



Holistic Mission of Jesus Christ to Poor with Reference to Matthew 9:35-38

Dr Srinivasa Rao Chepa

Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences

1. Introduction

This paper looks at the Scriptures with reference to God's attitude towards the poor, the oppressed slaves, the aliens, and the widows and its message for the oppressors. Probing into the ministry of Jesus Christ, we will see how He ministered among and with the marginalized in the society for their total transformation. In doing so, we will bring out a biblical understanding of the purpose of wealth and possessions. Above all, the discussion will focus and justify the ministry to the poor and what the Good News means to them in the light of holistic ministry of Jesus with reference to Matthew 9:35-38.

1.1. The Biblical Perspective of the Poor and Oppressed

The Scriptures reveals God's deep concern for the poor and oppressed in the society. Both Old Testament and New Testament gives different accounts in this regard.

Here is a brief analysis of the etymology of the word poor in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. There are about 300 references describing the causes, existence, and consequences of poverty in the Bible. The poor are described as the downtrodden, oppressed, who plead for justice, the weak or helpless, the destitute, the needy, dependent person, and the one forcibly victimized by the oppressor.

1.1.1. The Word "Poor" in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, there are six major Hebrew terms for the word poor: *ana* (*ani, anaw, oni, onawa*), *dalal* (*dal, dalta*), *aba* (*ebyon*), *haser* (*mashor*), *sakan* (*soken, misken, miskent, meskenot*) *rush* (*rash, resh*).¹ The Hebrew word *ebyon* appears 61 times in the Hebrew Bible, and predominantly 17 times in prophetic books. It refers to those who are very poor and in a wretched condition and it implies the idea of pleading and longing (Isa.14: 30, 25:4; Amos 8:4; Isa. 32: 6-7, 41:7; Eze. 16:49; Isa.29: 14, Jer. 2: 34, 20: 13, Eze. 18:12, 22:29, Amos 4:1).² The word *dal* means poor, weak, inferior and lacking. It occurs 48 times in the Hebrew Bible and half of these appear in the prophetic and proverbial texts (Amos 5: 11; 8:6; Isa.14:30).³ The term *mashor* means want, shortage, lack, deficiency, neediness.⁴ It appears 13 times in the Hebrew Bible. The term *misken* means 'dependent', socially inferiors. ⁵ It appears four times in Ecclesiastical writings.⁶ The word *rash* implies destitute. It refers to those who are deprived of family heritage in the land, etc., (Prov. 30:8). It occurs 22 times in the Hebrew Bible mainly in the wisdom texts.⁷ The word *ani* means economically poor, oppressed, exploited and suffering. The common term in Hebrew Bible for poverty *ani* occurs 80 times.⁸ It describes economic oppression (Isa. 3: 15, Eze. 18: 12 cf. Deut. 24: 12, Eze. 22: 29, Amos 8:4), unjust treatment in legal decisions (Isa. 10:2) and victimization through deception (Isa.32:7).⁹ The Old Testament reveals full of evidences regarding the concern of God towards poor and oppressed.

¹ W.E.Vine, ed., *Vine's, Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p.180.

² Elsa Tamez, *Bible and the Oppressed* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), p.70.

³ Thomas D Hanks, 'Poor, Poverty,' in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p.406.

⁴ Jagat R.Santra, "Good News to poor in the Old Testament," in Sebastian C.H.Kim and Krickwin C. Marak,eds., *Good News to the Poor* (Delhi: ISPCK,1998), p.18.

⁵ Tamez, *Bible and the Oppressed*, p.71.

⁶ Santra, 'Good News to Poor', p.18.

⁷ <http://www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/lop22 app.pdf>. 20/08/2009

⁸ Hanks, ' Poor, Poverty,' p.407

⁹ Hanks, 'Poor, Poverty,' p.408.

2.1.2. The Word "Poor" in the New Testament

The word "poor" is used about 34 times in the New Testament. The Greek term *ptochos* is used 31 times. The word *penichros* is used in Luke 21:2 and the verb *ptochouo* once.¹⁰ The ancient Greek term *penes* is used once in 2 Corinthians 8: 9.¹¹ In the New Testament, the poor are those degraded in social status, the physically handicapped, such as the blind lame, lepers, and the deaf (Matt. 11: 4,5; 25: 34-36,41-43; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 7:22; 14:13-21; Rev. 3:17).¹²

2.2. Some Selected Readings on the Poor and Oppressed in the Bible

2.2.1. In the Pentateuch

Poverty, according to the Old Testament, is the state characterized by lack of economic resources and material goods, political and legal powerlessness and oppression.¹³ The fall affected human's vertical relationship with God, which also destroyed the horizontal relationship between fellow human beings and environment. God's intention was that everyone should have a reasonable share of his creation. However, the fallen nature of human beings resulted in greed and accumulating more than their share. Myer points that the fall resulted in patterns of domination and oppression. This in turn destroyed the dignity and potential productivity of the poor.¹⁴ Moreover, it affected the economic, political and religious systems of the world.

The Old Testament, on the other hand, declares the mighty acts of God in the history of the Israelites. The Exodus history reveals the divine grace towards the poor and oppressed and also God's judgment against the oppressors. God heard the agony of his people and remembered his covenant with their forefathers. He took a personal initiative and delivered them from their slavery (Exo. 2:23-25; 3:7-8).

Jagat R. Santra quotes C.J.H. Wright, who states that, "The status of the Israelites in the Egyptian bondage reflects the condition of poor slaves who are a class of landless people, political refugees, displaced people and outlaws."¹⁵ It also tells us how a group of shepherds much against their will were forced to involve in construction work and build store-cities of Pithom and Ramases for Pharaoh (Exo. 1: 11). As it is true even today, skilled laborers became unskilled laborers in the urban centers. They were exploited in the urban centers of Egypt, by the princes and rulers of the nation. Myers observes that spiritually, the story of Exodus speaks of the God who reveals himself and demonstrates his power for Israel to believe and be faithful to him (Exo.3:7-10). Looking from a socio-political perspective, it is moving from slavery to freedom, from injustice to a just society, from dependence to independence. Economically, it is a move from oppression in a foreign land to freedom in their land. Psychologically, it is about people losing their slave consciousness and gaining an inner understanding that, with God's help, they could be a people and become a nation.¹⁶

Interestingly, the exodus story also reveals how God transformed them into a new community that was to show concern towards their poor and marginalized. God intended to form a God-centered political, economic, and religious community that began with the pain of oppression of the people.¹⁷ James H. Cone points that "God's revelation is inseparable from the social and political affairs of Israel."¹⁸ The Prophetic writings affirm that the Exodus event is a manifestation of God's saving power, a confirmation for the people of responsibility and a sign of justice and righteousness.¹⁹ (Amos 2: 10, 3: 1-2, 9:7; Mic. 6:4-5; Jer. 7:22-23). God is above all powers, and he obligates his people to treat the weak fairly as Yahweh has treated them in their slavery (Exo.22: 21, 22:23-24).

