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**“Compassion That Leads to Action”  
(Matthew 9:35-38)  
Pastor Peter Yi  
May 24th, 2009**

**Introduction:**

When I have the chance to meet fellow pastors like I did this past week when I was a part of an Asian North American Ministry Consultation in Chicago, the conversation at some point of another leads to our respective ministries. So we ask each other where are you from? What’s your ministry context? What’s your church all about? And so when I meet people from all over North America I mention that I serve at, “Young Nak Church in Toronto,” and then if the conversation gets around to what our ministry is like, I’ll usually begin by saying that we are a Korean immigrant church and at some point or another the conversation will come around to how big the ministries are, not in any boastful way, but just out of curiosity, so we’ll mention the size of our churches.

But for me, when I am asked to describe our church, I begin with our strengths and so I mention that we love missions. Missions is our heartbeat. We don’t mess around with missions. I talk about how we are involved in Kyrgyzstan and the work we are trying to start in Cambodia. Sometimes I get around to speaking about our stuff in Mexico and then I’ll mention our current kingdom building activities in the city of Toronto. And I realize that when I start speaking about that stuff my eyes light up and my heart races a little quicker.

All this say that today is another opportunity to speak on these matters. Today we will be sending Deacon Hakyung to Kyrgyzstan for 14 months. After the message she will have a chance to share more with you.

Just to give you a quick rundown about our church’s involvement in Kyrgyzstan.

- doing missions sort of randomly.
- Starting to focus on people groups
- Define people groups
- We narrowed in the Kyrgyz people. Back then, a group of around 3 million people in Central Asia. A traditionally nomadic people, shepherds, and nominally muslim.
- 1997. So he had this magnificent commissioning service basically right where we are sitting today to adopt the Kyrgyz people.
- What does adoption mean?
- Why is adoption important? It commits you for a very long time. It’s strategic.
- 1999. Sent Mclsaacs, the Chois. 4 years ago we sent Hyun Yong Lee. A couple years ago we sent one retired KM deacon and a retired KM elder.
- Since 1997 we have sent at least one STM from EM to Kyrgyzstan. Many of our EM members are repeat goers. There are many who used their precious vacation time and money to go to Kyrgyzstan year after year after year. We’ve sent families, couples, singles and college students. We’ve done construction, we’ve done evangelism, ESL, KSL, computers, VBS, sports, visitation, church planting, discipleship, leadership training.
- This year will be EM’s first year to send two teams there.
- Between KM and EM over 20 STMs have gone.
- Next month, Rev Song is going to
- A couple years ago 100,000 was sent to United Seminary in K.

- A few years before that 80,000 was sent to Hope Academy in K, a missionary kids school.
- And this year we're se

So we're not messing around. This is what adoption means. When I talk to the leaders of Interserve Canada and OMF Canada, they use our church as one of the models of missions and people group adoption.

And none of this is to toot our own horn. But it's because of the passage we'll be looking at today that we are what we are.

*<sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

I want to take a look at the compassion of Jesus for just a moment.

The compassion that Jesus shows here and no less than 11 other places in the gospels refers to a person's bowels, their internal organs, their gut. It's a gut feeling, a feeling that comes from deep within a person. Sometimes it's referred to as the "seat of feelings" or the "center" of human feelings. Whenever this word is used in the bible it is used only to describe the attitude of Jesus. It is never used to describe any other person. So we can conclude that this emotion is a divine one. It is the compassion of God.

So when Jesus saw the crowds that were following him, he had this gut wrenching pity and compassion toward them. And the reason for this is because they appeared to be harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. The word "helpless" here can mean "thrown away" and is also used in reference to an animal that cannot get up and escape danger, it cannot run away from its predators, nor can it get up to feed. That's what these people are like. And they're this way because they have no shepherd.

The job of a shepherd was to care for his flock. His job was to make sure the sheep are well fed, that they are protected from danger and predators. His job was to lead them. But these people were like sheep without a shepherd. They had no leader. There was no one to guide them and give them direction. There was no one to protect them or teach them. This is the heart of God toward lost and wandering people.

