

## Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry G . The Second Tour of Galilee

### 16. Jesus Calls His Disciples to Prayer in the Latter Part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #102

Base Text: MT 9.35-38 (Parallel Text: MK 6.6B)

35 <sup>MT</sup>Jesus continued to go through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness.

36 As he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were in a beaten down state and had become helpless, like sheep who do not have a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples,

*"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Therefore, I command you to pray and ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	The Towns and Villages of Galilee
Timeline	Sept or Oct. (Months 20 to 21, end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tour)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry
	G. The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tour of Galilee
Title	16. Jesus Call His Disciples to Prayer in the Latter Part of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tour

#### COMMENT:

After marveling at the unbelief of the people in Nazareth, Jesus led his band of disciples back onto the road to complete the second tour of the roughly 25 towns and villages of Galilee.

While Jesus could not do many miracles in Nazareth because of their lack of faith, this was no longer the case in the other towns of Galilee. Our text includes another reference to unspecified mass healings, as Jesus healed "every kind of sickness and disease" for the duration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour. Jesus probably healed over a thousand people on each of his tours, assuming he ministered to the physical needs of just ten people a day. Given the descriptions of the way Jesus healed many people in succession scattered throughout the gospels, this seems to be a conservative estimate.

Continued miraculous healing ministry shows us that the attitude toward Jesus was still positive among much of the crowd during the second tour. The Pharisees were inciting opposition against him with their relentless campaign to smear his name and reputation, and it was having an effect, but the many people were in need of supernatural power to heal and deliver them, so they still flocked to Jesus seeking help.

At this point in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour Jesus added a critical new command to his disciples. He directed them to pray for God to send out workers into the harvest with. The Lord already intended to send out the twelve, two by two, during

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his third and final upcoming tour of Galilee. His preparation for using them in ministry began with prayer, just as he had begun his ministry with 40 days of prayer and fasting, and had prayed prior to beginning his tours of Galilee (DJN #55)

Prayer and preaching went hand in hand in Jesus' ministry. By giving this command the Lord was teaching the apostles to follow him in a ministry style that balances prayer and proclamation. He would give the same command to pray for workers to the 70 he sent out a year later in Judea and Perea (LK 10.1-3). It as a lesson the apostles eventually learned well, for they would declare: **"We will devote ourselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word."** (Acts 6.4)

Why was Jesus so concerned that his disciples ground their ministry in prayer? There were several key reasons we should understand well. In the first place, Jesus had lived in constant heart-communion with his Father forever. Literally. The same intimate fellowship he had experienced with his Father in eternity past--before creation and his incarnation--continued to be his deepest source of joy and meaning in his earthly life as well. The consciousness of his father's presence that is prayer was his very life.

This communion with the Father meant that every outward word and deed of his life had to arise from the conviction that it was his Father's will to work through him in that particular way. Jesus adamantly refused to do anything on his own initiative. For the Trinity, everything begins, and is sustained in prayer, for each Person works in seamless unity and harmony with the Other Two in all things. So faith and prayer *had* to be the origin of everything Jesus said and did. It could be no other way. This needed to be as true of his disciples as it was true for him.

A second reason was that the disciples had just seen the powerful impact of unbelief during their days in Nazareth. They needed to learn how to minister with a robust faith, rather than a mediocre trust. Prayer was the answer for this need.

Furthermore, Jesus knew that the opposition toward him was only going to grow. That meant the apostles would face a tougher environment on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tour than they had seen Jesus handle on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour. As we will see in the coming days, Jesus would specifically train the apostles to face harsh opposition, even persecution during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tour. Prayer is crucial for overcoming hardship and opposition in ministry.

Finally, Jesus was teaching his apostles to live and minister as he did, by the power of the Spirit. His ultimate mission to reach every person in all the nations of the world with his gospel through the witness of his disciples was only possible in the power of God. It could never happen on the basis of their own human capacities. Prayer and faith were the only way for his disciples to become as full of the power of the Spirit as he was.

So the latter weeks and months of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tour of Galilee featured a clear and urgent call from Jesus to pray with him about workers for the harvest fields. Even as he directed them to pray privately, the Lord no doubt made the request for workers a central focus of intercession in his daily corporate prayer time with the twelve. This prayer focus was the means for each of the Twelve to realize that THEY were the answer to their own prayers. It prepared them to preach the gospel like nothing else.

#### APPLICATION:

God's work always begins with prayer, is sustained and empowered by prayer, and is completed with prayers of thanksgiving and praise for what he has done. On the other hand, it is sobering to think about how much one's lack of prayer and faith can limit God's work. James wrote in his letter that **"you do not have because you do not ask."** Ouch!

Some times we do not ask because we do not believe that God will truly answer our prayers. The people of Nazareth were not alone in limiting the work of Jesus through unbelief. Persistent prayer is the only answer for spiritual powerlessness and fruitlessness. This truth applies as directly to us today as it did on the day Jesus first commanded his disciples to pray for workers to join the harvest. It is when we fervently pray for the progress of God's work that find ourselves being called into it for his sake.

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*Are you praying and believing the way Jesus taught us to do?*

*What do you need to adjust in order to follow Jesus out of Nazareth, and into greater service?*