

Bible Study
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People were amazed by Jesus miracles. Jesus healed a blind man and mute man. He continued to do miracles through all the cities and villages proclaiming the kingdom of heaven.

Word Studies:

Teaching –

to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting, *teach*¹

According to the unanimous witness of the Gospels διδάσκειν was one of the most prominent functions of Jesus in His public ministry. Thus in Mt. 4:23, in a comprehensive reference to His wandering ministry in Galilee, we first read that He taught in the synagogues, and only then do we read that He proclaimed the glad tidings of the βασιλεία and healed the sick. Cf. also Mt. 9:35; 11:1. The synagogues are continually mentioned as the places of instruction (Mt. 9:35; 12:9 ff.; 13:54 and par².; Mk. 1:21; Lk. 4:15; Jn. 18:20 etc.), or the temple in Jerusalem (Mk. 12:35; Lk. 21:37; Mt. 26:55 and par³., though cf. Jn. 7:14 ff.; 8:20), where there was a special synagogue to which there might well be attached the house of instruction mentioned in T⁴. Sukk^{5a}, 4, 5,²⁶³ since most synagogues provided facilities for instructional purposes (^{7j} Meg⁸., 73d, 23).²⁹⁴ In any case, orderly teaching could be given in the temple. The Evangelists are certainly agreed that a great deal of what has been handed down concerning Jesus consists in

¹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 241.

²par. parallel.

³par. parallel.

⁴T. Tosefta (Strack, *Einl.*, 74 ff.), ed. G. Kittel-H. Rengstorff, 1933 ff.

⁵Sukka Sukka, Mishnah-, Tosefta-, Talmud tractate *Tabernacles*.

⁶²³ G. Dalman, *Orte und Wege Jesu*³ (1924), 317, seems inclined to regard the two as independent.

^{7j} Jahwist.

⁸Meg. *Megilla*, Mishnah-, Tosefta-, Talmud tractate *Esther Scroll* (reading for the feast of Purim) (Strack, *Einl.*, 43).

⁹²⁴ Cf. Str.-B., II, 150.

teaching material.

b. The form in which Jesus teaches is that of a Jewish teacher of the period. It is true that we are not always told concerning the externalities of the teaching of Jesus. This was hardly necessary, since one part of the Church for which the Gospels were written already knew the customs followed from their own observation, and the other part was not interested in the form but in the all-important content. We do at least have information about what happened in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4:16 ff.). After the reading of the Scripture portion (Is. 61:1 f.), which took place standing,²¹⁰⁵ Jesus seated Himself like other expositors of the time²¹¹⁶ and based His address on the passage just read (Lk. 4:21 ff.). This handling of a text is “teaching” for later Judaism. Hence it is quite apposite that in the brief reference to the incident at Nazareth in Mt. 13:53 ff. and par¹². the absolute διδάσκειν should be used, though it can be omitted in Lk. 4:16 ff. because the matter is plain enough without it (Mt. 13:54; Mk. 6:2). The same practice of sitting to teach is mentioned by Mt. in 5:1 at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, by Mk. in 9:35 when Jesus gave instruction to the Twelve on the occasion of their quarreling for supremacy, and by Lk. in 5:3 at the beginning of the discourse by the lake.²¹³⁷ It is thus with good reason that Jewish tradition concerning the teaching of Jesus also speaks in terms of תּוֹרָה (b¹⁴. A¹⁵Z, 17a).

c. If the external form of the teaching of Jesus is within the framework of later Judaism, the same is true of the matter. At Nazareth (Lk. 4:16 ff.) He uses a saying of Isaiah as a basis or starting-point. In other cases we have exposition of the Torah (Mt. 5:21 ff.; 15:3 ff.; 22:37 ff. and par¹⁶.; cf. also 22:23ff.). On the other hand, He does not restrict His teaching to exposition of the Law. For one thing, He is against estimation of the Law merely for its own sake. For another, He stands in irreconcilable opposition to the lifeless casuistry which does not start with the situation of the one who needs the counsel of experts in the religious sphere but, irrespective of his own questions, subjects him to its own principle and system,²¹⁷⁸ bringing about religious separation from those who for practical reasons²¹⁸⁹ or for conscience sake cannot allow themselves to be bound by it.³¹⁹⁰ The whole teaching of Jesus is with a view to the ordering of life with

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 161.

¹¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 185. Cf. Lk. 2:46.

¹² par. parallel.

¹³²⁷ Cf. also Jn. 8:2, where Jesus sits to teach the people.

¹⁴b. Babylonian Talmud when before tractates from the Mishnah.

¹⁵AZ *Aboda Zara*, Mishnah-, Tosefta-, Talmud tractate *Idolatry* (Strack, *Einl.*, 54).

¹⁶ par. parallel.

¹⁷²⁸ To this there belongs the whole complex of oral tradition which as הלכה למשה מסיני (cf. Strack, *Einl.*, 7) is no less highly estimated than the written Law; this included the handwashings which were by no means generally recognised at the time of Jesus (cf. Mt. 15:2; though cf. also Mk. 7:3) but formed part of the Pharisaic programme of purification (Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu*, II, B, 1 [1929], 121).

¹⁸²⁹ This would include the bulk of the people, who did not have the necessary knowledge of the Law (צִם־הֶאָרֶץ).

¹⁹³⁰ Like Jesus Himself (Mt. 15:3 ff.).

reference to God and one's neighbour (Mt. 22:37 ff. and par²⁰; cf. 19:16ff. and par²¹). Thus His teaching constantly appeals to the will, calling for a practical decision either for the will of God or against it. He finds a common basis with the Rabbis and the Pharisaic community in the fact that He sees a revelation of the will of God in Scripture and especially in the Law (→ νόμος), so that it is quite impossible for Him to surrender even a single letter (Mt. 5:17 f.). On the other hand, He is distinguished from these groups by the fact that for Him the Law and the whole of Scripture cannot be so restricted in meaning as to be the only way to enter into and to remain in contact with God. For Him the Law and Scripture are rather a confirmation of His own relationship to the Father.³²²¹ Thus the gap between Jesus and the Rabbis in respect of the subject of teaching is to be found, not in the matter itself, but in His own person, i.e., in the fact of His self-awareness as the Son. This is why His teaching, whether in the form of exposition or otherwise, causes astonishment among His hearers (Mt. 7:28; 13:53 and par²³. etc.): ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων, καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν (Mt. 7:29; Mk. 1:22).³²⁴²

Yet this is also the point which gives final meaning to the absolute use of διδάσκειν in relation to His teaching, even though Jesus rejects the absolutising of the Law historically presupposed by the word in view of its Semitic equivalent תּוֹרָה. This rejection is to be viewed simply as the repudiation of an aberration. In opposition to it, Jesus resumes the true line of תּוֹרָה in the διδάσκειν attributed to Him. For He is again advancing the claim of God to the whole man in a way which does not allow either contradiction or theoretical reflection. This is a total claim which is not bound to any intermediary authority and which is completely independent of the perception of the one who is claimed. This claim, which has as its goal the education and reformation of man according to the will of God (cf. Mt. 5:48), becomes a reality in the teaching of Jesus. For this reason He is the end of the Law as the Rabbis conceived it, i.e., as the basis and theme of scribal instruction and the way by which man may painfully attain to God (R. 10:4). These are the historico-linguistic reasons why early Christianity spoke of teaching in the absolute when in its tradition it referred to the teaching activity of Jesus among His people. His teaching was for it teaching in the absolute because with every word He brought His hearers into direct confrontation with the will of God as it is revealed in His Word and as it is constantly revealed in history.²⁵

²⁰ par. parallel.

