**Calvary Fellowship 7.31.2022 Matthew 10:1-26 “The All-Star Team”**

* **So about 6 years ago, I bought something called a Big Green Egg (pic)**
* It’s a smoker & it can also be used as a grill
* But over the last 6 years, I’ve gotten very involve in cooking dinner at my house b/c my wife & I make dinner together every night - it’s amazing
* **But my journey in the kitchen did not have a good start - in the beginning, I couldn’t do anything right**
* My kids were frustrated b/c I don’t know exactly how Carey does everything
* Livi got upset w/ me b/c I put cheese on her turkey sandwich
* Apparently, U don’t put cheese on her turkey sandwiches & if U do, U put it on the side that doesn’t have mayo b/c U only mayo 1 side
* Listen, I have no idea how my wife remembers this stuff - but now it makes sense why she has a glazed over look when I get home
* **1 night I made dinner - nothing too crazy, just pasta & red sauce**
* I watched a YouTube video about how to make pasta - it wasn't that hard
* My son was eating & said, "Dad, this isn't that bad." - I said, "Thanks buddy. Do U want some more." - He said, "Absolutely not.”
* Livi said, “This is disgusting. Dad, U should go on that show, “Worst cooks in America. You’d win.” - I’ll be honest, that hurt a little
* But that was 6 years ago - a few weeks ago, I made some ribeyes on the Big Green Egg & Livi said, “Dad, U are the greatest griller in the world. I remember when U were the worst cook in America. Your food was terrible. Now’s it’s great.
* Mia said, “Livi, that’s rude.” Livi says, “No Mia, it’s not rude. Dad was horrible at cooking. It was the worst food ever. I wanted to barf whenever he would cook food. Now he’s excellent. How is that rude?”
* **So no matter where U are in life, U can turn it around - all U need is a grill & YouTube apparently**
* But here’s what I find amazing - when we think of the Apostles - the 12 disciples that Jesus called, that walked w/ Him for 3 1/2 years
* The 12 who took the message of Jesus around the world after His resurrection
* They didn’t start out as the guys who always knew what to say or do
* Truth be told, they were contestants for the Worst Cooks in America
* **Now, U have to know a couple of things about the disciples of Jesus**
* 1st, they were younger than U think - most of us think of the disciples as 50 year old bald guys w/ beards & leg hair - not even close
* The disciples of Jesus were very young - most of them were somewhere in the range of 12-18 - in fact, only Simon Peter was older than 18
* Some scholars believe the apostle John could have been as young as 10
* That’s why in Matthew 17, when Jesus & the disciples show up in the town of Capernaum, Peter gets asked, “Does your Rabbi pay the temple tax?”
* Now, the temple tax was levied on every Jewish male 20 years or age & older
* Jesus tells Peter to go fishing & he catches a fish that has a coin (Stater in Greek) which is the exact amount of a temple tax for 2 people
* Why did Jesus only pay for them? B/c they were the only 2 older than 20
* The other issue is that everyone Jesus called was already working in the family business - that means they had already been rejected by another rabbi
* B/c Rabbis only picked those that they believed could be the best of the best
* And if U weren’t, the Rabbi would bless U & encourage U to get into your family trade - that’s why when Jesus calls fisherman, they had already been rejected
* But somehow these 12 guys changed the world b/c they saw their teacher die & 3 days later He was alive
* Listen, if U follow the links in the chain - from who led U to Jesus & who led them to Jesus & who led them to Jesus, you’ll get to these guys
* So I want to help U get to know these guys b/c I believe it’s going to encourage U that God can do great things through very imperfect people
* And we’re going to see how Jesus commissions them to do ministry in His name b/c God isn’t looking for perfect people - He’s looking for available people

