

Jesus And The Multitudes

Introduction. For years, most of us have seen a great lull when it comes to church growth. In fact, about the only growth we have seen is member's children who obey the gospel. While that kind of growth is good, we need something more (Deuteronomy 2:1-3).

In some ways, the situation is difficult to understand. People's hearts and natures are pretty much the same as they were 50, 100, or 1,000 years ago. The gospel still is the "power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). Preachers in the church today are faithful in preaching the gospel. If all these statements are legitimate, then what is the problem?

It is a sad situation when you ask some Christians if they have ever talked to someone about obeying Jesus Christ for over five or ten minutes at a time. The response will probably shock you and show you why the church is plagued by a growth problem. Most Christians have never had someone else inside their home or been inside the home of someone else to speak to them about the gospel. Over the last several years, we have turned inward rather than outward.

In Matthew 9:36-38, Jesus helps us to understand our job a little better. He explains to the disciples how to go about saving people's souls. What we will consider is the four desires of Christ and how to use them to become better teachers of the gospel.

I. ***The Desire To Look***

- A. Jesus did not turn His head away; He was willing to look. In order for the kingdom of God to grow, we have got to look for prospects to teach the gospel. Many other religious groups like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are growing very rapidly because they have a very strong door-to-door approach. They get out there and are willing to look for people who will listen.
- B. In John 4:34-36, Jesus taught His disciples that the key to finding people is perspective. Once we train ourselves to look for prospects, our job will be much easier. All it takes is the attitude of wanting to find others.
- C. Both this congregation and the church in general has got to get better at actually teaching people, rather than just wanting to "church" them. We get them to services and think that will just magically convert them, but it takes far more work.
- D. In the gospel of John, where Jesus had so many private interviews, He was actually willing to teach them about the gospel. He did not just invite them to the next synagogue meeting. He told them directly about what their soul needed.

II. ***The Desire To Feel***

- A. Jesus allowed Himself to feel. He opened His heart to authentic emotion. If we cannot feel for people who are lost, then we will be completely ineffective (Matthew 9:11-13; Colossians 3:12).
- B. We are told several times in Jesus' life about His compassion for others. We tend to concentrate on all the negative events and false doctrine around us. We need to focus upon lost people who need the gospel and their rejoicing (Acts 8:39; 2 Corinthians 1:14).
- C. You and I need to have the love of Christ so that we can have the kind of compassion it takes to care about people and their eternal destiny (John 15:9; 2 Corinthians 5:11).

III. ***The Desire To Pray***

- A. Prayer is always first. It cannot take the place of labor, but it precedes it. Jesus told His disciples to petition the Lord for help in teaching the gospel.
- B. Everyone needs a little help now and then; prayer is our answer (Colossians 4:5-6; James 1:5-6). God has promised to be with us and help us in our time of need. If you need strength to make the phone call or knock on the door, pray about it. If you need strength to get the words out of your mouth, pray about it (Nehemiah 2:4; Proverbs 3:6; Philippians 4:6). Remember, you are doing the best work for God possible. He will not let you go it alone.
- C. Cornelius petitioned God for someone to present the message of the gospel to him (Acts 10:31-33). There is no telling how many more people who are out there who may be praying to know and understand the Bible. We can be the people to help them understand. There are lots of great people out there in denominations, but you will never meet them unless you are willing to go.

IV. ***The Desire To Labor***

- A. Jesus was willing to go out and do the work, and so must we. It seems that the vast majority of Christians have never dreamed that the command in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16 is personal.
- B. The disciples of the first century understood this message and reacted appropriately. Today, we see little of the burning passion for men's souls as seen in Jesus and the early Christians. Luke 14:15-24 commands us to go out into the highways and along the hedges and compel them to come in that His house may be filled. Can our lack of "soul-winning" be an indication of our lack of spiritual wisdom (Proverbs 11:30)?
- C. True growth will happen if all of us set our minds to obeying this teaching. We cannot be "partial Christians," obeying God in some

respects and completely failing in others. There cannot be this big gap in our obedience to God. We have got to be better and do better at this critical function.

Conclusion. Maybe the greatest reason why the church has slowed dramatically in its growth is because we just do not get out and try to teach people anymore. Perhaps with the development of society, we not only become more busy, but we also believe that the gospel can be spread by bulletin, website, newspaper, radio program, and television show; but by themselves, they do not work. What does work is people taking time out of their schedules, and studying the Bible with people who need the gospel.

I need as much encouragement as the next person. All of us are trying to get to heaven. That is our ultimate goal. However, what we fail to realize is that teaching people the gospel on an individual basis is just as important as showing up for services and a host of other obligations. The gospel will not spread itself. God needs you and me to spread the message.