



The Compassion of Jesus Christ

Matthew 9:35-38

1. A Compassion for the Crowds (verse 36)
2. A Perception of the Problem (verse 37)
3. A Solution for the Situation (verse 38)

Matthew 9:35-38

And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

In Matthew 9:35 we find a nice summary verse of the ministry of Jesus. It explains what Jesus was doing with his days. He was travelling, teaching, and healing. This verse forms a transition to the next section which begins in verse 36. Therefore, our outline this morning will begin with verse 36 instead. We read that Jesus "was going about all the cities and the villages" (verse 35). The "cities" were the bigger population centers in the Galilee area, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Cana, Nazareth, Tiberias. The "villages" were the smaller locations, many of which are not even recorded for us in the gospel accounts. These are the little population centers of people, often outside any city walls. The ministry of Jesus Christ was not a "stay-in-one-place" type of ministry. He would go from place to place, be it a larger city or a smaller township.

As He went to these places, Matthew records that Jesus was "teaching in the synagogues" (verse 35). Since Jesus was a Jew, it would be only natural for Jesus to be there. He grew up in the synagogues, much like the children among us are growing up in the church. He would go to these services and be recognized as a teacher, and he would teach the people. In His teaching, He was preaching; He was proclaiming. The content of his teaching is given in verse 35. Matthew writes that Jesus was "proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom." His message was centered around the good news of the arrival of the kingdom of heaven. In chapter 10, we see Jesus sending out His disciples to preach. Their message is His message. When they go, they will preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 10:7). In other words, the Messiah has come to inaugurate the kingdom of God upon the earth. Jesus, the King, was in their midst. This is great news of deliverance!

The demonstration that the kingdom had come was found in the wondrous deeds that were taking place. We read that Jesus was "healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (verse 35). Jesus was healing everybody who came to Him! It did not matter what sort of disease someone had. Jesus was able to heal it. Nobody ever came to Jesus seeking to be healed but was not healed. Never did anyone come with an ailment, for which Jesus did not have a cure. He healed every disease and sickness. We have spent ten Sunday mornings over the past several months looking at different examples of the illnesses that Jesus cured! He cured leprosy, paralysis, fever, demon-possession, bleeding, death, and blindness. You name the sickness and Jesus healed it. Jesus was your dermatologist, orthopedist, family practice physician, internist, and your ophthalmologist! Remember, these miracles all attest to Jesus' Messianic claim. He is the Messiah. He is the King. He is bringing in the kingdom of God. Jesus is God, Himself, coming among His people, demonstrating Himself to be Who He is! Jesus' ministry was to the whole man. He taught the mind; He preached to the heart; He healed the body.

Now, when Jesus walked among the people, He was greatly affected by their condition. Here is point number one. Jesus had a ...

1. Compassion for the Crowds (verse 36)

Matthew 9:36 reads, "And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd." As Jesus went about His ministry, He observed the crowds around them. From city to city and from village to village, He noticed the same thing.

Jesus noticed the crowds were **distressed**. This word is translated very differently in the various translations of the Bible. The KJV translates it "fainted." The MKJV translates it "tired." The NKJV translates it "weary." The NIV and ESV translates it "harassed." The NASB uses the word "distressed." The idea of the Greek word here is that of being in a troubled state. Things were not well with the crowds. Things were bad with them.

Jesus also noticed the crowds were **downcast**. Again, there is somewhat of a difference in translation here. It is translated "scattered" (KJV, MKJV, NKJV), "helpless" (NIV, ESV), and "downcast" (NASB). The idea of the Greek word is that of being "thrown down." Let's try to picture this scene. Jesus looks at the multitudes and discerns their state. They were distressed and troubled. Things were going bad for them. Rather than being helped, they were neglected, abused, and cast away.

