

A Heart for the Lost

by Brian Long

Developing a heart for the lost requires a devoted prayer life, where you seek God's face daily and receive instructions from Him.

Duration: 33:20

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 1:16-18, Mark 1:35, Acts 1:1

Topics: "Lost Souls"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of developing the heart of Jesus for the lost. He highlights the example of Jesus, who not only preached about reaching the lost but also practiced it. Jesus led by example and taught his disciples to become fishers of men by showing them how to reach out to those in need. The speaker emphasizes the significance of prayer in developing the heart of Jesus for the lost, stating that without a vital prayer life, one cannot have compassion for the lost.

Transcript

I can commend you for many things. One is the strong families in this church. I don't know if you know that, but I mean, I get to go to quite a few places, and I've been to different places, and it is very, very, very rare to see the strength of families, the joy in homes, and in marriages, and the relationships you have with your children and grandchildren.

I've been so blessed just to witness that. I wish I could take a picture of that, and just display it everywhere that I would be able to go. So you're very blessed in that, and praise God for it, and others need to see it.

But such a loving group of people here, and I've been so blessed to be with you. We're going to study this morning in a Sunday school lesson from the gospel of Mark chapter 1. And in Mark chapter 1, I want to talk about developing the heart of Jesus for the lost. How does one get that heart of Jesus for the lost, developing the heart of Jesus for the lost? Mark chapter 1, and we'll begin in verse 16.

Now, as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Verse 18, And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship, mending their

nets. And straightway he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

So Jesus calls them, and he's not only calling them, he's calling us today, Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And what I love about the Lord Jesus, I don't know if you're familiar with this verse, you don't have to turn there, but I'm going to read it quickly. Acts chapter 1, verse 1. This is what I love about the Lord Jesus.

Acts 1, verse 1 says, The former treaty have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. He did, then taught. You've all probably heard the saying, Do what I say, not what I do.

Jesus didn't just practice what he preached, he preached what he practiced. He did, then taught. And that's how he would have us to follow him.

What I love about the Lord Jesus is he didn't just say, Come, follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men. Now, let me teach you how to do that. And he gave a lecture.

He didn't do that, did he? Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And he led them by example. They learned by watching him.

And that's what I want you to see throughout this entire first chapter of Mark. Jesus exemplifies what it means to reach the lost. He shows us by example, how to have that heart for the lost and to reach those who are in need.

Now, we're going to come back and read some of these verses, but I want you to skip down to verse 35, because this is key. If you and I are going to have the heart of God for the lost world, this is essential. This is vital.

Verse 35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed. Jesus prayed.

He got up long before daylight, and he found a quiet place, probably up on a hill somewhere, and he prayed. Without an effective, a vital prayer life, you and I will never develop the heart of Jesus for the lost. Prayer is essential.

Prayer is vital. Without a relationship with God in prayer and meeting with God daily in prayer, you and I, we're not going to have the compassion for the lost. You can't work that up.

None of us naturally have that. It has to come from God. It comes to God when we seek his face daily in prayer.

Now, Jesus, again, is our example. He gets up long before daylight and goes to pray. If there's anything in the Bible that should compel us to see our need to have a vital prayer life, a devotion to prayer, it's simply this, that Jesus prayed, that he saw his need to pray, that every he didn't find time to pray.

He made time to pray. He made time to be alone with the father. Now, all of us would say this.

I want to spend more time in prayer. I've said this. I want to spend more time in prayer.

I want to spend more time with God. I want to guard that quiet time. But Lord, do you know how busy I am? How do I juggle all of this? My family, my job, my workplace, the ministry, all these things.

And what I want you to see is the previous verses leading up to verse 35, you're going to see that Jesus didn't have just a relaxed day. He had an extremely busy day, and still he made time to be alone with the father early the next morning before the sun ever got up because he knew how essential that was. There is no substitute for a devotion, a devoted prayer life.

