



The College Campus

Beau Hughes – February 1, 2015

Well, good morning. If you have a Bible, turn to Matthew, chapter 9. If you're a guest with us and don't have your Bible, there should be a black hardback one in the seat in front of you, and it would be really helpful, especially if you're not a Christian. But if you are, it would be helpful just to follow with me. I think this will be much more enlightening and helpful if you follow along.

I want to go ahead and welcome you. I know WC did that earlier, but my name is Beau Hughes. If you're a guest, I just want to say how thankful we are that you're here. I'm one of the pastors and elders here, and I often have the privilege of teaching from the Bible on Sundays. We're just grateful you came to be with us and are here on a morning that not only is Super Bowl Sunday but is also the last Sunday in this series of praying together that we've started our year with.

We've been talking about and thinking about different topics of kingdom-oriented prayer this entire month, so my hope today is kind of twofold. First, it's to wrap up this month of prayer we have every year in January. Second, it's to wrap it up by leading us into praying for one last particular group of people, one last group of our neighbors this morning.

Again, we're going to just trust that the glimpse we get of Jesus' work here in Matthew 9 and the first part of Matthew 10 will lead us in that direction, so if you're with me here, I'm going to start in verse 31. The public reading of Scripture (which is what I'm about to do), where I'm going to just read the Scripture but not teach on it yet, and then pray...

I know it can sort of almost become (especially if you grew up in the church) just a mundane thing. "Yeah, this is just him reading the Scripture before he gets to what he's going to say." But there's something very powerful about hearing God's Word read. We're not receiving tablets like Moses did, but we have received this Word he has given us, so even today we're in the posture of just being hearers as God speaks.

Yesterday I drove down with my son Hadden (who's five) and went to watch the basketball team I used to play for in college. I know what you're all thinking. Yeah, I was a college athlete. I used to be athletic. I used to have some girth and other things that would make me sort of fit for playing college basketball. We went down, and one of the conversations we had was this neat conversation.

My son is learning. He just joined a basketball team. Coach Mike right here is one of his coaches. He has some little friends on there. We're learning about my son. He's like me. He really doesn't like being the center of attention, which I know is ironic for me since I'm being where I am right here. He's like me. He doesn't like that.

So he was just telling me even in the game that he really likes practice more because there's not a crowd of people watching him. Some of you can relate to that. Others of you can't, because you love being the center of attention, which is cool. We're different types. But he doesn't like it, so we were just talking on the way there, and it led into this conversation of me trying to relate to him.

I was just saying, "Hey, you see daddy when you come to the service? He stands up, and he preaches the Bible, and he's in front of a bunch of people." He said, "Yeah." I said, "You know, buddy, I don't necessarily like being in front of a bunch of people." That led into my saying, "But what I'm doing makes it worth it." That moved him in his little mind away from basketball, and he started talking about preaching.

I said, "You know what preaching is? Is it Daddy just getting up there and sharing his words?"

"No."

"What's he preaching from?"

"Well, he's preaching from the Bible."

"What's the Bible?"

He said, "Well, the Bible is God speaking to us." It wasn't that succinct, but he's on that trajectory theologically. It's kind of what he was trying to get out. Then he asked me if he could be Darth Vader for Halloween, and that was that, but it was a good theological moment. The reality, though, is that God is speaking.

He doesn't just invite us to pray to him, as marvelous as that is. He invites us to do that by first speaking to us, so let's give ear to him as we read this and then even as we think (after we read and pray) about what it means for us today as a church in Denton, Texas, in 2015. Matthew 9, starting in verse 31... This is the end of his healing two blind men.

"But they went away and spread his fame through all that district. As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, 'Never was anything like this seen in Israel.' But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the prince of demons.'

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

Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.' And he called to him his 12 disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction."

Father, we thank you for this glimpse into the work of your Son and, God, what you have providentially and sovereignly kept together and provided for us this day to read about you, to know of you, to hear of you. So we pray that as we reflect, as we meditate, as we think through these things you've said to us and written down for our benefit, so many years after this passage was written, God, and this event happened... Would you speak to us?

Would you teach us? Would you correct us even as you've told us? This Bible, this Word we've just read, is beneficial. There's nothing in the world more relevant than what we just read, so help us to make those connections this morning where we're not, and lead us by your Spirit to receive all you have for us. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

Well, if you've never read the book of Matthew, this gospel here that we read from, this is actually one of the hinges in the entire story. This is 28 chapters long, and these few little verses we've read

together are one of the many hinges in the story where Matthew is summarizing what Jesus is doing in his ministry, and at the same time he's taking us from one stage of his ministry to another stage of his ministry.

