

November 3/4, 2007

Global Outreach Weekend

A Heart for the Harvest

Matthew 9:35-10:1

Pastor Jeff Petersen

(Video: “Home of Hope Street Stories”)

What happens inside of you when you see images like that? What goes on in your heart? What do you think about in your mind? You know, when we see images of true human suffering it can stir us deeply within.

I'll never forget my first trip to India. We arrived on a plane into the city of Bombay and the next morning we had a driver take us away to see the city and he took us down to a place called Mahim Dharavi which means slum city. And we drove along, mile after mile, after mile seeing the greatest human tragedy I had ever witnessed in all of my life. And as we drove along I was so deeply moved within I said to the driver, “Who’s helping these people? Somebody must do something about this.”

It’s part of the reason that I have been so passionately involved in our ministry in India and seeking to launch church planting movements all around that needy country. When we see true human need, it can move us into action.

In Jesus’ earthly ministry there were a number of times where something he saw touched Him and moved Him deeply. This morning we want to look at one of those situations in Matthew chapter nine. If you have a Bible with you, would you turn with me to Matthew chapter nine.

Matthew 9 is coming to the end of an amazing section where Matthew is giving an accounting of Jesus’ Galilean ministry and this particular section begins at the end of chapter 4 and we get a glimpse of some amazing teaching from Jesus, but also just amazing works of Christ as He has this compassionate ministry of reaching out and touching lives and so much incredible stuff is taking place that by the time you get to Matthew 9:33, they say nothing like this has ever been done before and then in Matthew 9:35, Matthew says:

Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. (*NASB, Matthew 9:35)

He gives sort of an over arching summary statement and interestingly, it’s almost exactly the same words that Matthew used when he began the section at the end of chapter 4, and it forms bookends to this and it indicates to us that he’s taking a transition now as he leads into a new aspect of what he’s about to reveal about Jesus, His heart, His character and His ministry.

So, we read in verse 36, speaking of Jesus:

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. (v. 36)

Once again, Jesus uses a very familiar analogy as His theme, it’s that imagery of the sheep and a shepherd and yet here things are different, these are troubled sheep. This is not the picture we get

in a place like Psalm 23 of those fat and happy sheep with their beautiful white wool nestled up to the leg of a caring shepherd who's leading them beside quiet waters. No, we get very clearly the picture that these are sheep without a shepherd. And because they are without a shepherd, they are in deep trouble. The words used, distressed, dispirited, maybe yours says downcast. Some versions say harassed and helpless. They're powerful image words.

The first one, *distress*, really has an implication of the tearing of the flesh, it's like these sheep are wandering through such a harsh land, and they're going through the thickets and the brambles lost without a shepherd, and in the process they are getting caught up and literally their skin is being ripped open, and they're being wounded by the world in which they live.

The second word, this image of *downcast*, it literally has a picture of being thrown down and lying there prone, helpless, unable to get up and it has two reflections in it, one is a picture of a sheep that literally physically is unable to get up, and second of a sheep that is so weary he won't even try to get up. That's the picture Jesus is indicating here of sheep that are without a shepherd that are wounded and weary.

You know, the thing that's interesting when we look at this account and when Matthew tells us that Jesus looks out on the multitude and He sees the crowd, and He says that they're harassed and helpless, they're distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd, I don't think that what's trying to be communicated here is that there is something really uniquely wrong with that particular crowd on that particular day.

Instead, I think what we're getting is a glimpse into the heart of God as he looks at people all over the place all the time. Because I think if Jesus were here today and He were to walk into any context in our culture where He would see a crowd of people who were without God, who are separated from Christ, who have not yet been reconciled to their loving Father, His description would be the same.

He would see people today just as He did back then, people without Christ as being distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd. But what's key to the whole thing, is that Jesus saw them.

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them (v. 36a)

There was something about Jesus and when He looked at people, He didn't see like everyone else because I don't think what was happening on that day is that everyone, all of those followers of Christ were looking at the crowd and seeing the same thing. Jesus was looking into the condition of their hearts, He was looking into the very reality of their souls and He was understanding the deepest needs in the human heart and the reality is there is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every person.

