

Go!
Part 2 – Terms of Call
Matthew 10:1-4

Rev. Jeff Chapman ~ October 19, 2025 ~ Faith Presbyterian Church

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¹Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.
(Matthew 10:1-4, NRSV)

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When was the last time you received a summons from some authority to report for duty? Maybe it was from the courts. How many of you have been summoned for jury duty? Do you like going to your mailbox and finding that very recognizable letter from the Sacramento Superior Court? Maybe some of you are old enough to have been drafted into the military. That ended when I was seven, so I don't know that experience. I have had the experience of being summoned to the principal's office, but that's a story for another day. Point is, we all know what it's like to be summoned by authority.

As this passage opens, the twelve disciples, this core group of Jesus' followers, have been summoned to report to him for duty. Some translations say Jesus "called" his disciples to himself. That's a word we are more familiar with around the church. We often talk about people being called by God to ministry. But often we restrict the idea of call to people like me, pastors and missionaries, so-called "professionals" in the church. In fact, my employment contract here with this congregation is referred to as my "Terms of Call." It serves as a reminder to why I'm here. I'm not here as your pastor simply because I wanted to come here (though I did), or because you wanted me to come here (I think you did), but because God summoned me here.

But I would argue that we too often have too narrow a sense of God's call. In fact, I believe that we are *all* called by Jesus. In his teaching on this passage from

Matthew, my Kenyan friend, Pastor Reuben Kiboi, points out that Jesus actually calls *each of us* in three ways.¹

First, Jesus calls us *all* to trust him as Savior. He comes into this world as one of us, gives himself sacrificially for us, and in dying and rising from the dead opens the way for us to receive from him salvation from sin, evil and death. Then he calls us to trust him and give our lives to him. He summons us into his family as beloved sons and daughters of God.

Second, Jesus calls *all* of us to trust him as Lord. He invites us to follow him, to learn from him, to obey him, to allow him to teach us to live our lives as he would live our lives if he were in our shoes. Jesus summons us as disciples.

Then, once we are ready and willing to follow him, Jesus then calls *all* of us to follow him out into the world. He calls us to go. As we saw last week, Jesus sees that the harvest is ripe in this world, that all around us are people who are lost like sheep without a shepherd, and therefore open to responding to a call to trust Jesus as Savior and Lord. So he summons us to go with him out into the world to declare the good news of the Kingdom with our words and with our deeds.

We are all called by Christ. Though, of course, this will look different for each of us. Some of us are called to go across the world as missionaries in places far from home. Many others of us are simply called to go into our own families, and neighborhoods, and workplaces, and schools, to represent Christ in places closer to home. But none of us are exempt. All of us are called. And therefore, all of us, you might say, have been given "terms of call."

Matthew chapter 10, following on Jesus' teaching at the end of chapter 9 that the fields are ripe and in need of workers to go harvest the fruit, is Jesus' outline of those terms. These were originally given to his first disciples but, I believe, are relevant and applicable in many ways to us as well. In fact, these first few verses we just read have a few very important terms of call to make clear.

¹ From his course "Gospel Missions" offered at the Angaza Torchbearers Bible School in Embu, Kenya, in May, 2025. Rev. Kiboi's teaching was an inspiration for this sermon series.

First, and maybe foremost, it's made clear here that Jesus is always the authority and source behind our call. In other words, we don't call ourselves. And others don't call us. Jesus calls us. Jesus summoned his twelve disciples. They didn't come to him asking for the opportunity to go. It's not even clear whether or not they wanted to go. What is clear is that they were not to go unless they were called.

You may remember that after his resurrection, Jesus summoned these same bewildered disciples and told them that he was about to send them out into the world to declare the good news involving his death and resurrection, and the coming of God's Kingdom. But then he clearly instructed them, **"You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."**² Not only are you not to go unless I call you to go, you are not to go until I go with you.

This brings to mind the so-called Great Commission, those final words Jesus speaks in Matthew's Gospel: **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**³ In the middle of the commission is the call to go out into ripe fields. But the bookends are instructive. We only go out of Christ's authority, which happens to be the only real authority there is. And as we go, he goes with us, never leaving us, even to the very end.