As you read here, you see what Jesus has been doing up until this point in this story. He has been teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God and also modeling the power of what he's teaching and proclaiming through his many miracles, through his healings and exorcisms. So you see Jesus doing this, and as he's teaching, as he's proclaiming, as he's healing, he's also incrementally revealing who he is to his disciples and the crowds at large.

He's revealing that he is God come, the King of the kingdom of God come, in his life and ministry. It's a really important passage of Scripture here, so I just want to walk through this line by line, think about it, and then let it lead us into praying for one last group of people as we conclude this month of prayer. Start with me in verse 31.

You see here that the last whole two chapters of Matthew (Matthew 8 and 9) are just filled with Jesus healing people. We come here to verse 31, and he has just healed two more people. He tells the people, "Hey, don't tell anybody what has happened." Of course, as people are often inclined to do after they have an experience with Jesus, they can't not tell people what has happened to them.

So it says they actually go away, and they begin to tell people in their community. Then verse 32 picks up and says, "**As they were going away...**" So he has just healed people. "**Behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him.**" The next time you complain about your day job or the station of life you're in, just think about the Lord Jesus.

"Okay, you're healing these people..." Then a demon-possessed man is brought to him and is mute. Then Matthew just blows by it. "**And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke.**" Jesus healed him. And when he healed him... It says, "**And the crowds marveled...**" They were astounded at what they saw. They were in awe of what they saw.

They said, "**Never was anything like this seen in Israel.**" They just couldn't believe it. It just blew their minds. This is a common response of the crowds to Jesus. If you follow his ministry in the Bible... Often people are left in awe. You know, crowds are fickle. The crowds that were in awe here are the same crowds who would follow him along the way and cheer him on. At the end, they would be the same ones cheering, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Jesus cared about the crowds, as we'll see here in a moment, but they were in awe not necessarily because they got it all, but because they saw something wonderful that he did. It began to stir up conversations among them. They went from going, "Oh my gosh. I just saw that..." With circumstances in our lives, we have a tendency to turn to one another and say, "What just happened? Did I just see that happen? Did you just see the same thing I saw?"

I don't know if you've ever been in one of those moments. Then they began asking, "Who is this man? Who is this person? We've never seen anything like this. We have all sorts of teachers. We have all sorts of religious leaders. None of them walk in this type of authority. None of them have done this type of thing."

They begin to ask, and there's this pulse that goes out among the crowds in Jesus' ministry. "Could this be the one we've been waiting for, the Messiah, God's King? Could he finally be here to rescue us and redeem us as a people?" Of course, the religious leaders were in the crowd. They were watching as well. As they began to hear these conversations trickle out among the crowd, they became threatened by Jesus' popularity because they had all of the power.

But if someone was coming along who actually had more authority, not necessarily because of his position... You know, he's this guy from this little old podunk town in Galilee, yet he's walking, teaching, and healing with such authority that these leaders (rightfully so) are thinking, "Oh no. We have to do something about this." In their fear and envy, they turn to the crowd. Verse 34 says, **"But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the prince of demons.'"**

In other words, "This power you're marveling at is actually demonic. It's actually satanic." That's so sad in so many different ways because what Jesus was actually doing in his healings was the exact opposite of what they were telling the people. He was doing what they (these leaders who were sort of making sure they had glory for themselves instead of taking care of the people, as we'll get to in a minute) should have been doing all along.

Jesus' healings are anything but Satan driving out demons. In fact, that's what Matthew goes to in verse 35. He summarizes what has been going on during Jesus' ministry thus far, and he says, **"And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages..."** He was not doing what the Pharisees were saying he was doing, but **"...teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction."**

Matthew is summarizing what you've just read if you're reading his gospel in its entirety. He's saying, "Listen. Jesus isn't in league with the demons. He's actually showing us the way forward." He was showing people the way forward, announcing in his teaching and his miracles that God the King had finally come, that the kingdom (which is a way to say the rule and the reign of God) was finally coming to earth in and through his ministry.

That's what Matthew is saying. This is what Jesus' life, teaching, ministry, healings, death, and ultimately resurrection were all about, but people missed it. The leaders missed it, and the people didn't quite understand what they were seeing. That's why Jesus was increasingly trying to show them, "Hey, this is who I am. I'm the King who has finally come."

Verse 36 says this about the King when he came. You have these scenes happening, but then you get a glimpse of what Jesus saw. "**When he saw the crowds...**" It's important. I don't know how often you think as a disciple of Jesus... If you are a disciple (I know not all of us in this room are disciples of Jesus), part of being a disciple of Jesus is that we want to see the world, our neighbors, the way he sees them. We want our hearts to align with his heart about the things he sees.