When Jesus looks upon the peoples of Kyrgyzstan, lost in the cultural mix of the remnants of communism and folk Islam, massive unemployment, alcoholism and a government full of corruption; when he looks at Cambodia with their brutal history of genocide in the 70's, a government that turns its back on thousands of children in the sex trade, and the lostness of Buddhism; when Jesus looks at the citizens of Mexico in all the façade of religion in their Catholicism that has everything but Christ, their poverty, their current scare from the H1N1 flu; when Jesus looks at Toronto with it's many people groups, it's wealth and riches, it's diversity in cultures and social status, it's pluralism and secularism; when Jesus looks at you and me in our struggle to get by, our hunger for significance, our loneliness, our sin; when Jesus sees all of that what is his emotional response? It's a gut wrenching compassion because we look harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

But he doesn't at this point say, "So you too, be compassionate toward them." I think that's implied for sure. There is no way we can do the ministry of Christ without compassion, but perhaps more than trying to muster up our own compassion, it's more important to see the compassion Jesus has upon all peoples. I think understanding the heart of our Saviour will be the thing that ultimately allows us to go the distance in missions. Our compassion is finite. We get donor fatigue, ministry fatigue, listening fatigue, and we get compassion fatigue, and we get sick of people. So it definitely can't be our compassion that motivates and sustains us. It must be the compassion of Christ.

So what does Jesus ask us to do? I believe 3 things. Listen to verses 37 and 38.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

### **Look**

Look at the harvest fields. They are ripe. They are plentiful. Look at the need around us. Look at the near 9-10 thousand unreached people groups. Look at the closed door countries. Look at the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Atheist worlds. Look at the great cities like Seoul, Tokyo, Mumbai, Moscow, New York, London, and Mexico City. Look at the problems of the great cities. Look at the overpopulation. Look at the systemic poverty. Look at the corruption in government. Look. Don't bury your heads in the sand. Don't turn the channel. Don't allow your hearts to get hard. If we don't look we've already made a choice to disobey the heart of God. We must first look and then allow the Spirit of God to move us to be compassionate.

**Pray.** That's pretty straight forward.

It was when we were on a joint KM/EM vision trip to SE Asia a few years ago that this passage and this command to pray hit me the hardest.

-Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia.

-Debriefing every night.

-it dawned on me, that we as a church, up to that time, had only sent one lay-missionary.

Mclsaacs. That really bothered me. I mean a church of 4000 people, having existed for 28-29 years at the time, had only sent one lay missionary. Sure we had sent Rev. JK Kim, Rev Song, Rev Caleb Choi, Rev Hyun Yong Lee, but only one lay person.

-And as I was ready to cast the first stone in righteous indignation, God gently spoke to me and asked, "Peter when was the last time you prayed this prayer?" "Have you been praying for more workers?"

Oh boy...I had to repent. I was guilty of not praying for God to raise up workers. So I began to pray. What has happened since?

-Jeong Ah to Indonesia.

-Elder Kook Il Kim (Julie's dad) and Deacon Bok Yun Kim (Mark and Ed's dad) to Kyrgyzstan. We have Anne in the pipeline to Cambodia. Hakyung is taking off this Tuesday for 14 months (maybe longer????) to Kyrgyzstan. And, I know of others, who are seriously praying and considering a career in missions.

So that's one of our roles. We must pray. We must pray for God to send us a CP for St. James Town. We must pray that from within the KM and EM congregations, the Myanmar, Vietnamese, Laos and Thai congregations in our church, that God would raise up workers.

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And when we pray, we're not praying, "Lord, her, and not me. Anyone but me." Rather, we are praying, "Lord, anyone, and if me, yes, I too will go."

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et's continue to be a church that prays for more workers.

**And finally, Jesus commands us to go.**

The command to go is implied here and of course it's made explicit in a few other passages like in Matthew 28 where Jesus says "GO!" Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

It's implicit in this passage in that Jesus is speaking to his disciples. Those that have watched him do his ministry. And he asks them to pray that God would send workers, and of course sending is just the other side of going.

"The workers are few" which means Jesus is calling for more. At no time in history has there been a greater need for workers, for missionaries. For the reason of population growth alone, we need thousands of more workers in the field. So Jesus wants all of us to at least make ourselves available. At some time in every Christian's life, perhaps periodically, every several years, we should take a moment to pray. "Lord, at this juncture, at this life stage, what would you have me do? Are you calling me to missions? Is there an area of my discipleship you want to address and deepen?" That has to be a prayer we offer to God on a regular basis.

And remember also that God may send us now or God could send us later. The reason God may give some of you early retirement might be for that reason.

So friends, let's renew our strength today. Let's look at the mandate with fresh eyes. Let's soften our hearts with compassion once again. Amen.