2.2.2. In Wisdom Literature

The Wisdom books also reinforce God's concern for the poor and oppressed in the society. Proverbs asserts that, "He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he

who is kind to the needy honors him" (Prov. 14:31;cf 17: 5). Jagat refers to T P Townsend, who states, "This concept is unique to Israelite wisdom. It is never a concern in the ethical codes of any of the Ancient West Asian nations. It is in Israel's essential teaching alone."²⁰

Moreover, Proverbs also speaks of the cause and consequence of poverty and highlights our obligation towards the poor. For instance, it describes laziness as an inevitable cause of poverty (Pro. 10:4; 20:4; 13:4; 20: 12; 24:33). Drunkenness and wickedness are identified as causes of poverty (Pro.6: 6-11;

¹⁰ Jeyaseelan Kanagaraj, 'Good News to the poor in the New Testament,' in Sebastian C.H. Kim and Krickwin C. Mark, eds., *Good News to the Poor* (Delhi: ISPCCK, 1998), p. 41.

¹¹ Hanks, 'Poor, Poverty,' p.415.

¹² Kanagaraj, 'Good News to the Poor,' p.41.

¹³ Hanks, 'Poor, Poverty,' p.402.

¹⁴ Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), p.29.

¹⁵ Santra, 'Good News to Poor,' p.21.

¹⁶ Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, pp.30.31.

¹⁷ Robert, C. Linthicum, *City of God or City of Satan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), p.83.

¹⁸ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), p.57.

¹⁹ D Jebaraj, 'Exodus: A Paradigm of Salvation and Liberation,' in Bruce I. Nicholls and Beulah R Wood, (eds.), *Sharing the Good News with the Poor* (Bangalore: TBT, 1996), p.33.

²⁰ Santra, 'Good News to the Poor,' p.23.

1:15; 14:23; 23: 21; 28: 19; 13:18; 21:5; 13: 2). In Job, there are 42 references for the word 'poor' and its related terms including poverty.²¹ Job, on the whole, emphasizes on the injustice of poverty and our duty to the poor (Job 24:3-12). The book of Ecclesiastics focuses on the poverty of people caused by injustice (Ecc. 5:8; 4: 1).²² Wisdom literature emphatically elucidates that poverty is caused by one's personal choice and is also a result of oppression.

2.2.3. In the Prophetical Writings

Prior to their conquest, the Israelites who followed a nomadic and semi Nomadic way of life did not have any great distinction between the rich and the poor. Moreover, they had more or less equal rights and status as defenders of the community. The new economic developments, after their settlement, created new class systems which resulted in social distinctions between the rich and the poor.²³ In other words, only the elite and rulers had civil rights and privileges in all aspects and the poor were totally neglected. Jerusalem was the capital city and the centre for Jewish faith. Moreover, it was a gathering place for the religious, political, and economic systems of the nation.²⁴

Interestingly, it witnessed a wide spectrum of sin. The sin was not simply the accumulation of the wrongdoing of Jerusalem's individuals. It was also corporate, systematic, and demonic sin, permeating every structure and aspect of city Life.²⁵

Premkumar refers to Scott, who comments on the wealth and power around the urban Centres particularly capitals, thus:

Once a people loses its organic relationship with its means of subsistence. Once individual wealth and power become the accepted goal of endeavor within the community poverty, injustice and social strife have come to stay.. with the establishment of court... there began a concentration of wealth drained-off from the economic surplus of the community ... vast quantities of food, goods and services were now taken for the upkeep of the royal establishment and army ... while the conscript labor which build chariot cities and embellished Jerusalem, left crops and herds intended. The imposing of great new quantities of Gold and silver. ... forced prices upward in sudden inflation. Men were compelled to mortgage their lands, their persons or their children to pay the exaction demanded. The interest was usurious and of many free Israelites lost their land and became slaves, while those who had an initial advantage amassed land and money.²⁶

In other words, the formation of the cities and towns brought about distinctions and widened the gap between the rich and the poor, the 'haves' and 'have nots', and the powerful and powerless. God had given political, economic and religious systems to enable humanity to structure their life together. (Deut. 6:4-19; 6:4-6, 6: 14-16). Especially, the religious system was to enable people to have a vital relationship with God rather than follow any other forms of gods such as power, prestige and possessions (Deut. 6:6-9, 6: 17-19). Unfortunately, the religious leaders who were assigned to lead the people into God's way became the controllers of people (Eze.22:26).²⁷

The pre-exilic prophets pleaded for a society where justice, equity and peace would prevail at all levels (Isa.1:17; Hos. 10:12; Amos 5:24). They have insisted that even the weak, the helpless, and the poor-fatherless, the widow, the different strangers have rights.²⁸ The oppressors of the poor were urban based officials such as, the royal administrators (Isa. 1:23, 3: 14), elders (Isa.3: 14), judges and rulers (Isa. 10:1-3), landlords (Isa. 5:8-10, 7 :23, 10: 1-3), the rich merchants and money lenders (Amos 8:6), religious leaders (Amos 2:8, 4:4,5, 5:5,21-23), cows of Bashan (Amos 4: I), wicked (Ps. 37: 14), murders (Job 24: 14), the people of the land (Eze.37: 14), and wealthy merchants (Jer.5:27,28).

The prophets condemned the false religious practices of the people. Robinson states that, Religion without Justice is like salt without savior which is good for nothing.²⁹ God was not pleased with the Israelites' religious practices, because they were seeking their own pleasure and oppressed the workers of the city (Isaiah 58:3). True worship other than fasting and praying included freeing the oppressed and slaves and feeding the hungry and needy and accommodating the homeless and showing mercy towards those who are in need (Is. 58:6-7). Paget-Wilkes refers to Miranda, who states that,

"The prophets do not just suggest reordering Israel's worship between worship and the practical outworking of religion. Rather he suggests that their pleas are much more radical. They claim that only by achieving justice, peace and righteousness will true worship of God ever be achieved. Only by working for complete justice and perfection will. God's followers ever are able to worship and adore him."³⁰ A.I. Maxey refers to Jack P. Lewis, who states that, "Worship and morality cannot be divorced from each other. They are two sides of the same coin".³¹ Thus, the prophets, the spokes persons of God, demanded justice from rulers, equality in economics and true spirituality of the city (I Kings 21: 1-29).

²¹ Good News to the Poor, pp.23-24.

²² Good News to the Poor, p.25.

²³ Rajanllgraham Daniel Premkumar, The Preferential Option of the Poor in Prophetical Literature of Israel socio-political Context of the Bible (Serampore: D.Th. Dissertation, 1996), p.80.

²⁴ Linthicum, *City of God*, p.115.

²⁵ *City of God*, p.116 .

²⁶ Preamkumar, The Preferential Option, p.80.

²⁷ Robert, C. Linthicum, *Empowering the Poor* (Monrovia: MARC, 199 J), p.12.

²⁸ Gnana Robinson, 'The New Economic order in the Light of the message of the Pre-Exilic Prophets,' *Bible Bhashyam* xxii/4 (1996) 242.

²⁹ Gnana Robinson, p.243.