Jesus was moved because the crowds were "**as sheep without a shepherd**" (verse 36). This reference to sheep and a shepherd obviously has spiritual allusions. The Bible frequently describes people as sheep whose spiritual leaders are shepherds. This terminology can be found in Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 11. In the gospel of John, Jesus told Peter to "shepherd My sheep" (John 21:16). Paul told the Ephesian elders to "shepherd the church of God" (Acts 20:28). Peter instructed the elders of the scattered churches to "shepherd the flock of God among you" (1 Peter 5:2). Jesus here says that the spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel had failed in their job to spiritually shepherd the people. Sure, they were doing lots of religious things. They were doing lots of religious activities. But, the sheep were not being fed. The sheep were not being nourished. The sheep were not being cared for. Instead, they were neglected, abused, and cast away.

Jesus is not discerning the physical state of the crowds. He has been healing them all. These people came to Jesus with broken bodies, but Jesus was putting them back together again. Rather, Jesus is moved by the spiritual state of the crowds; he is concerned about how they have been spiritually neglected, abused, and cast away. Let me ask you, "Does this describe our world today?" Are people today distressed? Are people today downcast? Are people today "like sheep without a shepherd"?

Let us take a moment to examine the reality of people in America alone. Half of our marriages end up in divorce today, and each marriage lasts an average of 7.2 years. Nearly a third of the children born today are born out of wedlock. Drug use is a major problem in America. Sixty percent of the world's illegal drug market is in our nation alone, a nation that includes only six percent of the world's population. Over 20 million Americans use Marijuana. An estimated 6 million Americans use Cocaine. An estimated half a million Americans use Heroin. An estimated 13 million Americans are alcoholics. Many drug users are prominent citizens in our communities. They are business owners, doctors, civic leaders, parents and neighbors. Consider the profile of a regular Cocaine user: well educated (average of 14 years of education); employed (77%); well-paid (37% earn over \$25,000); 56% engage in illegal activity other than drug possession to support the habit. (source: www.drugfreeworkplace.com)

Violent crime is rampant. One murder takes place on average of every 22 minutes (26,000 per year). In the time it takes to preach this sermon, an average rate of 2 murders will occur. An average of one rape occurs every 5 minutes (105,000 per year). One robbery every 49 seconds (520,000 per year). One aggravated assault takes place every 28 seconds (1,000,000 per year). One burglary every 10 seconds (3,000,000 per year). (These statistics were gleaned from several web sites: <http://www.probe.org/docs/crime.html> and <http://www.ncpa.org/studies/s193/s193b.html>).

It would take little effort to discover it gets even worse. I have not mentioned the problem of diseases, such as AIDS. I have not touched upon poverty, homelessness, or family violence. I have not even begun to look at other countries where tremendous abuse occurs. Think of the victims of these circumstances. In some sense, we are all victimized by these social problems that are all around us. One man researched all of the ways in which people are victimized in America. In his report, he wrote, "a lot of Americans qualify for victim status in multiple ways: they are victims of AIDS, the press, rock music or pornography, warped upbringing, anti-nerd bias, public hostility toward smokers, addiction, patriarchy, being black, being white, belonging to male bonding groups that beat drums in the woods, and so on." He concluded that **760 percent of the American people are victims** (because we are all victims in many ways). (source: "A 'Victim' Census for Our Time," *U. S. News and World Report*, 23 November 1992, 22, as referenced in *Worship by the Book*, edited by D. A. Carson, p. 30).

Are people today distressed? Are people today downcast? Are people today "like sheep without a shepherd"? Yes! If Jesus were walking our streets today, how would He feel? When He walked the streets of ancient Israel, we are told that "He felt compassion for them." I would conclude that He would feel the same way today. This word "compassion" describes the inner pains in your stomach when you are moved to feel the difficulties of others. Jesus experienced in His inner man a pain which sympathized with the distresses of others. Our English word, "compassion" describes this idea nicely. The word has two parts: *com* means "together" and *passion* means "feeling." So the word *compassion* means to "have feeling together" with others.