The question really is, do we see it? You know, I told you about my first trip to India and how I so clearly saw the need of those people. Something very surprising has happened to me over the years. I've now been to India nearly 20 times and a change has taken place. I first noticed it a couple of years ago. My wife, Cynci and I were bringing some other leaders from the U.S., pastors and their wives who were going to spend time in India, serving and pouring into the lives of our Indian church planters and their wives, and we landed in the southern city of Chennai and we got off the plane and we came out of the airport, and waiting for us were two cars. We were first going to go over and have some lunch, and it just so happened that these other two couples

who had never been to India before, ended up in one car and most of the luggage and Cynici and I ended up in the other car as we headed across the city of Chennai.

As soon as I got in the car I was just kind of in ‘go’ mode. It’s time to get running, what’s next, what are we planning. I got my phone out and I’m calling people and getting numbers entered, and I’m just thinking, “where are we headed and what’s the task at hand?”

Well, we get to the restaurant and I get out and all of a sudden the door to the other car opens and these two couples pour out of their car. They were talking a million words a minute and I looked at them like, “What happened? What happened?” I thought I missed something. And then I realized what I had missed was India. They had never been there before, and just the drive from the airport to the restaurant, they saw things that were unimaginable and they could not stop talking about everything they were seeing and experiencing. And it began to occur to me, something’s changed.

And I thought, when did all of this become normal for me? And you know, the sad part of that is as a result, sometimes I don’t see India, not like I did on that first trip. And as I’ve worked through that with the Lord, I’ve discovered something really important for me, and that is that God wants me to continue to see India.

But, in order for me to continue to see India, I have got to be far more intentional about cultivating God’s perspective for the lost people in that needy land. Which means, I’ve got to pray more, and I’ve got to ask God to have my heart more, I’ve got to ask God to open my eyes more, I’ve got to connect with Him more. I’ve also got to connect with lost people there more to hear their stories and to see their needs that I might continue to have eyes that are open to see people in India as distressed and downcast.

I think the same thing is true for everyone in the room. Particularly if you’ve been a believer for any extended period of time. Perhaps you remember back to those first days when you first encountered Christ, and in the reality of the freshness of being reconciled to your God, there was a passion and there was openness in your eyes to see not only your own need, but to see the needs of people around you and your heart would break as you realize that people are separated from the God who created them and the God who loves them.

And yet, invariably what happens over time, we begin to not see people nearly as clear. They drive by in their SUV’s, we see them nestled in their warm homes, we see them out in restaurants having a nice evening, we see them at work sitting at the desk across from us, but do we truly see people with the eyes of Christ? Do we understand that if they are without a shepherd, if they’re without a savior, they are distressed, they are downcast, they are needing the saving grace of a great God.

Each of us needs to be intentional in our lives about seeking to ask God to work in our hearts in such a way that we will continue to see with His perspective. Because when we see people like Jesus does, it changes our response. Verse 36 again:

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them (v. 36a)

This word *compassion*, it’s one of three words that are translated, *compassion* in our English Bible, this is the strongest. It carries with it a lot of meaning, it goes well beyond feelings such as pity or sympathy. You see, often when we’ll see someone in a difficult situation we’ll feel

badly for them. We'll have a sense of empathy that they're going through a hard time, we may be sympathetic to their plight, but often it doesn't go beyond simply an emotion that comes and goes. This word translated, **compassion**, carries with it being moved so deeply that it's moved beyond mere feelings and into action.

The images I showed you a few minutes ago are from a ministry called "The Home of Hope" in Bangalore, India. And it's a place that I've been connected to for a number of years. Over the years, I've taken more than a dozen people to "The Home of Hope" to meet Raja to see those people, to find out about this ministry. I have never taken a person to "The Home of Hope" who was not deeply moved by what they saw. And almost every single one of them has been moved to action saying, "*I need to do something about this.*"

You know, the truth is, I showed you just a tiny clip today and there was a part of me that wanted to show you more of that video, but I just didn't think I could because there are things on that video just so horrific, I just didn't feel comfortable showing it here, because when I watch them there's literally this sense of an almost visceral reaction which takes place inside of me at the unbelievable scope of human suffering.