²¹ par. parallel.

²²³¹ Cf. Schl. Gesch. d. Chr., 280 f.

²³ par. parallel.

²⁴³² This last statement also excludes the possibility that the subject of διδάσκειν is the knowledge of salvation imparted thereby (cf. also Cr.-Kö., 292). This is certainly true of the διδάσκειν of Jesus. In any case, the phrase knowledge of salvation has an accent which contradicts the very essence of תּוֹרָה//διδάσκειν.

²⁵ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 139–141.

Synagogues- a place of assembly [Ⓐ] of the Jewish *synagogue* (it is used for a place of assembly for Jews ²⁶

a. Teaching the Law. The meaning and purpose of the synagogue derive from the central importance the Torah and Halachah came to have in Judaism. Without the Law there would have been no synagogues.¹³²⁷⁸ The extraordinarily high evaluation of legal piety forced the synagogues into the service of the teaching and propagation of the Law. In seeking to make the Jewish community acquainted with the Law the synagogues of the Dispersion do not differ from those in the mother country, nor do those of N²⁸T days differ from the synagogues of other periods. The synagogue is undoubtedly many other things, but it is primarily the place of the Torah, which is to be read and taught, heard and learned here²⁹

Proclaim

to make public declarations, *proclaim aloud*, of proclamation that is divine in origin or relates to divinity³⁰

Gospel-

God's good news to humans, *good news*

Jesus.

Jesus is the One who brings the good news of the expected last time. To the question of the Baptist He replies in Mt. 11:5 (= Lk. 7:22):¹⁰³¹⁸ τυφλοί ἀναβλέπουσιν καὶ χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, καὶ νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται καὶ

²⁶ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 963.

²⁷¹³⁸ Cf. Lv. r., 11 on 9:1 → 811, 6 f.

²⁸ NT New Testament.

²⁹ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 821.

³⁰ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 543.

³¹¹⁰⁸ On the genuineness of this verse v. Bultmann Trad., 22, 115, 163.

πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται.¹⁰³²⁹ The whole sentence finds its climax in the πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται. The message actualises the new time and makes possible the signs of Messianic fulfilment. The Word brings in the divine rule. This is no longer understood in some MSS. Thus Θφ sy^c rate the resurrection of the dead higher than the proclamation of the Gospel and therefore they change the order.¹¹³³⁰ The answer which Jesus gives to the Baptist is that the longed for time is now dawning, that the eschatological good news expected from the days of Dt. Is³⁴. is now being proclaimed, and that the Word has power and brings into effect what is spoken. Word and miracle, the proclamation of the glad tidings and the resurrection of the dead (→ 717; 720), are signs of the Messianic age. εὐαγγελίζεσθαι is also found on the lips of Jesus in Lk. 4:18, 43 and 16:16. According to Lk. 4:18 Jesus in His sermon at Nazareth applied Is. 61:1 to Himself. Lk. 16:16: ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίζεται (→ 719), may not be authentic in this form, since it is hard to put it back into Aram³⁵,¹¹³⁶¹ the pass³⁷. of ΤΨΔ meaning “to receive news” rather than “to be proclaimed.” On the other hand, if Lk. is responsible, he shows an accurate perception. The task of Jesus was to proclaim the → βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. This was His mission, His sacred duty (Lk. 4:43; cf. 1 C. 1:17; 9:16 ff. → 719). The presence of the kingdom of God means joy.

Synonymous with εὐαγγελίζεσθαι is → κηρύσσειν (Lk. 4:43 f. compared with Mk. 1:38; Lk. 8:1; v³⁸. Lk. 20:1: διδάσκειν and εὐαγγελίζεσθαι). The phrase κηρύσσειν καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ (Lk. 8:1) gives us a comprehensive picture of the whole activity of Jesus. His whole life was proclamation of the Gospel. Hence His birth is an εὐαγγέλιον, Lk. 2:10 (→ 721). Eph. 2:17: καὶ ἔλθων εὐηγγελίσαστο εἰρήνην

³²¹⁰⁹ Mt. 11:5 is a quotation from Is. 35:5 and 61:1 with the additions “the lepers are cleansed” and “the dead are raised.” There are similar quotations in Apc. Elias 33:1 ff. (TU, NF, 2, 2 [1899], 89); Lidz. Joh., 76 (II, 243); Lidz. Ginza r., I, 201 (p. 30); II, 1, 136 (p. 48); Slav. Jos. Bell., 1, 364 ff. But the decisive word εὐαγγελίζεσθαι does not occur. Thus Slav. Jos. Bell., 1, 364 ff. has instead: Among the anointed it was determined “to make the rich poor,” in addition to making the lame to walk and the blind to see; Lidz. Ginza r., I, 201 (p. 30) has: “He converts the Jews,” and *ibid.*, II, 1, 136 (p. 48): “He wins believers among the Jews,” which might perhaps correspond to εὐαγγελίζεσθαι. Cf. R. Reitzenstein, “Das mandäische Buch des Herrn der Grösse und die Ev-Überlieferung” (SAH, 1919, 12), 61; H. Schaeder, in R. Reitzenstein and H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus* (1926), 333. Mt. 11:5 can hardly be dependent on the Mandaeen writings. R. Reitzenstein, *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium* (1921), 111, n. 1; ZNW, 26 (1927), 51, 55 f.; A. Allgeier, *Theologische Revue*, 20 (1921), 181; H. Gressmann, ZKG, NF, 3 (1922), 188; M. Goguel, Jean Baptiste (1928), 125 f.; H. Lietzmann, SAB, 1930, 596 ff.; Bultmann Trad., 22, n. 2; H. Schlier, ThR, NF, 5 (1933), 9 ff., 69.

³³¹¹⁰ Schn. Euang., XII A.

³⁴Dt. Is. Deutero-Isaiah.

³⁵Aram. Aramaic.