**———(v. 1-4)———**

**#1 - The Disciples were Specifically Called**

* **Luke records them in 6 pairs of 2 - this was done b/c most people in the day were illiterate & even if U did read, there weren’t books laying around**
* So it’s being written for memorization purposes - it’s kind of lost on us
* **When I was in college, I had a class in the Gospel of Matthew & our professor asked, “Who can name all 12 disciples?”**
* There were over 100 people in that class & I was the only 1 who could do it
* I think important for U to know that your pastor excelled in his theology degree
* B/c not everyone does - as I tell my wife, “50% of doctors graduated in the bottom 1/2 of their class.” - U don’t want 1 of those guys cutting U open
* So I want to go through these names b/c it’s important for U to see that these guys didn’t walk around w/ halos - they were a motley crew
* **Peter & Andrew - they were brothers - Peter being the most famous -**
* Peter is the patron saint of everyone who has ‘open mouth, insert foot” disease
* He said so many dumb things - it gives the rest of us hope
* When Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” - everyone gave their answers & then He asked, “Who U say that I am?”
* “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’” (Matthew 16:17-18)
* This was an amazing moment - Jesus says, “My Father revealed this to U.”
* On the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter swore He’d die for Jesus, only to deny know Him that same night
* But Peter got it together & became the leader in the early church
* And he ultimately died in Rome as a follower of Jesus - he didn’t believe he deserved to crucified like His Lord, so the Romans crucified him upside down
* I’ve always found it funny when Satanic bands use upside down crosses to show how against Christianity they are
* Someone should tell them that the upside down cross has been a Christian symbol for 2,000 years dating back to the death of St. Peter
* **Andrew was Peter’s brother** & his claim to fame was that he was a follower of John the Baptist before following Jesus (John 1:40)
* Andrew is the 1 who brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus & he was the 1st follower of Jesus b/c J the B told him to stop following him & follow Jesus
* Andrew later was a missionary to the area around the Black Sea (pic)
* This would include the Ukraine & parts of Russia
* **The next 2 that Matt. mentions are another set of brothers - James & John**
* These 2 guys were a couple of loose cannons - how do we know?
* “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, ‘Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?’ But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village.” (Luke 9:51-55)
* I don’t know what’s odder about these guys - that they wanted to call down fire to torch the city or they thought they could?
* But b/c of this incident, Jesus gives them a nickname - Boanerges - which is translated as “Sons of Thunder” - which sounds like a wrestling tag team
* But James & John (w/ Peter) became part of Jesus’ inner circle
* James, unfortunately is killed by Herod Agrippa - it’s recorded in Acts 12 & James became the 1st of the apostles to be martyred
* John lived into his 90’s & wrote 5 books of the NT & became known as the apostle of love - he would speak at churches as an older man & would just say, “Little children, love one another” & then sit down
* Here’s the point - U might be someone who is calling down fire from heaven, but God isn’t done w/ U - U could be known for something completely different by the time God is done working in U
* **Next up is Philip & Bartholomew = Philip is a Greek name & we aren’t told his Hebrew name - He’s the 1 in John 1 who brings this next guy to Jesus**
* Bartholomew = that’s not his real name - Nathaniel is his given name (John 1)
* Bar = son of/ Tolemi = dad’s name - It’s like calling him “junior”
* **Next up is Matthew & Thomas = Matthew we talked about last time**
* His Hebrew name is Levi - he was a tax collector
* **Thomas isn’t a real name either - the name Thomas means ‘the twin”**
* Some scholars say he was called that b/c he looked like Jesus - could U imagine his profile on E-harmony? “God-like looks”
* He’s known as the Doubter, but honestly, I see him as the Chandler Bing of the group - he’s the guy that always has the sarcastic remark
* “So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go back to Judea.’ ‘But Rabbi,’ they said, ‘a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?’ (John 11:6-8)
* “Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him.’” (John 11:16)
* **James son of Alphaeus is also called “James the lesser”** to not be confused w/ James the brother of John = (Gr.) mikros
* Calling a guy “The Lesser” would be like calling someone “Tiny”
* Which means he was either really small or really big
* In fairness, “Mikros” can also be translated “younger”, so it might just be that this James was younger than the other 1
* I worked for a company where the CEO’s name was Bob, so I referred to as “Young Bob” - now I refuse to hire anyone named Bob b/c of what I’d be called
* **Thaddeus is an interesting guy b/c he has a coupe of nicknames**
* His real name is Judas son of James (Luke 6 & Acts 1), but there was another Judas in the group, so he went by went but the name Thaddaeus
* Thaddeaus is a derivative of the word for breast or nipple in Aramaic
* So it’s like calling him “Mama’s boy” - He also went by Lebbaeus which means “Heart child” - It probably meant he as a sensitive guy - a lover, not a fighter
* There used to be a guy who played for the Boston Celtics named Glen Davis, but his nickname was Big Baby - this is the same idea
* There’s only 1 thing he says that’s recorded in the Gospels in John 14
* “Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?’” (John 14:22)
* **Lastly, we have Simon the Canaanite or Zealot & Judas Iscariot**
* Zealot is a nice way of saying terrorist - their goal was to overthrow Rome by committing acts of violence
* Zealots would carry small knives called Sicae under their cloaks so they could stab Roman soldiers & Jewish Sympathizers of Rome in crowds
* This must have made for great conversation between him & Matthew, a guy who previously made a fortune exploiting the Jewish people for Rome
* I imagine Matthew saying, “How do I know you’re not going to stab me in my sleep?” - Simon says, “U don’t. Sweet dreams Uncle Sam.”
* **Then lastly, we have Judas Iscariot - Iscariot isn’t his last name**
* Iscariot is really 2 words: Ish Kerioth = Ish means man/ Kerioth was a town 20 miles south of Jerusalem - Since he was the only disciple not from the region of Galilee, he was Judas, man from Kerioth
* **We can all agree that this isn’t what we’d consider to be an all-star team**
* However, what I love is that all of can find someone to relate to in this group
* And even though these aren’t the best & brightest, Jesus chose them & called them to serve in amazing capacities & change the world
* Listen, Jesus isn’t looking for superstars - He’s looking for people who will answer the call & He’ll turn them into people who can do amazing things

