesus knew that one day he would have to leave. So, the things he did, he did as an example. He wanted to train his disciples to follow in his footsteps. We'll learn all about that in the next chapter.

In the meantime, Jesus says something very interesting: He said, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

It's interesting because it's not what we would expect. Jesus could have said, "The Harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So, YOU go out into the harvest." But that's not what he said. He said, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

What does that mean for us? That means we must start with prayer. It is so tempting to start with doing instead of praying. But Jesus tells us to start with prayer. In particular, ask that he will raise up people who can go in the way that he went. Now, in other places, there is certainly encouragement for all of us to be part of the harvesting process in some way. However, we all start with prayer.

You say, “but I don’t know how to pray!” Jesus says here that we can start by asking the Lord of the Harvest to send workers into his field. If you need more, come visit us. We have a weekly prayer meeting that you can join. We’ll teach you how!

Let’s pull this all together.

Conclusion

Today, we’ve learned some things about Jesus.

We learned about his methods.

- He started by going out himself.
- He taught and proclaimed and healed.
- He did all these things in a way that involved personal contact.
- That’s important to him.

We learned about his heart.

- He has compassion for the hurting.
- He sees the crowd as wandering sheep who need a shepherd.
- And he is the good Shepherd.

Finally, we saw his goals.

- His goal is the harvest.
- The harvest is you and me and lots of others.
- We are to pray that he will send out workers.

What kind of man is this? What kind of man is Jesus? He is Lord of the Harvest.

Let’s make him our Lord and join him as he reaches the world.

Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church: www.TrinityTeaneck.org

Phil’s Site: PhilBrainerd.com

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham’s site: PeaceWithGod.net