That's the type of description that we're getting of Jesus' heart. That sort of visceral reaction is this compassion that comes from within Him as He sees the people are distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd, and so Jesus initiates a course of action. Verse 37:

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.
(v. 37)

Very interesting what Jesus says as a response to what He is seeing. The first thing to note is what He doesn't say. Jesus doesn't say people aren't interested in God. He doesn't say people are unresponsive, He doesn't say that the problem is we just can't find enough interest out there. He says the harvest is plentiful. There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every person and people are hungry to be reconciled to the God who created them and the God who loves them. There's a plentiful harvest, always has been and still is today.

But what does He say is the problem? The workers are few, the workers are few. There are more people needing to be harvested than there are people who are moved to compassion to be involved in bringing in that harvest. That's the problem that He so clearly articulates, an issue of the harvest being plentiful and the workers being few. The reality is that is still true today.

I was reminded of it recently on my most recent international trip. I was traveling from Ghana in Africa and heading back to Spain in Europe, and I had to fly through Casablanca, Morocco and I had a plane change in Casablanca and in the process had a pretty long layover. And I thought, well, I don't want to just stay in the airport. I've never been here so I made my way down into the city and didn't really know where to go or what to do. I just wandered around for a while and asked "Lord, what should I do at this time?" And I ended up going down to the water.

Casablanca sits on the Atlantic Ocean, all the way on the opposite side from our eastern seaboard. I went down to the water; it's an interesting place because it doesn't have a long sprawling beach or anything. The city comes right up to the water and in order to hold back the waves, there's a break wall all along the edge of the city.

Well, somewhere way out in the ocean there must have been an amazing storm that was taking place, because there in Casablanca that day it was beautiful blue skies, but these huge waves were rolling in and they were coming along and they were just pounding the break wall. And you come along here and you're up high, and you're looking down on all of this, and along the coast there are some hotels and some health club type of places. There's a running track area and some swimming pools that are all behind this break wall, and that appears to be how they really engage and have a beachside life in Casablanca.

But on this day, there was nobody down there because the waves were so high and so strong, they were literally hitting the wall and flooding over the top filling all the swimming pools with salt water and just washing out everything. In fact, just looking from that vantage point, those waves were hitting the wall and the spray was casting 30-50 feet in the air, it was an amazing sight.

So, I sat there up on high, I found a little table and I had a couple of hours and I just sat down watching these waves come in and watching this scene before me, and I opened my Bible and I put on my headphones and I just began to enter into a time of worship with the Lord, and His word really began to speak to my heart. I was listening to some songs that just really stirred me and I was looking out at this scene and these incredible waves. I was just seeing the glory and splendor and the power and the majesty of God. As I read His Word and as I worshipped and looked at this sight, I just began to reflect on how incredible He is. How amazing it is that the God who created all of that is mindful of me. And that He has revealed Himself to me and that He deeply loves me.

And I found myself just sitting there basking in the wonder of His love, enjoying who He is and the majesty of His glory and right in the middle of that scene something caught my eye. I looked down and there was a lower level and there was some concrete down there and I saw a man, a young man in his early to mid-twenties come walking up. Throughout the course of the time that I'd been there, there were people that would just come and go and everybody who came along there did the same thing I did. They stopped and they looked at the ocean. It was amazing, the waves were incredible.

But this man came down and I watched him as he stopped and he didn't look at the water. In fact, he turned his back directly away from the waves. And I saw him take this little rug out from underneath his arm and he laid it out, and then facing directly backward from what I was seeing of the splendor and majesty of our creator God, he kneeled down and I could see his lips as he went through this routine. And he would bow and literally prostrate himself all the way on the ground. And he'd come back up and he'd stand up and he would repeat the words again and he would bow down, prostrating himself all the way as he went through his Muslim time of prayer.

And I couldn't escape this terrible sense of irony as I sat there looking out on the waves and reading the Word and enjoying the worship and thinking of God's love for me. And I thought to myself, but what about him? Here's one so zealous to know God, so desiring to please God, that time after time throughout the course of his day, he'll carry around his little rug and wherever he is, he'll bow and face toward Mecca and he'll go through his ritualistic time of prayer because that's what he knows of how to find God.