Let's think about this for a moment. Jesus is God. Jesus has come to explain God. In His compassion for the hurting, Jesus teaches us what God is like. Jesus repeatedly told parables to illustrate the compassion of God. The father of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) had compassion for his wayward son (Luke 15:20), though the son had sinned against him greatly. The lord who was owed 10,000 talents, which could never be repaid, had compassion for his slave, and forgave him all his debt (Matt. 18:21-35), just like God has forgiven you. On several occasions, the Bible explicitly says that it was the compassion of Jesus Christ that moved Him to heal those with diseases. This is the case with the story of the leper (Mark 1:41). It is also the case with the blind men on the road in Jericho (Matt. 20:34). It is true in the case of the only son of a widow, who had died (Luke 7:13). Matthew tells us in chapter 14 that Jesus "saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them, and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14). Jesus was compassionate for the hungry. He said, "I feel compassion for the multitude, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way" (Matt. 15:32). We preach and proclaim a compassionate Savior. He sees our difficulties. He knows our distresses. And without Him, we would be, "like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus identified Himself as "the good shepherd ... [who] lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:1). For those who are distressed and downcast, Jesus is the shepherd they need. Jesus Christ is "the Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4). Jesus Christ is the "Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25). We ought always to look to Jesus. We ought always to tell others to look to Jesus. Rebellious sinners need to look to Jesus to be saved. Despairing Christians need to look to Jesus.

Jesus had a "compassion for the crowds." **Do you have a compassion for the crowds?** When you see people who do not have a savior, does your stomach stir in compassion for them? Does your stomach pain for those in need? Jesus once told the story of a man who was robbed and beaten on the road to Jericho (Luke 10:30-37). The priest and the Levite who were so religious had no compassion for this man. But the despised Samaritan had compassion for this man (Luke 10:33) and he cared for his physical wounds. Jesus asked, "Which one of these proved to be a neighbor to this man?" The man replied, "the one who showed mercy toward him." Jesus said, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). The good Samaritan had compassion (Luke 10:33).

Do you have a Samaritan-like compassion for your "neighbors"? What about the lonely child in your neighborhood that likes to show up at your house and talk and talk and talk and talk? You know that he is being neglected at home by his parents and just looking for attention. There is a girl in our neighborhood like that. Come summertime, she is going to show up at our door frequently wanting to play. As we ride our bikes around our neighborhood, we see her in many places longing for attention. My heart goes out to her.

What about your co-workers who are trapped in their sin? Do you feel the pain of their sin in your heart? I recently spoke with a friend of mine at Kishwaukee Bible Church, and was very encouraged. He was explaining his situation at work with a guy who I happen to know and is very antagonistic to the gospel. He said that he recently spent some time with him, travelling into the Chicagoland area and back, in an effort to reach out to him. He had a good opportunity to speak with him about Christ. He was motivated by his compassion for his co-worker. Are you?

What about your family members? All of us have family members who lack a Shepherd for their soul! Often, it is those in our family whose sin we see most clearly because they are close to us and we cannot get away from them. Do you have a heart of compassion and care for them? When your family gets together, do you seek to serve, help, show interest in, and love your unsaved family members in tangible ways? Do you seek to do all that you can do to direct them to Jesus?

When you start thinking about all of the people who surround you (e.g. your neighbors, your co-workers, your family, the crowds at the stores, the people at events you go to), are you ever overwhelmed with the great need of the crowds? Have you ever watched those television programs with the starving children in Africa? Does it overwhelm you to see that suffering? Have you ever thought about the problems we have here in America with the divorce rates, child abuse, drug abuse, AIDS, murders, burglaries? Does that overwhelm you? Have you ever thought about the political, economic, and spiritual oppression that exists in other countries? Does such oppression bring you to despair because the world is so big, and you are so small? Have you ever thought about all of the deceived Muslims in Iraq and become overwhelmed at the great need this world has for the gospel? If this describes you at all, I have good news for you today: Jesus understands your dilemma! Jesus had a Compassion for the Crowds (verse 36). Jesus also had ...

2. A Perception of the Problem (verse 37)

Simply put, Jesus said in verse 37, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." The illustration changes from animals to that of plants. Rather than viewing the situation as one where sheep are in trouble, Jesus begins to talk about wheat that cannot be harvested. He says that the harvest is "plentiful." It is full. It is numerous. It is large. He says that the harvest, though it is great, has but few workers in it.