Now, when it comes to going, the problem with some of us here is that we hesitate. Whether out of fear, laziness, distraction, or plain old disobedience, we stay instead of go. Jesus is going out, but we, though we claim to be his followers, are inclined to stay put. But others of us, our problem is that even though we say we are following Jesus, we love to run way out ahead of him, often into places he never told us to go and doing things he never told us to do. Honestly, this is my problem. And it's probably rooted in pride, this inbred tendency to think I've got it all figured out. How many times in my life have I needed to be reminded of that warning in Psalm 127:1 - **"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."**

So which is it for you? I guarantee you that the Lord is calling you to go out into this world and bear witness to the good things he has done. So, is it your tendency to

hesitate and stall? In a moment I'll say more about what may be behind that. Or is it your tendency, as it is my tendency, to run on ahead? Remember that after Jesus teaches us that the harvest is ripe, the first thing he teaches us to do is pray. I hope you have been praying with me, praying for forgiveness, praying for compassion, praying for people. He's the Lord of the Harvest. Not us. And he is always the one who calls us to go.

A second thing in regard to our terms of call that we learn here is that when Jesus calls us to go, he calls us to go and represent him. Matthew tells us here that Jesus gave his disciples "authority" as they went out. To be clear, this doesn't mean that they then had authority in and of themselves. No, they were to go and act on *his* authority. This is conferred power, delegated license. In the next verse Matthew calls these men "apostles." That's the only time he uses that word in his Gospel. The word "apostle" literally means "to send." A good parallel in our day would be an ambassador. If you are sent as an ambassador from the United States to another country, you don't go to represent your own personal interests, but solely to represent the interests of the United States. Same with an apostle. You are going on the authority of another.⁴

All the way back to the creation accounts in Genesis we learn that we were made in the very image of God.⁵ Same idea. We were literally created to be God's ambassadors in this world, to go out and represent him, reflect him, seek his interests, bring glory to him. Sin corrupted that image in us, but Christ has come to restore what was corrupted, at work in us even now to reform us back into God's image, that when we go into the world we would not only reflect the character of Christ – love, joy, peace, patience, and the rest – but begin, with his power and authority in us, to do the things Jesus does in the world.

This is, by the way, why there are 12 apostles. Not 11. Not 13. The number is not random. Israel came to be defined as twelve tribes, one for each of Jacob's sons. Many of us have been reading about that in Genesis. From the very beginning, when God summoned Abraham in Genesis 12, the call of God for Israel was to represent him in this world, a nation blessed by God that God would then use to bless all other nations.⁶ The church, founded by these 12 apostles, is to be the new and greater Israel, a community not defined or distinguished by race or geography, but by faith in Christ, and now the primary vehicle through which God will bless every nation on earth.

² Luke 24:48-49. Unless otherwise noted, this and all biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

³ Matthew 28:18-20

⁴ <https://biblehub.com/greek/652.htm>

⁵ See Genesis 1:26

⁶ See Genesis 12:1-3

I pointed out last week that in the preceding chapter of Matthew, chapter 9, we see Jesus spending his days driving out evil spirits, healing the sick and the injured, welcoming the outcasts, declaring grace and good news. So if this is what Jesus is doing in the world, what do you think he will send his representatives, his apostles, the new Israel, the church, out to do in the world?

“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.” This is part of our terms of call as we go, to represent the one who sends us and goes with us.

But a fair question you may be asking at this point is whether or not this delegated authority to do such miraculous things was given just to these original twelve disciples, or has it been also given to all disciples ever since, right down to us today? Are we also sent out to exorcise demons and perform miraculous healings? The short answer is no. Biblical scholars point out that beginning with the Great Commission, and then on throughout the rest of the New Testament following the Gospels, there is no command given to the *whole* church to do these things. Yes, certain people within the church are granted these specific spiritual gifts of healing and deliverance. I have met people with these gifts. Perhaps some of you have these gifts.