And I thought to myself, how is he going to hear and know and experience what I was in that very moment reveling in, the glory of the grace of God.

And I looked down the beach and I saw the Grand Mosque. A place where tens of thousands of men would gather every week, filling that place, praying toward Mecca. I got in a taxi and I drove back to the airport and I saw a mosque here, I saw a mosque here, I saw a mosque here, but not a single church.

So, while I revel in the glory of God, I wonder what about that man? And the billions of others just like him, because the reality is nearly 2,000 years after Jesus said the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, nearly 1/3 of the people who live on our earth, have still never even heard the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet at the same time, 80% of us who are involved in Christian ministry live and serve in places and 91% of Christian outreach takes place among people who have already heard.

That is why I'm so excited about what God is doing in our body these days. God is giving us a vision and a burden as a church to continue to be used by Him in ways we've never imagined. To have a transformational impact on our world, not just right here in our city, but extending all the way around the globe. We are in the coming years, trusting God to use us through two new major global initiatives that we think will take us to places we've never been in helping to reach people who haven't heard about Christ.

The first is our short-cycle church planting partnership where we are trusting God to use us to literally send out not individuals, but whole teams of people, going out from Lincoln Berean saying, you know what, I will give a season of my life, five years or something like that with my friends as a team, and we will go to one of these places. One of these places where people have not yet heard and we will catalytically together launch a church planting movement, raising up nationals who can continue the work, equipping them and then coming back home.

And we're trusting God to use us, not only to send one team, but to send one team in the first year, and then another team the next year and another team the next year and for a period of years, to send team after team after team of people from this body standing up and saying, *"yes Lord, I will be used by you and I will go in that way and to have that kind of an impact."*

Our second initiative is similar to what we've seen God do in India, where we are looking for additional partnerships all around the world where we can come along side nationals. We can equip them, we can train them, we can resource them, we can help them reach out to the unreached people who live so near to them who they can more effectively reach than we can.

And we are so excited that God is calling us to take these incredible steps of faith and that's exactly what they are, because unless God shows up and does something amazing, there's no way they'll come to pass, and that is why the first step in all of these initiatives is to heed Jesus' admonition which He gives us in verse 38.

**Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.
"Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
(v. 37-38)**

Beseech the Lord of the harvest, it begins with prayer. It begins with us responding and understanding the needs that God has put before us in the world in which we live. It begins with every single one of us calling out to God just as we've been called to do by Jesus to beseech the

Lord of the harvest, to raise up workers for His harvest. What could God do if we would all come together to have a part in the harvest?

(“The Harvest” video)

When I think about what God has done for me, and I think about that young man in Morocco, I think about people I’ve seen in India, people I’ve seen in Japan, in China, in Vietnam something in me says, “we’ve got to do something.” And then I see a picture of all those combines lined up side by side sweeping that field. I look out here and I see what God has given us in the church. I think, what could God do if we’d all come together to be a part of the harvest?

I think it’s beyond our ability to even imagine. But I think it really requires each and every one of us asking that bottom line question, how will you, personally, be involved in the harvest? It starts with our hearts, it starts with beseeching the Lord of the harvest, it starts with seeking to have eyes like Jesus to see the needs of lost people, and I think it starts right here in our community.

It starts with what we’ve been talking about all of this year with our “Each One Reach One” vision. Every single one of us saying, “*God, would you lead me to just one person? One person who is right now a sheep without a shepherd that I might love them? I might reveal to them what you’ve done in my life that I might share the good news with them.*” I believe God wants all of us to be involved in the harvest right here in our community.

But I believe God wants to use each and everyone of us to have a part in the harvest around the world. I believe He’s going to send some from our body to be a part of these teams to go out but even the vast majority that will never get on a plane can still be involved in helping with the harvest.

Maybe for you, your part is that first step, it is being committed to intentionally, specifically and regularly praying for people in some place, in some land, in some area of need. You know, we right now have 43 Lincoln Berean Missionaries who are impacting peoples from over 30 countries all around the world doing incredible work, but they desperately need your help. They need us to pray for them, to encourage them, to partner with them, to be interested in the needs of those people in those places, to see with Jesus’ eyes, to come along side, to encourage them in that work and to be a part of that with them.