Picture with me, a huge cornfield! Say, three thousand acres! It is late September and all of the stalks of corn are brown and dried, and ready to be harvested. Then, picture with me, only a few workers. Say, three. Three workers for ten thousand acres of corn. Remember, time is of the essence here. The thing about harvesting is that when the crop is ready to be harvested, it needs to be harvested sooner rather than later. If you do not get the crops into your barns soon, the rain or the snow or the wind or the hail or the deer are going to get your crop. There is an urgency of this problem. This is how Jesus expressed his compassion for the multitudes. This is how Jesus describes the state of the needs of our world: a plentiful harvest with few workers.

I believe that the purpose of Jesus' illustration is to overwhelm us. When you think of such huge problems and needs in our culture and what we as a little church can do in helping the hurting, you ought to be overwhelmed. The task before us is huge!

Jesus had a perception of the problem. **Do you have a perception of the problem?** When you look out upon the world, how do you see it? Do you see it as a harvest, that is in desperate need of workers! For myself, I see ministry opportunities all the time. Yesterday, I was driving on the campus at Rockford College, picking up a foreign exchange student that we have "adopted" while he studies here in the United States from Bulgaria. I remember when I went to a similar small, private college of 1,000 students. There were probably about 20 students who regularly went to church. There were probably about 30 students who were involved with campus ministries. Every time I'm on campus, I think of the great need for ministry there. But I cannot do it, and perhaps you cannot do it either.

I think about the inner city of Rockford, what a needy place it is. Several of the men went to a hockey game together down there last week. Every time I am there, I am overwhelmed by the poverty and need for the gospel in that place. The Rockford Rescue Mission is doing a good work, helping the homeless get on their feet again. Just this past week, I was approached by a homeless man when meeting with one of you. It was great to be able to tell this man about a place that will provide him with a warm meal and a warm bed, but he did not want anything to do with it. He would rather spend the night in the street, or in his own motel room if I would provide him with one. There are certainly opportunities for ministry there. But, I cannot do it, and perhaps you can't either.

I think of the Rockford Area Pregnancy Care Center. They are doing a good work, caring for women who have found themselves in the midst of an unwanted pregnancy. There are opportunities for ministry there. But, I can't do it, and perhaps you can't either. I think about our neighbors. I'm not talking about those way down the street. I'm talking right next door and behind us. There are great opportunities there. It simply takes the time and effort to reach out. Often my time is limited. Do you have the time to do all these things? What about your families? I know that there are probably many wandering people in your families, who desperately need to hear the gospel. What about your workplace? I know of very few of you who work in a Christian setting for a Christian employer. There are a few of you, but the general rule is that you are surrounded by "distressed and downcast" people who are "like sheep without a shepherd" (verses 36).

Do you perceive the problem? One of the reasons why the workers appear to be so few is that harvesting the crop takes a long time! Oh, perhaps you might be able to pick an ear of corn off a stalk and put it in your bag in a few moments. But people are a bit different. People take time. Some take a lot of time. Some take a little time. People take lots of different circumstances to be drawn to Christ. While in prison, Paul was summoned to preach to Felix for two years. We do not know whether Felix was ever converted, though Paul spent two years preaching to him. After hearing Paul preach, King Agrippa said, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Paul said, "I would to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains" (Acts 26:28, 29). Jesus said, "One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor" (John 4:37,38).

Jesus describes and Paul demonstrates that the souls of people are in process. People have an experience here. They hear some truth there. They meet with some crisis in another place. They receive some faithful Christian counsel in another. Finally, their hearts are broken and they are harvested into God's kingdom. But it all takes time and patience, in some cases it takes years for this process to come to full

fruition. It takes time to reach out to a college student. Our exchange student from Bulgaria has been at our home probably seven or eight times over this past year. Two days ago was one of the best opportunities that I have had to speak directly with him concerning the gospel. We have talked of spiritual things before. I had given him "Ultimate Questions." But the hope of obtaining a complete righteousness by faith in Christ was never communicated as clearly and as lovingly as took place this past Friday. It has been done so in a context in which we have demonstrated our genuine love and care for him over this past year.

It takes time to go and be involved at the Rockford Rescue Mission, where you can faithfully help those in need. It takes time to answer the crisis phones for the Pregnancy Care Center. It takes time to counsel those who are dealing with the incredible guilt of having an abortion. It takes time to befriend your neighbors and care for them and communicate the gospel with them, from a genuine concern for their soul. Do you see the problem? Do you perceive the need? Can you see it? There is this massive harvest that requires many workers. Yet, the **workers are few**.

