

Our Mission: Like Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Scripture reading comes from Matthew chapters 9 and 10. Please follow along on the screen in your bulletin or your own Bible. In Matthew 9 verses 35 we read, And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every affliction.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.

The names of the twelve apostles are these. First, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, Simon the zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and proclaim as you go, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You receive without paying, give without pay. Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff, for the labourer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you, or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet, when you leave that house or town. Truly I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

[2 : 4 7] Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. So be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts, and flog you in their synagogues. And you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak, or what you are to say. For what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.

For it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your father speaking through you. Brother will deliver and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next. For truly I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household?

This is the Word of God. Great. Well, once again, good morning, Watermark. Great to see you and great to be with you again.

If you are new, welcome. My name is Kevin, one of the elder pastors here, and it's great to have you with us this morning. We're so glad you've joined us. Please make yourself feel right at home and join us after the service on the breakout room. I would love to meet you and get to know you a little bit better. Now, as a church, we are working through Matthew's gospel. And one of the things that we've seen is Matthew's gospel is deeply challenging and encouraging, all at the same time. And that's one of the ways that you know that you're meeting the real Jesus.

[4 : 58] Jesus has this incredible ability to both comfort us and challenge us together at the same time. And it's certainly been like that over the last couple of weeks. Now, today we're going to get to a very, very important and significant juncture in Matthew's gospel. It's an incredibly important passage for Christians in general, but especially for us at Watermark Church, given our values and who we are as a church and how important we take gospel community and mission. Matthew, at this point that we're reading today, is going to make a significant change in direction or a pivot as he pivots the focus from who Jesus is and the life and ministry of Jesus to the life and ministry of Jesus' followers.

And so if you're a Christian here today, if you've ever asked the question, what does Jesus expect from me? What is Jesus calling me to do? What is my calling in life? I want you to listen up. Today's passage is going to help us to answer that question. And so let's dive straight in. Look at Matthew chapter 9, verse 35 with me. It's the first verse in the passage that we read today. Matthew describes Jesus' ministry like this. He says, Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and affliction. Now, that verse should be familiar to most of us at Watermark. And the reason is because a couple of weeks ago, we spent three weeks in Matthew chapter 4, where Jesus calls his first disciples. Remember, he calls Simon Peter and his brother Andrew and James and John, these two brothers, two groups of brothers that are both fishermen. And he says, follow me. And they leave their father's nest and they follow him. And then in Matthew chapter 4, verse 23, it says this, let me get the slider. And Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and affliction among the people. You see what's happening here? In Matthew chapter 4, Matthew describes the life and the ministry of Jesus. And there are two main things that Jesus does. He goes around preaching and teaching and healing the physical needs of the people around him. In Matthew chapter 9, our passage today,

Matthew gives almost the identical sentence. It's almost identical, word for word. Jesus went throughout all their cities and villages, preaching and teaching and healing every disease and affliction.

And Matthew gives us these two identical sentences, which describe the life and the ministry of Jesus, because he wants to show us that Jesus's life was full of power and authority, both in word and in deed.

Jesus went about proclaiming the gospel and then also healing the sick and the afflicted. You could say that Jesus, everywhere he went, went around announcing the gospel and then demonstrating the gospel with his lifestyle. Jesus went throughout the cities and the villages, teaching their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing everyone with every disease and affliction.

[8 : 11] Now, Matthew has arranged his gospel very, very carefully. As you read through Matthew's gospel, you see there's nothing that's just left to chance. He's arranged it extremely carefully.

And one of the things that we see in Matthew's gospel, the way that he's done this is he's sent these two sentences almost like a book ends. You know, when you've got a book, a shelf, and you've got all these books, and you put these two book ends to keep everything in order.

Matthew's put these two sentences, chapter 4 verse 23 and chapter 9 verse 35, almost as two book ends, these identical sentences, in this section of his gospel. And in between these two book ends is everything that we've looked at the last four weeks and what we looked at two years ago.

In Matthew chapter 5, 6, and 7 is the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' famous authoritative teaching on what life in the kingdom looks like. And then chapters 8 and 9 is everything we've looked at the last four weeks. Those ten miracles accounts where Jesus casting out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, healing the paralytics, healing Jairus' daughter, the centurion's servant, Jesus healing every disease and affliction. And so in chapter 4, Matthew announces Jesus' life and ministry, what it's going to consist of. In chapter 9, he summarizes, and in between, he's got what Jesus' life and ministry looks like. Proclaiming and teaching the gospel and going about and doing good. Jesus' life full of authority in word and deed. Jesus announcing and demonstrating the arrival of God's kingdom on earth. Jesus went out throughout the villages and towns, teaching the synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom, and healing every disease and affliction.