So when Matthew says, "**When he saw the crowds...**" here, it's really important because Matthew is very clearly interpreting for us what God saw, what God thought, because Jesus is God. I don't know how often you may think of that in your circumstances, but it's really a startling, sobering exercise to step back from your circumstances and your life (even if you think about different conflicts or different discouragements in your life, maybe relationally or otherwise) and just go, "What does God think about this?"

Even go big today. What does God think about the Super Bowl? Now I'm not... If you like the Super Bowl, that's fine. I'm sure there are many things God thinks about the Super Bowl, but I think that when you think about it... I'm not asking whether he knows whether there were deflated footballs or not or whatever was going on. He knows.

God knows, but beyond that, just our world, your world, your friendships, your circumstances... What does God think? I don't ask myself that question often enough. "What does God think about what I'm about to say? What does he think about what I just did?" What I love about this text is that when it's saying Jesus saw... Matthew is giving us a glimpse of what God thought when he was here among us through what Jesus saw.

We get to see what God saw. It says that when Jesus saw the crowds... I think it's the crowd in this particular passage but then generally all of the crowds that followed him. It says, "**When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them...**" That word *compassion* literally means he felt it in his guts. It's a physiological word. It means kidneys or bowels.

It means, "Man, he felt something so deeply that it almost physiologically was there in his stomach." He saw them and felt compassion in his guts. Why? "**...because they were harassed...**" *Harassed* is a word that means distressed, bruised, battered, completely exhausted. "**...and helpless...**" The word *helpless* means they had been completely thrown down and left completely vulnerable.

They had just been torn in two and thrown down and left there, dying and helpless and vulnerable. It says, "**...like sheep without a shepherd.**" This is what Jesus saw. He was looking out on these people, and this is what he saw in the crowd. Again, just for us to get a glimpse of God's heart here... That's not unimportant, especially to some of us in this room, especially in a room this size.

I don't have to be a prophet to know this. Just pastor people and you'll figure this out soon enough. Some of you feel that way. You are a sheep without a shepherd. All of us are sheep. Some of you this morning come in here battered, bruised, just torn in two internally, discouraged, and hopeless like the joy in your life has just evaporated.

Whether that's because of your circumstances, your sin, or sin that has been done against you, this is how you feel. You just feel hopeless and helpless. You feel like a sheep without a shepherd. What's so beautiful about this passage is that part of what you can hear this morning as you read about this account in Jesus' life is that God sees you.

If you're there... Maybe that's why some of you came. You didn't know where to go, and you just saw this place or knew somebody who came to this service every now and again, so you came here. What I'm telling you is that God brought you here to tell you he sees you and he loves you. He knows you're broken down. He knows you're helpless.

He knows you don't have a shepherd, and he says, "Hey, I'm the Good Shepherd." That's one of the names Jesus called himself. He wants to bind you up and care for you. I don't have any idea what that looks like for many of you, but I just want to invite you to see that, that the way Jesus felt about this crowd... We can be confident that if you're there, he feels about you the same way this morning.

He loves you. Then others of you may actually be the predator, because part of the glimpse of this is the reason that these people were sheep without a shepherd: The would-be shepherds had let the predators come in, rip them apart, and tear them down. These people who are saying Jesus has a demon are the ones who should be watching after the people as good shepherds, and they're not.

They're horrible shepherds, and maybe that's you. Maybe you come in here, and you've been the one tearing people down. Your friends, your spouse... You've just been preying on people emotionally, verbally, even physically. Husbands, you've just been harsh with your wives. Even here this morning... Jesus didn't just see the crowds; he saw the poor shepherds, the would-be shepherds. This is a rebuke and an invitation that there's grace as well.

If you're the one doing the predatory speaking or acting or whatever it may look like, God loves you and invites you in. This is really good news. You're watching Jesus' life. You're seeing his heart as Matthew describes it, and you're getting a glimpse of his heart for us. It's really compelling to see what God thinks and feels. Then Jesus turns to his disciples.

He sees the crowd, he's filled with compassion because they're sheep without a shepherd, and then he turns to his disciples (these people who follow him closely) and actually tells them what he thinks about this crowd. So now he switches gear. This isn't Matthew knowing what Jesus is thinking. This is now actually what Jesus said to his disciples in verse 37. Look.

It says, "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...'" It's interesting here that as Jesus now speaks and teaches his disciples who are following him, he changes the metaphor. He changes the imagery. He goes from thinking of and seeing sheep to saying, "These crowds are not just like sheep; they're also like a field full of wheat that has no one to harvest it." It's interesting imagery that he paints for him.

If you can imagine that... You know, we often see pictures (especially just with the climate changes and the reality of that conversation), but those are actually the opposite of this picture. A lot of times what we'll see are drought scenarios. You have fields where there's no harvest but there are farmers, farmers just waiting, praying, and hoping.

