

**Sermon: Drawn In: Living the Creative Life with God. Step 3: Listening for Needs  
by Pastor Jenn 2/20/22**

**Scripture Matthew 9:35-38 The Workers Are Few**

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

If you pay attention to the church’s activities, you will know that recently we started a Social Justice Committee. And when working to define what the ministry would be, we found this definition helpful, from Rev. Ryan Dunn, an ordained Deacon in the United Methodist Church and the Minister of Online Engagement for Rethink Church. “Social justice is achieved when one person comes alongside another to ensure mutual welfare and well-being. To come alongside another human being does not necessarily mean that we get to invite into our place of comfort. Rather, it means entering into another’s suffering. We cannot experience a shared sense of justice until we have recognized where injustice occurs — until we have recognized where inequality exists because of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, education, legal status, economic background, and mental or physical ability.”<sup>1</sup> To sum it up, Social Justice is listening for the burdens of others and coming alongside of them to assist.

In our Scripture lesson today, Jesus has compassion on the crowds, and invites his followers to come along side of them. Here’s the background, prior to this passage, Jesus began his ministry calling disciples. In Matthew 4:18-19 we read, <sup>18</sup> As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” Jesus calls the disciples to participate in his divine mission, and they drop their nets and follow him. From there, Jesus shows them how to fish for people, as the beginning of our text states, 35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. The disciples see what Jesus can do.

But then we pick up on something that Matthew doesn’t want us to miss. He writes, 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them...Compassion when translated from Greek is an emotion that moves one so completely that they can physically feel it, so that they are moved in their inner being and are compelled to respond. It’s like when you witness someone fall, you want to help, so you move toward them and see what you can do. Here, for Jesus, he saw people as they were v36, harassed and helpless. Harassed by the cruelties of society or daily life, helpless as life passed them by. The text then claims they were like sheep without a shepherd, which is dangerous. Do you know if a shepherd does not guide and teach sheep where they should and should not go, they can easily fall off a cliff , or get caught in water and drown. Sheep need a shepherd, as did these crowds, Jesus discerned.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.umc.org/en/content/what-is-social-justice> 2/10/22

And then Matthew writes, 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Here Jesus is referencing God, the creator, the Lord of the harvest, and claiming that in Jesus is God’s act to involve human workers as God’s agents to assist with creation. Their mission, if the disciples, the fishers of people, so choose, is to express God’s compassion, as portrayed through Christ. In other words, God is the creator who listened and knew to create a helper for Adam, is faithful to all creation, and invites us to the field where we can listen and be moved with compassion to help others too.

As we move through this sermon series on being Drawn Into the heart of the God, today we are to consider are we listening to the needs of the crowds around us? And are we willing to walk alongside them as Jesus and his apostles did? And let me be clear this is not us saying to another “You know what would really help you out” and we tell them what we think they need. Which is easy to do at times. We have these preconceived ideas that get in the way of possibilities to truly assist. My example of that is for years at my last appointment we would gather all the ingredients for a traditional Thanksgiving meal for families who the local schools told us could use the help. So for years we would go out buy frozen turkeys and all the trimmings. And we would deliver them to the houses. And then I began to listen. And I heard there were families who did not have a working oven to cook a frozen turkey. And I heard how some did not know how to cook the traditional meal, and others who preferred other foods over turkey, and others who had allergies. That was walking alongside and me shoving food in their mouths. I don’t think that’s what Jesus would have done. When I listened, I heard their request of what would be most beneficial for their family: gift cards to the grocery stores that carried the foods they liked. Which is what they received the next year and the years to come.

In his book, *Drawn In: A Creative Process for Artists, Activists, and Jesus Followers*, Troy Bronsink writes, “we need to listen to how the Spirit is guiding our next steps and unfolding possibilities we were previously unaware of. Without paying attention in this way, we act as if we have all the answers. And when we are up against something that doesn’t go our way, we see it as a negative. But what if those moments are simply Co-Creator God inviting us to listen and learn new ways of moving forward in our lives? ...To listen is an inherent act of connection.”

I want to close with some visualizing. Picture the crowds that you have been around recently. Maybe it’s the crowds at school, at work, in the neighborhood, or in the church. What have you heard that moved you? Was it a friend’s sadness over a failed relationship? Was it a student whose family life is difficult? Was it a co-workers grief? What did you hear?

Now I want you to imagine that Jesus is standing next to that person, and what does he do? How does he enter into their suffering? Is it something you can do also? Does he express a genuineness that you want to express to that person, to come alongside of them? Now when you are ready, I want to invite you to ponder how will you come alongside that person? And when you know, offer this prayer: This is my creative spirit in the world, this is my offering to goodness to the world, creating more life, more joy, more love. In the name of Jesus, I pray, Amen.