³⁶¹¹¹ Dalman WJ, I, 84.

³⁷pass. passive.

³⁸v. vide.

ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς. The coming of Jesus to earth, His life and death, were the great message of peace, the great proclamation of peace. His manifestation, not merely His preaching but His whole work, is described in terms of εὐαγγελίζεσθαι. The context shows this. In v³⁹. 16 the reference is to His death. In v⁴⁰. 14 He is peace, and His manifestation is the proclamation of peace. He makes peace between God and man and between man and man (→ 415 f.). On Ac. 10:36 → 721. Since in 1 Pt. 3:19 it is said of Jesus: καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν, we must refer the νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη of 1 Pt. 4:6 to Jesus. Even to the dead the good news is brought (→ 717, n. 10⁴¹⁵) that they might be saved and live.⁴² Compassion-

have pity, feel sympathy

In these parables of Jesus human emotions are described in the strongest of terms in order to bring out the totality of mercy or wrath with which God claims man in His saving acts.³⁴³⁰ In the third passage taken from the oldest stratum of the Synoptic tradition, the illustrative parable of the good Samaritan, σπλαγχνίζομαι is shown to be the basic and decisive attitude in human and hence in Christian acts: Σαμαρίτης δὲ τις ὁδεύων ἤλθεν κατ' αὐτὸν καὶ ἰδὼν ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, Lk. 10:33.⁴⁴

Distressed-

weary, harass

“Used here of the common people, it describes their religious condition. They were harassed, importuned, bewildered by those who should have taught them; hindered

³⁹v. verse.

⁴⁰v. verse.

⁴¹105 Pirqe Mashiach (Beth ha-Midrash, 3, 73, 17) in Str.-B., III, 10c: “In that hour he will draw near and bring good news (ומבשר) to those who sleep in the twofold grave, and will say to them: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, arise, you have slept enough. And they will answer him and say: Who is it who has taken off the dust (of the grave) from us? And he will say to them: I am the Messiah of Yahweh, salvation has drawn near, the hour has come. And they will answer him, If this is truly so, then go and bring the good news to the first man, that he may arise first ... Then the first man will arise at once, and his whole generation, and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the righteous, and all the patriarchs and all generations from one end of the earth to the other, and they will raise the voice of joy and singing, for it is said, How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings, Is. 52:7.”

⁴² Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 718–719.

⁴³³⁰ Braun, 126.

⁴⁴ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 554.

from entering into the kingdom of heaven (23:13), laden with the burdens which the Pharisees laid upon them⁴⁵

Dispirited

w. no connotation of violence, but context may indicate some degree of rapidity, *put/lay someth*⁴⁶. *down*⁴⁷ **Mt 9:36** (of animals lying on the ground

Sheep- The more general senses 'cattle' or 'small cattle' scarcely merit serious attention for our lit⁴⁸, though they are barely poss⁴⁹. in certain passages.) **Mt 12:11f; 18:12; Lk 15:4, 6** (on this parable: GNordberg, SEÅ 1, '37, 55–63); **Rv 18:13**; ⁵⁰B 16:5 (E⁵¹n 89:54ff); GJ⁵²s 18:3 (codd.). As a sacrificial animal 1 C⁵³I 4:1 (Gen 4:4); **J 2:14f.** πρόβατα σφαγῆς *sheep to be slaughtered* **Ro 8:36** (Ps 43:23). Defenseless in the midst of wolves **Mt 10:16**. In danger without a shepherd⁵⁴

Harvest - of persons to be won **Mt 9:37f; Lk 10:2**. In **J 4:35b** the evangelist may be combining an agricultural observation with a statement about the apostolic mission πρὸς θερισμόν in pass⁵⁵. sense of *undergoing a reaping*.⁵⁶

Beseech- of petition to God

⁴⁵ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Mt 9:36.

⁴⁶*someth. someth.* = something

⁴⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 906.

⁴⁸lit. **lit.** = literal(ly); literature (references to [scholarly] literature)

⁴⁹poss. **poss.** = possible

⁵⁰**B B** = Barnabas (the Letter of), II A.D., except in series of uncial witnesses, in which case B refers to Codex Vaticanus (s. also Vat.). When the abbrv. B would be ambiguous, Vat. is used for the codex.—List 1

⁵¹En **En** = I Enoch—List 2

⁵²GJs **GJs** = Gospel of James (Protevangelium Jacobi), II A.D.—List 1

⁵³1 Cl **1 Cl** = 1 Clement—List 1

⁵⁴ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 866.

⁵⁵pass. **pass.** = passive (either of grammatical form or of passive experience); also used in reference to literary portion=passage

⁵⁶ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 453.

Workers - one who is engaged in work, *worker, laborer*

really means to drive out, to push out, to draw out with violence or without. Prayer is the remedy offered by Jesus in this crisis for a larger ministerial supply. How seldom do we hear prayers for more preachers. Sometimes God literally has to push or force a man into the ministry who resists his known duty⁵⁷

Commentary Studies

The pericope falls into three parts: (1) the formulaic summary of Jesus' ministry (v 35), expressed by the three parallel participles (διδάσκων, κηρύσσων, θεραπεύων, "teaching, proclaiming, healing"); (2) the statement about the compassion of Jesus for the crowds, together with the quotation of Num 27:17 (v 36); and (3) the harvest and the need of workers, divided into (a) a description of the need in parallel clauses (v 37) and (b) the call for prayer for the meeting of that need (v 38).

35 See the *Comment* on 4:23, where this verse is found almost verbatim. The summary occurs again here in order once more to state the essence of the ministry of Jesus. περιῆγεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς πόλεις πάσας καὶ τὰς κώμας, "Jesus went about all the cities and the villages," shows that Matthew, like the other evangelists, has only given a representative sampling of the words and deeds of Jesus. The word πάσας, "all," here, as in its occurrences at the end of the verse, is again hyperbolic and symbolic. The healing ministry of Jesus (θεραπεύων, "healing") to which Matthew has just devoted so much attention and space in his Gospel is once more considered secondary to the prior references to teaching (διδάσκων) and proclaiming (κηρύσσων). See too 11:1, where διδάσκειν καὶ κηρύσσειν, "teaching and preaching," but not healing, are mentioned. At the heart of all the words and deeds of Jesus is τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας, "the gospel of the kingdom" (the phrase also occurs not only in 4:23 but also in 24:14).