³⁰ Michael Paget-Wilkes, *Poverty, Revolution and the Church* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1981), p.71 .

³¹ AI Maxey, 'The Minor Prophets,' <http://www.zianel.com/maxey/Prophet .htm>. 20/12/2012.

2.2.4. In the New Testament

In the first century, among the people of Palestine, there existed a relatively small wealthy class and a larger poor. The rich were usually the wealthy high-priestly class or the Herodian family and their retinue. The wealthy people were the remnants of the older Jewish aristocracy and also individuals who had become rich through trade, tax, and farming.³² The urban poor in the Roman Empire were compelled to struggle for their existence. They were unskilled laborers picking up odd jobs as porters at the harbor, working on a low pay on farms and vineyards, as sailors on ships, and as attendants at the bath. Most of the slaves lived and worked as domestic servants in the larger cities.³³ The parable of Jesus in Mathew's gospel describes the conditions of the unskilled laborers in the urban areas. The urban poor were waiting patiently in the market place for someone to call them for work (Matt. 20:2-9). The Jewish pilgrims considered giving alms particularly in Jerusalem, the Temple City, as meritorious. Their generosity attracted large crowds of beggars, who were mostly sick, blind, dumb, lepers and destitute. These marginalized lived pathetically in Jerusalem without hope, and also socially and religiously disliked by others (Acts 3:2-3, 10).³⁴ The towns and cities were over crowded with the marginalized, who were oppressed sociologically, economically, religiously and mentally by others in the society. Both the Old and New Testament not only reveal God's concern for the urban poor but also encourage and substantiate our ministry among the urban poor.

2.4.1. Jesus and the Poor

The ministry of Jesus seems to be closely connected with the poor and the marginalized in the society. The Apostle Paul writes, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Jesus' public ministry began in the Nazareth synagogue with the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

(Lk. 4: 18-19; cf. Isa. 61:1-2).

J. Jeyaseelan Kanagaraj refers to G M Soarers- Prabhu who opines that, the reason for the omission of the broken-hearted from Isaiah is to prevent the spiritual explanation of the text. Thus when Luke's speaks of 'setting the oppressed free' he strongly emphasizes the social aspect of Jesus' ministry.³⁵ Joel B. Green builds the argument further. He opines that for Luke the concept of release signifies wholeness. It is freedom from diabolic and social chains and acceptance.³⁶ As John Nolland suggests, the release includes spiritual restoration, moral transformation, rescue from demonic oppression, and release from illness and disability.³⁷ From the above discussion, we can conclude that liberation as seen in Jesus' ministry included release from social oppression and spiritual bondage. In other words, 'release' needs to be understood from a holistic perspective.

The theme of good news to the poor which is mentioned in Luke 4: 18-20, appears quite often. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to inquire about Jesus, he replied, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them" (Lk. 7:22). Jesus' ministry was significantly aimed at freeing and accepting the oppressed. However, it implies the total transformation of the individual as well as the society. Jesus released people from various forms of bondage, oppression, physical inabilities, the religious condemnation and demon possession.³⁸ This implies that His good news to the poor goes beyond physical healing, to the acceptance of the political and religious outcaste such as tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. In the Jewish tradition, women were not allowed to appear in public and get along with men, because of their social status. However, Jesus included and considered them as a part of the society. He said, "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did not do for me" (Matt. 25:31-46). More frightening still, Jesus connected salvation with our response to the destitute. "For the reality of saving faith is exhibited in serving love. Those who are persistently indifferent to the plight of the needy, and so to Christ in them, will be irretrievably lost".³⁹ Jesus warned that all will be judged based on their deeds. Those concerned for the poor and oppressed will be rewarded (Matt. 25:34-40). The other group - those who did not use their possession rightly- will be punished (Matt. 25:41-46). However, the ministry of Jesus cannot be exclusively labeled as a ministry to the poor and marginalized. It extended to every strata of the society, including the rich. He accepted the invitation of the Pharisee (Lk. 11:37), healed the synagogue leader's daughter (Lk. 8:41), and the son of the centurion (Matt. 8:5). Yet without a shadow of doubt. We could say Jesus was well aware of the conditions of the poor and reached out to them in a special way. He was willing, against the status quo, to identify himself with the poor. He strongly raised his voice for the neglected in the society and sharply condemned those who made the lives of the poor miserable and on many occasions encouraged the rich to sell their possessions and give to the

³² D. H. Davids, 'Rich and Poor,' in Joel B. Green, Scott Mc Knight I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Illinois: IVP, J 992), p.701.

³³ Takatemjen Ao, " *The Rich and Poor in the Parables of Luke: A Study on Luke's Social Concern* (Bangalore, UTC: D. Th. Dissertation, 1994), p.56.

³⁴ Walter E Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), p. 44.

³⁵ Kanagaraj, 'Good News to the Poor,' p.42.

³⁶ Joel B. Green, *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), p.79.

³⁷ John Nolland, 'Luke 1-9:20,' in David A Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, eds., *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 35a (Dallas: Word Books Publishers, 1989), p.202.

³⁸ R Alan Culpepper, "Luke" in Leander E Keck, ed., *The Interpreters Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), p.106.

³⁹ Scott, Bessenecker, 'Why Should Christians Care About the Poor?' [http:// www.urbana.org/articles.cfm?RecordID=308,25/08/2009](http://www.urbana.org/articles.cfm?RecordID=308,25/08/2009).

poor. Good News is a significant theme in Jesus' ministry. The good news highlights deliverance and salvation but targets the poor and the oppressed, the despised and the alienated. On the other hand, it is wrong to assume that the good news was intended for only one group of people, as some may suggest. It included the rich and the poor, the sinner and the religious leader, male and female.

2.2. 4.2. *In the Early Church*

The early church reiterated the Old Testament (Deut. 15:4) and Jesus' teachings about caring for the poor, oppressed, widows and aliens. The early church shared everything as common (Acts 4:32). Many sold their property and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:36-37), which was used for the welfare of the needy in the church. The church collected funds for the minority widows in the church. Thus, "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought them and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need" (Acts 4:34-35) Ronald J. Sider refers to the Christian philosopher Aristides, who painted the picture of economic sharing in the early church thus:

They walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them, and they love one another. They despise not the widow, and grieve not the orphan. He that hath distributed liberally to him that hath not If they see a stranger, they bring him under their roof, and rejoice over him, as it were their own brother: for they call themselves brethren, not after the flesh, but after the spirit and in God; but when of their poor passes away from the world, and any of them see him, he provides for his burial according to his ability; and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs, and if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him. And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and they have not an abundance of necessaries, they fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with their necessary food"⁴⁰

The believers of the Antioch church shared their resources according to their ability to The brethren who lived in Judea (Acts 11 :29). Julio de Santa Ana refers to St.John Chrysostom, who rightly points out in his commentary on Acts 4:32-35, charity makes you see another self in your neighbor, and teaches you to rejoice in his goods as in your own, to tolerate his defects as your own. Charity makes one body of all, and of their souls, in which the Holy Spirit dwells. And thus the Spirit of peace does not rest on the separated, but on those whose souls are united. Charity makes what each owns the property of all, as is shown in the book of Acts.⁴¹

The Apostle Paul also helped the poor in Jerusalem (Gal. 2: 10; cf. Rom. 15:22-28). In Ephesus, Paul worked not only for self support but also to supply the needs of his companions and to help the weak (Acts 20:34-35). Roger S. Greenway rightly observes that in Paul's theology and mission strategy, proclamation and compassion went together.⁴² Paul often emphasized the responsibility of every believer in helping fellow Christians in their time of need (Gal.6: 9, 10). He also condemned the inequality shown between the rich and the poor in the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11). M. J. Joseph quotes from Lima's documents on Eucharist, "The Eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life."⁴³ (I Cor. 2:20-22; Gal 3:28).

