

# +

# THE LOOKOUT

DECEMBER 2022

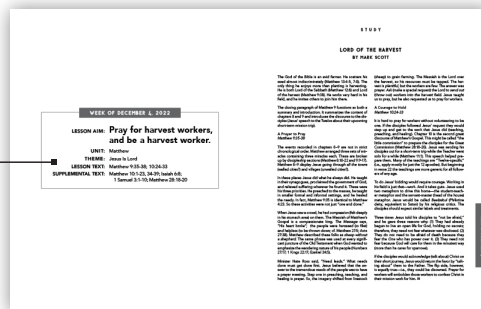
## Unit: Matthew

## Theme: Jesus Is Lord

**Overview:** Saying that “Jesus is Lord” can be difficult for someone living in a democratic republic. The paradigm of a democracy runs counter to living in a kingdom. Lordship implies that someone else is in charge. Perhaps the earliest Christian confession was “Jesus is Lord” (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Romans understood that to be a reference to a king. But Matthew’s audience used other titles to indicate the same; examples include “Christ” or “Son of God.” In this unit, students will learn from the disciples that Jesus is Lord of the harvest, they will learn from the miracles that Jesus is Lord of creation, they will learn from a parable that Jesus is Lord of judgment, and they will learn from the Magi that Jesus is Lord of all.

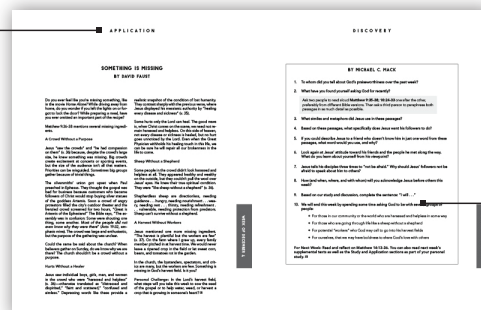
## HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

**WEEK OF DECEMBER 4, 2022**

**LESSON AIM:** **Pray for harvest workers,  
and be a harvest worker.**

**UNIT:** Matthew

**THEME:** Jesus Is Lord

**LESSON TEXT:** Matthew 9:35-38; 10:24-33

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Matthew 10:1-23, 34-39; Isaiah 6:8;  
1 Samuel 3:1-10; Matthew 28:18-20

## LORD OF THE HARVEST

BY MARK SCOTT

The God of the Bible is an avid farmer. He scatters his seed almost indiscriminately (Matthew 13:4-5, 7-8). The only thing he enjoys more than planting is harvesting. He is both Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8) and Lord of the harvest (Matthew 9:38). He works very hard in his field, and he invites others to join him there.

The closing paragraph of Matthew 9 functions as both a summary and introduction. It summarizes the content of chapters 8 and 9 and introduces the discourse to the disciples (Jesus' speech to the Twelve about their upcoming short-term mission trip).

### **A Prayer to Pray**

*Matthew 9:35-38*

The events recorded in chapters 8–9 are not in strict chronological order. Matthew arranged three sets of miracles containing three miracles each. These are broken up by discipleship sections (Matthew 8:18-22 and 9:9-17). Matthew 8–9 display Jesus going *through all the towns* (walled cities?) and *villages* (unwalled cities?).

In these places Jesus did what he always did. He taught in their synagogues, proclaimed the government of God, and relieved suffering wherever he found it. These were his three priorities. He preached to the masses, he taught in smaller formal and informal settings, and he healed the needy. In fact, Matthew 9:35 is identical to Matthew 4:23. So these activities were not just "one and done."

When Jesus saw a crowd, he had *compassion* (felt deeply in his stomach area) on them. The Messiah of Matthew's Gospel is a compassionate king. *The Message* says, "His heart broke"; the people were *harassed* (to file) and *helpless* (to be thrown down; cf. Matthew 27:5; Acts 27:38). Matthew described these folks as *sheep without a shepherd*. The same phrase was used at every significant juncture of the Old Testament when God wanted to emphasize the wandering nature of his people (Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Ezekiel 34:5).

Minister Nate Ross said, "Need leads." What needs done must get done first. Jesus believed that the answer to the tremendous needs of the people was to have a prayer meeting. Step one in preaching, teaching, and healing is prayer. So, the imagery shifted from livestock

(sheep) to grain farming. The Messiah is the Lord over the harvest, so his resources must be tapped. The harvest is *plentiful*, but the workers are *few*. The answer was prayer. Ask (make a special request) the Lord to *send out* (throw out) *workers into the harvest field*. Jesus taught us to pray, but he also requested us to pray for workers.

### **A Courage to Hold**

*Matthew 10:24-33*

It is hard to pray for workers without volunteering to be one. If the disciples followed Jesus' request they would step up and get to the work that Jesus did (teaching, preaching, and healing). Chapter 10 is the second great discourse of Matthew's Gospel. This might be called "the little commission" to prepare the disciples for the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus was sending his disciples out for a short-term trip while the Teacher went solo for a while (Matthew 11:1). This speech helped prepare them. Many of the teachings are "Twelve-specific" (i.e., apply mostly for just the 12 apostles). But beginning in verse 22 the teachings are more generic for all followers of any age.