But then look at what Jesus does, or what Matthew does, in chapter 10, verse 1. This is what we read. Jesus called to him his ten disciples, and he gave them authority over every unclean spirit to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction. Look at chapter 10, verse 5 and 8.

[10 : 21] He says, then Jesus sent the twelve out and instructed them, saying, as you go, say this, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, announcing the kingdom. And what should you do?

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Jesus commissioned his disciples to go and do the exact thing that Matthew's just been telling us for five chapters Jesus did, announcing the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and affliction.

And so what's Matthew trying to show us here? This is the big idea of the passage. This is what we have to understand if we're going to make sense of what's going on here. If you're going to understand anything about today, you've got to know this. To be a follower of Jesus, maybe we can get the next slider, doesn't just mean having your sins forgiven so that you can one day go to heaven. Rather, it means being so infused with his kingdom that his life and mission becomes our own life and mission.

Okay, let me say that again. Being a follower of Jesus doesn't just mean having your sins forgiven so that one day you can go to heaven. It means being so infused with the kingdom and the power and the life of God that his life and mission starts to become our own life and mission. And we see that exact thing here. Jesus, for five chapters, has been announced in the kingdom and healing all those that are afflicted. And then he says to his disciples, go and announce the kingdom and heal all those that are afflicted and with disease. And sometimes we can think of Christianity as merely this amnesty or this forgiveness of sins so that one day we can get to heaven. We kind of think of it as a vaccination drive, right? Everyone's talking about vaccinations at the moment. This vaccine against the virus of sin.

And we can sometimes think that churches are all part of this vaccination drive to try and get as many people vaccinated as possible. And there's a bit of debate, right? Which vaccine should we take?

[12 : 27] Should we take the Baptist vaccine? Should we take the charismatic vaccine? Should we take the mega church vaccine or the house church vaccine? And it's all about just trying to get vaccinated so that we can get the certificate so that when we get to heaven, we can say, look, God, I got vaccinated against sin.

You should let me in. And so we tend to think of it as some, as Christianity, some divine vaccination to obtain in order to get the certificate and hopefully get back to our normal lives.

But when Jesus come and announces the kingdom, he's not announcing a sin vaccination. Of course, the forgiveness of sin is probably the most important aspect of the kingdom of God. It's the entrance into the kingdom of God. It's the way we get to know God. It's the way we have relationship with God.

Without forgiveness of sin, there is no entrance into God's kingdom. Without the forgiveness of sin, we are under condemnation. We are under God's wrath and his judgment. We will for all eternity be separated with God. We will bear the own consequences of our sin. Jesus came to die on the cross to pave a way for us to be removed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's son by having our sins forgiven. Of course, forgiveness of sins is vitally, vitally important. If you're still holding on to your own self-righteousness, friends, you're in bad, bad way. I've got bad news for you.

You cannot save yourself unless you come to Jesus and ask him to take away your sin. But Christianity is not merely about the forgiveness of sins. It's about being transferred from one kingdom, the kingdom of self, the kingdom of me, the kingdom of this world, which is all about me and my world and my selfishness, the kingdom that always leads to death and destruction and joining his kingdom, his kingdom of light and life, his kingdom of grace and mercy, his kingdom that always leads to life. Friends, when Jesus said, follow me, he was calling us to forsake our own kingdoms and to orientate our lives around his kingdom and himself, the kingdom that leads to life.

[14 : 43] And so that's what Matthew wants us to see here. Having seen and experienced Jesus' life and ministry, he then sends his disciples out to go and do the exact same things that Jesus has been doing, which is to bring hope in the gospel and healing, demonstrating the gospel, to wherever they went, announcing the good news of God's kingdom and healing the needs of those around them.

And that's incredibly important. What does it mean to be a Christian? It means to so orientate our lives and be so infused with his kingdom that Jesus' life and mission becomes our life and mission.

Jesus sends us out as his followers to say, as you have received, so now give. Join me on my kingdom adventure, gospel announcing, proclamation adventure into the cities in which you live.