36 At some unspecified moment Jesus, surveying the crowds that now followed him everywhere, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, "was moved with pity"—a strong word describing deep compassion. The word is used again to describe Jesus' response to need in 14:14; 15:32; 20:34 (cf. 18:27). Whereas in these instances the compassion is caused by quite specific needs, here the cause is expressed only in general terms: ὅτι ἦσαν ἐσκυλμένοι καὶ ἐρριμμένοι, "for they were harassed and confused." σκύλλειν, which occurs in Matthew only here (cf. Mark 5:35; Luke 7:6; 8:49), means "to bother" or "to harass." ῥίπτειν elsewhere in the NT always means "to throw" (cf. 15:30; 27:5) and here is perhaps used metaphorically to mean something like "confused" or "exhausted" (cf. BAGD, 736b, "lying down"; NJB: "dejected"). The reference to "sheep who have no shepherd" is a common OT image that occurs, for example, in Num 27:17; 2 Chr 18:16; and Jdt 11:19. All these passages agree verbatim: ὡς (Num 27:17, ὡσεὶ) πρόβατα οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν

⁵⁷ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Mt 9:38–Mt 10.

ποιμήν (cf. Zech 10:2); but none agrees exactly with Matthew's ὡσεὶ πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα. The 2 Chr 18:16 passage (cf. 1 Kgs 22:17) is suggestive in its reference to those who "have no master." What causes Jesus' deep compassion at this point is not the abundance of sickness he has seen but rather the great spiritual need of the people, whose lives have no center, whose existence seems aimless, whose experience is one of futility. The whole Gospel is a response to just this universal human need. (Cf. the reference to the gospel being sent out to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" [10:6; 15:24]; cf. 18:12, "the lost sheep"; and 26:31, the "scattering of the sheep"; cf. 1 Pet 2:25.) Jesus, as the promised messianic ruler, is to "shepherd" his people Israel (2:6, a quotation of Mic 5:1; cf. Ezek 34:23; 37:24). In relation to the concern of the following verses with the need of workers, Ezek 34:6 may be in view: "my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them" (cf. Isa 53:6). Jesus himself is the shepherd of his people according to many NT references (cf. 25:32; 26:31; John 10:11–16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25).

37–38 In the light of the great need of the people and just prior to the sending out of the twelve, Jesus refers to the harvest and the need of workers. The saying has a somewhat rabbinic tone (cf. its counterpart in m 'Abot 2:15). ὁ θερισμὸς πολὺς, "the harvest is large," points distinctly to the present era of fulfillment, the era of the proclamation of the kingdom. "Harvest," like "kingdom of God," has inevitable eschatological associations but cannot mean the eschatological judgment, as it means elsewhere (e.g., Rev 14:15; cf. Matt 13:24–30; esp., 13:39, "the harvest is the close of the age"). But the eschatological tone of the word has an unquestionable urgency about it. There are many yet to be reached with the gospel of the kingdom, and the mission of Jesus must be carried on by his disciples (cf. 10:1), yet few in number, and other workers. The prayer of v 38 is that God himself ("Lord of the harvest") will also raise up others, like those of Matthew's church, to carry on the work of proclaiming the presence of the kingdom. That work is finally τὸν θερισμὸν αὐτοῦ, "his harvest," the work of the Lord of the harvest and not that of human beings.

Explanation

Matthew has concluded his presentation of the first discourse (the Sermon on the Mount) and the collection of stories concerning Jesus' mighty deeds (chaps. 8–9)—the sovereign authority of Jesus in word and deed—and returns to the general characterization of the ministry of Jesus with which he began (4:23). He calls attention once again to the teaching, proclaiming, and healing of Jesus by means of a summary statement. The center of Jesus' activity is "the good news of the kingdom." His words and deeds, indeed his very person, point to and presuppose that reality. The crowds, who think mainly of their physical maladies, have a more serious need of which those maladies are but indicators. The real need of these troubled and bewildered people, who have no master to lead them out of their plight, is met by the fundamental reality Jesus has come to bring. But a universal need of this kind, a harvest this great, requires workers to extend the proclamation of the good news. The small band of disciples is about to be sent out to that specific end. But the Christians of Matthew's church are

themselves the workers sent by the Lord of the harvest. And so, as we shall see, they along with the disciples are addressed in the discourse of Jesus to be presented in 10:5–42. The prayer for workers is thus directed to and answered by the Church of every generation. As the harvest continues, so too does the need for workers.⁵⁸

THE MISSIONARY TASK (9:35–8)

This passage offers the reader three images of Jesus. The first is of him wandering about cities and villages, carrying out his ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing (v. 35). The second is of him seeking the crowds and feeling compassion for them (v. 36). The third is of him speaking to his disciples, explaining to them the situation and what they must do (vv. 37–8). Notice that the three images become increasingly contracted. We go from Jesus wandering about cities and villages, to Jesus seeing the crowds, to Jesus speaking to his disciples. In this way the narrative naturally gives rise to 10:1–42. The task that the twelve are to perform (vv. 37–8 + 10:1–42) is rooted in Jesus' compassion for the multitude (v. 36) and results from the need for the ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing to be carried out by more than one individual (v. 35).

35. The missionary work of the disciples is introduced by describing the missionary work of Jesus. This is because the two tasks are of a piece. The disciples of Jesus are to do what Jesus did.

καὶ περιῆγεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς πόλεις πάσας καὶ τὰς κώμας διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν. This, with minor variations, reproduces 4:23 (to which Matthew's mind turned because of Mk 6:6b: 'and he went among the villages teaching'). On the *inclusio* created by the two verses see on 4:23 and 1, p. 224. On the meaning of 'teaching' and 'preaching' in Matthew see pp. 414–15. Observe that after the main verb and its clause (καὶ περιῆγεν κ.τ.λ.) the evangelist gives us three participles followed (in the Greek) by four or five words:

- teaching—in their synagogues
- preaching—the gospel of the kingdom
- healing—every disease and every infirmity

The balance gives the verse a nice rhythm.

36. Having travelled through cities and villages (v. 35), Jesus knows the condition of the multitudes: they are lost. His response to this sad fact is neither anger nor resignation. Rather is it compassion and action. He sees the people as though they were sheep without a shepherd. He sees them as victims, as harassed and cast down. And, in accordance with his messianic mission, he seeks to help.

ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους. So also 5:1 (q.v.). Compare Mk 6:34.

⁵⁸ Hagner, D. A. (1998). *Matthew 1–13* (Vol. 33A, pp. 259–261). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

ἐσπλαγγνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν. Mk 6:34 has ἐπ' αὐτούς. On περὶ + the genitive after verbs of emotion see BDF § 229:2; contrast 14:14 and 15:32. The verb is from the noun, σπλαγγνα, which means 'entrails', 'compassion'. Its usage in the gospels is to be explained by the Hebrew *riham*. Because σπλαγγνίζομαι is used positively in several dominical parables (18:27, Lk 10:33; 15:20), one suspects that the tradition applied to Jesus a word which had been given special meaning by his speech.