The writing of James focuses on the poor and those of low social standing who are easily exploited and persecuted.⁴⁴ He states that the Christian should respect the poor and behave justly towards them. (James 1:27; 2: 1-13).

The early church insisted unity among the believers. Along with their preaching on the repentance and forgiveness of Christ they emphasized on love, sharing and serving one another (Acts 2:41-47). The Christian Church was intended to be centers of a living faith, where the fruits of justice, equality, and mercy could be seen.

2. 3. *The Holistic Mission of Jesus with reference to Matthew 9:35- 38*

The European mission scholar, Johannes Verkuyl, says the following about the New Testament. "From the beginning to the end , the New Testament is a book of mission. The gospels are, as it were, live recordings of missionary preaching and instruments of mission work."⁴⁵ All four Gospels were written when the church was actively engaged in missions. Each Gospel tells the story of Jesus to a specific audience. Matthew was written for Jews, to teach them about Jesus and make them support missions.⁴⁶ The gospel of Matthew reflects an important and distinct sub-paradigm of the early church's interpretation and experience of mission. Matthew gospel is essentially a missionary text. It was primarily because of his missionary vision that Matthew set out to write his gospel, not to compose a " life of Jesus" but to provide guidance to a community in crisis on how it should understand its calling and mission.⁴⁷ Matthew writes his gospel to a community cut off from its roots, its attachment to Judaism exposed to the harshest test possible, divided in

⁴⁰ Sider, *Rich Christians*, p.97.

⁴¹ Santa Ana, Good News to the poor, p. 41.

⁴²Roger S. Greenway, "Antioch: A Biblical Model of Urban Church Development," in Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma, eds., *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), p.62.

⁴³ M. J. Joseph, "Paul's understanding of 'Economics' in Social Relations," *Bible Bhashyam* xxii/4 (1996):194.

⁴⁴ Santa Ana, *Good News to the Poor*, p.48.

⁴⁵Johannes,Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology* (Michigan:Wm.B.EerdmansPublishing Company,1978). P.101.

⁴⁶ Roger S. Greenway, *Go and Make Disciples* (Secunderabad: OM Books, 1999),p.48.

⁴⁷ David, J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Bangalore: CFCC, 2006), P.71.

itself as to what its priorities should be, groping for direction in the face of previously unknown problems. And his primary concern is not simply to help his people cope with the pressures they confront, but to assist them in developing a missionary ethos that will match the challenges of a new epoch. He does this in an exemplary fashion by prolonging the logic of Jesus' ministry into the historical circumstances he is facing. Through out, then, Matthew's use of the Old Testament is not just polemical- to counter rabbinic claims to the Old Testament- but deeply pastoral and missionary- pastoral, in that he wishes to convey self-confidence to a community facing a crisis of identity; missionary, in that he wishes to embolden the community members toward seeing opportunities for witness and service around them.⁴⁸

According to Luke Timothy Johnson, Four of the structural elements deserve mention. First, Matthew uses stereotyped *summary transitions* between discourse material and narrative 'when Jesus had finished these words ...' (7:28-29; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Second, Matthew uses two *temporal transitions* which Mark stages in Jesus ministry: in 4:17, "from that time, Jesus began to preach.....", and 16:21, "from that time, Jesus began to show his disciples...". Third, Matthew introduces many of his direct quotations from Scripture with stereotyped formula "this was to fulfill what was spoken..." (1:22; 2:5,15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:4,35; 21:4; 27:9). These are conveniently called formula *citations*, and they offer an authorial commentary on the narrative. Fourth, Matthew also put materials within literary brackets, using the technique called *inclusio* the effect is less dramatic than in Mark, but provides the reader with important clues for reading the gospel.⁴⁹

2.3.1. 1.The Text - Matthew 9:35-38 (NIV)

35. Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

36. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

2.3.1.2. The structure of the passage

This passage is Matthean composition, made up mainly out of Marcan material. Verse .35 is from Mark 6:6, and he went about among the villages teaching; verse.36 is a repetition of Matthew 4:23. Verse .36 is from Mark 6:34. Verse 37-38 is parallel to Luke 10:2, and may have been taken from another source.⁵⁰

Matthew 4:23 marks the beginning of the second main section of the gospel. This verse finds a close parallel in 9:35, for both speak of Jesus' itinerary and "his teaching in their synagogue, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness." The first use of this formula highlights Jesus' growing fame, however, and thus prepares for reports of Jesus' teaching. (Ch.5-7) and powerful deeds (Ch.8-9). The second comes after accounts of Jesus' ministry of preaching and healing and thus stresses the need for assistance in the "harvest".⁵¹

Matthew summarizes the nature of Jesus' ministry throughout Galilee with three verbs- teach, preach, and heal. The content of Jesus ministry, given here as "the good news of the kingdom," was communicated already in the same way at the close of previous section. These verses provide retrospection and anticipation as a transition to Chapter.10. The passage constitute the framework surrounding the presentation of Jesus as the Messiah in word and deed and at the same time the passage lays the ground work for the mission of disciples.⁵² These verses summarize Chapters 8-9 and 4:23-25 to underline Jesus carrying out his God- given commission (1:21-23) among the marginal. They anticipate, as a whole this section is peculiar to Matthew. Some expressions about Jesus going about preaching are paralleled in Mark and Luke but in different contexts. Here Matthew is giving a summary of a good deal of Jesus' activity. verse.35 is very similar to 4:23. Here Jesus replaces the pronoun "he" to recall his mission and all the cities and villages replaces in Galilee and among the people is omitted. It is the summary of Jesus' three fold ministry of teaching, preaching and healing.

2.3.1.3. The Historical Context

It was about January A.D.29 When Jesus and his disciples left Capernaum for his third preaching tour. They went to Nazareth, and on Sabbath he taught in the synagogue. Leaving Nazareth Jesus went about all the cities and villages of Galilee teaching in their synagogue and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manners of disease.⁵³ The verb went around is in the imperfect, pointing to a continuing process, while the combination of the cities and villages, reinforced as it is by all, indicates a comprehensive activity. This is what Jesus kept doing. Matthew does not say explicitly that this tour took place in Galilee, but this is to be understood.⁵⁴ During a long tour of preaching and healing in the towns and villages of Galilee, Jesus has become deeply moved by the spiritual condition of the people. They are confused and helpless with no one to look to as their leader. But the very

⁴⁸ David. J. Bosch, p.73.