There is no substitute for a devoted prayer life. Back up with me now to verse 21, because I want you to see how busy his day was that led up to this morning of prayer. Verse 21, this is now he's leading his disciples, those he said, come follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

They're following him now. Verse 21, they went into Capernaum and straightway on the Sabbath day, he entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one that had authority and not as the scribes.

So Jesus immediately leads them to the synagogue. He's teaching. Now, how many of you have taught Sunday school or filled the pulpit? If you really, if you've really put your heart into it, and you've labored and you've studied and you pour your heart out in that Sunday school lesson, it's exhausting.

You should be at the end. I mean, we are dependent on the life of Christ. But I know when I preach my heart out or teach, it can be exhausting.

It can be draining. You would know that, brother, as a preacher, as a pastor. But so Jesus is teaching in the synagogue.

But then he goes further, verse 23. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, Let us alone.

What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know who thou art, the holy one of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

And they were all amazed in so much that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. So not only is Jesus being poured out in teaching in that synagogue and preaching, but now he's confronting demon possessed, a demon possessed man.

And I don't know if you've had any dealings with that kind of ministry, but I have had in old Mexico and even where I am now, we have had encounters with people who are truly demon possessed, and we've seen the Lord Jesus Christ deliver them. But I tell you this, after such prayer and travail and prayer and and this type of deliverance ministry, it can be extremely exhausting. That's what I want you to see.

This day is a busy day. He's teaching. Now he's casting out demons.

Virtue is going out of him all throughout the day. Verse twenty nine. The ministry is continuing on the same day.

Verse twenty nine. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever.

And and and they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. And immediately the fever left her and she ministered unto them.

So he's not only teaching, he's not only casting out demons. Now he goes to Peter's mother in law and he heals her. So he's ministering throughout the whole day.

That sounds like a pretty full day of ministry to me, does it not? You be a good time now to go home and sit in my easy chair and relax. But watch what happens to Jesus in the next verse. Verse thirty two.

And that even when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door and he healed many that were sick of diverse diseases and cast out many devils and suffered not the devils to speak because they knew him. Does that sound like a pretty full day to you? Even at evening, even after the sun went down, the ministry is not over.

He's still ministering to people. He's still pouring out, being poured out for the sake of others. Now, you would think that's a long day, that's a busy day.

I'm tired. Next morning would be a good day to sleep in. But what's the next verse say? Verse thirty five in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there he prayed before anyone else got up the next morning.

Jesus arose and he arose in the quiet hours of the morning because he knew there was nothing more important than time alone with his father in prayer. And I want to say to you, brothers and sisters, there is no substitute for this. There are no shortcuts.

Time alone with God in prayer is vital. Your verse on the bulletin, one of my favorite verses in all the Bible, John 15. No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same shall bring forth much fruit.

But apart from me, you can do nothing unless you abide in Christ. You cannot do anything. You will not have a heart for the lost.

You will not have any kind of effective ministry apart from abiding in Christ. The question is, what does it mean to abide in Christ? To stay connected to him? How do we stay connected in our fellowship with God? It's through prayer. It's a devoted prayer life.

It's saying nothing is more important in my life than time alone with God. And I'll tell you that God has given us all enough time to seek him. There are no excuses.

There are no shortcuts. Now, it may be at six o'clock in the morning for you. It may be four o'clock.

I know a brother that got up every morning. I didn't know him personally. I knew about him every morning at two o'clock.

And he spent those two hours with God. And then he would go back to bed and catch a few hours of sleep. You do what works for you.

But here's the thing. You're not going to find time for prayer. You have to make it.

And when we really think about it, how absurd is that? God, who gave me the breath in my body, who causes my heart to beat, who gave me time in the first place. And if he wants to, he can make me have time by laying me on a sick bed. Now spend time.

That's happened to me before in ministry where you get going so busy and you're pouring out, pouring out, pouring out, and you're not spending time alone with God. And all of a sudden you're depleted. Now you get sick and you can't get up.

