

Compassionately Reaching
Mission, Vision, and Values Part 6
Sunday, February 22nd, 2026
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Scripture

Matthew 9:35-38

[35] 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. [36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [37] Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; [38] therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Let’s Pray

Introduction

Illustration

Imagine you’re handed a clipboard that contains a list titled: **“People to Be Careful Around.”**

On it are the following people:

- The addict who keeps relapsing.
- The angry political liberal.
- The person who deconstructed their faith.
- The chronically needy.
- The one who hurt you deeply and never apologized.
- The person whom everyone whispers about.
- The outspoken transgender person.
- The homeless man in your local park.

Now, let’s be real. Most of us would probably never have or write a list like this ourselves, but we do carry one like it. We all have people in our lives that we label with words like: **Be careful around, avoid, enemy, not worth my time, too much work, too weird, too dirty, too scary, or too lost.**

Now imagine Jesus asking you, “Can I see your list?” Of course, you hesitate, but you slowly hand it to him.

However, he doesn’t argue with you, nor does he shame you. He simply reads it quietly until he crosses out your title and writes something new at the top.

“People I Came For.”

Then, slowly and deliberately, he begins to check off those same names.

Not to avoid them, but to move toward them.

You see, when we come across a list of people like this, we think things like:

- Danger, disruption, discernment, and distance. **I know I do. And there can be times when this type of caution is warranted and needed.**

However, when Jesus sees the same list, he thinks:

- Lost, wounded, harassed, helpless, and sheep without a shepherd.

Therefore, what we label as **“problem people,”** Jesus calls **“neighbors.”** And what we see as **“interruptions or people to avoid,”** Jesus sees as **“divine appointments.”**

Over the past 5 weeks, we have covered a lot of ground in this series on our **“Mission, Vision, and Values.”**

We’ve been given clarity on the main mission that we are called to pursue as a church.

Mission

Loving God and inviting people to follow Christ.

With this mission, we have also encountered this beautiful and grand vision that we believe God is calling us to pursue and become over the next 5 years.

5-Year Vision

We are a growing household of God that equips and sends backyard missionaries into the Coulee Region.

And yet, if we are going to accomplish this mission and vision, we need to have a practical plan of action and a core set of values that will guide us as we look to reach into the Coulee Region.

I want to take a minute and remind you of both the plan and the values that we have already walked through.

The Plan for Year One (Briefly describe each one)

- **Begin with Prayer.**
- **Vision Implementation Team**
- **Backyard Missionary Training**
- **Table fellowships**

Goal for Year One

We will begin to take ownership of this mission and vision.

This means that each of us will identify and work toward taking our next step as backyard missionaries.

To help you with this, you should have picked up a small piece of paper on your chair this morning that has the words **“Next Step as Backyard Missionaries.”**

We want to encourage each one of you to think through the next step that God is calling you to take in becoming a “backyard missionary” and then write it down.

You can either keep it as a way to help you remember the step of faith God is calling you to take this year, or you can drop it in the brown prayer box in the back, and the prayer team and elders will be praying for God to lead you in fulfilling that next step.

So if that is the plan for year one, then what are the values that will guide us in the ministry that God has called us to do? **The vision team came up with 5, and we have already talked through 4 of them.**

They are...

- **Worshiping our Sovereign Father.**
- **Rooted in God’s Infallible Word.**
- **Building Up One Another in Christ.**
- **Prayerful Dependence on the Spirit.**

My hope is that you have been able to get a good understanding of why we need to be pursuing each of these if we are going to be a church that lives out the mission and vision that God has given to us.

And yet, if we were to stop at these 4, we would probably struggle to become a church that lives on mission right where God has placed us. Because each of them, in their own way, is mostly focused on us and our life together, within the body of Christ.

This means that there isn't a single value that is compelling us to look out into the world to see people the way Jesus does. **As lost, wounded, helpless, harassed, as sheep without a shepherd, and as people that he came to die for.**

So we needed a value that would both shape our heart attitude toward the lost and would call us to action outside of these walls. Here's what we came up with:

Value 5

Compassionately Reaching the Lost

Main Idea: We need to see the lost through the eyes of Christ so that we will love them intentionally and speak the gospel boldly.