⁴⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of The New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999),p.188.

⁵⁰ J.C. Fenton, *Saint Matthew*, p.150.

⁵¹ Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B.Green, Marianne Meye Thompson, eds., *Introducing New Testament; Its Literature and Theology*.(Michigan: Wm. B.Eerdmans Publishing Company,2001), p.99

⁵² Edward, Schweizer, *Good News According to Matthew* (London: SCK, 1975), p.233.

⁵³ Volmer Philip, *The modern student's life of Christ* (New Jersey: Flaming H.Revell Company, 1912), p.142.

⁵⁴ Morris Leon, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p.238.

extremity of their helpless condition and need, Jesus seems to imply, may render them more receptive of the gospel of the Kingdom. And Jesus demanded the preparation and willingness of the disciples to reach these people with the same motive and method of Jesus' ministry.

2.3.2. The Holistic Ministry of Jesus

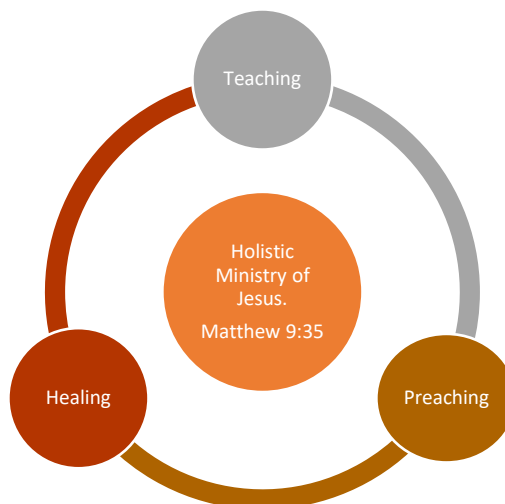


Figure.1. Holistic Ministry of Jesus according to Matthew 9:35

Matthew has a threefold description of Jesus' ministry: teaching, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing. And this passage offers three images of Jesus. The first is of him wandering about cities and villages, carrying out his ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing. The second of him seeking the crowds and feeling compassion of them. The third of him speaking to his disciples, explaining to them the situation and what they must do. The three images become increasingly contracted. Passage go from Jesus wandering about cities and villages, to Jesus seeing the crowds, to Jesus speaking to his disciples. The tasks that the twelve are to perform are rooted in Jesus compassion for the multitude and result from the need for the ministry of teaching, preaching and healing to be carried out by more than one individual.⁵⁵ Jesus Christ preparing the disciples for the great task of the ministry ahead of them by his way of mission.

2.3.2.1. Jesus as a Teacher

In all four Gospels Jesus is addressed as *didaskalos* for Matthew, Jesus messiah reveals God's will. Jesus Messiah teaches and reveals God's will in his public ministry, but his teaching and preaching are largely ignored. Jesus' most prominent activity in Gospel of Matthew is teaching. As son of God, he knows the will of the father in a unique way, and can reveal it to others.⁵⁶ The very structure of Matthew, punctuated as it is by major discourses (nine chapters), leads the reader to think of Jesus as a great teacher, a special rabbi, a revealer of wisdom. Morgan G.Campbell suggests, Jesus teaching consisted of interpretation of the Scriptures and economy. Jesus read Old Testament and perfectly familiar words, giving them new life and meaning, teaching their deepest intention⁵⁷. In Matthew *didaskolos* is never used by the disciples to address Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus does describe himself as teacher (10:24,25; 23:8; 26:18), and his ministry, according to Matthew, revolves around teaching God's will as revealed in the new age.

The style of Jesus' teaching was colorful and picturesque, and with many figures of speech. Jesus often created epigrammatic sayings not easily forgotten, and delighted in which usually fail to come through in translation. He used allegories. Allegories are different from parables. In parable there is a central truth, but in allegory every detail is important. Jesus used stories and pictures from the everyday world around him.⁵⁸ Jesus used humor, exaggeration, paradox, repetition, poetry, and symbolic actions. Jesus used every means at his disposal to teach and to teach them in such way that they would remember what he had taught⁵⁹. The teachings of Jesus are one of the major part of Jesus life to reveal God's concern and compassion to the oppressed and poor.

2.3.2.2. Jesus as a Preacher

The word Gospel is the noun form *euangelizo*, the message of "goodnews", which is usually the object of the verb *kerusso*, "to preach".⁶⁰ It used 32 times in the gospels, but about half of these are parallel occurrences within the synoptic Gospels. For the most part "proclaim" is used in conjunction with

⁵⁵ Dale C.Allison, JR, *Matthew : A Shorter Commentary* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004),p.145.

⁵⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of The New Testament*, p.195.

⁵⁷ Morgan G.Campbell, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (New Jersey: Fleming H.Revell Company, nd), p.99.

⁵⁸ Margaret Baxter, *Jesus Christ: His Life and His Church* (New Delhi: ISPCCK, 1993),p.30.

⁵⁹ Margaret Baxter, *Jesus Christ: His Life and His Church*, p.42.

⁶⁰ G.Friedrich, " *εὐαγγελίζομαι*," *TDNT* II:707.

its object, the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁶¹ The gospel in the New Testament is used in particular of the good news of the Kingdom of God.⁶² The basic meaning is to herald a message, to make a public announcement for everyone to hear. The general usage of these terms appears to be consistent with their etymology: the *eu-* Prefix meaning “well, good” and *angelo*, meaning “to proclaim news”.⁶³ Matthew always specifies the noun Gospel with “of Kingdom”, except in 26:13. Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 are summaries of Jesus’ ministry. The preaching of the gospel is collocated with the kingdom in both the Synoptic.⁶⁴

According to the four evangelists the proclamation of the kingdom of God was central to the ministry of Jesus Christ. According to the Gospels, both John the Baptist and Jesus initiated their ministries with reference to the imminence of the kingdom of God without defining its meaning for their audiences. It can be assumed that this concept was well known within first century Judaism.⁶⁵ The Synoptic Gospels record a number of summaries of Jesus message into which are incorporated references to his Shortly after Jesus baptism, Jesus entered upon a ministry of proclaiming the kingdom of God. Mark describes the initiation of this ministry with words, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God.”⁶⁶ Matthew summarizes Jesus’ ministry with the words, “He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom...”⁶⁷ And the important feature of Matthew’s Christology is that Jesus as “inaugurator of the kingdom.”⁶⁸

It is now generally agreed that it means not so much a domain, as a reign; not so much an area over which the king reigns, as the activity of reigning.⁶⁹ It is therefore, a dynamic concept, a view which is in complete agreement with Hebrew usage.