Just make a trip out to West Texas and you'll see this, that this is the reality for so many. But Jesus is saying, "No, it's the opposite. There's a harvest. There's a massive harvest. There are no farmers.

There are no laborers." He says to his disciples, "I look out over this crowd, and not only do I see sheep without a shepherd, but I see a massive harvest with no laborers, with no farmers."

He invites his disciples to see this. In an essence, what Jesus is saying is that the crowds are actually (in Jesus' mind) eager for God's kingdom. They were eager to know what God was doing, but they didn't know where to find it. They were waiting and ready for God to act in their lives, but they had no one to tell them that action had already begun in his life, teaching, and miracles.

That's what Jesus is seeing as Matthew gets a glimpse, so that being the case, Jesus says, "Because there's a harvest with no laborers, this is what we ought to do." In verse 38 he says, "**...therefore pray earnestly...**" That's not typically our first reaction, but he says to his disciples, "**...pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.**"

What's so helpful here... Jesus often tells us to pray, but he doesn't often tell us exactly what to pray for outside of the Lord's Prayer. If you think about that, there's a modeling of prayer, there's an exhortation to prayer, but there's rarely Jesus saying, "This is specifically what I want you to pray for." He gets specific here as he looks out on these crowds and tells his disciples what he's seeing and what they should be seeing if they want to be his followers.

He's saying, "What this should do is lead us to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest." Then look at what he says in chapter 10, verse 1. This is one of those areas where I think it's easy to see that the chapter breakdown sometimes kind of hinders us from reading the whole story of the Bible. It says in verse 1 of chapter 10, "**And he called to him his 12 disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.**"

Just picture this. Right after Jesus tells his disciples what he sees and how to respond to what he sees by persistent prayer, he then equips them and sends them out into the harvest to become the answer to their own prayers. This passage leads us exactly to where we began this month of prayer together. This passage starts us right where we began on January 4.

This is a summary of what we just read. When we see the world (our neighbors, the hopeless and marginalized in our world, especially those who are hurting) through God's eyes, it fills us with a gut-level compassion that drives us to persistent prayer. If we really see, if we're really following after Jesus, learning from him and saying, "Teach me to see how you see. Teach me to see this world how you see it. Here's how I see it. My view is so myopic. I see what's in front of me..."

Jesus knows that. That is our weakness, and that's okay, but he's always lifting our heads to help us see, and as we see as he sees, when it really connects with us, it leads us to this gut-level compassion. Jesus got punched in the gut when he saw that crowd, and the same thing happens to us. It drives us not to hopelessness but to hopefulness that exerts itself and manifests itself through persistent, ongoing, kingdom-oriented prayer.

That's what this chapter is talking about, and this is why we pray. This is why we start every year praying. "God, would your kingdom come? Would your will be done?" This is why we pray that this gospel and this kingdom would go to all of the nations, especially the unreached peoples. This is why we pray that this gospel and this kingdom would continue to create and sustain racial reconciliation among us as this church so that this gospel and kingdom can be made visible in Denton and beyond.

This is the gospel and kingdom that compel us to care for the vulnerable, compel us to care for the marginalized, even (as we talked about last week) especially those who aren't even born yet or those who are orphaned. This is the gospel and kingdom that leads us to this persistent prayer, just like the widow that WC read about from Luke 18 earlier. Church, I think part of what we're meant to ask as we read this passage is more particularly, "Okay, so where are the fields today that are ready for harvest?"

If we're following with Jesus and we're really trying to go with him here (we're reading this passage as a church, as a people), part of what we're meant to ask (both globally and locally, but today I want to speak specifically about locally) is, "Where are the harvest fields in our own city, in our own neighborhood as a church that we would be filled up with compassion for if we had eyes to see, because they're sheep without shepherds that desperately need to know and understand who the Good Shepherd is?"

One of the most consistent fields of harvest that this church has identified since it was installed in 1949... There's a little church history for you. I know so many of you care about that. Twenty-three people started meeting right down the street at a house on Oak Street, and that became Grace Temple Baptist Church, who then purchased some property right here and did some building.

Now we've been meeting here since 1949. From the installation, from the very beginning of this church, one of the groups of people in our city who this church has looked at... We've prayerfully

tried to discern, "Okay, how do we steward who we are to send more laborers through prayer and through our being the answers to our own prayer into different harvest fields in our city? Where could that happen?"

An obvious, in-your-face answer for us as a church year after year, decade after decade, has been the college campuses in our city. I mean, if you're thinking about Denton (especially as you're our church that meets right here), you're thinking about where harvest fields are in our city that are like this, what Jesus is talking about. One of the first things, if not the first thing, that should always come to mind, especially since so many of you are college students...