ὅτι ἦσαν ἐσκυλμένοι καὶ ἐρριμμένοι. The last three words are a redactional addition without parallel in Mk 6:34. ἐσκυλμένοι means 'harassed' (see Allen, p. 99). ἐρριμμένοι means, literally, 'lying on the ground' (see *BAGD*, s.v., ῥίπτω 2); but here it must mean something like 'helpless'. Perhaps 'cast down' is the best equivalent. Do the passives imply a subject (the political and religious leaders)?

ὡσεὶ πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα. So Mk 6:34 (omitted in Mt 14:14). ὡς(εἰ) πρόβατα οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν ποιμὴν appears three times in the LXX: Num 27:17, 2 Chr 18:16, and Jth. 11:19. Compare also 3 bas22:17, Ezek 34:5–6; Josephus, *Ant.* 8:404; and 2 Bar. 77:13 ('the shepherds of Israel have perished'). Matthew has moved the words from their place in Mark (6:34) because they link up so well with the imperative in 10:6: 'Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (cf. also 9:33 and 15:24).

ποιμὴν is used three times in Matthew, in 9:36, in 25:32, and in 26:31. In 25:32 Jesus, as the eschatological judge, acts like a shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats. In 26:31 Jesus is the shepherd of Zech 13:7, and, being struck, his sheep (= the disciples) are scattered. Probably implicit in 9:36 is the notion that Israel is waiting for her true shepherd, Messiah Jesus. The evangelist has already asserted, on the basis of OT texts, that the Messiah will 'shepherd' Israel (2:6), and there is some evidence that 'shepherd' carried messianic connotations in Judaism (Jer 3:15, 23:4, Ezek 34:23–4, 37:24, Ps. Sol. 17:40; *Midr. Ps.* on 29:1). Is not Jesus the messianic shepherd, whose responsibility it is to gather eschatological Israel?

Is there also a Mosaic typology in the background of 9:36? Moses was a shepherd (Exod 3:1; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 1:60–6; Josephus, *Ant.* 2:263–4; LAB 19:3, 9); and in Num 27:17 it is the departure of Moses which occasions the concern that Israel might become 'like sheep which have no shepherd'. When one also recalls that there are certainly places in Matthew where Jesus is one like Moses and that some Jews no doubt expected the last redeemer (Messiah) to be like the first redeemer (Moses), the reader should perhaps think that Jesus the shepherd is taking up a Mosaic office when he seeks out the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The notice that Israel appeared to Jesus as shepherdless sheep harmonizes well with our author's estimate of the Jewish leadership. The scribes and the Pharisees and the others in positions of power and responsibility have, for Matthew, not performed properly, and they are one of the major causes of the people's downfall. Compare Chrysostom, *Hom. on Mt.* 32:4: Jesus' words are a 'charge against the rulers of the Jews, that being shepherds they acted the part of wolves. For so far from amending the multitude, they even marred their progress'.

37. τότε λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ. τότε + λέγει is distinctively Matthean (Mt: 12; Mk: 0; Lk: 0). Lk 10:2 has: ἔλεγεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς. According to Gundry, *Commentary*,

p. 181, Matthew's historical present 'makes Jesus' following words an address to the church'. Compare Sand, *Mattäus*, p. 207: the tense adds emphasis.

ὁ μὲν θερισμὸς πολὺς, οἱ δὲ ἔργαται ὀλίγοι. So Lk 10:2. Compare Gos. Thom. 73. The agreement with Luke in this clause and the next indicates a common written source. For other ὀλίγοσ/πολύς contrasts see 7:13–14, 22:14, Lk 7:47, 12:48, 2 Cor 8:15.

Everywhere else in the synoptic tradition, as in the prophets and Jewish apocalyptic literature, the harvest is typically a metaphor for the divine judgement, and the harvesters, those that gather, are God and the angels (Isa 18:4, 27:12, Jer 51:53, Hos 6:11, Joel. 3:13, Mt 3:12, 13:30, 39, Mk 4:26–9, 13:27, Rev 14:14–20, 4 Ezra 4:26–37, 9:17; 2 Bar. 70:l–2; *b. B. Meṣ.* 83b; *Midr. Ps.* on 8:l). Here, however, the harvest is a metaphor for mission, and the disciples of Jesus, with their preaching of the kingdom, are the harvesters. So the eschatological harvest has been moved from the future to the present (cf. Dodd, *Parables*, pp. 143–4). This is some reason for urging that 9:37f. contains an authentic saying of Jesus. On its connexion with Jn. 4:35 see Dodd (v).

m. Abot 2:15 reads: 'R. Tarfon said: The day is short and the task is great and the labourers are idle and the wage is abundant and the master of the house is urgent'. This saying probably shows us that the application of harvest imagery to a pressing task was traditional. At the same time, the application in the gospels appears to be new. Time is short not because life is short but because the kingdom is at hand.

Because the harvest is, in the OT and other Jewish sources, so frequently associated with eschatological themes, and because the connexion is maintained in the NT, including Matthew, 9:37f. puts what follows in an eschatological context. The mission of the twelve and of the post-Easter church belongs to the latter days. It is not simply a prelude to the end but itself part of the complex of events that make up the end. This means that the evangelist and his community perceived their own time as eschatological time. See further on 10:17–24.

38. Having observed the tragic situation—the harvest is great, the labourers few—, Jesus does not weep and grieve but asks for prayer. Faith responds to the situation of crisis by turning towards God (cf. 24:20, 26:41). This is because 'man cannot create the new situation that is necessary; God alone will choose his messengers' (Schweizer, *Matthew*, p. 234).

δεήθητε οὖν τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ θερισμοῦ ὅπως ἐκβάλῃ ἔργατας εἰς τὸν θερισμὸν αὐτοῦ. So Lk 10:2. Compare Gos. Thom. 73 and *m. Ma'as.* 3:2 (*hammôṣî pô-âlim laśśādeh*). The Lord of the harvest is clearly God, not Jesus.

Because the disciples of 9:37 are most naturally identified with the twelve (see 10:1–4), the 'workers' (ἔργατας; cf. 10:10) are probably, in Matthew's mind, to be identified with the missionaries of the post-Easter period. If so, their existence is clearly an answer to prayer. Which is to say: not only is the post-Easter mission grounded in the

activities of Jesus and the twelve, it is also grounded in the prayer request of Christ the Lord.⁵⁹

As a whole this section is peculiar to Matthew. Some expressions about Jesus going about preaching are paralleled in Mark and Luke but in different contexts. Matthew is giving a summary of a good deal of Jesus' activity, and he may well have embodied in it isolated sayings from other contexts. Verse 35 is very similar to 4:23, and it may be that the two are meant to bracket the intervening section on the authority of Jesus for teaching and healing. But perhaps it is more likely that for Matthew each passage forms an introduction to an important section on the teaching of Jesus. Here he goes on to bring out the compassion of the Master and his call to prayer for the sending out of those who would bring in the spiritual harvest.

