

2026 06 14 *Whom Shall I Send?*

By Darci Strutt

Based on Matthew 9:35-10:23

Hymns: *We Bring a Sacrifice of Praise; Here I Am, Make Me a Channel of Your Peace; Together We Serve*

The liturgist read Matthew 9:35-10:8. I'm going to tag on Matthew 10:9-20 so you get a few more instructions. Jesus' instructions continue beyond the 20th verse, and if you're curious pull out a Bible! I'm also going to be using information from a book called "Dare to Dream." It is authored by Rev. Mike Slaughter, and was the last book studied by our Wednesday morning class.

Our verses start off in a familiar way. Jesus has been doing all the things he is known for; teaching and curing disease and sickness. Then he pauses.

9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

The Greek translation of "had compassion" is "he had his bowels moved". That sounds funny yet we have a similar phrase. A translation in our time might be to say the sight of the people was "gut wrenching". It wasn't a light feeling moving him. It was a clutch your stomach moment.

He brings God in as a partner immediately.

9:38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

All good mission work should begin with such a prayer. It is God's work, not our own. Let God lead. Our role is to follow.

He told all his disciples to pray, and in the very next verse he calls in his top twelve and lets them know they were the answer to that prayer. What a fast turn-around!

I have a visual of the scene. I can imagine them all hanging on Jesus words as he says the people don't have good leaders. The term "Shepherd" was often used to refer to religious leaders or kings. No doubt they were nodding their heads and feeling a righteous anger at the failure of the current leadership to keep their people free from Roman occupation. They were ready to have Jesus transform into the political leader they needed. Simon the Zealot may have been nearly jumping up and down.

Instead, Jesus stayed in the background of the mission.

10:1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

Can you even imagine how they felt? Matthew was barely a member of the group. He had just received his call a few verses earlier in 9:9! They were students who turned into teachers. They were sheep who turned into shepherds. That is an extreme transformation.

Kindly, Jesus keeps their audience to one they knew, their fellow Israelites. They weren't ready to take on the world yet. Keep it to people they could understand. Post resurrection Jesus opens it up to all the world.

Audience aside, the goal of the mission was a bit much. Not only were they to proclaim the kingdom of heaven has come near, but they were to prove it – with miracles! Peter did a bit of walking on water, and that nearly turned out deadly for him. Now they were to do all the healing works Jesus was doing without Jesus there to back them up in person.

Jesus was God's hands. Could they be God's hands?

The instructions go on beyond verse 8. They make the mission tougher still.

Matthew 10:9-20

9 *Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— 10 no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. 11 Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.*

16 *I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

Jesus was instructing them to be dependent on God and on the hospitality of others. They were not being sent out in their own power or with the ability to care for themselves. They weren't even given names of friendly people they could stay with. They had to search for someone willing to take them in when they got to town.

Jesus didn't say "if you are handed over", he said "you will be handed over." They weren't given a script to recite in their defense. Instead, they were to trust the Holy Spirit would give them the words to say when it was time to speak.

That's a tough assignment from their teacher.

I imagine you can guess the next part is going to be an obvious segway into how we are called, but I do want to take a small detour and talk about peace and hospitality.

10:13 If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

The chosen twelve weren't only bringing the good news about the kingdom being near and bringing healing. They were bringing peace to those that would listen. They were channels of God's peace.

Hospitality was a life-or-death situation. There were no fast-food restaurants on the road. We hear there were some Inns because when Mary and Joseph were traveling there was an Inn with no occupancy. But in general, providing for travelers was critical in their society. Their scripture reminded them that they were once strangers too.

Hebrews says:

13:2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

The people providing hospitality were part of the mission field without leaving home. They partnered with those doing the healing by providing a place for them to sleep and some supper at the end of the day. Choosing to do so brought God's peace to your house and town.