You live there. You don't just meet here as a church. You live there. You're there at UNT and TWU. The college campus is a harvest field. Then if you think about the need there, that it really is not too different than what we see described here in Matthew 9, that virtually every sociological survey ever done has shown that emerging adults (the category of emerging adults includes people of ages 18-25) are clearly and consistently the least religious group of adults in the United States...

Contrary to what many people have said, there aren't a lot of emerging adults who are actually seeking after God. We kind of try to encourage ourselves that, "Eh, you know, they're really..." No. They're consistently (for years and years and years) the least religious group in the United States, and not very many are seeking after God.

We have tens of thousands of that group right across the street, right down the street, right in this room this morning...tens of thousands of this type of unreached person. Now they're not an unreached people group like people in North Korea or Japan or those in Muslim countries around the world, but the group of people who fit this description (the crowds of college students on the college campus) are a group of people who desperately need to be reached.

If you think about this... I mean, if you really think about everything we've really talked about this month if you've been here, the college campus is really a microcosm of all of these things, right? Do you want to talk about the nations? The nations live at TWU and UNT. I mean, just at UNT alone there are 2,000 international students, and the majority of them come from Asia.

China is the number one nation represented over there, and the other majority group over there is from the Middle East. The nations have come to live here, thousands of them right across the street,

and beyond that, you want to talk about racial reconciliation? Well, these campuses are some of the most diverse places anywhere on the face of North America.

TWU is 43 percent white. If you're white, just take that in for a minute, right? If you've never known what it's like to be white (it's fine if you haven't; it's good for us to know that, though), if you've never felt what it's like to be white, just go over to TWU's campus and have lunch, or just go over to Chipotle over here and have lunch.

I'm going to be honest. This is the college campus. It's racially diverse. So as you think about the nations, racial diversity, abortion, sexual abuse, and all of those things we talked about last week, one of the primary places here in town where they're most prevalent is the college campus. All of these things exist... These are mission fields.

These are harvest fields that are right here in our own back yard, and this church has always recognized that. There are crowds of people on these campuses who are searching for salvation. Again, I don't mean they actually know they're looking for God, but they're searching for salvation through their achievements, degrees, relationships, and the next steps they're looking ahead to in their lives. They're looking for validation, identity, and connection.

They're looking for meaning, and they're looking for value, yet they're searching in vain. Tens of thousands are right here in this neighborhood. Christian Smith is a sociologist at Notre Dame. He has done some really good work. He did this longitudinal study. That means he did a study over a long period of time, just for those of you who may be...

He did a longitudinal study of students starting as teenagers and moving through their college years, and it was about the religious reality of those students (teenagers and then emerging adults). He wrote a book and summarized those studies. It was called *Souls in Transition*. There was another book he wrote before that one called *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*.

If you're a parent (I don't care how old your kid is) or if you're thinking about being a parent, you need to read these books, because for all of the things we kind of throw around about what really makes for children receiving the gospel by faith and holding on to it... You know, we think it's peers. What these books show scientifically is that it's not peer interaction.

Peer interaction is great. It's really helpful, but the reality is it happens in the home. The reality is that all of these things... I used to be a youth minister, and they'd tell us, "Eighty percent of students lose their faith when they get on the college campus. The college campus is just so evil..." Some of that is true, but what the college campus does is not change the trajectory of people's lives; it just reveals what's already there and what has started since they were little ones.

That's what the studies have shown. This is sociology. This isn't Beau conjecturing. That would be fun in and of itself, but these are studies that are showing that this is what happens. This is how he finishes his book about emerging adults. I just want to read this to you. I'm just going to warn you that it's a few paragraphs, which I know may be long for some of us in our culture of 162 characters.

We're not really used to that, but just lean back in your chair. Let me read this for you. This is what he says about these emerging adults. Some of us (even if we're not in college) fit this description. I want you to just internalize this, what he writes and summarizes from all of the data over all of the years and the thousands of interviews they've collected. He says this.

"Emerging adults struggle earnestly to establish themselves as autonomous and sovereign individuals. But the crises of knowledge and value that have so powerfully formed their lives leave them lacking in conviction or direction to even know what to do with their prized sovereignty. Emerging adults are determined to be free." They think, "We get out of that house and we're free."

"But they do not know what is worth doing with their freedom. They work very hard to stand on their own two feet. But they do not really know where they ought to go and why, once they are standing. They lack larger visions of what is true and real and good, in both the private and public realms. And so, it seems to us a small set of predefined default imperatives quickly rush in to fill that normative and moral vacuum."

That's pretty wordy, but basically what he's saying is that with no rudder, with no gauge to know what to do, with no foundation of truth and what's good and what's right, they turn to things that our culture has set up for them to turn to as a default. "One of these is mass consumerism's slavish obsession with private material comfort and possessions, the achieving of which nearly every emerging adult views as a key purpose in life." There's that American dream coming to roost.