35. The verb *went around* is in the imperfect, pointing to a continuing process (cf. Moffatt, "made a tour"), while the combination of *the cities* and *the villages*, reinforced as it is by *all*, indicates a comprehensive activity. This is what Jesus kept doing. Matthew does not say explicitly that this tour took place in Galilee, but this is to be understood. There is no indication that Jesus journeyed into Judea or the region east of the Jordan. Jesus' tour of the area was one in which he proclaimed *the gospel of the kingdom* and healed all kinds of illnesses (the same program that preceded the Sermon on the Mount, 4:23). The *synagogues* were places of instruction as well as of worship; they were a natural place in which a teacher would do his work. *Their* has no discernible antecedent, but it perhaps distances Jesus from the synagogue establishment: it was *their* synagogue, not his (cf. 7:29; 10:17). For *proclaiming* see on 3:1, and for *the gospel of the kingdom* on 4:23. The good news Jesus brought was about *the kingdom*; Matthew does not say what kingdom or whose, but that Jesus was proclaiming the rule of God is plain enough. And he healed *every disease and every sickness*, which may mean every illness that was brought to him, or "every kind of disease and sickness" (GNB). It is a comprehensive expression that brings out Jesus' mastery over all ill health. Matthew has a threefold description of Jesus' ministry: teaching, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing.

36. *When he saw the crowds* looks like a reference to a specific occasion, but if so, Matthew does not say when or where. The main thing is that Jesus *had compassion* on them (this is said of Jesus again in 14:14; 15:32; 20:34). In the New Testament this verb is always used of Jesus or by Jesus in his parables; it is particularly associated with him. H. Köster comments, "outside the original parables of Jesus there is no instance of the word being used of men. It is always used to describe the attitude of Jesus and it characterises the divine nature of His acts." He finds in Matthew's use of the term "a

⁵⁹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (Vol. 2, pp. 146–150). London; New York: T&T Clark International.

Messianic characterisation of Jesus rather than the mere depiction of an emotion” (TDNT, VII, pp. 553, 554). What we are to see here is not purely human pity, but divine compassion for troubled people. Matthew goes on to use two picturesque expressions to bring out the plight of those who were the object of Jesus’ compassion. The translations employ a variety of expressions: “worried and helpless” (GNB); “harassed and helpless” (NRSV, REB, NIV); “distressed and downcast” (NASB); “harassed and dejected” (JB). The imagery is that of shepherdless sheep, sheep wounded and torn either by hostile animals or by thornbushes and the like, and then prostrate and helpless. *Harassed* is probably as good a translation as we can find for the first term, while *cast down* is almost exactly what the second conveys. This picture of people completely without resource is rounded off by explicitly likening them to *sheep without a shepherd*, an expression used of the Old Testament people of God (Num. 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron. 18:16; Zech. 10:2) Sheep are defenseless animals. Without a shepherd they are vulnerable to any attack. Even without predators they are in trouble if they have no shepherd, for they are not good foragers. They need a shepherd to lead them in green pastures and beside still waters (Ps. 23:2). Goats manage very well by themselves, but sheep do not. Sheep without a shepherd points to people who are in great danger and without the resources to escape from it.

37. For Matthew’s characteristic *then* see on 2:7; here it means “next in sequence.” *His disciples* is Matthew’s characteristic early use; this is what would be said at a time when it was necessary to distinguish Jesus’ followers from those of other teachers. *The harvest* may refer to a literal crop of grain or the like, but here it is used metaphorically of people. Jesus does not spell it out, but he is speaking of people who are ripe for inclusion in the kingdom. In that situation it is necessary that something be done to bring them in. A crop of wheat needs workers⁸⁹ to bring the grain into the barn; without the laborers the crop cannot be reaped. Jesus says that in the great harvest of which he is speaking *the workers are few*.

38. In that situation action is demanded. Jesus himself could be in only one place at a time; therefore, to reap the harvest he saw, he enlists the disciples to take part in the harvesting. *Therefore* means that the state of affairs indicated in the previous statement demands action. Because there are few workers for the great harvest it is incumbent on the disciples to do something. The particular action Jesus singles out is prayer. In an age like ours we would expect a call to more vigorous and effective action ourselves (and situations continually arise when that is the right course to pursue). But Jesus points to prayer as the really effective thing.⁹² No matter how great our personal exertion, we will not be able to gather in the whole harvest. Therefore we are to pray to him who can *send out* the workers who are needed. *The Lord* is used of God in a variety of ways (all of which bring out his superiority); here the term is related to the *harvest*. The harvest is already *his*. But it must be gathered in. It is one of the functions of the workers in God’s field that they pray for more workers to be sent into the field. Some exegetes see the thought of judgment here, for harvest is often used in connection with judgment. It has an obvious suitability, with the sickle cutting off the possibility of further growth and

development. But in this passage there is nothing to indicate judgment; the thought is rather that of the owner's care for his crop. He takes infinite pains over it.⁶⁰

More Laborers Needed

The works of Jesus in 8:1–9:35 must become those of his disciples in chapter 10.

9:35–36. Without Moses (Num 27:17) or a king (1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron 18:16) Israel had been said to be “without a shepherd,” or ruler. When Israel was without other faithful shepherds (religious leaders), God himself would become its shepherd (Ezek 34:11–16); the shepherd's ministry included feeding (34:2–3), healing (34:4) and bringing back the lost sheep (34:4–6). Matthew 9:36 thus also implies that those charged with shepherding Israel, its leaders, were failing.⁶¹

THE WORK OBSERVED (9:35–38)

9:35–38. In verse 35 Matthew summarized Jesus' threefold ministry (see comments on 4:23, with its almost identical wording). **Jesus** had been going **through all the towns and villages** of Israel, **teaching** and **preaching** about **the kingdom**. His **healing** ministry was for the purpose of authenticating His Person. The spectacular nature of Jesus' ministry attracted large **crowds**.

As Jesus observed the crowds, **He had compassion** toward **them**. The verb “to have compassion” (*splanchnizomai*) is used in the New Testament only by the Synoptic Gospel writers: five times in Matthew (9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34), four in Mark (1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22), and three in Luke (7:13; 10:33; 15:20; see comments on Luke 7:13). Suggesting strong emotion, it means “to feel deep sympathy.” The related noun *splanchna* (“sympathy, affection, or inward feelings”) is used once by Luke (1:78), eight times by Paul, and once by John (1 John 3:17).