**———(v. 5-15)———**

**#2 - The Disciples were Strategically Sent**

* **There’s something important here that we need to discuss so we really understand this passage & that it the subject of the Kingdom of God**
* Throughout the gospels, we read that Jesus went about preaching the Kingdom of God - what does that mean?
* Simply put, the kingdom of God is anywhere that God is reigning as king
* So when Jesus tells the disciples to go into a town in Israel & heal people, He’s telling them to show people what like in the kingdom of God is like
* When U give your life to Jesus, that’s the kingdom of God coming into your life b/c now Jesus is reigning in your life
* And the more U allow Him to be king is to the degree that you’ll see Jesus working in your life & changing your life
* But sometimes, the problem we experience is that we get confused as to who’s in charge - sometimes it’s Jesus who’s in charge & sometimes it’s us
* **When my son was born, we took a weekend family vacation**
* So we went to a hotel in Orlando & just hung out at the hotel
* 1 morning we decided to go to the pool - but this hotel was a complete maze
* When we checked in, we got lost in the lobby, which I didn’t think was possible
* We had only been there for a day but we had gotten lost several times
* So that AM we were headed down to the pool & Carey told to me to call downstairs & I said, “Have U learned nothing being married to me? When have U ever seen me ask for directions?”
* Truth be told, I had no idea where I was going - But then I got a vision - I turned to Carey & said, “Follow me”
* I made twists & turns w/ total confidence & got us to the pool in no time
* Carey said, “How do U do that?” I said, “I’ve been following that guy w/ the giant inflatable alligator.” - I figured that guy was headed to the pool
* We have to decide that we’re the 1 following & Jesus is the 1 leading
* And I love the lesson that Jesus teaches His disciples - that where God guides, God provides - He tells them not to worry about bringing extra stuff
* B/c while they are preaching the kingdom of God, they’re also learning about how the kingdom of God works as well
* So when they went to a home to stay in as they ministered, they shared a blessing of peace or shalom on that house - this is what the rabbis would do
* **They would bless the home - but if the people of the city wouldn’t listen, they’d shake the dust off there feet & leave**
* That was a very Jewish way of saying, “I’m not going to carry any of this mess w/ me as I move on w/ my life.”
* That’s a good practice - too often, something happens & we carry it w/ us for years sometimes & we can’t shake it
* I love this idea of actually shaking the dust off your feet so U remind yourself that it ends right here - we aren’t carrying any of this mess w/ us
* Think about the painful words that have been spoken to U - think about the relationships that brought so many problems
* Think about the years of your life that you’ve given to people who don’t deserve it or even care - how much pain would we have saved ourselves if we could have just shaken the dust off our feet & moved on?
* Here’s what Jesus was telling His disciples & telling us - He’s saying, “If they don’t see the value in your message, move on & be free.”
* Listen, some of us have been working so hard to get people to see our value & what we need to do is move on & find the people who already do
* **When I was in High School I was a pretty big comic book collector - mostly Spider-man & The Punisher, but I collected a few others**
* 1 day I was in this shop that sold candy & baseball cards & comic books
* They weren’t a comic book shop, but they had some stuff
* I walked in & saw this at the store (pic) - that is X-Men #6
* That comic day sells for about $5,000 - back then it was worth about $600
* I bought for $2.50 - Someone had sold a bunch of comics to the shop - they gave the guy $50 for everything b/c he had no idea what he had
* The shop put a $2.50 price tag on it b/c they had no idea what they had
* And it wasn’t until someone who understood its value showed up that things changed - that comic book partly funded my 1st apartment when I got married
* Here’s my point - if people don’t see the value in U, they’re the wrong people
* And some of us have been living w/ people who are somewhere between the guy who sold the comics & the guy who priced them at $2.50
* And no amount of arguing is going to get them to see that you’re a valuable collectible - so shake the dust off & find the people who see the value in U
* You’ll find a lot more joy in your life if U do