It has just worked really deeply into our hearts. "Other imperatives, in the meantime, may be the amusements of alcohol and drug intoxication, and the temporary thrills of hook-up sex. Yet even in

the early emerging adult years, signs were evident to us that many already find these culturally given, default purposes, amusements, and thrills unsatisfying, if not outright wounding. Many know there must be something more, and they want it. [...] But they do not know what to do about that given the crisis of truth and values that has destabilized their culture."

It continues, "So they simply carry on as best they can..." Like they will tomorrow morning. "...as sovereign, autonomous, empowered individuals who lack a reliable basis for any particular conviction or direction by which to guide their lives." If this doesn't describe a crowd of sheep without a shepherd, I don't know what does.

Friends, this description fits some of you to a *T*. I'm not just talking to college students. As you go from relationship to relationship, to comfort, to material purchases, you're looking. You're like a duck underwater in your soul. It may seem calm on the surface, but underneath you're just searching, and you know you're searching, and you have no foundation. You don't know where you're going.

You're lost. You're helpless. Again, the invitation is that there's a good shepherd who can guide you and show you, that even though you would walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he would lead you, comfort you, guide you, and save you from yourself. He'll save you from what culture says is salvation, things that are not going to fill you up at the end but only harm you.

That's the invitation, and this is why we as a church want to be consistently praying for the college campus: because of this, because we look out on our mission field in the city of Denton and believe God has placed us here in his providence, not by mistake, so we could steward who we are as a church, where we meet as a church, and who the harvest fields are right around us.

I'm going to ask WC to come up and lead us in prayer, but before we pray, I just want to encourage you because as we've prayed for the college campus over the last eight years, God has done marvelous things. He was doing marvelous things in this city and on these campuses long before we got here, but there are things that have happened where...

In this passage we read, Jesus says, "Pray earnestly," and then he equips them and sends them out to be the answer to their own prayer. There has been prayer here, but then many of you have even been the answer to our own prayers for laborers for the college campus, so I just want to highlight a few of those by way of different ministries and realities.

First of all, as the BSM (which is the Baptist Student Ministry) is tearing down their building and building a new one over on campus, they're meeting here on Thursday nights. Numerous members of our church have led the BSM for many years now. Think about Stephanie Gates, who's a member of this church and the director of the BSM.

There's Chase, who used to be a member of this church. We got to send him out to help with a church plant here in town. Then Jay is over here somewhere. I saw him. He's on staff at the BSM. The BSM is serving college students. Historically, the BSM served as the college ministry for all for all of the Baptist churches because the Baptist churches didn't have college ministries.

Now they've had to evolve a bit as a ministry, but they're still serving both the students who show up as Christians and those who are not yet Christians through equipping those who are to share the gospel with them. I also think about Micah, who's at TWU at the BSM, and then even members of our church who cook often. There's a free meal at the BSM. Many members of our church regularly gather and help provide that meal through cooking.

Then there's Young Life, which is a college ministry. Cat Ryden, who was here in the 9:00 service this morning, sat right over here. She leads Young Life College, which is (again) a ministry that is reaching out to those who are lost, those who are marginalized, those who are looking for Christ even though they don't know they're looking for him and may not be proactively seeking him on the college campus.

Then there's also Cru, which has historically been called Campus Crusade for Christ. We have people at Cru who are here at TWU. There are just so many over at TWU who are laboring on that campus to share the gospel with their classmates and peers.

I think about a member of our church who used to work on UNT's campus and other campuses who now sort of helps equip others who work across campuses all over the metroplex and helps them raise their support. Evan Woods, who's a member of our church, started a ministry called Box 7, which is a ministry to those who are music majors, those who are in Drum Corps International.

That is a subculture that is (especially here at UNT) so far away from God. They don't even have time to look up, because they have so much pressure on them to achieve musically. It's a whole

subgroup of people who one of the members of our church started a ministry around to reach out to. Then, of course, there's our international student ministry.

Members of our church have partnered with other churches to reach out to those international students who are here right across the street. You know, it's not just The Village. There are so many... I met with Austin Wadlow, who's the college pastor at First Baptist. We met just last week and heard about what God is doing through the ministry of Overflow there on Tuesday nights.

Chris Miller leads college life at Denton Bible. He's a good friend of mine. That ministry has been faithful for so long. There are even other ministries, like Faculty Commons. There are professors in our church and on campus. Some of them know Christ. Others are far from Christ, so Steve Pogue leads a ministry to try to equip professors to minister to their colleagues and steward their positions as professors and staff over at the campus.