And so let's look at this passage some more. And what we're going to see here is four essential ingredients that we all need in order to live out the mission and the calling of God.

Friends, if you don't want to waste your life, we have to see these four essential ingredients in this passage that we need in order to live out the mission that God is calling us on.

[16 : 00] Okay, so let's dive in and look. And the first one is this. We see the great ingredient of compassion. Compassion. Look at chapter 9, verse 36 with me. Matthew here tells us about Jesus.

It says, like Hong Kong, one of the most unequal cities in the world.

Time magazine just ran this article a few years ago on South Africa. You might not be able to see the cover, but the cover picture of Time magazine is all these houses with swimming pools and big gardens and driveways.

And across the road are thousands and thousands of tin shacks where families of five, six people will live without any running water or electricity. And when you first get to Cape Town, one of the things that strikes you is every single traffic light you arrive at, someone will knock on your window asking for \$2 or \$5 to buy a meal.

But after a couple of years of living there, you just get numb to it. After saying no so many times and being asked so many times, your heart just gets hard and numb to it.

[17 : 36] And when you first arrive, you think, how on earth can people live like, can ordinary citizens live and be so numb to the poverty here? But it's the same reason that we are like that in Hong Kong.

Here in Hong Kong, we have people living in cage homes, people living in stairwells, people living in illegal dwellings on rooftops. We have whole families living in subdivided apartments.

And just across the road, we will have very expensive luxury apartments. How is this possible? Friends, familiarity numbs our hearts to what's going on right before our very eyes.

And we lose a sense of compassion. But Jesus has incredible compassion. Jesus never got familiar with the brokenness he saw around him.

Jesus looks around him and his heart breaks with compassion. Matthew tells us that Jesus saw. He saw the crowds around him.

[18 : 37] And he had compassion on them because he saw their condition. Their state was like sheep that had no leader. I don't know if you've ever seen one of those BBC series with David Attenborough when he narrates them.

And you see those animals maybe on the plains of Africa. And one of the maybe fragile animals, a limp one or one that was born prematurely, is separated from the herd.

And you see the lions coming around them just waiting to tear it apart. Jesus saw the people of his day. And he saw what sin and the brokenness of this world and the religious systems of this world, apart from the gospel, had done to them.

And he saw that they were harassed, which means they're being torn apart. They're helpless. They're being left there with nobody to come to their rescue. And his heart is broken and moved within him because of what he sees, the people around him.

The word compassion is *compassio*, which literally means to suffer with him. Jesus saw their suffering and he took it on himself as if he was suffering as well.

[19 : 39] His heart was broken and grieved as if he himself were experiencing that same suffering. I think Chris has explained this to us before. The Greek word for compassion literally means your gut is wrenched within you.

I don't know if you've ever had that feeling. Maybe it's nervousness or fear where you feel like your stomach is being tied into a knot. And you literally feel the agony in your gut. Jesus is saying this is what he felt.

That his stomach was tight within him as he saw the pain and the brokenness of people around him. Four times in Matthew's gospel, Matthew describes Jesus having compassion, either on the crowds or on individuals around him.

As he saw the consequences of being citizens of the kingdom of this world. A kingdom that, as we said, always leads to death. Death of relationships, death of self-respect, death of identity.

Always leads to suffering. Remember two weeks ago we looked at Matthew chapter 9. Jesus is in Matthew's house. He's surrounded by tax collectors and sinners.

[20 : 55] He's surrounded by some of the most hated and despised people of his day. And he's loving it. He loves to be there. Why? Because he loves the outcasts of society. He loves the very people that no one else loves.

He loves those that are hurting and he loves to be with them. Jesus says it's not the well that need a doctor. It's those that are sick. And I, the great physician, have come to bring healing to those that are sick.

Jesus' heart of compassion breaks for people. Friends, do our hearts break for the harassed and the helpless in our city? Are our hearts moved by what we see around us?

I often wonder if Jesus were to come to Hong Kong, where in Hong Kong would he be? Which streets would he go to? Where would we find him as Jesus came to Hong Kong?

Friends, Jesus was moved with compassion. And if we're going to be kind of the kind of people that God sends out on his mission, our hearts need a break as well. Second thing is this.

[21 : 58] As Jesus sends his people out, one of the things that is startling is Jesus sends people. He sends people. Strange as it may seem, Jesus says that his mission needs people.