But the church is a body with many different parts, each part with unique gifts. Yes, we are all given authority to go out and make disciples, but we are not all given the authority to utilize every spiritual gift. In fact, there has been general consensus in the church that the concentration of miracles and healings we see here and in much of the early church served the specific purpose of authenticating the new message of Jesus and the apostles. In other words, these signs and wonders served as credentials given to root and establish the new church to a world that knew nothing about Christianity. This may explain why we hear about signs and wonders today in parts of the world where the gospel is being introduced for the first time.⁷

Even so, even for those of us who have not been given the authority to heal and deliver people from evil, consider for a moment what authority we have been given if we are in Christ. For example, when you follow Jesus’ call out into the world, going with him where he leads you, you have the authority to declare to people you meet who feel overwhelmed by evil in this world that evil’s days are numbered. The evil one is defeated. Goodness will have the last say. Jesus himself declared, **“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**⁸ Who do you know that

needs to hear that the evil infecting this world, along with the evil attacking us personally, has been, and will be, overcome? *You* have the authority to make this declaration!

If you are in Christ, *you* also have the authority to declare to people whose bodies are sick and breaking down that healing is coming. Perhaps temporary healing; sometimes people do get healed in this life. But for those who trust in Jesus there will come a day when we are *guaranteed* to receive resurrected bodies which will never age, never get sick, never feel pain, never die. I have a good friend who has been diagnosed with ALS. It’s a terrible disease that will likely take his life. But because he loves and trusts Jesus, I had the authority to declare to him that for the vast majority of his future days, he will live free from ALS. You have the authority to declare to others in our world that the same can be said of them, regardless of their current physical condition, if they would come to also trust in Jesus. In that beautiful vision of what is to come when Jesus returns, John declares, **“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”**⁹

And if you are in Christ, you most definitely have the authority to declare to anybody that you meet that the God who made them is a God who loves and forgives them. So many people in our world live lives burdened by crushing shame, guilt, failure, and a gnawing sense of never measuring up. You have the authority to tell people that as they come to Christ they will discover that he, their only judge, remembers their sin no more, that he loves them unconditionally, on their worst day as much as their best day. 1st John 1:9 is an invitation we can declare to everybody: **“If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

This is how Jesus is calling us to go and represent him in this world. All of us, not just some of us. We are all called to trust him as Savior, obey him as Lord, and follow him into the world to join him in seeing his Kingdom established here on earth. So why don’t we go? Why do so many of us hesitate? And many more in the church don’t just hesitate, they simply ignore the call. While there are many reasons, I’d like to point out three of the more common ones. Perhaps at least one of these will sound familiar.

First, many of us don’t go because we feel ill-equipped. This is probably the excuse I most often hear in the church: “I’m willing to go, but I don’t see how Jesus

⁷ Frederick Dale Bruner was especially helpful here, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Volume 1 (Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 452–453.

⁸ John 16:33 (New International Version)

⁹ Revelation 21:4

could use somebody like me.” And this is where the list of disciples Matthew gives us here in verses 2-4, verses we might be tempted to read right past, can be enormously helpful. To put it bluntly, the group listed here is not the cream of the crop. Most of these men were poor and uneducated. Some were fisherman. One, Simon the Zealot, had been a political terrorist. Another, Matthew, had been a hated tax-collector, a traitor to his own people. And one, Judas, would eventually betray Jesus.

Commentator Dale Bruner reminds us, “[This list teaches us] that mission is exercised by sinners transformed by grace rather than by saints without problems, by debtors not creditors, by people not angels.”¹⁰ In other words, by ordinary and flawed and ill-equipped people just like you and me. God calls old, unfertile people like Abraham and Sarah to start nations, stutterers like Moses to go give speeches to kings, runt shepherd boys like David to become kings themselves, and religious terrorists like Paul to go promote the very message he was trying to stamp out. So what’s your excuse? God does not call the equipped; he equips the called.

Second, many of us hesitate to go because we don’t want to go alone. And in a way, it’s right that we should hesitate, for I don’t think Jesus ever calls us to go alone. It’s instructive that when Matthew gives us this list of disciples, they are grouped in pairs. Simon is with Andrew. James is with his brother, John. And so on. In a similar account in Luke’s Gospel we read, **“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.”**¹¹ Did you know that the only time in the Gospels that Jesus ever sends out a person on his own is when he sends out Judas to betray him?¹² Every other time he sent people out in at least pairs.