Jesus saw that the people **were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd**. Like sheep bothered by wolves, lying down and unable to help themselves, and having no shepherd to guide and protect them, the people were maligned by the religious leaders, helpless before them, and wandering about with no spiritual guidance. The religious leaders, who should have been their shepherds, were keeping the sheep from following the true Shepherd. In response to the people's “helpless” condition, Jesus encouraged **His disciples** to beseech **the Lord of the harvest**, namely, God the Father, **to send out additional workers** (cf. Luke 10:2). **The harvest** was ready; for the

⁶⁰ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (pp. 238–240). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

⁶¹ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Mt 9:35–36). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

kingdom was at hand (Matt. 4:17). But additional laborers were necessary to complete the harvest.⁶²

All: this may not indicate that Jesus went to every city and village, since in Hebrew the word frequently refers to a large number. Matthew does not define what *cities and villages* are intended. The district of Galilee is specifically mentioned in 4:23, and in 11:21, 23 the three towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum are mentioned. Chorazin and Capernaum were actually in Galilee, while Bethsaida was across the Jordan River from Capernaum, in the district of Galanitis. But in any case it would appear that the *cities and villages* may loosely be identified as those of Galilee. If the translation must be specific, one may render “all the towns and villages of Galilee” or “all the towns and villages near Lake Galilee.”

Languages that do not have separate words for *cities* and *villages* can say “big towns” and “little towns,” or even “all the towns.” Some translators will find it difficult to keep the exaggerated style of Matthew, *all*, and will say “many of the towns.”

This first sentence will be handled in different ways. Some examples are “Jesus went to all the towns and villages (in the area)” and “Jesus visited the towns and villages of that area.”

Teaching ... every infirmity: see comments on 4:23. The two verses are essentially identical at this point.

Matthew 9:36

Saw may be “looked at” or “observed.”

Crowds may need to be “crowds of people.”

Had compassion translates a Greek verb which is used quite frequently in the Gospels. In Matthew it is found in 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34. The root meaning is “to be stirred up with feeling.” NJB renders “he felt sorry,” and NEB “the sight of the people moved him to pity.” NAB is similar to TEV, “his heart was moved with pity.” Other suggestions are “he was filled with compassion for them” or “pity for them filled him.” Many languages will have an idiom that describes this feeling of pity and love.

Harassed translates a participle derived from a verb stem which originally meant “flayed” or “skinned.” In the New Testament, however, it always has a figurative meaning: “troubled,” “harassed,” “worried,” or “bewildered,” or possibly “confused” or “upset.”

⁶² Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). Matthew. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 41). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Helpless also translates a Greek participle. It derives from a verb which originally means “throw away (or, down),” but Matthew quite obviously uses it in a figurative sense. NEB translates as TEV does; several others have “dejected” (AT, NJB, Brc), while Phps translates “miserable.” The two participles are represented in NAB as “They were lying prostrate from exhaustion,” which seems to squeeze too much from the etymology of the verb, for it is hardly conceivable that the people were actually lying on the ground, physically exhausted! In addition to a literal translation of *helpless*, other possible words are “defeated” or “vulnerable.”

The closest parallel to the expression *like sheep without a shepherd* is Numbers 27:17. But see also 1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chronicles 18:16; Isaiah 53:6; Ezekiel 34:5. This verse indicates that the call for laborers to go to the harvest (verses 37–38) is based upon the compassion of Jesus.

The simile *like sheep without a shepherd* can pose something of a problem in areas where sheep are not well known. It may be necessary to say “like animals that need to be watched, but have no one to take care of them.” However, since sheep occur so often in the Bible, most translators have tried to retain “sheep” where possible, perhaps calling them “domestic animals called sheep.” If possible, however, the sentence should not be too long or awkward.

Matthew 9:37

Then translates a particle which may mean either “at that time” or “next in sequence.” Matthew employs it rather frequently (90 times).

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few is probably a proverbial saying. The *plentiful* harvest can be “rich” or “huge.” In some languages one cannot speak of the harvest being big, but rather one must say “the crops that are ready to be harvested are abundant.”

Laborers can be “workers” or “people who work in the fields.” TEV uses an infinitive phrase to specify the work of the laborers: “*workers to gather it in.*” The basis for the inclusion of this information is found in the Greek text of verse 38 (“laborers into his harvest”). GeCL provides the same information, though in a different way: “Here is a rich harvest to gather in, but there are not enough workers.” Instead of saying they are *few*, it is possible to say “but there are only a few people to gather it in” or “but there are not enough people to bring it in.”

The *harvest* is a figure for people who are ready to be persuaded to trust in God, and there are translators who have said “These people are like crops in the field that are abundant and ready to be harvested. But there are only a few workers who can lead them to trust in God.”

Matthew 9:38

For comments on *pray*, see 5:44. It can be “you should pray” or left as an imperative *pray*. See TEV, for example. Of course in many languages one has to say “pray to the Lord of the harvest to ask him.”

Therefore or “so” should appear in the sentence wherever it will be most natural. Some languages do not need such a transition at all in this context.

Lord of the harvest (TEV “owner of the harvest”; see NEB) is translated “harvest master” by NAB. The person referred to is God. The TEV and NEB renderings have been the most useful models for translators.

The noun phrase *into his harvest* is translated as a verb phrase in GeCL 1st edition and TEV: “to gather in his harvest.” Elsewhere Matthew uses the *harvest* as a symbol of the final judgment (13:30, 39), but here the symbolism is slightly different. The harvest represents the masses of people who stand ready to respond to the message of salvation, and Jesus calls upon his followers to pray to God to send messengers who will proclaim the good news.

For those translators who choose to make the whole image into a simile (see verse 37), the *Lord* may be “God, who is like the owner of the harvest.” To *send out laborers into his harvest* will then be “to send out his servants (or, his people) to lead them to trust in God” or “... to proclaim the good news.”⁶³

9:35 and 4:23 mark an inclusion which underlines the importance of reading chaps. 5–7 and 8–9 together and, when linked with the emphasis on the mission of the disciples in what precedes 4:23 (vv. 18–22) and what follows 9:35 (9:36–11:1), provide a chiasmic structure which enhances the significance of the mission perspective for the whole body of the encompassed materials. 9:35–37 function as an introductory piece for the section that runs to 10:42 (11:1), which consists mainly of the second major discourse by Jesus in Matthew, in a set of five marked by a shared concluding formula (here in 11:1; see discussion at 7:29).

For 9:35–36 Matthew draws on Mk. 6:6, 34 and echoes Mt. 4:23 in v. 35. The material of Mt. 9:37–38 is found in almost identical form in Lk. 10:2, also in connection with a mission charge (Luke includes it in the charge rather than in the introduction to the charge).