(Ps. 145:11,13; 103:19). One of Jesus’ tasks is to preach the gospel of the kingdom, a message requiring repentance and obedience to God’s will.⁷⁰ Although Judaism expected an eschatological kingdom would break into the present except to bring the present to an end. The fact that Jesus taught men to expect a kingdom in the present while the existing situation continued introduced a new element into current expectations.⁷¹ According to G.E.Ladd, the most distinctive fact in Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom was its present in breaking in history in his own person and mission. We should not be surprised to find kingdom of God used of a new realm of redemptive blessing into which men enter by receiving Jesus’ message about the Kingdom of God.⁷² The kingdom of God is dynamic rule of God active in Jesus; it is also a present realm of blessing into which men enter who receive Jesus. Jesus preaching about the kingdom was not just about the future kingdom, in its millennial and eternal states, but about His present spiritual kingdom, into which a person is born by forgiving, transforming grace the moment he trusts Jesus as son of God. Finally, according to B.Witherington, the entire message of the Bible is the kingdom of God. It is the synonym for salvation, in its broadest sense, and the people of God are called to live under his rule and concomitant hope of the coming kingdom of God.⁷³ By above discussion, Jesus’ preaching of kingdom of God is nothing more but about the salvation of God to the people through Jesus Christ.

2.3.2.3. Jesus as a Healer

According to all the Gospels, Jesus devoted a substantial portion of his ministry to performing miracles of healing for a wide variety of people. The healings sometimes occurred in response to faith and sometimes instill faith and they demonstrated Jesus’ compassion and his concern to break down the physical suffering. Above all, the healings supported his teaching that the kingdom of God was arriving with his ministry.⁷⁴

Matthew’ largest group of healing miracles occurs in 8-9 chapters. Matthew presents Jesus as one mighty in deed. For Matthew, Jesus is the promised Jewish Messiah, and several of those whom Jesus heals confess him as such.⁷⁵ Several other who are healed further acknowledged him as Lord⁷⁶ The healings fulfill the Old Testament scriptures.⁷⁷ Here in his summary statement, Matthew refers to the role of Jesus healing with distinct emphasis. The summary consistently teaches that “Jesus healing with his preaching and teaching to give both aspects of ministry equal weight.”⁷⁸ And it is said that, “Jesus’ ministry of teaching and preaching were verified as divine and true by the display of supernatural power in his ministry of miracles, manifested

⁶¹ Walter A.Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (England: Baker Book house, 1966),p.626.

⁶² *Dictionary of the Jesus and the Gospels*, p.283.

⁶³ Joel B.Green, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p.282

⁶⁴ Mark. 1:14-15; Matthew.4:23; 9:35; Luke.4:43; 8:1; 16:16

⁶⁵ David J. Atkinson, ed., “Kingdom of God”, in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, p.530

⁶⁶ *Mark.1:14ff*

⁶⁷ Matthew. 4:23 ;9:35f.

⁶⁸ *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 534.

⁶⁹ S.Alen, “Reign” in the kingdom of God in the Gospels’, *NTS* 8,1962, p.215.

⁷⁰ *Dictionary of the Jesus and the Gospels*, p.534.

⁷¹ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, p.412-413.

⁷² G.E.Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p.70.

⁷³ B.Witherington, *Jesus, Paul and the end of the world: A Comparative Study of New Testament Eschatology* (Downers Grove:IVP, 1992),p.60.

⁷⁴ Joel B.Green, ed., *Dictionary of the Jesus and the Gospels*, p.299.

⁷⁵ Matt.9:27-31; 20:29-34.

⁷⁶ Matt.8:2; 15:22; 17:15.

⁷⁷ Matt.11:45; cf. Isaiah 61:1; 35:6

⁷⁸ *Dictionary of the Jesus and the Gospels*, p.303

especially through healing.⁷⁹ The teaching, preaching and the healing demonstrate the three fold activity of Jesus' ministry on the earth. Further researcher views the motivation behind the three fold ministry of Jesus.

2.4. The Motivation for the Mission of Jesus

Jesus having travelled through cities and villages, teaching, preaching, and healing every diseases and Jesus knows the condition of the multitudes as they are lost. Jesus response to this sad fact is neither anger nor resignation. Rather is it compassion and action. He sees the people as though they were sheep without a shepherd, as victims, as harassed and cast down; and in accordance with his messianic mission, he seek to help them to have a abundant life. Compassion could be seen in His entire mission⁸⁰

2.4.1. The Compassion for the Helpless and Oppressed

The Gospel of Matthew repeatedly tells that when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion.⁸¹ It looks like references to a specific occasion, but if so, Matthew does not say when or where. The main thing is that Jesus had compassion.⁸² The word Compassion (*splanchnizomai*) means to be moved as to one's inwards (*splanchna*), to be moved with compassion, to yearn with compassion, is frequently recorded of Christ towards the multitude and towards individual sufferers. (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 8:27; 20:34.⁸³ Jesus' mission results from compassion.⁸⁴

To have compassion derives from "entrails," "bowels," or "guts," the location of merciful, loving action.⁸⁵ *Esplanchnisthe* means, 'he was moved in his guts' and he was stirred deep down inside. Very literally the declaration is that "His bowels were moved within him". For the Greek, the bowels were regarded as the seat of violent passion, such as anger or love. For the Hebrew, they were regarded as the seat of the tender affections.⁸⁶

In the New Testament this verb is always used of Jesus or by Jesus in his parables; it is particularly associated with him.⁸⁷ H. Koster comments, "Outside the original parables of Jesus there is no instance of the word being used of men. It is always used to describe the attitude of Jesus and it characterizes the divine nature of His acts."⁸⁸ Matthew uses this term as a Messianic characterization of Jesus rather than the mere depiction of an emotion.⁸⁹ It is not purely human pity, but divine compassion for troubled people.

The word translated compassion is actually a much stronger word. It implies pain of love. He saw the people of his land as shepherdless people. They were as if wolves had harried them and left them bleeding, because they had none to lead or protect them. The compassion of Jesus was not shallow or sentimental. The compassion of Jesus was not a mere palliative. For compassion is more than "feeling with": If it were only that it might easily add to the woe. Jesus felt the pain, and yet could lift a banner above it. The compassion of Jesus was not costless.⁹⁰ It is the empathy of Jesus rather the sympathy which moved Jesus to action.

2.4.2. The Object of Christ's Compassion

Jesus went around the villages and cities to teach, preach and to heal all the sickness. In overall picture the main object of Jesus Christ is the lost and oppressed crowd. While Jesus was an object of curiosity to the crowds, they were an object of compassion to Him.⁹¹ Multitudes were in distressed and scattered as sheep having no shepherd that moved Jesus to compassion. Crowds suffering from violence and in a pitiful sight. It represents so much of sorrow, need, pain and sin.⁹² Harassed can mean flaying or skinning, violence and plunder.⁹³ Helpless can mean a throwing down and a laying down, often in violent contexts, including abandonment, imperial violence (Exo.1:22), war and death (Josh. 8:29; 10:27; Judg. 4:22; 9:53), and divine destructive judgment on unfaithfulness (Isa.22:18)⁹⁴ Jesus sees people who are oppressed, down trodden, beaten, and crushed. The historical and literary contexts indicate Rome and religious elites as those who inflict social, economic, political, and religious abuse with misrule.⁹⁵ Hobbs states that, "the people were tired of the burdens placed upon them by the Pharisees, but were given by them no power to bear them."⁹⁶ The religious leaders are always

⁷⁹ John Mac Arthur, *The Mac Arthur New Testament Commentary on Matthew* (Chicago: Moody Publications, 1987), p.106.