I've had the privilege of speaking to both faculty and staff groups at TWU and UNT. There are The Navigators with Steve Shank and RUF with Matt Odom. We can go on and on. There's the Bridges ministry. There are just so many good ministries going on that we want to thank God for, and I want you to know about this, because it's us on campus in so many different ways, the answers to the prayers we've been sowing in this church since 1949 but even more particularly since we started meeting eight years ago.

As some of you know (hopefully many of you know), all of these good things that God has done among us and through members of our church... The primary partnership we have to reach the college campus is Campus Outreach, which is a ministry. WC is now the campus director at UNT, so I asked him to come and just share with you a little bit about that and then lead us into a time of praying in light of this harvest field God has placed us right in the middle of to reach and be a part of.

WC Garrett: Well, thank you, Beau. Like he said, I work with Campus Outreach, my college ministry at the University of North Texas. This is the third year I've been on staff with Campus Outreach, and I absolutely love my job. Who knew I would get paid for playing video games and telling people about Jesus? Man, it really is a sweet gig.

I thank you, supporters, for supporting me to tell people about Jesus while smacking them in *NFL Madden 2015*. It's absolutely phenomenal. I'm excited to be up here and kind of give the support

and share this encouragement with you guys, but before I get into that, I do want to say really quickly, church, that Campus Outreach is an extension of the local church, of The Village Church Denton on the college campus.

When I say that, hear me say this: Campus Outreach is you guys. You guys are Campus Outreach. As we go and minister, as we go and build relationships, you are with us. We are you. So as you hear these words of encouragement, as you hear this report, have your affections stirred, knowing you are us and this is you on the college campus.

The mission statement of Campus Outreach is to simply build laborers on the college campus for the lost world. This mission statement comes straight from Matthew 9:37-38, verses Beau preached on this morning. What we do is really hope, seek, and ask God to raise up men and women who will go to the ends of the earth for the sake of the gospel.

To quote Beau in his sermon, he said the college campus is filled with the least religious young adults in our nation. The college campus is filled with young adults who show no spiritual or religious interest at all, and I think that statement could not be any more true, which is why we go to the harvest that is plentiful. It is my belief that years spent on the college campus are critical and formable years for an individual's life.

It is in college where these young men and women begin to solidify things they believe socially, philosophically, politically, religiously, and spiritually. But at the bottom of that list, at the very bottom of that totem pole, down at the bottom of the barrel of things students want to begin to solidify and grow in and wrap their beliefs around is their relationship with God.

You see, these young adults come into college thinking they want nothing to do with God. They aren't spiritually interested in growing in their relationship with God, so getting connected to a Bible study, joining and plugging into a local church, is not on the college students' top 10 list of things to do while in college. They don't care. They don't want to know.

They didn't come to college to grow in their relationship with God. These are students who I am hanging around every single day, eating lunch with, having dinner with, spending time with. They're men and women who didn't come to college to build a relationship with God. This is even more true for students who grew up with a spiritual or Christian background, who grew up in a spiritual home.

Many of them are beginning to come to grips while they're in college with the thought that, "You know what? While I was younger... Man, if I had to be honest, I'd say the only reason I went to church is that I went with my family. I lived in their home. I did what they did, so we just went to church. Church was just something we always did, and it's something we continue to always do. But now that I come to grips with it while I'm in college, you know what? If I don't want to go to church, I just won't go."

Or they say, "I just won't go as much," or, "I'll only go for these varying circumstances." What many of them realize is they have no real spiritual foundation with God, so typically what these college students think (this is the same thing I thought before the Lord saved me in my sophomore year of college) is that the opportune time for them to start building their relationship with God is after they graduate.

"Let me get my spouse. Let me get my kids. Let me move to this area, and then after I do that, I will begin to start developing a relationship with God, because you know what? My parents brought me up in church, and whenever I have kids I want to start bringing them to church, so that's when I'll start going back." For many of these college students, following God means no fun. It means a buzzkill to their college years. "I'll push back. I don't want to do it. I'll get to God at a later point."

What they think is, "I don't need God right now. I'll do me, and I'll let God do him." What we're beginning to see... This is what's so heartbreaking about this. When I see students I know individually by name who are coming across my mind, as I'm sitting with them at the table, what they'll tell me is that they will reject God for lifestyles, people, and things they know will disappoint them at the very end of the day.

They know these things will ultimately lead into destruction at the very end of the day, but they say no to God but yes to that. It's heartbreaking. They are harassed. They are helpless. They are desperately searching and yearning for more, but they don't know where to look. Well, they do know where to look, but they just want it.

They're sheep without a shepherd. These are the types of students we're around every single day. These are the types of students we're building and developing relationships with, praying and begging God that he would enter into their hearts so they can have a relationship with him. These

are the students we know. These are the students we have the opportunity of meeting: men and women who don't want anything to do with God.