My fear is that so many ministries try to make such a great impact in so many different places, that their impact amounts to very little, if any, in the long run. This week, I received a Missionary news letter from the Master's Mission in North Carolina, which accurately described the problem. This article is entitled, *Conserving the Results: Missions for the 'Long Haul.'* An excerpt from the article follows:

It happens everywhere. Another campaign has just taken place. The victories have been proclaimed, the new converts counted and reported. Testimonials have begun. Some who had left the fold have now returned. But like other campaigns before, appearances and reports can be misleading. Many counted today are gone tomorrow. ... Some, regardless of the sponsoring group, 'convert' only to get what is offered, perhaps a meal, or clothing, or their school tuition paid. ... Some out of their loneliness and isolation welcome the promise to be loved and cared for by those conducting the campaign. We have all heard the stories of the 'rice Christians' of China and India -- those who professed faith in order to get a meal. Some will learn to 'work' the system well -- they will 'convert' to any group that comes along. While the local people initially view these conversions as comical, the deception usually breeds cynicism towards every campaign. For Christians, concerned that the message of Christ be presented effectively, it is tragic to recognize the depressing reality hidden behind the glowing reports. The numbers sound like we are reaching our goals -- that our investments in missions are worthwhile. It has become almost to painful to ask, 'where are the converts now?' (*MISSIONNEWS*, Winter 2003).

At Rock Valley Bible Church, we ought to perceive the problem that Jesus put before us. We ought not to seek the solution that so many have sought: "Let's harvest them all in, by some great big campaign! Let's go! Rah! Rah!" That philosophy may appear to produce lots of "conversions," but where did those people go? They ought to be harvested into a local church, where they can be discipled and grow in their faith in Christ.

Let us look at Colossians, chapter 1. With all our discussion of the harvest in the world we must take care to realize how the church fits in to the picture. In verse 28, Paul writes, "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ." This is the message that we preach. We do not preach a creed. We do not preach morality. We do not preach your own efforts. We do not preach the 10 commandments as God's entrance requirements. We preach a person. We preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified for sins (1 Cor. 1:22) and resurrected from the dead for our justification (Rom. 4:25). We preach what Col. 2:10 says, "In Him, you have been made complete." There is nothing more that you need, other than Jesus Christ. Look to Him and believe on Him.

Paul labored for this. He wrote, "And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not seen my face" (Col. 1:29-2:1). Paul labored for the preaching of Christ, who was lifted up for us to believe in Him and have eternal life (John 3:15). But notice it does not end when people come to faith in the gospel. Paul said that he labored "that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ, Himself" (Col.2:2). He is preaching and laboring that the converts in these towns might be "encouraged, having been knit together in love." He labors for a united church in which Christ is understood in His fullness. He labors for a healthy church in which Christ is put on display. This is what Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 3:6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth." Paul planted the church in Corinth and saw many of the Corinthians come to faith. Apollos continued that ministry. God caused the growth of the church. He caused it to be knit together.

As we think about the future of Rock Valley Bible Church, we need to realize that ministry is for the long haul. Those that come into our midst ought to see that we are a body of disciples who are strengthening each other for the work of making disciples. After the service, you will receive our annual report which in some small way summarizes our activities this past year and gives vision for the next. You will notice that the predominant focus of our ministry is upon ministry focussed toward ourselves. There is purpose in this. The strong church will be able to support, nurture, and train Christians to labor in the harvest. When you are excited about church and what the Lord is teaching you here, you will speak it forth.

Jesus' words here ought not to eliminate our focus upon our own church body because within our body there are great needs that people have. You can support the work of the harvest by supporting those with needs in the church. Within our church, we have a dear wife and mother who has gone to be with the Lord. The family that is left behind is in great need. Within our church, we have a wife and mother, who is disabled and cannot get out to come to church. The family is in great need. Within our church, we have employment difficulties. Within our church, we have a "billion" children who need constant care and nurture. We need to be a strong church, so that we can take on other needy people from the world who have been transformed by the power of the gospel.