Some of you know that recently, after sensing a call to serve in prison ministry, I’ve been going each week to shadow a chaplain at the county jail downtown. I’m getting to see Christ at work in the lives of the men I meet there, and finding countless opportunities to represent Jesus in that place. But the thing is, even when I am done with my training, I’m not going to continue going unless I can find a few other men who feel called to go with me. I don’t think Jesus would send me on my own. So by the way, if that’s a call you’re open to exploring, please come talk to me.

By contrast, I love the Reaching Out event we host every fourth Saturday at Bethany Church. There are always 20-30 of us who go out together to serve that community, to share a meal, share resources, share prayer, share Christ. I love going together. We need each other. There is power in two, or more.¹³ I’m convinced that however the Lord calls us to go out as a church in the days to come, he will not call any of us to go alone. Not only will Christ be with us, he will be with us through one another. Be assured of that.

Finally, sometimes we hesitate because we feel divided. It’s understandable. The division in our nation and culture these days has sadly infected the church as well, as people who, though they claim the name of Christ, allow politics, or race, or personality, or preferences to divide them just like these things divide the rest of the world. And yes, it makes it hard for divided people to go together. But this is where this list of 12 is also instructive, because once we understand the men behind the names in this list we see that Jesus intentionally chose men who, in any other circumstances, would never have been united in their mission because there was too much that otherwise would have divided them.

The clearest example is Matthew the tax collector and Judas the Zealot. Notice that Matthew doesn’t just list their two names here, but highlights their backgrounds. That’s intentional. Any first century Jew reading this list could not have imagined two such people ever joining together in a shared mission. Matthew had been a traitor to his own people and had signed up with the enemy occupiers in Rome to unfairly collect taxes from his fellow Jews to line his own pockets. Simon, on the other hand, had been a revolutionary working as a part of the anti-Roman-imperialism movement in Israel. In our day, imagine a far-right white supremacist and a far-left Antifa radical working together on the same team, and you get a sense of the potential divide among the twelve.

And yet Christ, because he was becoming the dominating and renewing center of this community of those submitted to him as disciples, he was able to overcome even the most seemingly-insurmountable social, political, economic, and class divisions to form unity around himself. In fact, at another point Jesus made clear that the distinctive mark of his true disciples to the rest of the world was that they would love one another in spite of all these differences which otherwise divide everybody else.¹⁴

¹⁰ Bruner, 456.

¹¹ Luke 10:1

¹² “After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’” (John 13:27)

¹³ See Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 – “Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other, but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to

help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

¹⁴ “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

There is nowhere else in the world where this happens. Nowhere. And this is why our differences, *when made secondary to our commonality in Christ*, are now not allowed to divide us. The result is that our witness to the world is uniquely powerful if we are willing to go and bear witness together. Imagine if the world could see the church full of people with varying politics, ages, races, nationalities, personalities, and preferences, people who honestly may not always like each other all that much, nevertheless still willing to go out and love one another as they love the world together! Where else will you see this? Again, nowhere. And so far from being something that should give us pause before we go, our differences, once made secondary to our unity in Christ, are an asset as we go.

Listen to me. Jesus is calling *you* as he is calling us all. He is calling you to trust him is Savior, obey him as Lord, and go out with him into the ripe harvest to represent him to a lost world. Those are your terms of call, and there is no good excuse you can give to him for not accepting them. You are not ill-equipped (at least you won't be!). You are not alone (at least you shouldn't be!). You are not divided (you must not be!). And yet, even if you agree that all this is true, I will acknowledge that it still may be hard to see where you are to go and what you are to do when you get there. I get it. The good news is that Jesus does has not left us without clear instruction. In fact, that is what we are going to find in the remainder of this chapter, which we will work through in the coming weeks.