On our own, most of us struggle to see past a person's personality, faults, and outward appearance. So we choose to judge or avoid people; all while being blind to the fact that they are lost and helpless sheep, **like we all once were**, who are in need of Jesus.

So today, we are going to be challenged to look past the outward appearance of a person so that we will stop seeing the lost as **"problems and people to avoid"** but as **"neighbors and divine appointments."**

That can only happen when we begin to see people the way Jesus does.

1. See the lost through the eyes of Christ.

Matthew 9:36

[36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Illustration

In 7th grade, I was bullied by a kid named Justin Lant. From the first day of 7th grade, he would call me names like "gutter boy" and would make fun of the way I dressed and combed my hair.

So as you can imagine, **I didn't like him**, and I know, on more than one occasion, I wished that something bad would happen to him. Because I knew that he was evil to his core, and he deserved to be knocked down a few pegs.

Well, in the spring of 1994, his older brother shot and killed his mom and sister, and then went on to commit suicide.

As you can imagine, Justin's life completely collapsed. And for the first time in my life, I was able to look past the hard exterior of this bully, to see a boy who had experienced a lot of fear, depression, neglect, and violence. **Now, he had to figure out how to cope with the loss of his entire family.**

Text

When we read Matthew 9:35-38, it doesn't really tell us a lot about the crowds that Jesus encountered. But when we look through the gospels, we can get a decent idea of the kinds of people we're talking about.

- The poor and needy (Mathew 19:21)
- The afflicted (Matthew 9:35)
- Those with diseases (Luke 17:11-19)
- The demon possessed (Mark 5:1-20)
- Social outcasts (Luke 5:27-32) (**prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners**)

And if we are honest, when we encounter these kinds of people today, we tend to put them on a list with the title that I mentioned at the beginning, **"People to be Careful Around"** or even **"People to Avoid."**

Yet, Jesus doesn't see any of them that way. Because he is able to look past their outward appearance (their clothes, smell, afflictions, personality, and even their past), and is able to see their great and inward neediness.

As he says in Matthew 9:36, ***"they are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."***

In fact, this is exactly why each of us are here today. Jesus looked past all of our faults and imperfections, and the ugliness of our hearts, and saw the real need that we all had. **We were lost and helpless and in need of his rescue.**

And we need to realize that every person on planet earth, regardless of their race, gender, social standing, personality quirks, or even political beliefs, is a person who is in need of a shepherd. **They need Jesus, just like we do.**

Because of this, Matthew tells us that when Jesus looked out on the lost and needy crowds, **he had compassion on them.**

He had a deep and inward affection and concern for them that moved him to love them in tangible ways.

This is why he healed the lepers, the blind, the lame, and the demon-possessed. It's why he didn't condemn the woman caught in adultery, and it's why he told the rich young ruler to sell his possessions.

He gave them exactly what they needed in the moment, so that they would see the great need for God that existed within each of their hearts.

But Jesus didn't just do this for people he got along with. His loving compassion even extended to his enemies. As he says in Matthew 23:25-26:

[25] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. [26] You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

Now, I know that it seems like he is being really harsh with the Pharisees, and he is. They were not only doing their religious observance for show, but they were more interested in maintaining their power than they were in helping people to follow God.

But he is doing this so that they would see that their greatest need isn't outward religious observance, but an inward and spiritual renewal of the heart.

So it didn't matter if someone was poor, needy, an adulterer, a rich ruler, or a hypocritical Pharisee. **Jesus saw their inner neediness and did all that he could to show them that they were lost and in need of a shepherd.**

And that the shepherd they needed most was Jesus himself. As he says in:

Matthew 11:28–29

[28] Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Luke 19:10

[10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Application

Church, I'm not going to lie to you and say it was easy, but I will tell you that when Justin's family was killed, **even though I wasn't a believer**, I was finally able to move him from the category of **"Person to Avoid"** to **"Person Jesus came for."**

Because I saw clearly that he was a lost sheep in need of a shepherd. A need that I would eventually come face-to-face with in my own life 6 years later.