**———(v. 16-20)———**

**#3 - The Disciples were Spiritually Empowered**

* **Verse 16 is something I talk to my kids about all the time - being wise as a serpent & harmless as a dove - Jesus wants us to be both**
* In the ancient world (and especially in Egyptian Hieroglyphics), snakes were portrayed as wise & cunning, smart & shrewd
* Doves are a symbol of peace - they are considered innocent & pure
* Jesus is putting this together to create a composite of how we should live
* We should be wise like a snake, but instead of a snake who lies in wait to strike & do harm - we should be wise & knowing when to do good & speak
* **So how does that work for us? Jesus is sending His disciples out into a world that is hostile towards believers - that was then as it is true now**
* And we need to know the right thing to say & when is the best time to say it
* When someone questions your faith & says, “How can U believe Christianity?”
* They usually go in a couple of directions - let’s cover them - this will be fun
* **1 of their objections is, “What about all of the horrible things that have been done in the name of religion? It’s better to live in a secular society.”**
* So, 1st of all - there have been terrible things done in the name of religion
* But, that doesn’t mean that all of them were done in the name of Jesus
* So it’s important to differentiate that - but, let’s talk about the crusades b/c that’s what people like to use as their example of why religion is evil
* Here’s the thing U have to understand - generally speaking, the crusades are characterized as Christians marching into Europe & killing Muslims
* Yeah, that’s totally false - The Christian crusades were a response to Muslim attacks that lasted for over 400 years
* By the time the Byzantine emperor asked for the Pope’s help in the 12th century, 2/3’s of the Christians in the world had been captured by Muslims
* And do U know what they did to these Christians that they enslaved? They turned them into soldiers to fight & capture other Christians
* *Crusade scholar Thomas Madden wrote, “The Crusades are in every way a defensive war. They were the West’s belated response to the Muslim conquest of fully 2/3’s of the Christian world.”*
* That’s not the say there’s weren’t rogue soldiers who did terrible things - however, the crusades were started as a defensive measure
* **But let’s talk about the peace that a secular society would bring - the good news is that the 20th century tried that a few times**
* Communism was popularized by Karl Marx around the turn of the century & influenced Joseph Stalin & Vladimir Lenin as they built the Soviet Union, Mao built Communist China, Castro built Cuba, & Kim il Sung built North Korea
* These people that I just mentioned killed 100 million people in the secular society they built where the practicing of one’s faith was illegal
* So it’s an argument from absurdity to say Christianity is evil
* And by the way, where are all the hospitals, orphanages, & food banks named after atheists? They don’t exist b/c it’s only people of faith who care enough about the the hurting & marginalized to create institutions to serve them
* But the key is to wait for the right moment to share these truths & share them in a humble way - we’re not trying to beat people over the head
* **Here’s another: “Well, there are contradictions in the Bible. That’s why I don’t believe.” - I have done the so many times - U should try it**
* I will hand my Bible to them & say, “Great. Show me one.”
* Every time I have done this, the person won’t even touch the Bible
* I love doing this b/c non-Christians are scared of the Bible - they don’t want to touch it - they think it’s going to start to sizzle in their hands
* 1 of my professors in college used to hand non-Christians his Bible when they’d say stuff like this & he’d whisper, “U know the Bible says that it’s alive & active & sharper than a 2-edged sword. AAAAHHHHHH!!!”
* The other person would start screaming - anyway, a fun time was had by all
* But here’s the point - when someone says they don’t believe or gives 1 of the tired excuses that they’re heard along the way, ask them to defend their claim
* Typically, Christians start spouting off everything they know about the veracity of the Bible at the 1st sign of a challenge - hold off on that stuff
* Instead, let them defend their claims - it’s what they believe after all - and when they can’t, U say say, “U know, this is such an important conversation & at 1 time I had the same thoughts. Can I share what changed by mind?”
