INTRODUCTION

During the Christmas season we hear a song that begins, "Said the night wind to the little lamb, 'Do you see what I see?'" It was written by Noel Regney and Gloria Baker in 1962 in response to the fear created by the Cuban Missile Crisis. That's why they added the line, "Pray for peace, people everywhere." The song was probably destined for obscurity, but in 1963 Bing Crosby recorded it on his new Christmas album on November 22, 1963, the exact day that President John Kennedy was shot in Dallas. There was something about the song that touched the heart of a grieving nation and that Christmas album became a hit, and since that time, dozens of singers have recorded it as well. It's a wonderful song that ends by saying, "A child, a child sleeping in the night; He will bring us goodness and light."

It's a good song, but for this message I'd like to revise that question and ask instead, "Do you see what HE sees?" In other words, do you see the world the same way Jesus sees the world? Do you even WANT to see life the way He sees? You don't have to wonder what Jesus sees, because in our passage today, we are introduced to three ways Jesus saw the world.

Matthew 9:34-38. "But the Pharisees said, 'It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.' Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

In this passage, Jesus saw three different sights. He saw enemies who opposed Him; He saw people who were wandering like sheep; and He saw the world as a harvest field. Let's examine these three visions and hopefully we can see what He sees as well.

(1) JESUS SAW ENEMIES WHO NEED THE TRUTH

In the preceding verses we read that Jesus healed a man who was kept mute by a demon. Jesus cast out the demon and the man spoke. Then we read, "But the Pharisees said, 'It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.'" While everyone else was rejoicing over the miracle, these Pharisees were muttering that Jesus was getting his power from the prince of demons, Beelzebub. I'm not going to go into detail about Beelzebub in this message because three chapters later in Matthew 12:24, they make this same accusation again, and in that passage Jesus responds to it. That's where we'll talk more about the prince of demons. But for this message, it's important to realize there were those who opposed Jesus—enemies of the truth.

Some people think Jesus lived such a life of peace and love that He never had any enemies. I have a pastor friend who told me about a sociology professor at his college who only believed in the moral goodness of Jesus. He told the class one day that we should live a life of peace, like Jesus, and do unto others and we would have them do unto us. He went on to say that Jesus never had any enemies. My pastor friend had heard all he could take so he raised his hand and asked the professor, "If Jesus never had any enemies how did He end up getting nailed to a cross?" The professor didn't like the question.

No, the truth is Jesus had enemies. A man is known by his friends—and his enemies. Ironically, the enemies of Jesus weren't people we'd identify as immoral sinners. In fact, these same Pharisees criticized Jesus because He socialized with "sinners" like Levi the tax-collector and his other IRS friends. The enemies of Jesus were religious people. You could actually call the Pharisees the professional clergy of that time; maybe that's why I never use the word "clergy" and don't like the title "Reverend!" The Pharisees lived by a strict moral code, but they took their self-righteousness to a new level and considered themselves MORE holy and righteous than others. They looked down their long religious noses at anyone who didn't believe what they believed and acted the way they acted. But all of their religion was show-off religion to be seen by others. Jesus didn't turn on these enemies and fight them with His fists; He simply fought them with the truth.

Personal Application: When I encounter someone with false beliefs about Jesus I should share the truth with them

Here's the personal application for each of us: When I encounter someone with false beliefs about Jesus I should share the truth with them. If you are going to see the world the way Jesus sees the world, you must recognize that there are still enemies of God's truth in our world. And many of the enemies of the gospel today are extremely religious people. Our First Amendment gives us the freedom of religion. For the first two hundred years of our history, that meant that Baptists and Methodists could worship their own ways without killing each other on the way to the cafeteria when church let out. But over the past 30 years, freedom of religion has come to mean that Muslims, Buddhists, and even Wiccans are free to worship in America. Now some of you may see that as a threat, but I see it as a great opportunity. In 2010 we don't have to travel overseas to tell people of other religions about Jesus. In the 21st century God has brought the entire world to America!

We are living in a different world, and it is important for you to become informed about two totally different terms that relate to the spiritual landscape of America in the 21st century. First, you'll hear the term "religious pluralism." That term is okay. It just means we allow multiple faith systems to exist in our culture: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism etc. "Plural" just means more than one. Don't take that freedom for granted. Many nations don't have it. For instance, we're fighting a war in Afghanistan against the Taliban who are so opposed to religious pluralism that they kill Christians and have destroyed the ancient Buddhist shrines that existed for many centuries. So don't choke on the phrase "religious pluralism."