This is the same challenge that God is giving us this morning. To become a body of believers who can see past the rough, hard, frustrating, and at times, annoying exterior that people present, so that we can see people the way Jesus does.

As lost and helpless sinners who need Jesus just as much as we do. Because Jesus came to hold out the word of life to all people, not just to those with whom he gets along.

So this is a very important first step that we need to take if God is going to form us into a family of backyard missionaries.

If you struggle seeing people the way Jesus does, I'm not here to judge you, but I would encourage you to pray and ask God to change your heart so you can begin to see them the way God sees you.

Because once we begin to see people the way Jesus does, we will be willing to step into their lives to meet the lost and needy right where they are.

2. Intentionally build relationships with non-believers.

Matthew 9:10-13

[10] And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. [11] And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Text

In this section of the gospel of Matthew, Jesus, in verse 9, has just called Matthew to follow him. **But he didn't stop at the call.**

Because when we connect it to verse 10, we can see that Jesus actually went to Matthew's house and spent time with him and his tax collector friends.

This is amazing, by the way, because tax collectors are considered some of the worst people in the eyes of the Jews.

And yet Jesus looked past all of Matthew's external flaws and was able to see his internal need for a shepherd.

As a result, he not only called Matthew to follow him, but he got into his world so that he could preach the good news to him and his tax collector friends.

Jesus saw Matthew as a **“person he came for,”** therefore, he was willing to invest intentional time in his life.

But the Pharisee, on the other hand, dealt with tax collectors differently. They would have talked to them like Jesus did, **but only to condemn them for their sin.** And they never would have spent time in their houses, because they viewed them as evil, unclean, and not worth their time.

The Pharisees saw these tax collectors as “people to be careful around and to avoid.”

The reason I'm pointing out these different responses is to show us that our actions toward other people say a lot about how we view them.

If we are going to be people who actually view others, **especially the lost, needy, and helpless,** through the eyes of Jesus, then we need to be willing to compassionately move toward them.

This means that we are going to need to open our lives to them just like Jesus did. This will be hard for some of us, because it may require us to share our lives with people who are very different from us.

The politically opposite, the morally opposite, the lifestyle opposite, etc...

And yet, when we see them through the eyes of Christ, it becomes clear that we are all fundamentally and spiritually the same. **We all need Jesus.**

Also, whether we always like it or not, the main way that God draws people to himself is through the ministry that happens when Christians spend time with those who don't know him. As Jesus says in Matthew 5:16:

[16] In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

The only way someone is going to see the light of Christ in us is if we are willing to take the time to open our lives to them.

But to get there, two things will need to happen.

First, we will need to make an intentional decision to focus on building relationships within our own backyards.

One of the good consequences that the technological revolution brought with it is the fact that we can now keep in touch with friends and family who don't live near us.

We can text them, send funny memes, receive pictures, and even FaceTime as a way to maintain closeness in those relationships. **I think that is a good thing, especially when it comes to our families.**

But there is also a negative side to it.

It leads us to believe that lasting and impactful relationships can be created and maintained simply through a screen.

And yet, when we look at the life of Jesus, scholars estimate that about 80-85% of his ministry was done just in Galilee.

This means that he started a worldwide movement by investing his life in people who lived relatively close to his hometown of Nazareth.

He called them, spent time with them, learned about their lives, shared the gospel of the kingdom with them, and he lived a life of faithfulness before them.

This means that he intentionally invested his energy into the people who were right around him, **and he is calling us to do the same thing.** As he says in the first part of Matthew 28:19:

[19] Go (as you go) therefore and make disciples of all nations...

As you and I live our lives in our homes, at work, in our communities, apartment complexes, grocery stores, coffee shops, book clubs, schools, etc..., we have been given the good task of investing in the people right around us by building intentional relationships with them.