And in verse 37, Jesus changes the analogies a little bit from sheep farming to crop harvesting. And look at what he says here in verse 37. He says, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest that he may send out laborers into the harvest. It's quite remarkable that the sovereign God of all the universe, the one who spoke the universe into being, the one who with a simple word could calm the raging seas, the one who with a simple word could bring life and revive the paralytic, could bring to life Jairus' daughter, could heal the centurion's servant, the one who with a word, one simple word, could cast out demons that they flee.

It's remarkable that this sovereign, majestic God has chosen to get his work done through people. I personally think it would be much easier just to avoid people altogether.

But for some reason, God has chosen to use people. God's unsearchable wisdom has chosen that his ministry in this world, into cities like Hong Kong, into nations like mainland China, into places like Taiwan and Japan and Sri Lanka and Cambodia and Laos, into North Korea, into all the great countries of Asia, that for some reason God has chosen that this ministry is not to be done through angels, but through people.

[23 : 44] And through ordinary people, sometimes insecure people, sometimes immature people, people like me, people like you. I think that's the point of chapter 10 verse 2 to 4, where Jesus names his disciples, his apostles.

Jesus isn't merely giving us these names here so that we can name our children and our hospitals or schools or churches. Jesus is telling us what kind of people he called when he sent them out. And when we look at the list of names, look at the descriptions that follow the names.

And to some of these names, there are descriptions attached so we can know who they are. There's like Simon Peter as opposed to Simon the Zealot. But look at Judas' description.

Judas, the last one, quite intentionally gets the dishonorable addition of Judas, Judas the one who betrayed him. Some of them, one man in particular, gets his occupation attached.

It's not Andrew the fisherman or Thomas the lawyer or Philip the high school teacher. It's Matthew the tax collector. As one preacher said, God chooses outcasts to reach outcasts.

[24 : 54] Here, friends, we find not Peter the Great or John, son of thunder, the dean of the theology school, or some Thaddeus right reverend bishop of Hong Kong. No, friends, here on this list, we find common people, ordinary people, fishermen.

Zealots, tax collectors, even sinful men like Judas who would betray Jesus. Friends, you know what this means? It means that Jesus is not half as bothered by our shortcomings as we are.

But it also means this. It means no matter who you are, if you'll simply come to Jesus and say, Here I am, use me for your kingdom. Jesus will use you. Friends, you don't need to be wealthy.

You don't need to have gone to an elite school or got an elite education. You don't need to have worldly power or prestige or positions of influence. Friends, you don't need a great reputation to be an effective minister or faithful witness for Jesus.

Friends, all you need to do is be available. You need to come to him and say, Christ, have your way in my life. One of the early church leaders, Jerome, said this. He said, The church was built upon the faithful testimony of a bunch of rustics.

[26 : 09] Rustics means somebody who's not very polished or refined. And God somehow delights to build his church using seemingly insufficient, sometimes even contorted building materials.

And that's the amazing thing. One of the greatest privileges about being used by God is that God and his majestic, glorious, uncreated God would choose to use such fallible and imperfect materials.

People like you and people like me. The apostle says the same thing. The apostle Paul, throughout the letters, he's always saying, God uses us, but it's not because of our strength or our brilliance.

Somehow God chooses to use us. Incredible as it is, God has chosen to entrust his ministry into ordinary people like you and I. Friends, maybe I can ask you, what about you?

You know, many of us in Watermark are more qualified, more naturally gifted, more resourced, more educated.

[27 : 10] We have more Bibles in our homes. We have more opportunities than probably most of the pastors and church planters across Asia. Friends, if Jesus can call somebody as fallible and as full and as imperfect as Matthew the tax collector, Simon the zealot, Peter the big mouth, even somebody as flawed and as fallible as someone like me from the bottom tip of Africa, friends, can I ask you, what's your excuse?

Jesus wants to call people like you and me. Friends, our great continent of Asia has 60% of the world's population, 4.5 billion people, 95% of them do not know the wonder of Jesus.

95% of our continent, 4.3 billion people are enslaved and trapped in sin. 4.3 billion people are on a one-way ticket to an eternity without Christ.

They do not know the hope of the gospel. They do not know the indescribable one that we sang about this morning. How great is our God? And Jesus, what is he doing about it?