But be careful whenever you hear anyone talk about "religious syncretism" in America. Syncretism is the belief that all religions are equal and they all have the ability to get you to heaven. It's a word that means "the same." When you synchronize your watch with mine, we have the same time. And some people in America want us to believe that all religions are the same. They believe there are many paths to get to God. They would say we are on the Christian path, others are on the Muslim path, and others are on the Buddhist path. We do NOT believe in religious syncretism. We believe there is only ONE way to heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) Some Christians want to soft-pedal this truth because they are afraid it might create enemies. But we must speak the truth in love. When you insist that Jesus is the only way to heaven, you will have enemies too. They will label you as narrow-minded, and intolerant. But in spite of the enemies of the truth, we must lovingly insist on this truth. Jesus told us to love our enemies, and to pray for those who mistreat us. But He never told us to be silent. He commanded us to share the truth with them.

(2) JESUS SAW PEOPLE AS SHEEP WHO NEED A SHEPHERD

The Bible says, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." In addition to seeing those who opposed Him, Jesus saw multitudes of people who were like helpless sheep and He had compassion on them.

Have you ever thought it interesting that the main animal analogy that the Bible gives for us is sheep? The Psalmist says, "We are his people, the sheep of his pasture." (Psalm 100:3) Before we can follow the Chief Shepherd, we must admit as Isaiah wrote, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." (Isaiah 53:6)

We aren't compared to noble horses, or intelligent animals. Sheep have a reputation for being dumb animals. There are plenty of stories of dogs and cats finding their way back home after traveling dozens of miles, but sheep don't have an internal guidance system, and they wander off and get lost without a shepherd. A lamb will follow another lamb without any understanding of where they are going. They wear ruts in a pasture from following each other back and forth aimlessly. It reminds me of teenagers—when one tries smoking a joint or taking a shot, the other little lambs just follow along—that's what sheep do. Sheep are so dumb that they have been known to drown from looking up into a hard rainfall. You can go to the circus and see trained lions and bears, but you'll never see a trained sheep act! It's not very complimentary, but the Bible says we are like sheep—sheep are needy animals.

Personal Application: When I feel harassed and helpless, there is a Shepherd who cares enough to help me

Just as Jesus looked at that crowd 2,000 years ago and had compassion on them, He is looking at this crowd today and He sees the same thing. So here's the personal application: When I feel harassed and helpless there is a Shepherd who cares enough to help me.

Notice the two words in our text used to describe the people. They were harassed and helpless. Can you relate to those conditions? The word "harassed" means to be wounded. Sheep were vulnerable to attack from predators, so the shepherd had to protect them. When Jesus looked at these people, He could see that they were vulnerable as well. He could see beyond their physical pain, He saw their emotional wounds as well. Jesus is able to see where you're hurting today, and He cares. He wants to be a Shepherd to you.

The other word is "helpless." Sheep can't instinctively find green pasture. Many young lambs die from eating dirt. They need a shepherd to help them find green grass. Without a shepherd they

become weak and lethargic. Can you relate to that? We live in a world where aimless people are eating the dirt of this world's pleasures, and they are weary and weak. Do you struggle with weariness, not just physical exhaustion, but emotional fatigue? That's why Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

In order to receive this kind of relief you must admit that you are helpless and harassed. Remember, God doesn't help those who help themselves—God helps the helpless. Do you see yourself more as a religious Pharisee, or as a helpless lamb? If you need the compassion of the Good Shepherd, then you must be willing to admit, "I need help, Lord, and I need it baaaaaaad!"

One of my favorite images of Jesus as a Shepherd is found in the promise contained in Isaiah 40:11. The Bible says, "He tends his flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." Do you need someone big and strong like Jesus to hold you safely to His heart? He is willing and able today to be your Shepherd.