We do this with the hope that one day they will come to know Jesus, and with our help, will grow into a mature and Christ-honoring disciple. **Because we know that their greatest need is to know and to be known by Christ.**

But this kind of intentional investment is going to take more than just putting our phones down. **It will also require us to adjust our lives so that we can be present where we have been planted.**

I mentioned multiple times, in this series, that we are going to be creating a vision implementation team. The reason we feel this is necessary is that we want to figure out how to do two things well.

- One, to equip people to live as mature, Christ-honoring, and gospel-sharing Christians in the world.
- Two, to give you the necessary time needed to be intentionally present in your spheres of influence.

I'm continually bringing this up because this will probably mean that the ministry of La Crescent Free will have to change to better facilitate disciple-making and to give people more time.

However, it has to be more than just an organizational change. Each person will need to assess their time and commitments so that we all can wisely use the time God has given us, so that we can have a gospel impact in the body and out in the world. This is exactly what Paul tells us in Colossians 4:5 when he writes:

[5] Walk in wisdom toward outsiders (non-believers), making the best use of the time.

The best use of our time outside of these walls is to build relationships with the lost and the needy so that they may see and receive the hope of Christ that is in us.

3. Share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Matthe 9:37-38

[37] Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; [38] therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

In Matthew 9:35, Jesus is doing the amazing and life-changing work of preaching the gospel and healing people so they would believe in him and receive everlasting life.

But then in verse 36, it's as if he stops for a minute to take stock of all the needs that were actually around him. And seemingly in this brief moment, he is overwhelmed by the lostness and spiritual needs that exist within these multitudes and the crowds.

As a result, he is moved to compassion, which means that he can't help but do something to meet their great need.

Now, based on verse 35, I would have expected Matthew to write in verse 36:

“Because of this, he continued to heal afflictions and preach the gospel to all who came to him.”

But that's not what happened. Instead, Jesus takes this opportunity to tell his disciples that they need to earnestly pray and ask God to send laborers into the harvest who can share the good news of the kingdom. **Because, as he says, “the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few.”**

Jesus didn't intend to be a one-man gospel show. Because he knew that if people were going to receive the gift of eternal life, he not only needed to go to the cross, but others would need to carry on the work once he left.

In fact, this is why one of the last things he said to his disciples is the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20.

Because the main call that God has put on our lives as his people is to first and foremost love him. And the second is to love others by inviting them to know and follow Christ.

Again, this is why our mission statement is: **“Loving God and inviting people to follow Christ.”**

And if we are going to gain traction in seeing this mission fulfilled in our space and time, then we need to take to heart a few things that God tells us within his word.

- We need to be praying for God to raise up and send laborers.

Again, as Jesus says in Matthew 9:38: ***[38] therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.***

This is why we believe that prayer is such an integral part of fulfilling this vision. Because God will use it to raise up and send people to be gospel witnesses in the world.

- We need to realize that God is sending us.

I know we talked about this last week, but let's once again look at Acts 1:8:

[8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

We are not simply praying and asking God to send other people. Rather, God is using our prayers to prepare and send us so that we all can be Christ's witnesses in the world.

- We actually need to share the good news with those who don't know Christ.

As Paul writes in Romans 10:14-15:

[14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Church, it is absolutely essential that we begin to see people through the eyes of Christ. That we move them from being **"interruptions or people to avoid,"** to **"divine appointments."**

And with it, we must begin to intentionally build relationships with the lost, needy, and helpless within our own backyards. Because, as I said earlier, the only way someone is going to see the light of Christ in us is if we open our lives to them.

But understand this, if we do all of that, and yet fail to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, **then we are not compassionately reaching them at all.**

In fact, we are doing the opposite, because we are withholding from them the answer and remedy to their greatest longing and need, a Savior who can rescue them from sin, death, and an eternity in hell.

As the famous magician and atheist Penn Jillette once said:

How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that.

So yes, let's see people as Christ sees them, and let's intentionally invest ourselves in their lives. But remember, as he gives us the opportunity, let's speak and preach the gospel boldly. Because what we have is exactly what they need: **the words, the message, and the hope of everlasting life. Amen.**

Let's Pray.