

Sovereign Grace Church Is... #5:
A Church That Always Has Room for More
April 7, 2019

Do you know what busking is? It is playing an instrument outside hoping to get donations from passersby.

A few years ago, Jimmy Fallon enlisted the uber-talented band, U2 to busk in NY at the 42nd Street subway station in disguises. They didn't look at all like themselves.

At first, they started playing and people filed by thinking they were a normal band. There were a few glances. There were some that just ignored them and continued their commute. There were others that stood at a distance sort of listening/watching.

Then a crowd formed and it was clear that the busking band was the most famous Irish foursome in the United States, U2. Then Jimmy Fallon announced them and the whole scene changed. A concert broke out—phones were whipped out, people started dancing and singing along.

And now, it's on YouTube continuing to get hits.

The reason that many looked at the band but few saw that it was U2 is because you don't expect to see world-famous musicians in subway stations.

Until Jimmy Fallon announced them, many looked but few saw.

We are going to talk today about the difference between looking and seeing. One way you can describe Jesus is that he never just looked, he saw unlike anyone before or since.

What do I mean by look vs. see?

Looking merely involves turning our heads for a momentary glance, but seeing is observing with understanding.

Jesus saw past the way people appeared deep, deep down into what they need. Today we are going to follow our savior as he really sees the people around him.

Jesus saw people with eyes of compassion. We must not merely look but see with eyes of compassion.

PROP: See others like Jesus—with compassion.

Today we are going to take another step on our identity journey. Who are we? What do we want to be?

So far—

- We want to remember we are a body working together representing Jesus.
- We want to be a church that Loves God by loving others.
- We want to be a church that Looks beyond our four walls.
- We want to be a church that lives to worship God.

We want to be a church where there is always room for more.

What does that take?

We are going to have to do more than look, but we need to seeing.

We are going to need help seeing.

The best person to help us is Jesus.

“And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and

every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for 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 laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Matthew 9:35—38

PRAY

1. What Jesus saw—Matt. 9:35-36

Anywhere Jesus went, people trailed behind. As he travelled amongst the Galilean hamlets people constantly thronged to him. The crowds constantly crowded around him.

Instead of being put off or irritated Matthew reports that he responds with compassion. That is quite a response.

Can you imagine how difficult that would be?

People were relentless in their pursuit of him. They came to him wave upon wave they came to him wanting something from him.

They wanted—

Health
Food
Help
Healing for a child
Blessing

Jesus was a public figure. Everyone wanted something from him. I feel sorry for public figures because everyone comes to them asking for something. People say—give me, help me, help me help you...

How tiring.

But Jesus is not irritated. The way that Jesus interacts with the masses is just another example that shows Jesus was not just different he was revolutionary.

Look at his response—

Vs. 36,

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

He has compassion. This was more than just a, "Oh I feel so sorry for those people. Goodness."

The original says, "his insides yearned." In other words, he saw the people and his stomach was tied in knots of compassion for the people.

Why?

Because the people were "harassed and helpless' like sheep without a shepherd.' Literally it reads the people were torn and thrown down. They had no help. They had no rest.

Why?

Because the people had no protection. It might sound a bit demeaning to call a group of people 'sheep.' Our culture does not think highly of sheep. When use that word we are calling people mindless followers.

No professional sports team are the sheep.
No school is called American Sheep Academy.
No High School Graduation Speech ever calls graduates to go forth and be sheep.

Why?

Because sheep are not strong or able, and they might just be some of the dumbest animals on the planet. But yet, Jesus calls these people sheep.

One of the most common names the Bible has for people are sheep. Not too flattering. But probably more accurate than we like to think.

Sheep are defenseless. They have no claws or fangs. They have no mighty roar. When danger threatens, they flock together.

Sheep are directionless. They have notoriously bad sense of direction and get lost easily.

Sheep are helpless. They cannot forage for their own food or find any water.

Sheep without a shepherd, die.

The most remarkable thing about sheep is that they respond to their master's voice and only their master's voice.

As Jesus looked out on the crowds and was moved with compassion also because the people who should have been shepherding them were not. Their spiritual leaders were not protecting, defending and watching over them. Their leaders only cared for themselves.

This wasn't something that Jesus just noticed, Israel had been sheep without spiritual guidance for

centuries. Consider the words of Ezekiel spoken on behalf of God to Israel's leaders—

"The word of the LORD came to me: [2] "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? [3] You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. [4] The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. [5] So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; [6] they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

"therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: [10] Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my

sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. [12] As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. [13] And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. [14] I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. [15] I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. [16] I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.” Ezekiel 34:1-6, 9-16

The coming of Jesus was the answer to this long ago prophecy. The voice of God echoes down through

time and Jesus is the answer to, "Behold, I, I will search for my sheep..."