⁸⁰ Roger S.Greenway, *Go and Make Disciples*, p.49.

⁸¹ Matt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34.

⁸² Leon Morris, *Gospel according to Matthew*, p.238.

⁸³ W.E. Vine, ed., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Virginia: Mac Donald Publishing Company,ND),p.220

⁸⁴ Hendriksen William, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), p.439.

⁸⁵ BAGD, 762.

⁸⁶ Morgan G. Campbell, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p.100.

⁸⁷ Leon, Morris, *Gospel according to Matthew*, p.239.

⁸⁸ H.Koister, *TDNT*, VII, p.553.

⁸⁹ H.Koister, *TDNT*, VII, p.554.

⁹⁰ George Arthur. *The Interpreters Bible Vol.VII* (Nashville: Abingdon Press,1951), p.362ff.

⁹¹ J.D.W. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Michigan: Academic Press, 1981), p.192.

⁹² R.A. Torrey, *The real Christ* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1966), p.75.

⁹³ Allen, S, *Matthew*, p.99.

⁹⁴ Carter, Warren, *Matthew & Marginalized: A socio- political & religious readings* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p.230.

⁹⁵ Carter, Warren , *Matthew & Marginalized: A Socio- Political & Religious readings*, p.231.

⁹⁶ Herschel H, Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Four Gospels* (Michigan: Baker Book house, 1965), p.115.

burdening them with legalistic niceties about Sabbaths, fasts, phylacteries, and tassels. The people are oppressed by the burdens which the religious leaders place upon them.⁹⁷ The attitude of Jesus toward the multitude, the ordinary herd of man, “the masses” as distinguished from the classes, was in striking contrast to the attitude of the other religious leaders of the day. It was the fact that “the multitude” were hungry that moved Christ *Compassion*; and Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with *compassion*, when the Lord saw her, he had *compassion* on her; Jesus Christ had compassion on all men afflicted by any form of misfortune, misery, wretchedness or degradation.⁹⁸ The lost condition of the people is the result of false religious claims of Pharisees and other religious leaders of the time of Jesus. It leads Jesus to a radical reaction with motto of helping them to send his disciples.

2.4.2.1. *Sheep without Shepherd*

In all antiquity, both gentiles and Hebrew, it was usual to speak of nations as flocks and their rulers as shepherds. The Old Testament uses this mode of speech frequently. The figure of sheep without a shepherd is rich in Biblical references. Sheep mostly in the Old Testament it is used implicitly or explicitly of the People of Israel. In the NT, Flock is still used for Israel, described by Jesus as lost (Matt.15:24) as well as weakened and exhausted. (Matt. 9:36). Shepherds were the providers, guides, protectors and constant companions of Sheep. They were also figures of authority and leadership and care.

In keeping with Shepherd's role as leader and provider, biblical pastoral tradition often picture civil and religious leaders as shepherd and the people as sheep. Israelite kings and religious leaders were called as shepherds. Amos is an example of the prophet as shepherd being a herdsman whom God took. (Amos.1:1; 7:15). Judges were also called shepherd. (2.Sam.7:7)

It is also common in the Bible, where false religious leaders are often denounced as being bad shepherds. (Eze.34) Jeremiah attacks leaders who have mismanaged their tasks and under whom the people have lost their way. (Jer. 10:21; 50:6).⁹⁹

The notice that Israel appeared to Jesus as shepherdless sheep reflects Matthew's estimate of the Jewish leadership.¹⁰⁰ Jesus saw the multitude' true description as shepherd less and actually see their condition as distressed, fleeced, lacerated by the fleecing, scattered, flung, tossed by violence, half-dead, bleeding from wounds, fainting,¹⁰¹ and who are perishing on the barren, windswept steppe. Such sheep are “fatigued and forlorn,” “dejected and deserted”.¹⁰² As sheep without shepherd means people without instructions, guidance, and motive. In the time of Jesus the religious leaders and rulers were bound to be the shepherds and watch over them and feed them with knowledge, disclose the love of Divine shepherd.¹⁰³ Leon Morris comments that, “sheep are defenseless animals. Without a shepherd they are vulnerable to any attack. Even without predators they are in trouble if they have no shepherd.”¹⁰⁴ Hendriksen also comments that, sheep are untended, unprotected, and unsought.¹⁰⁵ The religious leaders of Jesus' time went about to establish their own righteousness, exalting and pleasing themselves, while the people were perishing for lack of knowledge and guidance. So the eye of Jesus, while fixed on men's outward condition, is fastened most earnestly on their moral and spiritual condition. The Scribes and Pharisees and the others in positions of power and responsibility have, for Matthew, not performed properly, and they are one of the major causes of the people's downfall.

2.4.2.2. *Harassed and Scattered*

The translations employ a variety of expressions: “worried and helpless” (*GNB*);

“harassed and helpless” (*NRSV, REB, NIV*); “distressed and down cast” (*NASB*);

“harassed and dejected” (*JB*). The imagery is that of shepherdless sheep, sheep wounded and torn either by hostile animals or by thorn bushes and the like, and then prostrate and helpless. The word, “Harassed” is probably as good translation as it can be find. *Skullo* meant originally “to skin, flay” and “to be plundered or vexed”¹⁰⁶ or deprived of support¹⁰⁷ and thus came to be used metaphorically for serious trouble of any kind.

The word, “Scattered” renders of word (□□□□□□). It is used of men cast down and lying prostrate on the ground suffering from mortal wounds. It is used in a wide range of derivative senses, but not normally with overtones of violence. It is perhaps best to think of sheep lying passive on the ground, with no senses of what to do in their need. In sense they lack the protective and guiding role of a shepherd¹⁰⁸

⁹⁷ Hendriksen, William, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p.439.

⁹⁸ Mark 8:2; Matthew 14:14; Luke 7:12,13; Matthew 20:34.

⁹⁹ W.E. Vine, ed., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Virginia: Mac Donald Publishing Company, ND), p.782.

¹⁰⁰ Dale, *Mathhew: A Shorter commentary*, p.146.

¹⁰¹ Morgan G. Campbell, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p.100.

¹⁰² Hendriksen William, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p.439.

¹⁰³ Lewis W. Sunderland, *A Homeletic Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, p.240.

¹⁰⁴ Leon, Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 239.

¹⁰⁵ Hendriksen William, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p.440.

¹⁰⁶ W.E. Vine, p.234.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis W. Sunderland, *A Homeletic Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (New York: Funk & Wagnales, n.d), p.239.

¹⁰⁸ John Nolland, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grandrapids: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 2005), p.234.