Some of them are here today. I encourage you after the service to stop in the coffee house, have a conversation, find out more about what God’s doing in their lives. If you are not personally involved in one of our mission fields, I challenge you to start there. Let that be your first step. Our hope in keeping with the theme of “Each One Reach One” is that each one would own one.

My dream is to see every individual and every LifeGroup at Lincoln Berean take a sense of personal ownership and responsibility to say, “I will get involved with just one of our mission fields.” Not trying to keep track of all of them, but just one, one field, one missionary. And I will pray for them regularly and I’ll be involved in their lives. And if that’s the step that God would have for you, I would really encourage you to take a step. At the Spotlight Booth on the 100 level and the Outreach Booth on the 200 level there’s more information. There’s a booklet containing information about all our mission fields, all our missionaries. Pick one up, talk about it as a Life Group, dream together, pray about how God could use you as a part of the harvest.

For others, maybe you'll be involved without ever getting on a plane, by serving, helping to build our infrastructure that we might increase our capacity here at Lincoln Berean to send these teams. We're going to need dozens and dozens more people to be involved in serving in our Global Outreach Ministries right here in Lincoln. If we're going to really be able to see God bring this great vision to pass, then maybe that's a next step for you. There's information again at the Spotlight Booth on the 100 level, the Outreach Booth on the 200 level. All kinds of opportunities, all kinds of teams, using all kinds of gifting where you can plug in and say, you know what, *"I don't think God's called me to go overseas, but I want to have a heart for the harvest and I want to have a part in the harvest"* and maybe God would have you serve on one of those teams. Another way God can use many of us is by the investing of our resources. Look what God has given us, look at what he's poured into this place and into our lives. We live in a blessed city in a blessed church in the midst of a country that has been uniquely blessed in the history of mankind and by investing our resource God can use us in amazing and strategic ways.

India has been a great picture of that as we have seen God use us to invest our resources to equip and resource and send nationals out and the sweeping influence that's taking place all across that country, and maybe God would have you to take a next step by being more specific and intentional about investing resources to help us launch these new initiatives.

One reminder you need to know is that the only funds available for all of our Global Outreach Ministries are those funds that are specifically designated toward that end. So, you need to ask God what part of your giving should go toward our Global Outreach Ministries and then make sure when you give, that on your check, your envelope, somehow you designate "missions" or "global outreach", you somehow indicate on the gift that that's the portion that you believe God would have you give to our global outreach.

And then finally, there is this thought of going. And again, I know that God is not going to call the vast majority of people in this room, but I'm trusting God in believing that there are people sitting in here today that God is going to call to get up out of that seat to go to another part of the world. For some of you, that might be a short cycle, for a period of five years with your friends as a part of one of these new teams, a chapter of life. Maybe you're heading into that Empty Nest season; you're looking at a final challenge. Maybe you're a young person and you're looking at career and family but you're not there yet. Maybe you're a family. Wherever you are at in life, I believe God's going to be calling people to go.

And I believe He's also going to be calling people to go short term and that's something we're going to talk about as a part of this strategy, because this is not something we're doing by ourselves. We're doing it in partnership with Avant Ministries and with us today are a couple of leaders from Avant. In our closing time I want you to hear a couple of minutes from them.

The first one coming up is Scott Harris and Scott has become a dear friend of mine as he and I have dreamed of the harvest together and as we've been involved in initiatives together through this church and Avant serving in Europe and different places. Scott's been to India with me and helped us to resource our church planters over there, so we've really had a growing relationship and we're excited to partner together for these new initiatives in the future.

This other gentleman is familiar to a lot of people, Dave Hansen has been a part of our church and involved in our Global Outreach Ministries for 20 years and it's exciting to have him standing up here this morning because he's just taken on a new role. Dave is now the Vice-

President for Global Partnerships for Avant Ministries. We're going to talk about that in just minute, but we are so excited to see how God's going to use Dave as we work together as well.

Scott, I want to start with you though. I just want to ask, you've been all over the world. I'm always amazed when I talk to you and where you've been and what you've been involved in. You've seen the harvest in so many places and what God's doing. You know, people out there right now are asking that question, "How will I be involved?" And I just want to ask you why should they be involved? What would you say to them to encourage them to be involved in God's global work?