OK, now you're going to spend some time in prayer and fellowship with God. You don't find it. You make it.

Jesus made it. He got up early in the morning, long before daylight, and he spent this time in prayer. And watch what happens in this time of prayer.

You keep your place there and turn with me to Isaiah chapter 50. Isaiah 50. This is a prophecy about Christ.

And in Isaiah 50, verse 4, it says, The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth me morning by morning. He wakeneth my ear to hear as the learned.

The Lord God hath opened my ear and I was not rebellious, neither turned away my back. And this is, of course, speaking of Christ, but what he's saying is. He's given me a word for the weary.

Where did that word come from? When he awakened me in the morning and I first heard from him, now I have something to say. If you don't first hear from God, what do you have to offer to others? In other words, if you're not first filled up with God and his presence and his spirit in prayer, you really have nothing to offer others but flesh and flesh profits nothing. It's in that place of prayer that we are.

We are refreshed. We are filled up with God. We are equipped for the day.

We receive that word in due season. You may not even know what it is at the time, but because you spent time alone with the father, then you get up and you go about your day and you have an encounter with someone who is in need. You're overflowing.

You have something to offer. I firmly believe that all effective ministry is simply an overflow of your own personal love relationship with Christ. You're just overflowing because, you know, the father, you've spent time with the father in prayer and it's his life.

It's not our life. It's his life pouring out through us. And he pours out through us because we spent that time alone with him in prayer.

That's where we receive that that word. We heard from God first. Now we speak.

And what else happens in that quiet time of prayer? It's fellowship with God. You get to know the heart of God. You get closer to God.

The more you get to know God, the more you love him. The more you love him, the more you want to know him. Until what happens is really what our brother Dale just spoke about.

It's in that place of prayer that our eyes are open to the glory of Christ and what he did on the cross. And when you have that kind of encounter with Christ, brothers and sisters like Peter, James and John, you cannot help but speak about those things which you have seen and heard. Do you remember that in Acts chapter four, when they captured Peter, James and John and they beat them and they threatened them? They said, you are we command you never again to speak in this name of Jesus.

You know what they said? You judge for yourselves whether it's whether we should listen to God and obey, obey God or man. He said, but as for us, we cannot help but speak of those things which we have seen and heard. When you have that encounter, this is really the secret.

This is the key. When you have that encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ and you see his beauty through the eyes of faith and you see that nothing compares to knowing him. Nothing compares to hearing his voice.

Nothing compares to what he did for you on that cross. He gave his all for you. There's a fire that begins to burn in your bones and in your heart.

And you get up from prayer and you cannot help but speak of those things which you have seen and heard. That's where boldness comes from. That's where passion comes from.

Doesn't come from working it up. Doesn't come from reading a book. It comes from spending time alone with God.

And Jesus is our example. Mark chapter one, verse thirty five. He's our example.

Now, what happens after this? He spent that morning in prayer. And verse thirty six says, and Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, all men seek for thee.

In other words, everybody's looking for you. Have you ever felt like that, especially young mothers and you have children and you've got a child hanging on each leg and you're just you're busy and you try to get that quiet time alone and there's knocks on the door and everybody's looking for you. You might feel like that in ministry.

Notice what Jesus says, though, if someone said came to Alvin and said, Alvin, everybody's looking for you. Brian, everybody's looking for you. What would our natural response be? Here I am.

I'm let's go. What do they need? But because Jesus had been in prayer. It's in prayer that we receive our instructions from the father.

Notice his response. In verse thirty eight, they say, everybody's looking for you. And in verse thirty eight, he said unto them, let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth.

That doesn't make sense, does it? Everybody's looking for you, and yet Jesus says, well, let's go to the next towns. That's why I've come. You would think that he would say, well, here I am, I'll continue to minister to those who are looking for me, but he doesn't.

He goes to the next town. Why? Because he'd heard from the father and he heard from the father because he had been in prayer. So he goes to the next town.