Note well what Jesus has done.

- Jesus himself seeks the lost

We cannot think that there is no one who cares or is looking for us. You have a rescuer.

- Jesus himself gathers the strayed

He comes to us personally and brings us back to him. Notice, you gather strays one at a time—this Jesus has done for you.

- Jesus himself will bind up the injured

Our world tears at us and throws us down—and Jesus is our healer. He personally tends to our wounds.

- Jesus will strengthen the weak

Not only does he seek, rescue and heal, he strengthens. He never asks his people to be strong, but freely offers strength to his people.

Every person not following Jesus is a sheep without a shepherd.

Without Jesus we are defenseless against the great predator of mankind, death. We have no natural means of avoiding death on our own.

Without Jesus we are directionless. We are not going who to follow, what to think, what do without his leading.

Without Jesus we are helpless. We would have no access to spiritual food if it were not for him.

Jesus did not just look—he saw and what he saw moved him to compassion.

2. What Jesus said—Matt. 9:37-38

The long promised shepherd who would gather his people from the harvest field of every corner of the globe.

Jesus speaks to the way he is going to gather his sheep—

Vs. 37,

“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to

the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Jesus switches the metaphor from animal husbandry to agriculture. Where he was talking about sheep now he starts talking about crops.

He says that he needs workers, laborers to enter the harvest field and harvest souls. Pray that there would be a worldwide workforce of harvesters that are raised up to go out.

The shepherd commissions his sheep to gather.

And at one level the gathering has been wildly successful. We sit here some 7,974 miles and 2000 years removed from where and when Jesus said this. Many of us in this room have been gathered.

But there are more who need to be gathered to the Great Shepherd.

He says the harvest is quote 'plentiful.' I don't know about you, but it doesn't always feel that way. It seems to me that especially in our day and age people don't want to hear the message of the gospel.

It may seem that our culture is so hostile to the message—but Jesus says the harvest is plentiful.

It may seem that no one wants to hear about Jesus—but Jesus says the harvest is plentiful.

It may seem that conventional wisdom the world to turn its collective back on Jesus—but Jesus says the harvest is plentiful.

It may seem that people are so happy that they don't need Jesus—but Jesus says the harvest is plentiful.

It may seem that some people are so nasty so as to be irredeemable—but Jesus says the harvest is plentiful.

Jesus does not just look he sees. His eyes were able not just to see the throng of people but to see every age and all the people who would one day call upon the name of Jesus.

Plentiful.

But the laborers are few.

Pray that the Lord would raise up more laborers.

It makes sense. There is a full 41% of the earth's population—some 3.16 billion people who are unreached for Christ. That is, there are places—vast stretches of places that have no followers of Jesus.

There are only so many missionaries, evangelists, preachers to go around. Pray for more.

One of the reasons we pray each week for other churches is because we want the ministries of the gospel preaching churches to be strong so more laborers can be raised up and sent out.

Think about the words of Jesus—

He says the harvest is plentiful—that is a guarantee that there are people who are ready to respond to Jesus Christ.

But it is not easy.

Laborers in a field harvesting crop by hand were in for hard work. They were called laborers for a reason. Their bodies were in constant motion as they swung a scythe to harvest grain. There would be others that would come behind them and gather up the clippings.

It is hard work to be a laborer for Jesus in the harvest field that is our world.

How can we do labor effectively in the harvest field we are in?

3. Seeing like Jesus—

Some of us are called to go or be involved in the in the labor of gathering up souls in other parts of the world.

Many of us are not.

But that does not mean we have no labor to do.

We want to be a church that always has room for more. We to build deeply together but not to the exclusion of others. It can be easy to be so tied in with the group of your friends that you don't look outside it much at all.

When we don't look out for others will not see the harvest opportunities.

How do we see like Jesus?

- *We see past how things seem*

It used to be that you actually had to physically meet someone before you had a sense of who they were. That is not the case anymore.

You can see your friends on FB, Instagram and think they look perfectly happy. They don't seem like they need Jesus. They certainly aren't harassed and helpless.

That is only the way things seem. She seems so happy on Instagram!