Like Yahweh in the Old Testament Jesus showed compassion on shepherd less crowds and judgement on the false leaders. The “sheep” Jesus sees are “harassed”, not “fainted” (KJV), which has poor attention, i.e., bullied, oppressed; and in the face of such problems, they are helpless” unable to rescue themselves or escape their tormentors.¹⁰⁹

It is the picture of people completely without resource is rounded off by explicitly likening them to *sheep without Shepherd*, an expression of the Old Testament people of God.¹¹⁰ According to Edward Schweizer, the image suggests a flock that is tormented and almost totally exhausted, or is at least being led astray and neglected by careless shepherds.¹¹¹

Jesus saw the situation: people were tormented, exhausted and led astray. Jesus perceived their need. This is the supreme motivation for mission, to see the need of those who are perishing outside the kingdom.¹¹² Motivation comes when you see people harassed by pressures, exhausted by the pace of life, going nowhere, and being led astray.

2.5. The Method of His Mission

Jesus by looking at the condition of the people as shepherd less, oppressed, harassed and scattered moved with the compassion and demanding his disciples to be prepared and be willing to go ahead as the harvest is ready to be reaped.

2.5.1. Harvest and Laborers

The harvest may refer to a literal crop of grain or the like, but here it is used metaphorically of people. Barclay points out that “the orthodox the religious leaders” and Jesus saw ordinary people in different ways: “the Pharisees saw the common people as chaff to be destroyed and burned up; Jesus saw them as a harvest to be reaped and to be saved”.¹¹³ Jesus saw them as an abundant harvest waiting to be gathered.¹¹⁴

Some exegetes see the concept of harvest as of judgment of God. For harvest is often used in connection with judgment. But in this passage there is nothing to indicate judgement; the thought is rather that of the owner’s care for his crop.¹¹⁵ Everywhere else in the synoptic tradition, as in the prophets and Jewish apocalyptic literature, the harvest is typically a metaphor for divine judgment, and the harvesters, those who gather, are God and the angels (Isa.18:4; Jer.51:53; Hos.6:11). Here, however, the harvest is a metaphor for mission, and the disciples of Jesus, with their preaching of the kingdom are the harvesters.

Jesus sees harvest time in two ways- as a time of opportunity in the here and now as a time of final judgment. The idea of harvest as opportunity is presented in Matthew 9:37-38 and its parallels in Luke 10:2 and John 4:35, where Jesus sees sinners in need of salvation as a field of grain needing to be harvested. Jesus does not spell out, but He is speaking of people who are ripe for inclusion in the kingdom. The crowds very appropriately called “the harvest” and the very extensive field in need of immediate attention.¹¹⁶ The situation calls for mobilization of workers, for everyone knows that a ripened harvest can be lost without timely attention.¹¹⁷ It suggests the imperative need of something similar to the hard work that is required when without delay.

2.5.2. Prayer for the Laborers

It is clear that Christ’s intense desire for laborers and still more laborers to be thrust into the soul-harvest springs from His deep and infinite compassion. Jesus having observed the tragic situation – the harvest is great, the laborers are few, Jesus does not weep and grieve but ask for prayer. According to Dale, “faith responds to the situation of crisis by turning towards God.”¹¹⁸

Jesus saw a need for a more workers and viewed God as “the Lord of Harvest”. Harvest is ready but it needs laborers to bring the grain into barn. The worker can denote any work man, but it is used especially of agricultural laborers.¹¹⁹ The greatness of harvest stood out in striking contrast with the fewness of the labors. The population of Galilee was congested over 200 cities and villages and his disciple’s band was just a handful of workers as yet.¹²⁰

The situation demanded action to be taken in order to meet the challenge. That particular action Jesus singles out is prayer. □□ it is the earnest plea of Jesus.¹²¹ □□□□□□□□, used here only in Matthew but 22 times in New Testament, means a prayer that springs from a sense of need. Here Jesus points

¹⁰⁹ Gaebel, Frank. E, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), p. 235.

¹¹⁰ Leon, Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, p.239.

¹¹¹ Edward, Schweizer, *Good News According to Matthew*, p.233-234.

¹¹² Michel, Green, *The Message of Matthew* (England: IVP, 2000), p.133.

¹¹³ Barclay, *Gospel of Matthew*. Vol.1. (Bangalore:TPI,1975), p.356.

¹¹⁴ Herschel H, Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Four Gospels*, p.115.

¹¹⁵ Leon, Morris, *Gospel according to Matthew*, p.240.

¹¹⁶ Hendriksen William, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p.440.

¹¹⁷ Leland Ryken, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (USA:IVP, 1998), p. 366.

¹¹⁸ Dale, *Matthew: A Shorter commentary*, p.146.

¹¹⁹ Leon, Morris, *Gospel according to Matthew*, p.239.

¹²⁰ Sheherd J.W, *The Christ of the Gospels*.(Michigan: Wm.B.Eerdmans, 1939), p.243.

¹²¹ Hobbs, *The exposition of the Four Gospels*, p.115.

out to prayer as the really effective thing. The prayer is not to be a substitute for the labor but the disciples were to be reapers as well as praying men. Edward comments that, disciples are not simply pressed into service but are called on to pray. Man cannot create the new situation that is necessary; God alone will choose his messengers. Therefore prayer is needed.¹²² But work will not be done without prayer. Leon Morris comments, "no matter how great the personal exertion, it will not be able to gather in the whole harvest. Therefore we are to pray to Him who can send out"¹²³ The word send out (□□□□□□□□ denotes the enthusiastic impulse of mission work.¹²⁴ If so, disciple's existence is an answer to prayer, which is to say: the post-Easter mission is grounded not only in the

activities of Jesus and the twelve but also in the prayer request of Jesus.¹²⁵ Jesus Christ is the model of the missionary activities especially reaping the ripened harvest, which accomplishes by asking the Lord of harvest to send more laborers in partnership.

Conclusion

This brief discussion about the Biblical understanding of the mission to the oppressed and Poor illumines God's heart for the poor. However, Christ preached the good news and reached out to the economically, politically, and socially out caste and oppressed of the society. He commanded his followers to be concerned about these people. The early church followed the footsteps of Christ in such a way that they could not find any weak brother or sister in their community. The real good news to the poor aims at bringing back God's image in their life and the transformation of their social and economic lives. Transformation needs to be truly holistic in nature and aim at emancipating the oppressed and downtrodden in every sphere of their lives. Jesus took a challenge to overcome all in order to achieve the plan and purpose for which he was send with a mission. He went around the cities and villages and accomplished his ministry through teaching, preaching and healing and motivated by the lost condition of the people and identified himself with their need as a compassionate Lord and commissioned his disciples to do the same. Jesus disciples are to fulfill their mission by following in the footsteps of their master. Disciples too are to fulfill their mission with Jesus-like behavior. Matthew's carefully structured presentation of narrative and discourse is designed to present Jesus as model in word and deed.

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¹²² Edward Edward , Schweizer, *Good News According to Matthew* , p.234.

¹²³ Leon , Morris, p.240.

¹²⁴ Carr. p.32.

¹²⁵ Dale, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, p.146.

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