

Go!
Part 4 – Extending Peace Without Excuses
Matthew 10:9-15

Rev. Jeff Chapman ~ November 2, 2025 ~ Faith Presbyterian Church

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⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts,
¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals,
or a staff; for laborers deserve their food.
¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who
in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As
you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is
worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not
worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone
will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake
off the dust from your feet as you leave that house
or town. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable
for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of
judgment than for that town. (Matthew 10:9-15,
NRSV)

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So what's your excuse? I know mine.

I've tried to make the case for these last several weeks that as followers of Jesus we are all called to go out into the world to make more followers of Jesus. We have good news, the best news, news that so many people who are in trouble in our world need to hear. So Jesus commands us to go. And yet many of us hesitate, we stall, we stay, we make excuses that keep us from sharing this good news with people around us who need to know Jesus.

One person says, "I lack the training. That's my excuse. I don't know how to share the gospel with other people. I wouldn't even know where to start." Fair enough. But what are you doing to get the training you need?

Another person excuses himself because evangelism is just not his gift. Also, fair enough. The New Testament confirms that only some in the church are called to the role of evangelists.¹ And yet, it also makes clear that *all of us* are called to be witnesses to what we know Jesus has done. Nobody gets a pass when it comes to sharing good news.

I'm sure some of you feel like you don't have enough Bible knowledge to tell somebody else what it says in

the Bible. That also could be true. And how you do you think you might solve that problem?

Others are afraid that they are not good enough to set themselves up as examples for others. "Who am I to tell somebody else how to live when my life is a mess?" What a relief it is to find out that we aren't supposed to do that anyway. We're just beggars telling other beggars where to find bread. We only boast about Jesus, never ourselves, because in many cases it's true, our lives are just as messy as the lives of others around us.

Have I called out your excuse? I called out mine. If you think about it, however, Jesus addresses and dismisses all our excuses in his command to his disciples here to, "**Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food.**"² Perhaps Jesus knew the forthcoming excuses these first disciples would have excuses about not having enough provision for a long evangelistic road trip, and so he's shooting down those excuses before they are even made, making clear to them that all that is needed will be provided. And I think it's fair to expand what he says here to also shoot down our excuses. Do you think your lack of training, or insufficient abilities, or weak Bible knowledge, or imperfect life is going to present an insurmountable obstacle that disqualifies you from being used by Jesus to bring good news? After all, he knew just how unqualified you were before he even called you! Same with me.

My friend, Reuben Kiboi, a Kenyan pastor who inspired this sermon series, points out that even when Jesus was sent out he was sent out with almost nothing. In fact, almost everything Jesus used in his ministry, he borrowed. He had no womb of his own, only a borrowed one. He had no cradle, so had to borrow one from the animals. He spent a lot of his days couch surfing, never staying in a home of his own. The donkey on which he rode into town on Palm Sunday was borrowed. He was even buried in a borrowed tomb!³ If Jesus himself had to rely on his Father in

¹ See Ephesians 4:11

² This and all biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

³ From his teaching at the 2025 Angaza Torchbearers Bible School in Embu, Kenya, entitled "Gospel Missions."

heaven to provide him with what he needed to accomplish his mission, do we imagine that we are expected to go out self-sufficient? No excuse we might offer is good enough. As I've said often in this series, God doesn't call the equipped, but equips the called.

I recently heard a brilliant illustration given by American theologian, Francis Schaeffer.⁴ Moses, after fleeing the royal palace in Egypt as a fugitive, spent 40 years as a forgotten shepherd in the wilderness far from Egypt. When God meets him one day at the burning bush, all Moses has in his hand is a rod, a shepherd's staff.⁵ Even so, God tells him to go to Egypt to bring good news to his people who are in trouble there. But Moses doesn't want to go. He's convinced he is woefully ill-equipped. So God asks Moses, "What's in your hand?" Again, it's just an ordinary shepherd's rod. But then God turns the rod into a serpent, a clear demonstration that God's power will be with Moses. The Lord touches what was in Moses' hand and the rod of Moses becomes the rod of God. The same rod that was used by a shepherd in obscurity to guide sheep was about to become a rod of power used in a palace to confront a nation.

So what is it that has God placed in your hands? Admittedly, it may not seem like much. But whatever it is, it's enough. As Francis Schaeffer put it, "In God's sight there are no little people and no little places. Only one thing is important, to be consecrated persons for God's purposes for us in each moment. Those who think of themselves as little people in little places, if committed to Christ and living under his lordship in the whole of life, may, by God's grace, change the flow of our generation."⁶ In fact, because of your distinctive position in life, your particular relationships, circumstances, and history, you are uniquely positioned by God to bear witness to people others would have a very hard time reaching.