For now, please continue to pray with me as Jesus commands us to pray before he summons us to send us out. Pray with me for forgiveness, forgiveness for all the ways we have thus far refused to go, often because our hearts are hard towards those we are sent to love. Pray with me for compassion, that Christ would change our hearts, even break our hearts with the things that break his heart. And pray with me for people. Please develop a short list of people in your life who do not yet know the love and grace of Christ, and pray for them daily. Pray for all these things every day. And as I said last week, the chances are good that as we do, we ourselves may end up being the answers to our prayers.

Amen.

Lord God, our Father in Heaven, we have heard you speak to us through your Word this morning. We now respond to what we have heard in prayer. Hear us as we lift up the needs of the church and the the needs of the world which you love and into which you call us to go and bear witness to your love. You are alive and at work in this world, bringing your kingdom from heaven to earth. Help us to be agents of that kingdom renewal, messengers of good news wherever you send us! We come before you trusting in your mercy, and in your

goodness, and in your enduring love. Hear our prayers, dear Lord.

We pray that this morning, as we gather together in congregations across the land to worship you, that you would unite believers of all traditions. Lord, keep your church from being divided – by race, by politics, petty disagreements, by anything! May we demonstrate the deep unity we share in Christ as we go into the world. May our differences, beautiful or otherwise, never divide us as they divide our world. May your church be one, that our witness to this world would be compelling and undeniable.

We pray for peace in our world this morning, that all people – all people! – may be free of war, and of famine and of disease. We remember nations in our world this morning where these threats seem particularly great. We pray for the leaders of our world – for all those who govern and maintain peace – that they would exercise their authority in obedience to your commands, that they would serve with wisdom, compassion and justice. Remove all men and women from leadership those who refuse to do so.

We pray for our own nation, Lord. Help America to be a nation in pursuit of just priorities – that the races may be reconciled; that the young may be educated; that the old may be honored; the hungry, filled; the homeless, housed; and the sick, comforted and cared for with the best attention possible.

We pray for our city, Lord. We pray for the division – racial and otherwise – which still threatens to divide us. Help us to listen to one another, to judge our own thoughts and actions before we judge the thoughts and actions of others, to give of ourselves for the sake of our neighbors no matter who our neighbors happen to be. Father, your Kingdom come your will be done, in Sacramento as it is in heaven.

We pray today for our own congregation, especially for those who find themselves today in a season of hardship.

We pray for those who are sick or dying...Father, bring healing, bring comfort and peace.

We pray for those who feel as if they are alone...Father, bring friendship, bring community.

We pray for those who grieve the loss of a loved one...Father, bring your presence, bring compassion.

We pray for those who are trapped, by addiction or by abuse or by other circumstances. Father, bring freedom, bring release.

And we pray for those who are lost, lost like sheep without a shepherd, for those who do not know you and the life you offer, who do not yet know the place you have made for them

as beloved sons and daughters. Father, bring salvation, bring new life. In all these things, use us, your people, to accomplish your will.

God of mercy and grace, to the extent that you want to call us to become the answer to these prayers as you send us out, make us ready and willing to go. Equip us. Fill us with compassion. Break our hearts by the things which break your heart. As you led, help us follow. All this we pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

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The Next Step

A resource for Life Groups and/or personal application

1. When was the last time you were summoned? Did you go willingly? Eagerly? Reluctantly? Why did you go?
2. Read Matthew 10:1-4 again. What do you notice here? What stands out to you? What questions are raised?
3. Do you believe that you have been called by God? Why or why not? If so, to what (or to whom) has he called you?
4. Do you believe that Jesus has given you authority as you go out into the world to represent him? Why or why not? Authority to do what?
5. Read the names of the men listed here. How are you similar to them? How you are unlike them?
6. Jeff mentioned three things which often cause us to fail to yield to Jesus' call to follow him out into the world: feeling of being ill-equipped; feeling of being alone; feeling of being divided. Does one of these describe you? If not, what other factor often makes you hesitate?
7. Can you share a time when you sensed a clear call from Christ to go out into the world to represent him? What happened?
8. How do you feel the Lord challenging you or encouraging you through this message? What might be your next step in response?

Table to Table: For kids and adults to consider together.



What is God calling his people to do in the world today? How will we hear Jesus when he calls out to us?