Well, he's sending out people like you and I. He's calling us and commissioning us who may not be particularly gifted or particularly wealthy or educated or powerful or sophisticated.

[28 : 35] And friends, what are his instructions? Well, he says here in chapter 10 verse 7, Friends, what about you?

We've said it a number of times, but I, for one, am not in the least bit interested in trying to grow Watermark to be a big and successful and oppressive and a mighty church in the world's eyes.

Not one bit. But, oh, friends, may we be a church that is sent out and joins Jesus on his mission into our city and into our continent.

May it be that we as a small and simple church send out tens and tens and even hundreds of people into Asia to go and plant churches or as missionaries or to go into the marketplace.

May it be that God, through this very ordinary church, does extraordinary, incredible things. Friends, I've been praying this week that God will somehow call some of us today to say yes to the call of God in our lives.

[29 : 53] Maybe into the marketplace. Maybe into ministry. Maybe to be a missionary somewhere. Maybe to serve here in Hong Kong. Maybe as you go into your business place, but you go with such a sense of calling and conviction that Jesus is sending us out into this place.

Then we as a church will send hundreds of people to do extraordinary things because we have seen the wonder of who God is. We've been blown away by the majesty of God. And we trust Him and we're obeying Him and we're going into this world proclaiming the gospel in word and in deed.

Announcing and demonstrating that God's kingdom has arrived. That the good news of God is here for our city. Friends, that our neighbors whose lives are in tatters, that are harassed and helpless, will come to know the hope of Jesus.

May it be. Friends, may it be. What about us? What about you, friends? What about me? What about us as a church? Christ is calling us out.

But no, there's a cost involved. And that leads us to the third thing. Which is people who are willing to suffer. People who are prepared to suffer.

[31 : 06] A couple of years ago, a man by the name of Victor Kooligan wrote a book called 10 Things I Wish Jesus Had Never Said. In his preface, Kooligan writes this.

He says, in our modern world, with the rise of health and wealth, gospel and prosperity preaching. So in other words, churches that are just saying, Jesus wants you to just be happy and healthy and wealthy and, you know, that kind of Christianity.

He says, we've become accustomed to a comfortable, what a friend I have in Jesus, Messiah. It's a picture of Jesus' light. Great taste, less demanding. But this version of Jesus is just interested in my happiness and nothing more.

This version of Jesus wants me to be financially comfortable, physically fit, mentally and emotionally stable. This version of Jesus would never demand of me anything that would cause any of these basic goods to be missed or challenged.

Difficulties, trials, hardships in my life seem to only be there because of my lack of faith on my part to believe that Jesus truly wants me to be happy.

[32 : 13] Friends, there's a version of Christianity, I dare say, often promulgated more in the West than in Asia, that thinks that the goal of Christianity is God wants me to be happy and moral.

And other than that, I don't need to bother with him and he doesn't need to bother with me. Kuligan goes on to write in his book, he says, Yet the truth is, the teaching of Jesus was often harsh.

He was not a preacher of convenience, but hardship. Not a preacher of comfort, but of suffering. Remember, we looked at it a few weeks ago. A man comes and says, Jesus, I'll follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus says, just be prepared. Remember, foxes of holes, the birds of the air have a place to lay their head. The Son of Man has nowhere to rest. You're going to follow me? Your life is going to look like me.

And Jesus actually says the same thing in our passage in verse 24. He says, if they accuse me, the Son of Man, of being filled with demons and they're disparaging about me, you've got to know that they're going to do the same to you.

[33 : 16] A disciple is not above his teacher, says Jesus. A servant is not above his master. Jesus being faithful ended up on a cross and he says that so will that happen to his followers.

One of the most important and yet most underrated scriptures in the whole Bible, and I would encourage you to learn this scripture off by heart, is 1 Timothy chapter 3.

Sorry, 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 12. Paul writes this. He says, indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted. In the New Testament, normal Christianity is one that involves suffering and opposition.

For Christians to be persecuted for following Jesus is not abnormal. Remember how the Apostle Peter writes it. He says this. Beloved, do you not be surprised when fiery trials come upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you?

Jesus says that, friends, this is what normal Christianity is. And there's so much in our passage, we're not unfortunately going to get to all of it. But I want to encourage you to read through Matthew chapter 10, our passage today, slowly and carefully.

[34 : 26] And read especially from verse 16 to maybe the end of the chapter. Jesus says here, I'm sending you out like sheep amongst wolves. That's automatically a sign that this is going to be dangerous.