Most of us have allowed Jesus to become our Shepherd, and we are safe and secure in His arms. But this message is about seeing what He sees. When you have the eyes of Jesus you will look at others with compassion as well. Do you know what compassion really is? Let's play a quick game of opposites. I'll say a word and you say the opposite aloud. Ready? The opposite of FAST is SLOW. The opposite of HOT is COLD. The opposite of HIGH is LOW. The opposite of YOUNG is OLD. The opposite of SOFT is HARD. The opposite of RICH is POOR. The opposite of COMPASSION is...whoa. You weren't as sure about that one, huh? Well, I believe the opposite of compassion is APATHY.

Apathy is the attitude that refuses to really look at the pain of suffering of others. Apathy is expressed in the phrases, "Who what?" or "Who cares?" You can choose to look at this world through the eyes of apathy or the eyes of Jesus—and He has eyes of compassion.

Compassion is difficult to define. In commenting on the word for compassion found in this passage, Theologian Karl Barth writes, "What it means is that the suffering and sin and abandonment and peril of these people not merely went to the mind of Jesus, but right into His heart, into Himself, so that their whole plight was now His own, and as such He saw and suffered it far more keenly than they did." Feeling compassion isn't some kind of lovey-dovey sensation or throwing a tongue-in-cheek 'pity party.' Compassion goes straight into the heart and will create a gut-wrenching feeling in which we empathetically identify with the brokenness of another person. Those who choose apathy are choosing to be emotionally absent. Those who choose compassion are choosing to become emotionally vulnerable."

A new missionary to Calcutta, India was being shown the slums by an older, experienced missionary. When the new missionary saw the poverty and suffering of the people, his heart was broken and he began to weep. The older missionary said, "Don't worry. After you've been here awhile, you'll get over it." The young missionary said, "Yes, I know. And that's why I'm crying." Will you ask God to give you the eyes of compassion like Jesus has?

(3) JESUS SAW THE WORLD AS A HARVEST THAT NEEDS WORKERS

As Jesus continued to look at the world He said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Jesus switched metaphors from sheep needing a shepherd to a harvest field needing workers. This agricultural metaphor is one He used many times. He said the world is like a field with different kinds of soil. The seed is the word of God and we are to be spreading the precious seed everywhere we go. You've got to plant the seeds if you want to see a harvest. And then you've got to be willing to go out and gather the harvest. Many of us have vegetable gardens, and they require some work. You have to plow the soil, plant the seeds, keep out the weeds, and then pick the vegetables. Those tomato plants don't just spring up on their own accord, and the ripe tomatoes don't jump off the vine and roll to your back door. Harvesting a crop requires an effort, and Jesus is calling us to be workers in His harvest. His harvest is not plants. God's harvest is comprised of men, women, boys and girls who need Jesus.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Am I willing to be one of God's workers in His harvest?

This should be the main focus of churches. Spreading the Word of God and bringing in God's harvest. The Psalmist says, "He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him." (Psalm 126:6) There is a two-fold promise here. First, we go out weeping. That means you should have a broken heart for people without Jesus. Are you burdened for people who are far from God? My earliest mentor was a man named Al Jackson, who is now a pastor in Auburn, Alabama. When he was my youth minister he once told me to go down to the lake where a lot of people were swimming and skiing. He told me to put an imaginary sign on each one's forehead that says, "Bound for hell." The only way the imaginary sign would disappear would be when I found out they were going to heaven, or helped them discover how they could go to heaven. I'll never forget that. Still to this day, I look at people and I want to know if they're going to heaven or hell.

On January 7, there will be Texas fans and Bama fans at the Rose bowl. Texas fans will be decked out in burnt orange and Crimson Tide fans will be wearing their crimson. But when God looks at the crowd, He doesn't see Texas or Bama fans. He sees people who have trusted Him for salvation, and those who haven't. What will you be seeing? It all depends on what you're looking for.

One of the things I'm going to be talking about in January is becoming more sensitive to people around you who need Jesus. When I was at a convention a few weeks ago I had my shoes shined by a man named Timothy who had been shining shoes at the Convention Center for 24 years. We got to talking and he said he looks at the shoes of everyone who walks by and he sees them as a potential customer. All he said to me was, "Shoe shine?" And I was in his chair. Will you ask God to give you the same kind of sensitivity to see everyone as a potential follower of Jesus?

