

Five Days at the Feet of Jesus

A devotional journey through Matthew 9:35–10:8, exploring the compassion of Jesus Christ who sees the harassed and helpless, sends ordinary people on an extraordinary mission, and sustains them with his own authority and grace. Each day offers a key verse, a short devotional reflection, questions for personal study, and a closing prayer. This study is designed for individual or small group use and is rooted in the conviction that God's name is compassion.

Do You Really See?

Jesus sees the harassed and
helpless

Sent and Sustained
Going with his authority



The Harvest Is Plentiful

God is already at work

Ordinary People,
Extraordinary Mission

Called and sent by Jesus

You Received Without
Payment

Grace freely given

Do You Really See?

KEY VERSE

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

— *Matthew 9:36*

Devotional

We live in an age of more faces than any generation before us has ever seen. Before your feet hit the floor in the morning, you may have already scrolled past dozens of strangers on your phone. On your commute, hundreds more pass by your window. And yet, for all this exposure to human faces, we often see very little at all. The sheer volume of pain and need can leave us numb, trained by habit to look without truly seeing.

Jesus did not have the benefit of a filter or a scroll. When the crowds pressed in, he could not swipe past them. He saw every face. He saw the exhaustion behind the eyes of the woman who had been ill for years. He saw the loneliness of the man whom no one would touch. He saw people who were harassed by forces they could not control and helpless to find their way. And rather than turning away or growing numb, Jesus was moved at the deepest level of his being.

The Greek word behind "compassion" in this verse points to something felt in the gut, something visceral and physical. This was not polite sympathy from a comfortable distance. This was the kind of care that costs you something. And it is this same quality of seeing that Jesus invites us into as his followers today. The people around us, the ones we pass and scroll past and sit beside, are still harassed and helpless. And God is still asking: do you really see them?

Reflection Questions

1. Think of someone you have seen recently but not truly noticed. What might be going on beneath the surface of their life that you cannot see?
2. In what areas of your own life have you become numb to the pain of others? What do you think caused that?
3. How does knowing that Jesus sees you fully, with gut-level compassion, change how you feel about your own struggles today?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive me for the times I look without seeing, and for the ways I have let the noise of the world dull my heart. Give me your eyes today. Help me to see the people around me the way you see them, with tenderness and care. Slow me down enough to notice the one right in front of me. Amen.

The Harvest Is Already Plentiful

KEY VERSE

"Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"

— *Matthew 9:37-38*

Devotional

It would be easy to look at the world around us and conclude that it is a lost cause. The news cycle offers an unending stream of suffering, injustice, and division. Whole communities seem to be unraveling. And in the face of all that, what difference could any one person possibly make? This kind of thinking is understandable, but it is not the conclusion Jesus reaches.

Jesus does not say the world is beyond saving. He does not say the problems are too large, or that the darkness has already won. He says the harvest is plentiful. In the middle of all that chaos and need and pain, God is already at work. Seeds have already been planted. People are already searching. There is already movement, already longing, already an openness that God himself has cultivated. The harvest belongs to God. We do not create it. We are simply invited to participate in what God is already doing.

But Jesus also says that laborers are few. And notice how he tells us to respond to that shortage. He does not say, "So work harder." He says, "Pray." Ask the Lord of the harvest. This is a profound reminder that the mission of the church begins not with our effort but with our dependence. We are not called to carry the weight of the world. We are called to pray, to trust, and then to go where we are sent by the one whose harvest it truly is.

Reflection Questions

1. Where in your life or community do you see evidence that God is already at work, already drawing people toward himself?
2. Are there places where you have been trying to carry the weight of ministry or service on your own strength? How might prayer change your approach?
3. What would it look like for you to participate in what God is already doing in the lives of the people around you this week?

Prayer

Lord of the harvest, remind me that this world is yours and that you are already at work in it. Forgive me for the moments I have tried to labor in my own strength and forgotten to ask. Increase my faith. Show me where you are moving, and give me the courage to join you there. Amen.

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Mission

KEY VERSE

"These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions..."

— *Matthew 10:5*

Devotional

If you were assembling a team to change the world, you would probably not start with this group. The twelve apostles included fishermen whose most significant credential was knowing where the fish were biting. One was a tax collector, a man whose profession made him despised by his own people. There were brothers who would later argue over who was the greatest. There were those who would fall asleep at the most critical moment. There was a man who would deny he ever knew Jesus, and one who would hand him over to his enemies.