Jesus says as you go out, you're going to be mistreated. You're going to be misunderstood. People are going to accuse you of things. You go with a good motive to go and bring healing and help to our city. You're going to try and demonstrate the gospel with the best of motives.

And people will twist your motives and accuse you of things. You're going to try and love and serve people. And people tell you that you've been self-centered and self-seeking. You're going to try and bring goodness to people.

And they'll twist what you do and spin some story about it. Jesus says that you'll be accused of things. You'll be punished for crimes that you haven't done. Jesus says that sometimes such opposition will come from those that are closest to us.

Our own family members won't understand us. Our dear friends will misunderstand us. The amazing thing is this. It's counterintuitive.

[35 : 31] But Jesus says this. That if you do everything in your power to try and get the perfect life. The perfect job. The perfect spouse. The biggest house. All the right connections.

Guess what? He says you lose. But if you come to him. And you say Jesus here's my life. I hand it over to you. Have your way. Do what you want with my life.

I'll suffer how you want me to suffer. I'll go where you want me to go. I'll say what you want me to say. You know what? Jesus says you win. You'll find abundant life.

Both in this life and in the life to come. Three things we need so far. We need to have hearts of compassion. Jesus' mission needs people.

People that are willing to go. People that are prepared to suffer. Fourthly and finally. And this is probably the most important. Is we need prayer. We skipped over this earlier.

[36 : 24] Because I wanted to land with this. It's probably the most important one. Which is why I've got a nice little box around it. Look back at chapter 9 verses 37 and verse 38.

Jesus says to his disciples. The harvest is plentiful. The need is great. There are so many people. 4.3 billion people in Asia alone. The laborers are few.

Therefore, pray. Therefore, pray. That's astounding. The first thing Jesus calls us to do is not plans, programs, strategies.

But to pray. Therefore, pray earnestly, says Jesus. To the Lord of the harvest. That he will send out laborers into his harvest. The need is great. Therefore, pray.

People are lost and in danger of an eternity apart from Christ. Therefore, pray. People are slaves to sin. They're being destroyed by their sin. Therefore, pray.

[37 : 26] Families and marriages are being ripped apart. Friends, pray. Our city is reeling of pain. Young people are feeling hopeless. Friends, pray.

Pray, pray, pray. To most Christians, prayer seems like a rather soft answer to the problems before us. People tell us they're going through a difficult time and we often say, I'll pray for you.

Which a euphemism is for, I don't really want to get involved. I don't really know how to deal with it. So, let's just end the conversation. But that's not the kind of prayer Jesus is calling us to.

The kind of prayer Jesus is calling us to is kingdom come, whole life orientated, laboring, struggling, wrestling with God in prayer. The Apostle Paul describes Epaphras in Colossians chapter 4.

He says, here is a man, a servant of Christ, one who is always laboring fervently, struggling in prayer on your behalf. Prayer is a battle.

[38 : 26] It's spiritual warfare. Prayer is a fight. Because when we pray, when we labor in prayer, we are engaging in the spiritual warfare. We are calling down heaven, as it were.

Jesus says that his mission is dependent upon prayer, upon men and women getting on their knees and agonizing in prayer. Leonard Ravenhill said, no church is greater than its prayer life.

You want to measure the health of a church? Measure its prayer life. There's a famous story I've shared many times. But in the 16th century, there was a terrible queen on the throne of Scotland.

Her name was Queen Mary, Queen of Scots. She was a terrible lady. Killed all sorts of people. And she reportedly said this.

She said, I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of England. Friends, imagine that. Imagine the drug dealers of our city.

[39 : 27] Imagine the corrupt people of our city. Imagine the forces of evil in our city saying, I'm not worried about the police force. I'm not worried about the government. I'm not worried about those things.

We can get around them. But oh, when Christians pray, they mess up all our plans. I fear the prayers of the followers of Jesus more than all the assembled armies of England.

Friends, do you know the power of prayer? Douglas O'Donnell writes this incredible commentary on Matthew's gospel. He writes in his book here. He says, when we look at the book of Acts, we see the equation for church growth.

The equation is simply this. Prayer plus preaching plus persecution equals growth. That's what we see in Acts. And that's what we see in the first three centuries of the church.