To do Jesus' bidding would require courage. Working in his field is just that—work. And it takes guts. Jesus used two metaphors to drive this home—the student-teacher metaphor and the servant-master (head of the house) metaphor. Jesus would be called *Beelzebul* (Philistine deity, equivalent to Satan) by his religious critics. The disciples should expect similar labels and treatments.

Three times Jesus told his disciples to "not be afraid," and he gave three reasons why: (1) They had already begun to live an open life for God, holding no secrets; therefore, they need not fear whatever was disclosed. (2) They do not need to be afraid of death because they fear the *One* who has power over it. (3) They need not fear because God will care for them in the minutest way (more than he cares for sparrows).

If the disciples would *acknowledge* (talk about) Christ on their short journey, Jesus would return the favor by "talking about" them to the Father. The flip side, however, is equally true—i.e., they could be disowned. Prayer for workers will embolden those workers to confess Christ in their mission work for him. ■

## SOMETHING IS MISSING

BY DAVID FAUST

Do you ever feel like you're missing something, like in the movie *Home Alone*? While driving away from home, do you wonder if you left the lights on or forgot to lock the door? While preparing a meal, have you ever omitted an important part of the recipe?

Matthew 9:36-38 mentions several missing ingredients.

### A Crowd Without a Purpose

Jesus "saw the crowds" and "he had compassion on them" (v. 36) because, despite the crowd's large size, he knew something was missing. Big crowds create excitement at concerts or sporting events, but the size of the audience isn't all that matters. Priorities can be misguided. Sometimes big groups gather because of trivial things.

The silversmiths' union got upset when Paul preached in Ephesus. They thought the gospel was bad for business because customers who became followers of Christ would stop buying silver statues of the goddess Artemis. Soon a crowd of angry protestors filled the city's outdoor theater and the frenzied crowd screamed for two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" The Bible says, "The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. *Most of the people did not even know why they were there*" (Acts 19:32, emphasis mine). The crowd was large and enthusiastic, but the purpose of the gathering was unclear.

Could the same be said about the church? When believers gather on Sunday, do we know why we are there? The church shouldn't be a crowd without a purpose.

### Hurts Without a Healer

Jesus saw individual boys, girls, men, and women in the crowd who were "harassed and helpless" (v. 36)—otherwise translated as "distressed and dispirited," "faint and scattered," "confused and aimless." Depressing words like these provide a

realistic snapshot of the condition of lost humanity. They contrast sharply with the previous verse, where Jesus displayed his messianic authority by "healing every disease and sickness" (v. 35).

Some hurts only the Lord can heal. The good news is, when Christ comes on the scene, we need not remain harassed and helpless. On this side of heaven, not every disease or sickness is healed, but no hurt goes unnoticed by the Lord. Even when the Great Physician withholds his healing touch in this life, we can be sure he will repair all our brokenness in the life to come.

### Sheep Without a Shepherd

Some people in the crowd didn't look harassed and helpless at all. They appeared healthy and wealthy on the outside, but they couldn't pull the wool over Jesus' eyes. He knew their true spiritual condition. They were "like sheep without a shepherd" (v. 36).

Shepherdless sheep are directionless, needing guidance . . . hungry, needing nourishment . . . weary, needing rest . . . thirsty, needing refreshment . . . vulnerable, needing protection from predators. Sheep can't survive without a shepherd.

### A Harvest Without Workers

Jesus mentioned one more missing ingredient. "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (v. 37). On the farm where I grew up, every family member pitched in at harvest time. We would never leave a ripened crop in the field or let sweet corn, beans, and tomatoes rot in the garden.

In the church, the bystanders, spectators, and critics are many, but the workers are few. Something is missing in God's harvest field. Is it you?

**Personal Challenge:** In the Lord's harvest field, what steps will you take this week to sow the seed of the gospel or to help water, weed, or harvest a crop that is growing in someone's heart? **L**

## DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. To whom did you tell about God's praiseworthiness over the past week?
2. What have you found yourself asking God for recently?

Ask two people to read aloud **Matthew 9:35-38; 10:24-33** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to paraphrase both passages in as much detail as possible.

3. What similes and metaphors did Jesus use in these passages?
4. Based on these passages, what specifically does Jesus want his followers to do?
5. If you could describe Jesus to a friend who doesn't know him in just one word from these passages, what word would you use, and why?
6. Look again at Jesus' attitude toward his friends and the people he met along the way. What do you learn about yourself from his viewpoint?
7. Jesus tells his disciples three times to "not be afraid." Why should Jesus' followers not be afraid to speak about him to others?
8. How (and when, where, and with whom) will you acknowledge Jesus before others this week?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. We will end this week by spending some time asking God to be with several groups of people:
  - For those in our community or the world who are harassed and helpless in some way
  - For those who are going through life like a sheep without a shepherd
  - For potential "workers" who God may call to go into his harvest fields
  - For ourselves, that we may have boldness to share God's love with others

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **Matthew 14:13-36**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. 