And yet, Jesus chose them. Not because of what they had accomplished, but because of who he is and what he intended to do through them. The calling did not come because they had their lives together. It came in the middle of their ordinary lives, their everyday work, their very human confusion and doubt. Jesus looked at regular people and said, "You. Come with me. I am sending you."

This is the pattern of God throughout all of Scripture. Moses had a stutter. Gideon was the least in his family. Mary was a young woman from a town no one respected. God has always delighted in using unlikely people for his purposes, because then it is crystal clear that the power belongs to God and not to the person. When you feel unqualified for the mission, you are in remarkably good company. And the one who sends you has never once relied on your perfection to accomplish his purposes.

Reflection Questions

1. What excuses do you most commonly reach for when you feel unqualified to serve or share your faith? Where do those excuses come from?
2. Look at the list of the twelve apostles again. Which one do you most identify with, and why?
3. How does it change your sense of calling to know that Jesus intentionally chose ordinary, flawed, doubting people to carry his mission into the world?

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for not waiting until I am perfect before you call me. Thank you for choosing ordinary people like me. On the days when I feel disqualified or invisible, remind me that you have already placed your hand on my life and called me by name. Use me, Lord, just as I am. Amen.

You Received Without Payment

KEY VERSE

"You received without payment; give without payment."

— *Matthew 10:8b*

Devotional

This short sentence at the end of Jesus's instructions to his disciples contains the entire logic of the kingdom of God. It is not the logic of the marketplace, where everything is earned and nothing is truly free. It is not the logic of religion as many people have experienced it, where acceptance must be won through enough effort, enough goodness, enough piety. The logic of the kingdom is a gift all the way down.

Before we can give, we must receive. This is not just a nice thought. It is the proper order of things. When we try to serve, to give, to love from a place of emptiness, we burn out. We grow resentful. We begin to perform for an audience rather than give from abundance. The sustainable life of discipleship flows out of an ongoing experience of receiving from God. We give because we have been given to. We love because we have been loved first. We go because Christ has already come to us.

The sacraments proclaim this order beautifully. In baptism, God acted before you could respond, before you could choose, before you even knew his name. At the Lord's Table, Christ does not wait for us to have it all together. He sets the table, pours the cup, and places his very life into our hands without condition. This is pure gift. And when we receive this gift regularly, week after week, it quietly transforms the way we go back into the world. We stop striving to earn what we already have and start sharing freely from the overflow of what we have been given.

Reflection Questions

1. In your own life, do you tend to give from a place of abundance or from a place of depletion? What does that tell you about your relationship with receiving from God?
2. How has God's grace come to you "without payment" in ways you did not earn or expect? Take a few moments to name them specifically.
3. What would it look like this week to give to someone in your life, freely and without expectation, simply because you yourself have been so freely given to?

Prayer

Generous God, I confess that I sometimes live as though your love must be earned. Forgive me. Remind me today of all the ways you have poured yourself out for me without condition. Let that grace be so real in my heart that it cannot help but spill over into the lives of those around me. Amen.

Sent and Sustained

KEY VERSE

"Jesus gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness."

— *Matthew 10:1*

Devotional

Jesus did not send his disciples out empty-handed. He gave them authority, a mission, and most importantly, he gave them his presence. The church has never been sustained by human talent, organizational efficiency, or financial resources. The church of Jesus Christ is sustained by the compassion of God.

That refusal is still active today. Jesus looks at our broken world, with all of its loneliness and grief and searching, and he does not turn away. He keeps moving toward the need. And he invites us to follow him into that movement, not because we are capable on our own, but because we carry his authority and his presence as we go. This is not a burden. It is a freedom. We are not responsible for saving the world. That has already been accomplished. We are simply invited to be witnesses to it, messengers of it, embodiments of it in our everyday lives.

Your life is a harvest field. The people you will encounter today, at work, at the grocery store, and even in your own home may be longing for someone to simply see them and not look away. You have been equipped for this by the grace of the one who has already come to you, who has already claimed you, who has already placed his life in your hands. Go now. Freely you have received. Freely give. The harvest is plentiful, and you are not sent out alone.

Reflection Questions

1. As you come to the end of this five-day study, what is the one idea or image that has stayed with you most? What do you think God is saying to you through it?
2. Who in your daily life might God be calling you to see more fully, to move toward with compassion rather than scrolling past?
3. What is one specific, concrete step you will take this week to participate in the mission of Jesus right where you are?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, you saw us when we were lost and came to us when we could not find our way. You gave without condition and loved without reservation. Send us now in your strength. Make us people who truly see the faces around us, who are moved with your compassion, and who give freely because we have been so freely given to. Use us for your glory and for the good of the world you love so much. Amen.