Sermon: We Are a Living Parable Matthew 9:35-38

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In the past several months, I have cress crossed the country, preaching at churches, district conferences and district gatherings, delegate briefings, as well as commissioning new church and ministries.
I am always amazed to see the passion that exist in our churches, large or small. Many of our churches are involve in different kinds of ministries glocally. Locally and globally and for that, I am grateful to God to be able to witness all of these.

I want to begin my sermon with a question. Have you ever wondered why Jesus’s use of parable is so frequent?

Parables, some only a sentence long are often seen as the hallmark of Jesus teaching. As Mark 4:33 puts it “He spoke to them in parables” paraphrase.
The gospel writers, in their wisdom did not give us the answers, they left most of the parables as open narratives in order to invite us to engage them thereby making some personal application. Each reader will hear a distinctive and different message and may also find the same parable with different message over time.
Just as today’s listeners, when hear parable of the Lazarus and the Rich man, the Lost sheep, the Lost son, etc. Everyone can find something for a personal reflection on in these parables. Jesus’s genus is endowed in his ability to tell stories that are inviting. The setting of the parables should not go unnoticed. For the setting plays a key role in the listener understanding.

Parables did not just originate with Jesus, in 2 Samuel 12, we find the parable of David, when Nathan told him the story of a rich man hordes of sheep but when he was throwing a party for his guest decided to go get a sheep a farmer with a lone sheep, that story I would say David’s anger was kindled against such behavior. He said to Nathan “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserve to die” Nathan after a pause said, “You are the man”

Sisters and Brothers, here we are thousands of years away from the story of David, from the parable spoken by Jesus, yet, these scriptures right down through the corridors of history speaks to us afresh and alive.

Pause!

Prayer:
I invite you to pray with me: God of grace, God of glory, Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian church for spiritual boldness in proclaiming the gospel is what I long for, as your church gathered here tonight. May your presence be felt amongst us, help me that, your children may not hear a merely uttering of my empty words, but that your spirit would minister to each and every one in tonight’s gathering,
may our growing faith be energized, we pray, God hears and answers our prayers, for in your son’s Holy name we pray.

Amen.

Jesus demonstrated to us what it means to be a living Parable judging by these insights from Matthew 9:35-38, I would attempt to draw three points that we may focus on:

They are:
- a. Jesus’ Itinerary
- b. Jesus’ Insights
- c. Jesus’ instruction

If all the things Jesus did and said were recorded, it would fill the largest library in the earth, imagine how compressed a sentence would be that summarized all that He did. This is what we find in Matthew 9:35-38

**Jesus’ itinerary: Should I say Jesus the itinerant preacher**

Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

1) **Jesus was going**

The first thing that stands out is the word ‘going.’ Do you know what it reminded me of? It particularly reminded me of Matthew 28:19-20, the Great Commission. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus’ actions in our scripture demonstrate to us what it is to be a Living Parable.

As you are going into the world? Are you making disciples?

Behind all ministry of going, is the thrust into new and perhaps uncomfortable places. For example, it would be much easier to sit down and play computer games or watch some movie than reach out to others in need.

In our going, some of us would be thrust in new situations, like some of what I have seen across our denominations in my travels. They could have stayed within the confines of their church, but they discerned God wants them to go. And as they went out, they found opportunities to minister.

In my case we have taken to using our gifts of computer skills to bring reconciliation and peace in a broken and divided community.
The thrust of the Great Commission is not to go but to make disciples. As a Christian, we have the Spirit of Christ in us accompany us wherever we go. But within one’s context, one needs to be opening our hearts to others rather than closing them out.

2) Jesus was ministering
In Matthew 9:35, we read of Jesus Christ carrying out all sorts of ministries. The word ministry means ‘to serve’ from the Latin ministerium. The focus of Jesus’ work, in other words, was on the needs of others rather than on His own needs. But He captured His time and abilities to serve others as much as possible, serving others in their needs. When we focus on serving, then our short comings or on what we don’t have, we become paralyzed and are no longer a parable to the watching world.

Get involved in the lives of others, and you will see the change in yourself.

Some the activities that Jesus was doing as he minister were, Teaching in their synagogues Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom Healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

   a. **Teaching** seemed to be more in-depth ministry of explaining God’s Word. He would do this in a protected locale like a building. In this case it was in synagogues, church buildings. People came together to learn more of God’s Word. We can see how Jesus Himself ‘made disciples.’ He valued instruction. Instruction gives us occasion to keep growing.
   
   b. **b. Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom**

But what did Jesus speak about in his proclamations? After all, Jesus had not yet died or come alive. What gospel was there to speak before He accomplished these things? Actually, we only need to look at the gospels, and we will see what Jesus taught. He would break apart lies with the truth of God. He proclaimed God’s kingdom to the Jews where they were at. He told stories or parables like some of what I have spent the year unpacking and most especially on the three kinds of parables that Jesus was proclaiming are:

**Similitudes** - “The kingdom of heaven is like...”
Parables in these categories are:
   - **The parable of the sower**
   - **The parable of the weeds**

We can see in these parables the kind of likeness; resemblance.

**The parabolic sayings** of Jesus with examples such as:

   - **Physician heal yourself** Luke 4:23
   - **The blind leading the blind** Luke 6:39
   - **The pupil is not above his master** Luke 6:40

The third kind of parable is the story of what I call Full parable –
c. **Healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness**’ is Jesus’ third powerful ministry. We do hear of healing of people through the power of prayer.

**Now we come to Jesus’ Insights**
The second aspect of Jesus, Jesus had special insight into people. I don’t mean that it is so special that we cannot gain it. The point here indicates that we ought to have the same perspective. A perspective that is able to sense the need of the community and the people around.

a. **The Needs of the People**
Jesus had great compassion on the crowds. There are loads of people out there who needed help. But we need to see why He had compassion. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

b. He saw their distress and inability to help themselves. They were like sheep without a shepherd. What kind of people? Lost people. Suffering people.

**We come now to Jesus’ Instruction (Matthew 9:38)**
**Therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.**

Jesus’ point is that like at harvest time, one can always use more workers. The application to this for our lives is rather obvious. If the harvest is plentiful, then we must by all means share the concern of the harvester and help bring in the crop.

I agree that evangelism needs to stand as a high priority in our churches. But Jesus’ instruction was for his followers to simply pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborer into His harvest field. As we pray God we could become the answer to our prayers

Jesus was given his listeners every chance to accept and understand his message by first putting into practice in their own lives.

I invite you to re look at your life in the light of Jesus’ parable, when people see you, who or what do they see?

A living witness? or someone who says do what I say but not what I do.

**In conclusion**
As Living Parable; Christ calls us to learn how to share our lives in grace with others and our sharing should be a source of grace for others, these kinds of sharing are not about telling of information but by being present in a world that so desperately need to see Christ in Action. Brethren at our best have been able to be present, when disaster strikes, Living Parable takes us beyond providing material resources, Living Parable calls us to share our personal story of God at work in our lives individually, through the Church community of believers and in the World.