* And now you’re in a totally different place - you’ve respected their view & asked them to clarify & now you’re created an opening to share the Gospel
* B/c they don’t know of any contradictions - it’s non-sense they picked up from a college prof. who’s still mad at his parents for taking him to a boring church
* **Ok, 1 last 1 - People say they don’t believe Christianity b/c it’s oppressive & approves of practices like slavery & polygamy**
* This is something that people will say b/c they take a verse out of context & don’t understand what the Bible means when it says slavery
* We immediately think that it involves people owning other people & that it’s connected to race - that view is wrong on all counts
* The Hebrew word translated slave is “Abed/ Aved”& it’s translated as either slave or servant in the OT - a person was serving until their debt was paid
* When a person fell into debt & had no means to repay, they sold themselves into slavery until the debt was paid - but it wasn’t like slavery in America
* There was no chapter 11 bankruptcy - people needed to repay their debts
* They are indentured servants, paying off a debt & then going free
* It was not forever - in fact, in Exodus 21, God limits the servitude to 7 years max - that limited how much debt a person could get themselves into
* Slavery by force or through kidnapping was a crime punishable by death
* “He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.” (Exodus 21:16)
* If a master mistreated a servant & hit him or her, they were free to go & the debt was considered cancelled
* “If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth.” (Exodus 21:26-27)
* In Job 31 we learn that a slave can take his master to court is he feels he is being treated unfairly & he could sue for rights he was deprived of
* In Deut. 23 we learn that if U find a slave who has run away from his master, God commands the Hebrews not to send him back - why?
* B/c if he ran away, the situation must have been pretty bad
* “You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him.” (Deuteronomy 23:15-16)
* Here’s my point - does that sound like slavery in America? No - b/c it wasn’t
* That’s why when people say, “Why doesn’t NT speak out against slavery?” - it shows they don’t understand that slaves were repaying debts
* And by the way, the NT does talk about slavery - that all of us are slaves to sin but Jesus died for us & paid the price to free us of the greatest slavery
* We think of slavery & we immediately think of slavery in America, but we have to understand it in context the Bible was speaking about it, not our context
* **Lastly, the Bible never condones polygamy - what it does do is faithfully record what happened**
* Robert Alder who is an OT scholar, he has this great quote this topic, he says, “If U think the Bible condones polygamy, U don’t know how to read b/c every person in the Bible w/ multiple wives is having a terrible time.”
* But I’m always taken by the fact that a culture which says “love is love” judges how other people in other cultures operated in their love lives
* This culture says it’s oppressive & bigoted to judge who U love - unless of course we’re talking about the Bible - then it’s perfectly fine
* **But here’s the funny part to me - they say polygamy is terrible, but our culture is celebrating a recent city council decision in Somerville, MA**
* The city council voted unanimously to acknowledge polyamorous couples
* Do U know what polyamorous couples are? More than 2 in a relationship
* Do U know what polygamy is? More than 2 people in a relationship
* And they are saying that it’s totally different - it’s insane
* **Now listen, I grew up in Somerville - I went to all of elementary school in Somerville & Arlington (the town next door)**
* I spent every weekend w/ my dad in Somerville - I played Little League in Somerville - This isn’t some activist town - it’s blue collar, working class city
* And the fact that they are pushing this shows how off-base we are as a society
* **Here’s the point - these objections have rather simple answers**
* But the key isn’t to blast people - it’s to communicate in an understandable & humble way b/c the goal isn’t to win the argument, it’s to win the relationship
* We want that person to com to Jesus & they need to know that we care about them more than we care about being right
* That’s why we need to be wise as a serpent & harmless as a dove
* **And that’s what communion remind us of - that Jesus died so we could experience forgiveness, grace, & love**
* And that now we have the opportunity to share that w/ every person we come into contact with…