The second part of the promise says we will return with JOY when we are part of the harvest. We used to sing a song in church that said, "Bringing in the sheaves, bringing in the sheaves, we will come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves." I didn't know what "sheaves" were, but since I often brought in the sheets that my mother hung on our clothesline I would sing, "Bringing in the sheets, bringing in the sheets, we will come rejoicing, bringing in the sheets, bringing in the sheets, and it is

ready for workers now. There is great JOY in the presence of angels, and down here too, when we see one person who comes to know Jesus.

But did you notice what Jesus told us to do? He told us to pray, to ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth more workers. We need to pray that prayer and then we need to be willing to be an answer to that prayer.

Every great evangelistic harvest has started with a prayer movement. We all know we've been in a deep economic recession the past year. And we know about the Great Depression in the 1930s but few people realize that prior to the Great Depression, the scariest economic downturn the gripped our nation was back in the 1850s. Banks were failing, and even mighty railroads were declaring bankruptcy. Unemployment was rampant. New York City alone had over 20% of its workers unemployed.

A businessman named Jeremiah Lanphier was burdened to pray for the out of work men, so he advertised a noon prayer meeting for businessmen. He distributed 20,000 fliers that said, "A day Prayer Meeting is held every Wednesday, from 12 to 1 o'clock, in the Consistory building. (entrance from Fulton and Ann Streets). This meeting is intended to give merchants, mechanics, clerks, strangers, and businessmen generally an opportunity to stop and call upon God amid the perplexities incident to their respective avocations. It will continue for one hour; but it is also designed for those who may find it inconvenient to remain more than five or ten minutes, as well as for those who can spare the whole hour."

His first prayer meeting was on September 23, 1857. At noon, Lamphier was alone. Fifteen minutes passed and no one joined him. He paced the floor with a sense of fear and failure as he prayed. At 12:30 he heard a footstep on the stairs and another man joined him. Soon four others stopped in. The next Wednesday twenty men were there, and the next Wednesday there were sixty. After six weeks, they decided to have the prayer meeting every weekday instead of on Wednesdays. This later became known as the Fulton Street Prayer meeting. Within six months 10,000 businessmen were gathering in 100 churches around New York City to pray at noon. The greatest revival in New York City's colorful history swept the city and it was of such interest that the whole nation was curious. The movement spread to other cities, and within two years a million new converts were added to the churches. There was no fanaticism, no hysteria, and very little preaching—just an incredible movement of the people to pray.

CONCLUSION

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could see the world through the eyes of Jesus? We would see enemies as opportunities to share the truth about the gospel. We would see people with the eyes of compassion Jesus has. We would see the world as a great harvest field in need of workers. Will you ask God to give you the eyes of Jesus?

I can vividly remember the first time I heard a song that some call the first major "contemporary Christian song" hit. It was entitled, "My Father's Eyes" sung by Amy Grant. Long before Eric Clapton recorded a song by that same title, Amy Grant sang it in 1979. It was her first #1 hit and propelled her to stardom. She sang, "I may not be every mother's dream for her little girl; And my

face may not grace the mind of everyone in the world; But that's alright as long as I can have one wish, I pray, When people look inside my life I wanna hear them say, 'She's got her Father's eyes; Her Father's eyes. Eyes that find the good in things, when good is not around. Eyes that find the source of help when help just can't be found; Eyes full of compassion, seeing every pain. Knowing what you're going through and feeling it the same.' Just like my Father's eyes."

That's a great desire. She sang about wanting to have the eyes of her Heavenly Father. She wants to see the world the same way the Lord sees the world. That's the point of this message. Would you be willing to pray, "Dear God, let me see the world the way you see the world?" Do you see what HE sees? When you do, your world will change for the better!

OUTLINE

(1) JESUS SAW ENEMIES WHO NEED THE TRUTH

"But the Pharisees said, 'It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

Personal Application: When I encounter someone with <u>false beliefs</u> about Jesus I should share the <u>truth</u> with them

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

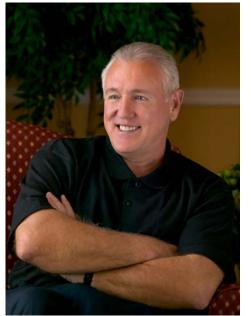
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"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Am I <u>willing</u> to be one of God's <u>workers</u> in His harvest?

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For the Joy... Pastor David Dykes