So with God as the one who not only calls us but equips us, we go. And it's in these next verses that Jesus finally gets specific about what it is we do when we go. In verse 11 he tells his disciples, **"Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave."** Basically, the disciples were to go out and do a little research. Go out and get to know people well enough so that you can know the state of their heart. "Worthy" is the word used here. It's a word that has to do with weighing something to determine its value.⁷ From the context of the passage it seems fair to replace it with the word "receptive." As

you meet people in this life, pay attention long enough to gain a sense of whether such people may be receptive to the good news you have to bring. You won't yet know for certain, but there are certain people you will suspect may be more spiritually open than other people.

Think about people you know in your life who are outside the church, people who don't seem to yet be followers of Jesus. As you get to know them, I bet you have a sense of their receptivity to spiritual matters, their level of openness to hearing what it is you have to share. I'm sure you know people who seem absolutely unreceptive. Perhaps they have even told you so – "Don't bring up Jesus to me!" We have to be discerning here. Understand that Jesus is making clear to us that we are not called to just go out and share the gospel indiscriminately with everybody we meet. To do so actually goes against his teaching. A little research is first needed.

When we do come across people who seem receptive, Jesus says we should "stay there." In the context of these first disciples, the reason for this was because moving around from house to house in the same village would violate ancient Palestinian hospitality norms. People might be offended if you left their home for a better offer down the street. In our context, I think what Jesus may be telling us here is that sharing the gospel is mostly about relationships. In Luke's version of these instructions, Jesus tells his disciples, **"Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide..."**⁸ The Jewish table was the most cherished and protected sector of Jewish communal life. If you were welcome into that space, you had been granted access into an intimate space.⁹ It's why the religious leaders hated Jesus for sharing a table with those they considered absolutely unworthy, people like tax collectors and sex workers. All this means that Jesus is encouraging us to be on the lookout for people who seem to be receptive, and then when we find them to remain in those relationships. As commentator Jim Edwards put it, "Evangelism is not a crusade, or a strategy, or a program, but interpersonal encounters in which the good news of Jesus might be shared in the context of trusting relationships."¹⁰

But staying is not enough. So Jesus goes in in verse 12, **"As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you."** To greet a household in those days with peace likely meant using the greeting "Shalom aleichem," which literally means

⁴ Cited by Jon Tyson in a sermon entitled, "The Fifth Act: The Church at Antioch", *Church of the City*, July 21, 2025. I'm borrowing some of Tyson's description here. Watch at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9J7BGEZ6WI>

⁵ Read the story in Exodus 4.

⁶ Source unknown.

⁷ <https://biblehub.com/greek/514.htm>

⁸ Luke 10:7

⁹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Apollos, 2015), 307.

¹⁰ Ibid

“Peace be upon you.”¹¹ It’s really much more than a greeting, and more of a blessing. This was extending to another wholeness, good will, the Lord’s favor, salvation. In other words, when you sense that somebody you know seems receptive to the good news you have to share, you find a way to extend to them that blessing of the good news. In a way, you are saying, “The good news which has changed my life is good news that is equally available to you if you are indeed ready and willing to receive it.” It’s almost a question as much as it is a statement. “I’m bringing God’s blessing to you. It’s fully available to you. Are you ready to receive it? It seems like you might be.” This is a way of identifying yourself with Christ.

This past week a friend of mine told me a story which I pass on with his permission. He recently felt God’s prompting to share a meal with some men he met who were living on the streets, men who regularly congregate near where he works. He’d seen them before and, as it turned out, they’d seen him before. As he was leaving after giving them their Big Mac’s, one of the guys recognized my friend by the nametag lanyard he always wore which represented his favorite NFL team. So this guy yells out to my friend, “Hey, I know you. You’re the Patriots guy!”. To which my friend responded back, “That’s right. And I’m also the Jesus guy.”

The Jesus guy. I like that. At some point the people in your life who seem to you to be receptive to Jesus need to know that you are a follower of Jesus. It’s a way of extending peace, God’s peace. If somebody sees you as the Patriots guy, they are more likely to talk to you about football, if they’re into football. If they see you as the neighbor lady, they’ll talk to you about neighborhood things. Those of you who have a specialty career, whether you’re a lawyer, a doctor, a carpenter, or a car mechanic, if people know you are that guy or that lady with that expertise you’re likely to have them approach you when they have a legal question, an unexplained rash, a question about plumbing, or a strange noise coming from the engine. And if people know you’re the Jesus guy, it opens the door to for them to talk with you about Jesus if and when their heart is truly inclined to doing so.