That's what we see throughout church history. Whenever the church is genuinely growing, that's what we see in Asia even today. The kingdom of God advances through persecution, preaching, and prayer.

[40 : 35] Friends, I mentioned it earlier. I'm not the least bit interested in what we are growing just for the sake of numbers. Growing for growth's sake or numbers' sake. But oh, may we grow as a church that are rooted in the gospel.

May we grow in our dependence of God. May we grow in the power of God. May we grow and see revival breaking out. Friends, may we grow and see God turning lives around.

What's it going to take? It's going to take people that are prepared for suffering. It's going to take people that are prepared to share the gospel. But oh, friends, it's going to take prayer. It's going to take prayer.

Getting us on our knees. Staying up all night. It's going to take fasting. Saying no to food. No to the comforts of this world. Yes to discomfort. It's going to take people that pray.

Why is this? Why is it that Jesus says we need to pray? Well, there's many reasons for this. And we should probably talk about this a lot more. But I want to give just one reason today. The reason is Jesus wants us to know where the power lies.

[41 : 39] Look at what Jesus says here. He says, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest. Jesus wants us to know who the Lord of the harvest is. That it's not us.

It's not Watermark. It's not any pastor. It's not Tim Keller or John Piper. It's not any great preacher. Jesus himself is the hope of the world.

Jesus himself is the hope of the city. Jesus wants us to know where the power lies. It lies with him and not with us. Friends, none of us have the power to convert a single person to Christ.

None of us can sweet talk or persuade a single person into repentance. None of us can manufacture faith in someone's heart.

None of us can manufacture or persuade someone to turn from their foolish idols to the hope of Jesus. But Jesus can. Jesus is the Lord of the harvest. And so we cry out to him.

[42 : 37] Jesus wants us to know that it is as impossible for us to convert someone or save someone as it is impossible for us to raise the dead and cast out demons. No demon is going to be cast out in the name of Kevin.

No dead person is going to come alive by the authority of Kevin. It's the authority of Jesus that does those things. Friends, it's the authority of Jesus that gives faith to the dead and causes life in the souls of unbelievers.

The Apostle Paul says that God is entrusting the message of the gospel to us. And he says we are like clay pots that are holding this treasure that we may know that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

One of the things Jesus wants us to see here is that the need is great. The harvest is great. The opportunity is awesome. The calling is there. But friends, what our city needs and what our world so desperately needs is not just a fired up watermark, not just a self-confident, self-assured church, not just a church that says we can go and do it.

What our city needs and what our world desperately needs is ordinary, humble, compassionate men and women that have seen the great need of our city, whose hearts have been moved by the brokenness of our world, whose gut is stirred with compassion for our city.

[43 : 59] that men and women who have seen the glory of God and the wonder of Jesus and are filled with confidence because of who He is, not because of who we are, and who have got on their knees and who cry out to God and say, Oh God, come and move in our city.

Friends, what our world needs is men and women who will pray. In this passage, Jesus gives us two instructions, really. He says, Pray and go.

Some Christians want to pray, but never really go. Some Christians are happy to go, but don't want the hard work of prayer. Some people who think they're Christians, but don't really care about either praying or going.

Matthew tells us, Friends, let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we hear your words. We hear you. This morning, God, we come empty-handed.

[45 : 27] God, we confess that there's so many things in our lives that stop us. It's our fear of man. It's the fear of insecurity. It's the fear of letting go of our idols.

Jesus, we hear you this morning. We want to go. We want to respond. We want to say, Here am I, Lord.

Send me. Father, here are we. Send us into this great city of Hong Kong. God, I pray that over the coming days and weeks, you will break our hearts for the brokenness of the city.

God, when we read the newspaper reports and when we read online what's happening and may we not just with a sense of hardness of heart say, there we go again.

But God, may our hearts burn within us. May our guts be wrenched. May we get a knot in our stomach when we see the hurt in our city. God, won't you send us out?

[46 : 39] God, where we don't want to suffer, we confess, God, that we very often have an idol of comfort and convenience and security.

God, won't you dismantle that idol, smash that idol in our hearts. Help us to love you and trust you above those things. And God, I pray, won't you teach us to pray.

Won't you teach us as a church how to pray, God. Teach us how to fast. Jesus, won't you make us more like you.

Won't your kingdom so infuse our lives that our life and our mission starts to look like your life and your mission. We pray, God, come and do this. in your name we pray.

Amen.