Let us look again at Matthew 9. When Jesus acknowledges the problem of the harvest, He also gives us a wonderful solution to the problem. I believe that it is best to follow our Lord's council on these matters. Not only did Jesus have a Compassion for the Crowds (verse 36), and a Perception of the Problem (verse 37), but He also had...

3. A Solution for the Situation (verse 38).

Matthew 9:38 says, "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." A rich harvest with few workers? What do you do? Jesus says you are to pray. The owner of the field has sent a few workers out to harvest the grain in his field. We know nothing of their work. We simply know that they begin to ask the owner for more workers to come and help them. The workers immediately acknowledge the greatness of the task and the immense need they have for additional helpers. So they plead with the owner of the field to send more workers. They say, "The work is too big for us, send in reinforcements. We need help!" Their pleading and beseeching is not a polite prayer. It comes from a genuine need. Their asking is a begging. They are beseeching.

Two things will drive you to pray such a prayer. One thing is the size of the harvest! When you realize that the harvest is vast, you will quickly perceive that you are not up to the task yourself. You need help. No one man can accomplish such a task! The second thing that will drive you to pray such a prayer is the Lord of the harvest. When you realize that your harvesting is completely dependent upon the Lord; when you realize it is the Lord alone who raises dead sinners to life in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:1-5); when you realize it is the Lord alone who gives understanding to spiritually depraved people (1 Cor. 2:12-14); when you realize it is the Lord alone who grants repentance to those who oppose the gospel (2 Tim. 2:25); when you realize it is the Lord alone who shines in the blind hearts to show the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4-6); when you realize all these things, then you will realize that your work is a spiritual work in desperate need of the author and perfecter of faith (Heb. 12:2) to send forth His workers into the harvest!

Tom Wells, in his book *A Vision for Missions* wrote:

Prayer is our first work in the harvest. And the reason is not hard to find. It is this: the harvest has a 'Lord.' He oversees the harvest. Someone supplies the workers. Someone controls the progress. And that 'Someone' is God. (Wells, p.138)

This is the solution that Jesus gives to this problem of an unconverted world. He said, "Pray for laborers." **Do you follow Jesus' solution to the situation?** Do you pray this way? Have you prayed this way? When you have perceived the problem of the huge harvest, have you gone to the Lord, to beg of Him that He would send forth more workers into the harvest? What about for Rock Valley Bible Church? Have you prayed in this way for this church? As I go through my weekly prayer requests, Matthew 9:37-38 is one of them. I pray this for Rock Valley Bible Church every week. Do you? Perhaps you might start praying for this.

Let me give you a very tangible prayer request. Dan Scott's brother, Nathan, has expressed a desire to come to Rockford to be involved at Rock Valley Bible Church. About six months ago, I was describing the climate of Rockford to him. I described how we are a racially divided town. We have this river that goes right through the town. I said that the west side is predominately black, with much inner-city need. I said that the east side is predominately white. He said, "I definitely would want to live on the west side." Nathan graduated from the Moody Bible Institute and worked with the children of Cabrini Green for several years. He has a heart for those in the inner city. He has applied for jobs up here, but nothing as of yet has worked out. He is currently applying to be a correction officer at the Boone County Sheriff's department in Belvidere. Pray that he might get hired! If that does not work out, pray that God would provide another job for him, that he might join us to labor in the harvest.

I have another very tangible prayer request. Jeff Wencel has joined us in Rockford for service today. He is in the process of considering a move to Rockford at some point in time to join Rock Valley Bible Church. Pray that God would open the appropriate doors and bring this about in God's time.

Both of these guys are laborers, who have expressed interest in moving to Rockford to join us and our work. I do not know how to get more practical than this. I have given you two names. In the case of Jeff Wencel, I have shown you a face as well (as he is visiting today). Will you "beg the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest"? (verse 38). Not every Christian can go and be a missionary. Not every Christian can be a full-time Christian worker. But every Christian can pray. Will you pray as Jesus directed us to pray?

Let us pray for laborers. Let us trust God to raise up people whose feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 23, 2003 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