This is so beautiful to me. He goes to the next town for one needy person. Verse thirty nine, he preached in their synagogues throughout Galilee and cast out devils, and there came a leper, one leper.

There came a leper to him, beseeching him and kneeling down to him and saying unto him, if thou will, thou can make me clean. Do you know, brothers and sisters, how many they're not crying out that perhaps verbally. But I can hear this, I can hear the cries through faith, I can hear the cries of people in Ingram and Lady Smith and in this entire area.

And the cry of their heart is, if you're willing, church, you can point me to the one who can make me clean. If you are willing, you can tell me how to get clean, how to be forgiven, how to be saved. The leper, if you're willing, you can make me clean, Lord.

What was Jesus's response? Should be our response. I am willing. I am willing.

Verse forty one, Jesus moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him and said unto him, I will. In other words, I am willing, be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed.

I am willing. Are you willing? Here's a question that we need to answer, and I'm going to speak about this later on in the message, but I'll touch on it right now. Are you willing to be one who carries the compassion of Christ? To one lost leper, one lost sinner, are you willing to carry the compassion of Christ to even one? If you're willing, Jesus will give you that compassion, if you're willing to meet with him in prayer daily, devote yourself to prayer, if you're willing for him to break your heart and give you tears for the lost.

What do you think he's going to do when you say, Lord, I'm willing and I'm seeking his face in prayer and I'm willing to carry your compassion? Do you think the Lord's going to say, well, let me think about whether or not I should give it to you? He's waiting for those who are willing. He's waiting for those who are available that he can pour out his compassion upon them. If you're willing, he's willing.

He's willing to give you compassion. Now. Without compassion, we can never have a heart for for the lost.

We can't. James chapter two, I want to look at a few scriptures here, James chapter two and verse 14. Look at this with me.

We need the compassion of Christ. James chapter two. Let me say first that whatever we may stamp with the title Christianity.

If it is absent of the compassion of Jesus Christ, it is nothing more than dead religion. True Christianity is all about love, the love of God, the love of Christ, love for God first and love for people. And whatever you call your Christianity, if it's absent of compassion for your neighbor, you're missing the mark.

You're dying in religion. A living relationship with Jesus is all about having compassion for the lost. James chapter two and verse 14.

What does it profit my brethren, though a man say he have faith and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be warmed and filled. Notwithstanding, you give them not those things which are needful to the body.

What does it profit? Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.

Yea, a man may say thou is faith and I have works. Show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well.

The devils also believe and tremble. But will thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered up Isaac, his son, on the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with works and not and and by works was faith made perfect. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.

And he was called the friend of God. You see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only. Likewise, also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead. Any so-called Christianity without the works of the compassion of Christ is a counterfeit religion. It is dead.

What good is it to say, I believe in Jesus and I follow a savior who laid down his life and shed his blood for the sins of the whole world? But I'm not even willing to feed someone who is hungry in front of me. Or pay someone's gas bill or or whatever it is, put feet to your faith. Faith without works is dead, faith without compassion for people is dead.

It's that simple. James chapter one, verse twenty seven, pure religion and undefiled before God and the father is this to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world. Pure religion, true Christianity will be exemplified in us carrying the compassion of Christ to the fatherless child.

It's taking that little boy fishing. It's inviting those children over to play. It's mowing that widow's lawn or paying a visit.

It's buying that child a pair of shoes, paying that family's bill. It's looking for practical needs that you can meet. It's very simple.

It's not rocket science and there's no formula to it. It's simply being willing to have eyes to see what God sees and you walk out the doors after having been in prayer and you say, Lord, show me someone in need in this community. And everybody has practical needs and it's sharing that love of Christ with the one, the one leper carrying the compassion of Christ, the one.

My word, we're almost out of time. I better hurry. Let's go back to Mark chapter one.

I'm going to skip over a bunch of this. Um. I just want to point out one thing here, we need the compassion of Christ, compassion comes from Jesus and he will give it to those who are willing to carry it.