So we go where they are. They don't come to us. They're not saying, "Hey, bro. When is your next Bible study? I want to go," or, "Hey, bro. What church do you go to?" They look at me and they're thinking, "Oh!" because they know what I do. They see me, and I see it in their faces. They look me in my eyes, and they're like, "Oh, WC." I say, "Hey, what's up, bro?"

"What's up, man? What are you doing?"

"Man, do you want to hang out?"

"Well, man, you know... I have class. Man, it's at 11 at night. I mean, I have to study for class. That's what I meant to say."

These are students who will run from me, so if they won't come to us, we go to them. We go to their dormitories. We go to the rec center. I go and buy them chicken wings. I say, "You want to get swoll, bro?" They go to the rec center with me to lift weights, pump some iron. We go to their Greek homes. We go to where they are, because they will not come to us, so we come to them.

Many of our students who are involved in that ministry today aren't students who came to us; we came to them. I think some of them are here. Will you just raise your hand? Raise your hand if you guys came to us when you started hanging around us. Raise your hand if we came to you then. Boom. You see that right there? We came and got them. We were blowing their phones up.

Some of the other staff were too. So many of these students don't come looking for us. We come and initiate to them because we see how plentiful the harvest is. In these last four years, God has done a tremendous work in and through our ministry personally, so I just have a few brag-on-the-Lord points I want to make here. In the last four years, we have had over 70 students make professions of faith in Jesus Christ. Yeah. Yeah. That's big time.

Man, it keeps getting better, y'all. It keeps getting better. Check this out. College students are coming here to be baptized during our celebration services, celebration service after celebration service. Students who were once dead in their sin but are now alive in Christ are now being dunked in water to show their profession of faith in Jesus Christ. That's crazy.

We also have students who are becoming covenant members here, students who did not have church on their top 10 list. "You know what? When I go to college, the first thing I need to do is find a church." Rather, it was, "The first thing I need to do is... When does that party start, bro? Bam. I'm there." That's the first thing they're thinking about.

Now these are the same students who are now becoming covenant members of the local church, serving in a variety of ways. We have students from UNT who were once dead in their sins and have said, "Hey, I'll go overseas for the sake of the gospel." We have students who are growing relentlessly in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

We have students who are sharing the gospel with other students, with their friends and with their peers. They're seeing those students come to Christ. The gospel, the kingdom of God, is advancing at UNT. But as I close, I want to give you guys, church, a little bit of encouragement for the things you guys are already doing, things you guys are already leading out.

Many of you have supported our students whenever they've wanted to go on mission trips. Many of you guys have said, "Hey, I'll partner with you financially so you can go and share the gospel and proclaim the excellence of Christ in other areas around the world." Some of you guys support me and some of the other staff so we are able to go on campus for 60 hours a week to build relationships with college students and play *Madden*. Thank you!

You guys support some of the staff so the gospel can get to the college students. Many of you open up your houses, and you cook some food for us. You guys show us great hospitality in cooking for us and opening up your homes for us. More importantly, I think what these college students see every time they walk through these doors is a group of people who are worshipping the Lord, who are loving one another, and who are bringing all of their affections to Jesus.

It's literally blowing their minds. Your lives, the gospel being made visible in and through you guys, are literally impacting these college students' lives because when they're walking in, they're sitting next to people who love the Lord. They're saying, "This is what it means to be filled with the Spirit of God. This is what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be a Christian."

They're seeing your lives. They're seeing you guys be the church, and it's amazing. You guys are already doing this. I can tell you time and time again how many students have told me they see the

life of this local church already living out the gospel, and it's intriguing to them. But just like Beau said, I just want to end our time with a few prayer points.

I want to do what we always want to do in this time and in this season of prayer: begin to pray earnestly. I have four prayer points I want to lead us through, and then you guys will have a few minutes to pray for those things. The first thing I want to pray for is... I just want to spend time rejoicing to God our Father for being so good to us, for strategically setting us up in such a place to literally be a cartwheel and two back flips away from the college campus.

Man, the Lord has sovereignly set us up so well to be able to minister to people who are right across the street. That's the Lord's goodness. Pray for this second one. Pray that we would steward our location well. Pray that we would continue like our heads are on a swivel, looking for opportunities to love our neighbors on the college campus well.

Third, pray that the God of the universe will continue to save men and women at UNT and TWU. Raise your hand if you began your relationship with Christ while you were in college, God saved you when you were in college. The harvest is plentiful, so pray that God will continue to save men and women at UNT and TWU, and he will raise up laborers to go out into his plentiful harvest.

Last, I want us to pray for the college ministries and the staff of those college ministries. Pray for them. Pray that God would show them great favor as they seek to minister to men and women who so desperately need the gospel of grace. Spend the next few minutes praying for that, and then we'll lead out in some worship.