Scott: Well, very briefly I see very immediate reasons to be involved, and one very deferred but massive reason to be involved. First of all, I think being involved in the global harvest will enlarge your world. In some fashion, it will make you a broader person, you will understand things differently; you will see things more through God's perspective than you have in the past.

Secondly, I think it will grow your faith. Ministry here is wonderful, it's fantastic and I hope you're all involved in it, and yet ministry here is a little bit safe. When you get involved in global ministry, it's no longer safe. It takes you completely beyond yourself to the point that you have to trust God. We challenge the people that we train to be on our teams to take on such audacious faith goals, that if God doesn't show up, they're toast! That's what it means, it will grow your faith.

Third, I think it will give you the opportunity, the great privilege of understanding that you are a tool in the hands of the Creator. And on this earth, I don't think there's a rush any greater than that. It's unbelievable and yet there's one other thing and that's the deferred thing. And that's that scene described in Revelation 7 beginning in verse 9 where there's people from every nation and tribe and tongue all standing before the Lamb, worshipping Him.

I think a reason for us to be involved is because if we are involved in the global harvest, when we're standing in a scene like that, we're going to see the faces of people who are there because we gave, because we prayed, because we went. And I don't think there's anything in all eternity short of just being with the Lord Himself that even comes close to comparing.

Jeff: You know, as we launch these new initiatives, we tried to think of how do we begin to really get a movement happening within our church? We recognize again, most people won't be on a short term team. We are actually going to challenge a lot of you to consider going on a short term trip.

We're going to have what we're calling the *Ultimate Spring Break* the last week in March and we are looking for about 60 people, whether you're families, whether you're a single adult, whether you're an Empty Nest couple, whatever season of life you're in, we want to challenge you to go to southern Spain, to north Africa with us. We're going to divide in groups to go into France, into Italy, into Poland and we are going to use this as a launching event for this ministry and I just want to ask you Scott, a lot of these people who go on this short term trip won't ever even go short cycle, so why should someone sitting out there consider going on *Spring Break* with us?

Scott: Whether you ever expect to be on a team or not, I think you should go for several reasons. Most of them personal; one of them relating to the body here. First of all, I think on this trip you will definitely experience and learn to appreciate other cultures. That's a given. You're also

going to better understand mission as to what it is and what it isn't. I think this trip will give you an opportunity to understand missions somewhat as it's described in the book of Acts and if you want to know about that, talk to me at the Spotlight Booth afterwards.

It's going to leave an indelibly etched focus of the face of the lost in your mind. It's going to touch you in a way that the lost will no longer be cold, dead statistics, they'll be faces in places. And that will have another effect on you, it will change you forever. You will not be the same, this is only about nine days, but you will never be the same again because you will see the world more as God sees it from His perspective, not your own.

But the final effect is the effect on the body here at Lincoln Berean. This church has such a history of effective ministry in the city, in the region and around the world. And yet, this new adventure of faith, this joint venture with Avant is a step up. It's an effort to change the effect of the church, to heighten the effect of the church, to grow it for the future and anyone who goes on this trip will have the opportunity, in fact, I think it will be made into a catalyst to help this church succeed in that venture.

Jeff: I know certainly for me, trips such as that have clearly changed my life. God has used them. If you have even an inkling of possible interest, stop at one of the booths, the Spotlight Booth or the Outreach Booth, there's a flyer on this, you can just sign up, not that you're going, that you just want to know more and be kept in the loop with the information, do that right after this service. Finally, Dave you've been around for about 20 years. You've seen God do great things as He's grown our ministry, grown our Global Outreach but now we stand on the precipice of these new things, what excites you today?

Dave: Well, Jeff, first of all five weeks ago I wouldn't have even thought that I would be standing here answering such a question today and now here it is a special privilege for me to join you and Scott as part of Avant and help Berean fulfill that goal of sending a short cycle team. You might have to pinch me and tell me it's true that I get to be a part of that.

But the realities also are that in the world today and a couple of years ago, the country of Korea actually surpassed the United States as a sending nation. In other words, they send more career missionaries from Korea to the world than we do from the United States. Also, for example, in the last three years we've watched God raise up three national pastors, missionaries, evangelists in India to go to remote villages in India to reach the un-reached.