You'll notice in verse forty one, Jesus moved with compassion, put it forth his hand and touched the leper. I'll never forget somebody from India was sharing that they were just ministering to the poor, the beggars, and she grabbed a poor beggar's hand. And he started crying.

She said, what's wrong? He said, it's been so long since I felt the warmth of a human hand. People are starving for the love of God. They're starving to see someone who really care, they don't care how much, you know, till they know how much you care.

This whole area here doesn't need. A new definition of Christianity, they need a new demonstration of it. They need to see people walking with Christ, they need to see Jesus in you.

We've heard this before. You're the only Bible right now that they're going to read. That's what they're reading right now.

Do they see Christ in you? Do they know that you really care? Do they feel the compassion of Christ coming from you? People know, they know, they know what's real and they know what's fake. Are you willing to go to the one, to touch the one leper, to get your hands dirty, so to speak, and to reach out with the love of Christ? I love this story I heard one time about a man who was walking along the beach and all these thousands upon thousands of starfish had washed up on the beach and they were dying because they couldn't make it back to the water. And he was going down the beach and he was just picking up one starfish after another and taking it to the water and throwing them back into the ocean.

And somebody, a passerby was watching this and he approached the man and he said, you're crazy. What are you doing? He said, well, I'm throwing these starfish back in the ocean so they won't die. He said, man, look at all of them.

There's tens of thousands. You're not making any difference. He said, it may not look like I'm making any difference to this 10,000 starfish, but as he held one starfish in his hand, he said, I sure am making a difference in this one.

And he threw it into the ocean. It can be overwhelming to think, how are we going to reach this area? I tell our fellowship all the time, your mission field is not a place. It's not.

Don't be overwhelmed by all the lost people. Your mission field is one person. Name one person and start praying for that one individual and have faith that will go to your feet and carry you to that one person.

And if you will simply meet practical needs, so many things, Thanksgiving's coming up. Do you know how many people are going to sit down at the Thanksgiving table? Not with a Thanksgiving dinner because they're all alone. Maybe they live this sinful life.

Maybe they're reaping what they sowed. What do we do, kick them while they're down? No, we go with the compassion of Christ and you either bring them a plate or you say, better, why don't you come have Thanksgiving dinner with us? I'm coming to pick you up at such and such time. You're not preaching to them yet.

God will open that door and he will know you will know when it's time to speak, but reach out with the love of Christ. Jesus, he ministered to the poor and that's where we need to begin. Just reach out with the love of Jesus.

I think my time is almost gone here, about 10 minutes. So let's let's pray. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Heavenly Father, only you can give us your heart for the lost, and I thank you for these precious people, because I see in them, Lord God, and I hear in them. A willingness. And we also hear a multitude that cry, if you are willing.

You can make me clean. I pray, Father, that all of us here today would be willing. Willing, Lord, to set aside time to make time every day to be alone in your presence and to get closer to you.

Jesus, to know you more than we do now. To love you more than we do now. I pray, God, is that we make time alone with you in prayer.

You would begin to just give us your very heart for lost souls, for people. And then, Father, give us the boldness and the courage to go forth, to be like Peter, James and John, who could not help but speak of what they've seen and heard. Help us not just to go through religious motions and say empty cliches.

Well, God bless you. Be warm and well fed. But rather, Lord, let us go way beyond that to practically meeting physical needs.

I pray, God, for your love to be shed abroad in each and every one of our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that your compassion would literally radiate through us, O God, that little children would know we care, that old men would know we care. And women, I pray for the sisters, Lord, to reach out to women, to embrace them, O God, with the love of Christ.

We thank you that you've given us the greatest news ever known to man, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Which in all of its simplicity, but greatest depth, is the power of God unto salvation. And I pray, God, that you would give us that word right there on our heart and on our tongue.

When it's time to speak, that we speak and proclaim your glorious gospel. And that every word from our mouths would throb with the love of God. Thank you, Father, for what you will do in our hearts and lives.

Thank you for your word in speaking to us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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