Our church has the gift of hospitality. Serving doesn't have to be monumental. Coffee hour can be a partnership with God as we welcome strangers among us. Every act of love is meaningful. If you get stuck feeling like you don't know what your mission is, start with being loving and kind. Let your "gut" feeling grow until it makes itself known.

Now, back to the scary question that I believe remains for us to this day.

"Whom shall I send?"

I'm going to be honest with you. I'm not a fan of Jesus instructions to the twelve. I was taught to be self-reliant. Don't jump into a project without enough money to complete it. Don't say yes to a task unless you know you have the skills to get it done. Be responsible. Be reliable. Remember the acronym SMART when setting a goal. Many of us were taught to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely as we designed our goals. That's fine for human goals but God's plans don't include such limitations.

Jesus told them to bring no money, or pack enough clothes, or make reservations. Perhaps my early teaching needs an upgrade.

The Wednesday morning Bible study just completed a book called “Dare to Dream”. Its subtitle is, “Creating a God-Sized Mission Statement for Your Life.”

One of the ideas within the book is that our God-goals will, and should, feel impossible. If we feel confident we can complete it, then we are limiting ourselves to personal goals not to God-goals.

The book asked questions along the way to get us thinking about what our purpose could be. Certainly “what am I good at” can be a starting point, but a stronger indicator is what moves you to compassion? Your gifts will emerge out of your service. Jesus was moved by compassion and acted from that gut-wrenching feeling. When do you want to scream, “somebody needs to do something about this!”

Jesus told the disciples to pray that God would step in and then turned around and said the twelve were the answer to that prayer. Your cry for “somebody” may end up being replaced with your own name.

Age isn’t an excuse. Moses was 80 when he began his call to lead God’s people out of Egypt. Sarah had gone through menopause, and Abraham was a hundred years old when they welcomed their son Isaac into the world.

God can deal with old age.

Lack of funding isn’t an excuse. Jesus ordered the twelve not to bring a purse. It wasn’t up to their bank accounts to fund the mission. They were also instructed not to charge for their healing services.

Matthew 10:8b “You received without payment; give without payment.”

God doesn’t worry about money.

We will always have excuses. I often compare myself to others and see how I fall short. Do you do that? I think I could never measure up to these people I admire. God doesn’t ask us to be the same as the people we admire. He’s asking for our hands and feet to be His hands and feet. He knows us! He has counted every hair on our head.

We meet God’s call to mission by being ourselves. We are enough when we partner with each other and with God.

What is the mission? It will be unique for each of us, but scripture gives us some guidance.

Our Psalm gives one piece.

Psalms 116:1-2 I love the LORD because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

People need to feel heard. They need to know they are not alone in their suffering.

Matthew 10:7 As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’

The words need to be backed up by responding to their needs for healing. It’s one thing to say you notice someone has a need and feel pity. A better response is to allow compassion to move you to action.

Your piece of God’s mission will be as unique as you are. I can’t tell you what yours is. What do you find gut-wrenching? That’s a place to start.

It doesn’t mention it in the Matthew passage, but in the Gospel of Mark it adds the detail that they were paired up.

Mark 6:7 Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

We are supposed to act together. We each have a different role to play based on who we are. We don’t get to travel alongside the Apostles to know how they went about the mission, but I am assuming they used their own personalities and unique gifts in the process. The weakness of one was supported by the strength of the partner.

We are to act together as humans and invite the power of the Holy Spirit to be our partner in ministry. If you are acting as God’s hands and feet, then God is present with you. You are never alone.

Never.

It doesn't mean the task is easy. It doesn't mean you won't find yourself in hot water with other people. We are called to persevere and lean on God. Again, if we think we can accomplish the mission on our own, our dreams are not God-sized.

I hope you are repeating our breakthrough prayer. It is a good one.

“God, we don't know what to do but you do. Open our eyes to see it. Our ears to hear it. Our hearts to live it.”

May you be moved by compassion. Dare to dream big dreams. You are not alone in bringing the dream into reality, but it is dependent on you responding to your unique call.

Amen