9:35 Mark has already used a brief summary of itinerant ministry by Jesus to introduce the mission of the Twelve (6:6); Matthew develops this idea further. Mt. 9:35 closely echoes 4:23 (see discussion there): this time Jesus is explicitly named; ‘all the towns and the villages’ replaces ‘in the whole of Galilee’ (probably with the intention of being more general); ‘among the people drops away’ (its specific linking role in 4:23 is no

⁶³ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992). *A handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (pp. 279–281). New York: United Bible Societies.

longer needed); otherwise the wording is identical. Jesus' ministry is freshly summarised/characterised after the expansiveness that has marked chaps. 5–9.

9:36 'Seeing the crowds' is probably intended to echo the language of 5:1. The presence of the crowds is not provided with a specific rationale, but it is easy to understand a repeat of something like the development in 4:24–25 which produced the crowds of 5:1.

Mark has linked the statement about Jesus' compassion to the time of teaching and feeding in Mk. 6:34–44. Matthew abbreviates at the same point (14:14), but makes his main use of this tradition here: from Matthew's early church perspective the provision of those who will extend and continue the ministry of Jesus is of profound importance. Compassion involves so identifying with the situation of others that one is prepared to act for their benefit. Apart from 18:27, in a parable (where compassion leads to forgiveness of debt), in Matthew compassion always addresses the physical needs of people, and so it will be in the ministry to which the disciples are called.

The imagery intended by ἐσκυλμένοι καὶ ἐρριμμένοι (not in Mark) is not entirely clear. σκύλλειν is literally 'flay' or 'skin', but comes to be used metaphorically of harassment of any kind, and then (in the passive) of the exhausted or troubled state produced by such harassment. ῥίπτειν or ῥιπτεῖν means 'throw'. It is used in a wide range of derivative senses, but not normally with overtones of violence. It is perhaps best to think of sheep lying passive on the ground, with no sense of what to do in their need: they lack the protective and guiding role of a shepherd. A cognate image will be used in 10:16 of the disciples sent out as sheep into the midst of wolves, but nothing quite so precise about the troubles of the sheep is intended here. Nonetheless, given the OT background of the image of sheep without a shepherd, it is likely that Matthew intends an oblique criticism of the Jewish leaders here.⁶ Jesus' own role as shepherd of Israel (2:6) may also be slightly in view, considering the christological emphasis that emerges as chap. 10 unfolds.

9:37–38 As in 9:6, the emphasis intended here is marked by Matthew's introduction using τότε ('then') with a historic present ('he says'). The accompanying disciples have last been mentioned at 9:19. 'The harvest is big' presumably means more than that there are lots of Israelites to be dealt with. The size of the crop suggests that much has already been accomplished in bringing such a crop to the point of harvest (through the prophets? the exile experience? John the Baptist? the ministry of Jesus to this point?). The present sign of the readiness of a large crop is the coming of eager crowds to Jesus.

Harvest here is not exactly an image of (eschatological) judgment as in Mic 4:11–13; Isa 63:1–6; Jer 25:30–31; Joel 3:13, nor is it straightforwardly an image of the eschatological gathering of Israel as in Isa 27:12–13. It is, however, from this background (where the saving of God's people is always also involved) that it draws its force as an image for the eschatological calling of people into the kingdom of God....

In the present imagery God has become the owner-manager of the farmland who employs farm workers to harvest the crop. There is an urgent need for sufficient workers to be able to harvest the crop before it spoils. No specific identity should be given to the

'few' existing workers: the focus is on the need for additional resources. The coming commissioning and direction of the Twelve will indicate something of what is involved in 'harvesting' (but we have also been seeing Jesus do it). The challenge to prayer, however, implies the need to call others beyond the Twelve into this task as well. Perhaps we can also draw from the prayer focus here an indication that Jesus' action in chap. 10 is to be seen as an expression of the will of the Lord of the harvest.⁶⁴

Matthew 9:35-37

The Harvest

Introduction:

Attention: The worst part of Thanksgiving is the dishes. After you eat sit down and watch the game there pile of dishes looming. The blessing is supposed to be that everyone who participated in the meal would help clear the table, counters and wash the dishes. The cooks already set the plate but the ones who enjoyed the meal are supposed come behind and work. There is always one in the family who never cleans, delegates or talks the entire time...

Subject: This is similar to our story Jesus has prepared the meal. He died on the cross so that we could enjoy the blessing of the gospel. We could eat off the plates He prepared. However, the issue is that despite Jesus setting the plate many of us has not joined the family to wash dishes.

Scripture: Matthew 9:35-37

Body:

- I. The Worker's Example
 - a. Jesus was Going
 - i. All the Cities **Acts 1:8**
 - ii. Tour was through Galilee
 - b. Teaching
 - i. Synagogue- Jewish Assembly
 - ii. is primarily the place of the Torah, which is to be read and taught, heard and learned here
 - iii. He was there for the Jewish people fulfilling His purpose
 1. Returning to the place he belonged

⁶⁴ Nolland John. (2005). Preface. In *The Gospel of Matthew: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 406-408). Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

- c. Proclaiming
 - i. make public declarations, *proclaim aloud*
 - ii. Gospel- **good news to humans**
 - iii. Kingdom- God's reign and Jesus messianic rule
- d. Meeting the Needs
- II. The Worker's Attitude
 - a. Seeing the people
 - b. Feeling Compassionate **Philippians 2:1-9**
 - i. Compassion-*have pity, feel sympathy*
 - 1. Synonymous with attitude of Good Samaritan
 - ii. Distressed - **weary, harass**
 - 1. "Used here of the common people, it describes their religious condition. They were harassed, importuned, bewildered by those who should have taught them; hindered from entering into the kingdom of heaven (23:13), laden with the burdens which the Pharisees laid upon them ⁶⁵
 - iii. Dispirited - , **put/lay someth⁶⁶. down⁶⁷ Mt 9:36** (of animals lying on the ground
 - iv. Sheep without a Shepherd
 - 1. Defenseless in the midst of wolves Mt 10:16. In danger without a shepherd
 - 2. point is not the abundance of sickness he has seen but rather the great spiritual need of the people, whose lives have no center, whose existence seems aimless,
 - 3. This prelude was by Israel being lost without a Shepherd in Ezekiel 34:6 and Jesus saying he is coming for them Matt 15:25
 - 4. The benefits of the Shepherd is Ps 23
- III. The Worker's Command
 - a. The Harvest is Plentiful - the evangelist may be combining an agricultural observation with a statement about the apostolic mission
 - b. The workers are few .
 - i. Worker- **one who is engaged in work,**
 - ii. Prayer is the remedy offered by Jesus in this crisis for a larger ministerial supply
 - c. Beseech for Service Isaiah 6:1-8

⁶⁵ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Mt 9:36.

⁶⁶**someth. someth.** = something

⁶⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 906.

- i. of petition to God
- ii. Faith responds to the situation of crisis by turning towards God (cf. 24:20, 26:41). This is because 'man cannot create the new situation that is necessary; God alone will choose his messengers'