Tony Reinke, in his wonderfully helpful book, *12 Your Smartphone is Changing You* writes,

"Meet Essena O'Neill, who, as a nineteen-year-old Australian model, accumulated five hundred thousand Instagram followers. Once poised to make a career from online endorsement deals, in 2015 she called it quits, deleted most of her pictures, and revised the remaining descriptions to unmask the true motives behind the images (mostly sponsored product placements). Why the drastic move? Essena had come to see that her online life was hollow, fake and self-centered.

'Being born into this screen-dominated age, we are taught to mold ourselves in order to gain the most social validation [likes, views, and followers across social media]," she said.

"I was living a paradox of conditional self-love and constant self-hate. Basically, my self worth relied on social approval."

"The popularity made her feel—in her words—trapped in a cycle that became more empty, lonely, hateful, jealous and insecure."

Merely looking at this young lady's Instagram account might make you think—what else could she want? She has everything.

False.

We need to see not just look.

You cannot judge how happy someone's life is by what they share on social media. You can judge how happy and perfect people want you to think their life is.

Here is what we know.

We are looking through Jesus' eyes—people without him are harassed and helpless. Ms. O'Neil was harassed by the constant pressure to look right and helpless to do anything about it.

It is a grave mistake to judge someone's happiness by how they appear on social media. It is a mistake to judge happiness by appearances.

Everyone needs Jesus.

How do we see like Jesus?

We need to look past the way things appear.

We need to see with compassion

One of the reasons that it is difficult for us to see the plentiful harvest is because we don't see people with the compassion that Jesus did.

It is so much easier to be judgmental and/or critical of the people in our lives. The people Jesus looked out on were the same kind of people in our lives. They were—

- Annoying
- Vexing
- Irritating
- Insolent
- Inappropriate
- Mouthy
- Rude
- Sassy

- Demanding
- Bothersome

And yet, instead of running from them, he came to them and more than that had eyes of compassion for them.

Do we see others with eyes of compassion?

If you are a believer, part of the reason that the people in your life are so difficult is that they are sheep without a shepherd. They don't know any better. And if we stand in judgment of others, we don't look at others with the eyes of Jesus.

For our church to be a place that sees others rightly, we need to see others the way that Jesus sees them. This is very difficult. How can we see others the way that Jesus sees them?

- Recall how Jesus sees you—

He sees you with eyes of compassion. Jesus sees you with eyes of compassion. When he sees you he does not bring to mind all the times you—

- o Fudged the truth to make yourself look good.

- Your thoughts preoccupied with lustful musings.
- Your smoldering anger toward those who wronged you.
- Your idle, foolish words.
- Your loud boasting and secret cowardice.
- Your greed for more.

He sees you with eyes of compassion. One of the reasons we remember each week all that Jesus has done in and for us, when that truth is at the forefront of our mind we are more apt to view with compassion.

When we remember that Jesus views us with compassion it is much easier to have eyes of compassion for others.

This matters. One of the things that should be attractive to others about us is our compassion. We must be the kind of people that press in to help those in obvious need and those with not so obvious need.

People can tell when you care. Go forth and care—care for those in your lives that are not Christians.

We need to see past how things seem.
We need to see with compassion.

How else can we see like Jesus?

See the plentiful harvest

We live in a harvest field. We live amongst a people who need to hear of the wonderful message of Jesus Christ. He has sent us.

We can see all the people in our lives and be discouraged that more are not believers—OR and here is the key—see the possibilities.

One of the reasons that Jesus had people coming to him is because of the compassion he uniformly gave to people. He extended understanding and compassion.

And people were drawn to him.

We are called to do the same. Here is a very simple strategy for all of us—a way that we can ensure that people always feel welcomed.

Be compassionate. No matter what.

Be close to people far from Jesus. Are you?

We will continue to strive to be a place that reaches to those who need help. But we must each see ourselves as laborers sent into the harvest field. Each individually.

- Your workplace is not just the place that you earn a living, it is your harvest field.
- Your school is not just a place where you gain an education, it is your harvest field.
- Your child's soccer games is not just the time you cheer on her exploits, it is your harvest field.
- Your adult children are not just those you fret and pray for, they are your harvest field.

The people you are around will live somewhere forever. C.S. Lewis famously put it this way in his series of lectures called, *The Weight of Glory*

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.

All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations.

It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics.

There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal." C.S. Lewis

Can we see the staggering possibilities?

Imagine the collective opportunity here in this room. We are connected to hundreds, thousands(?) of people in this area.

Can we see people like Jesus?

Jesus saw people not problems.

Jesus saw eternal souls not momentary intrusions.

Jesus saw people to help not people to use.

Jesus saw a harvest not a crowd.

Jesus saw the infinite not the finite.

