

Sheep without a Shepherd
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Matthew 9:35-10:20
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Another crazy, confusing, and disturbing week in America. Normally, a public speaker, such as myself would then proceed to open up a laundry list of the things that happened in order to amplify the point, but that's not really necessary. You have eyes, you can see. You have seen the absurd things that are happening around our country; no need to tell you about them.

But there is something that I do need to tell you, something that I feel compelled to tell you because it helps makes sense of what we you have seen. It begins with these words recorded in Matthew 9:36 which says “**When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd**” Jesus **sees** and Jesus **has compassion** on those who are harassed .

Before I get into the meat of this text, there's a side question I'd like to ask. Why does our Lord keep referring to people as sheep? I think it's because sheep feel better about themselves when they're part of crowd. So much so that they they may not even think about the way the crowd is moving and why. They're just happy to be part of the crowd.

Many of the protesters that are attacking our cities are doing so because they want to be part of the crowd. They've been taught and encouraged to revere the activism and protests of the late 1960's and now it's their turn. Some have imagined this to be the defining moment of their generation. They are part of something bigger than themselves and so like sheep they are mindlessly drawn in. Sheep will go where the crowd is going. They will sacrifice what reason and common sense for the mere pleasure of being part of the crowd.

Meanwhile, most of us just sit and wonder with mouths agape. “**How can people be this way?**” “**What is their problem?**” Their problem is they have been misled. Those that were meant to love them did not love them. Those that were meant to remain with them deserted them. Those that were supposed to teach them, instead indoctrinated them. Generations of demagogic politicians, and politically corrupt educators, malevolent community organizers have led them into this moment of absurdity that is now evident to all. They used to be satisfied with destroying their own lives, but now they want to destroy our lives too.

There's another reason why the Lord refers to us as sheep: we were meant to have a shepherd. We were meant to follow the voice of THE shepherd. But as we have learned, there are other shepherds and other voices that would have their way with the sheep. Oh they're clever too. They tie the victims into their program with the more base sinful urges like rage, the desire for revenge, and envy for not having what other have. All of that.

Academics from accredited schools are now teaching and have been teaching for decades, that America was built on racism and oppression and therefore is not a valid country which must be destroyed. This is why Christopher Columbus are being torn down around the country. Never mind the fact that most every country in the world that exists today has some form of racism, oppression, and/or genocide in its past. Shall we destroy all of them? These same academics assert that all white people are racists. How do they know that? How can they know

someone is racist simply by the color of their skin? How can they prejudge someone like that? Isn't that prejudice. The very thing they decry; the thing that has led them to riot is what they themselves are!

So you've had a couple generations of people who were taught to think like this...that it's okay to prejudge someone on the basis of the color of their skin... and destroy an entire country because some people in past did some evil things. This is the lens they've been given. This is the way they now see the world. Some very bad shepherds have put this in their heads.

So how does Jesus view them? He views them as lost sheep. **“When he saw the crowds he had compassion them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”** “Hold on a second, these are the people who are harassing us!” True, but they themselves have been harassed by false teaching for all of their lives. They themselves have been rendered helpless and unable to function in a country that is full of opportunity for those willing to seek it and work for it. Those leaders and teachers who should have encouraged them, chose to counsel them to rage, to prejudge, to hate to riot. They've been toyed with all of the there lives they've been pawns on a chessboard that is bigger than they can comprehend. Of course Jesus has compassion for them. It is for this reason he came. To rescue people from the evil one. To disabuse them of his lies

Does it surprise you that Jesus would even think about having compassion on people such as these? If it does, then you should probably be surprised that he has compassion on you! I know that I am surprised that he has has compassion on me. For I know what I could have been, were it not for emissaries of Jesus stepping in at various times in my life. Starting with my parents, then a few teachers and coaches who set me straight and demand I toe the line. Friends, professors, and even some of you who stepped up and spoke to me. I have been brought to repentance over my sins again and again by people who love me. I learned to admit when I am wrong, was assured of forgiveness by the cross of Christ, and I proceeded onward seeking what is good. I am what I am because Christ has had compassion on me, and has been my shepherd. What would I be if I had not had these folk sent by him. I am a sinner and I know what I'm capable of of. Who knows what sort of awfulness might have arisen from me were it not for The Shepherd constantly seeking me.

This is what I'm getting at, all of us, all people have the same enemy: the Devil and his close companions, sin and death We know the sadness that we feel for ourselves when we fall into sin, when we realize how wretched we've been. Should we not also have a similar sadness, for a any soul that has been overcome by evil? I think so.

“But they're wrong! They should be punished! They should go to Jail.” Indeed they should! God's in favor of that too. He gave us earthly authority for just that purpose: to maintain order on earth so that we all can live in peace. While he is in favor of punishing those who do wrong and he does so thorough the justice system, he's not in favor of anyone being punished for all eternity in hell; he doesn't want that from anybody. Despite the sinfulness, he still sees the value in each and every human being and he wants to save them from that end. He hasn't forgotten what they were meant to be... we were meant to be his people. It saddens him to see they are not and he wants to restore them.

So what did he do about it. He sent Jesus, of course to take away the sins of the world, and this Jesus when saw the sheep without of shepherd said **“Pray earnestly to the Lord of the**

harvest to send out laborers to into his harvest.” and then he sent his disciples out! And they were to help and heal and to teach. They were say “The Kingdom of Heaven (or the kingdom of God) is at Hand.” That’s good news! That is super good news! Especially to those who have been controlled by the prince of this world and all his apostles. Col. 1:13-14 says of God “He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son whom he loves, in whom we have redemption”

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther, in answer to the question “How does God’s kingdom come.” writes “Gods’ kingdom comes when our heavenly father gives us his holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe His holy Word and lead Godly lives here in time and there in eternity.” In otherwords, the kingdom comes to a person when that person comes to faith in Jesus by the work of the Holy Spirit... and thereby begins to repent... to tell himself the truth... to tell God the truth and be forgiven in Christ...and learn to live truthfully.

The bad shepherds and voices who fomented these riots did so by appealing to the sinful nature of the people. But once the kingdom of God comes to a person by faith; once Jesus who is the king comes to that person, they begin to see sin for what it is and begin confessing it and seeking forgiveness. In Jesus they have that. But with the forgiveness restoration begins. The conscience is brought to life and strengthened and are no longer so easily moved to blind violence and ignorant rage.

So how can you help? You have probably already started... by speaking up for what is good and right and true and speaking up for Jesus when the time is right. A good place to start is to simply be decent to all people. You’ll become like one of those people in my life, sent by Jesus to straighten me out. As a believer Christ, Christ goes with you where ever you go. In that way you are an emissary for the kingdom of God and the King who would be the shepherd of those who are lost.

A lot of people think these are the most horrible of times. And, in some ways it is. But I think it’s a time of great clarity. The enemy of us all, who has heretofore acted covertly, is now assaulting us out in the open. The contrast between good and evil could not be more clear. In my lifetime, our purpose as a church and as Christians is clearer than ever. We know the shepherd that everyone needs. And we are his emissaries. AMEN