God is raising up people outside of the United States to do what? *To fulfill the great commission, to plant churches, to reach the un-reached that you talked about earlier.* The second part of my job also relates back to Berean; to try to help Avant figure out how to partner with nationals and in this case partner with Lincoln Berean and what they're doing in India in order to fulfill the great commission before the Lord Jesus comes back.

You know, the realities are that it doesn't really matter if you're from the United States or whether you're from another part of the world, what is important to God is what's in your heart. He's wanting and calling you to be in service for Him. What better picture is there of Heaven than when Americans and Asians and Africans and people from Latin America all come together to do what? *To finish the task of reaching the unreached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

So, from the practical side I get the best of both worlds, being a part of my own church in the short cycle ministry and also figuring out how to partner in using nationals to reach the rest of the world.

Jeff: Thanks Dave.

You know, there are all kinds of ways you can be involved. There are all kinds of opportunities, there's something for everyone regardless of who you are or how God's wired you. But the bottom line question is, how will you be involved in helping with the harvest?

If you want to know more about any of these things, Dave and Scott will be at the booth out there. I just encourage you, again, to stop by one of those places, ask those things, but most important, I want to challenge you to begin to pray and ask God to show you clearly what His part is for you and what your next step would be. I want to close this time. We'll have one last song, beginning with that thought and us praying together just as Jesus challenged us to do in Matthew 9.

Father, we just want to come into Your presence and we want to beseech You as the Lord of the harvest to raise up workers for Your harvest. God, that can mean many different things. There in Matthew 9 you went on and You commissioned the twelve to go out and to be sent and to be directly involved but there were a whole lot of others who didn't go in that first wave and Lord there are a lot of different ways You could use each one in this body. Lord, I think the challenge for us is for us to see as You see, and to allow You to touch and to move our hearts that we might respond with compassion that motivates us to action. God, I just want to pray today that you would work in such a way that each one of us in this room would understand that you've given us the opportunity and the challenge to be involved, take the next step to make this personal. And so I would pray that You would lead each person, lead us clearly in keeping how You've made us and where You've called us that we might bear fruit with you in step with your spirit and that together, God together we might see more than we've ever even imagined. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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November 3/4, 2007

Study Questions

A Heart for the Harvest

Matthew 9:35 – 10:1
Pastor Jeff Petersen

Opening Discussion

1. Share with each other how the “Harvest” video presentation impacted you. What specific parts touched your heart? Why?

Bible Study

1. Read Matthew 9:35-38. In verse 36, the people in the crowd are described as being “distressed and downcast.” What do these words imply? What is the need Matthew is trying to capture in his description of the people?
2. Were the people back then different from people today? If not, do we see people in the same way as Jesus is described as seeing them here in Matthew 9? Why or why not?
3. In verse 36 we’re told that when Jesus saw the multitudes, “He felt compassion for them...” What do you think Matthew saw in Jesus that he was trying to describe and capture for his readers?
4. In Biblical language this word for compassion goes beyond pity. While pity evokes feelings of sorrow and a sense of empathy for another, this concept of compassion implies being moved to action. What would the difference have looked like in Jesus life? In other words, what happened because he was moved with compassion rather than simply touched with pity?
5. What does that difference look like in your life? Share some examples of times when you have felt pity for another. Contrast those with examples of times when you have been moved to action by a sense of conviction born out of true compassion.
6. In light of the context of verse 36, why does Jesus share the admonition that He does in verses 37-38?
7. Jesus described the harvest as being plentiful. What did that mean? Do we typically see a plentiful spiritual harvest in front of us? Why or why not?
8. Jesus indicates that the great need is not for more people to be ready for harvest but for more workers to be involved in bringing in the harvest. Why is this distinction important for us to realize? How should it impact our lives today?
9. What is the first step in solving this dilemma (v. 38)? What was Jesus’ second step toward bringing in the harvest (10:1 and following)?

Application

1. How are you personally currently involved in helping bring in the harvest? Here in Lincoln? Among the billions of unreached people around the world?
2. What “next step” would you like to take to be more involved in helping with the harvest?