So let me ask you, do people in your life know that you are a follower of Jesus? You don’t have to shove Jesus in somebody’s face to simply let them know that he’s important to you, even central to your life. That might happen by just sharing something you did with the church that past weekend when somebody on Monday asks how your weekend was. It might happen when you are sharing some of your story and mention how

you saw God at work in your life. That’s not preaching, it’s just sharing your story. My son has a visible tattoo that speaks to his faith. It elicits lots of questions from people he knows, meaning lots of opportunities to talk about his faith with those who express an interest in hearing. For me, all I have to do is let people know I’m a pastor. Now they know the door is open. One thing all of us can do is simply offer to pray for or with seemingly receptive people who share with us some struggle they are facing in life. That’s such an easy way to extend peace.

What works for you? What is the most natural way for you to tell seemingly receptive people, “Jesus is central in my life, and so I am open to telling you more about him if you ever want to know more.”

When you do this, I believe one of two things will happen. Jesus spells this out right in the text. Either your peace will be received and reciprocated, or your peace will be rejected and returned. First, if you discover that your hunch was right, that this truly is a worthy person, receptive to God at this point in his or her life, then the way is now wide open for you to pay attention to how the Lord has prepared this person to hear the good news you have to share. When I have identified myself as the Jesus guy, and in response the person is still willing to extend hospitality towards me, open their life to me, even be willing to serve me, it’s fair to assume at that point that the Lord has made such a person ripe to receive good news.

In Luke’s version of this teaching Jesus tells his disciples what to do at this point: **“Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”**¹² Essentially, Jesus is saying that it is time to share the good news of the gospel. Probably not with these words, because if you tell people that the kingdom of God is close by they will likely have no idea what you are talking about. What you can tell people instead is your own story, particularly how Christ has come near to you in your life and begun to change everything. Talk about how you have experienced healing because of Jesus, perhaps in your body, but most definitely in your spirit and mind. Talk about how you now live with hope, even in the face of death. Talk about how you have found a depth of community in the church which has been life-giving. Talk about how you are experiencing strength against evil in this world. Each of us has a personal story of how we have experienced the kingdom of heaven in our lives through Jesus. You are the leading expert when it comes to the story of your life. So tell it when the time is right.

¹¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Volume 1 (Eerdmans, 2004), 468.

¹² Luke 10:8-9

This means, of course, that it's good to think through our own personal stories, along with the main story of what Christ has done, so that we will be prepared to share these stories when the opportunity to do so arises.

1st Peter 3:15-16 encourages us, **"Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect."** And yet even when what we have to share is not polished and rehearsed, we can still trust that in those moments the Lord, who always equips those he calls, will provide the words.

At another point Jesus encouraged his disciples by saying, **"When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you will answer or what you are to say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say."**¹³ In that context he's talking about providing words when his disciples face intense persecution. Will he certainly not do the same for us when we are facing people who have already indicated that they are open to receiving what it is we have to share! On top of this, if what we're mostly doing is just telling our own story, perhaps what is most important is sincerity. Again, nobody knows your story better than you do.

Of course, when we extend peace to people, making known our devotion to Jesus, there will also be times when even people we sensed were receptive are anything but. Jesus knows this will happen, and wants us to expect that it will happen. He even gives specific instructions to prepare us when it does happen: **"If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town."** In Jesus' day, Jews who traveled to a foreign country would literally shake the dust off their feet and clothes as they crossed the border back into Palestine, lest they bring back with them anything unholy. Whether or not Jesus is being literal here, we see his point. When we face rejection from others because of our identification with Jesus, we are to leave that rejection behind and not carry it with us. And I think there are at least three things we can learn here as we do.

First, let's remember that it's never our job to force Jesus or his message on anybody. As we made clear from Jesus' teaching the very first week of this sermon series, Jesus is not looking for anybody to help make the harvest ripe.¹⁴ That's his job. He's only looking for workers willing to go out and harvest fruit which he, himself, has *already made* ripe. We must unburden ourselves of this idea that it's somehow up to us to

convert people. When you approach others with that idea, we become salespeople rather than harvesters, and most people don't like to be pressured by salespeople. When we try to sell Jesus to reluctant buyers, we can actually create barriers to belief that might not have existed before we showed up.

Second, don't be too discouraged when your efforts to share Christ with others who seemed receptive are met with resistance, or even hostility. For these first disciples, the shaking off of the dust was a little sacrament of sorts, graciously given to them by Jesus that they might be reminded to not take the sting of rejection to heart. A pastor I worked with years ago would often remind me that when you go out to represent Jesus in this world you are always going to find rejection. If people rejected Jesus to his face, why do we think it won't happen to his followers! However, my friend's goal was to make sure that when he faced rejection it was never him that others were rejecting. Sometimes people go out in the name of Jesus and it is they themselves, and the ways they interact with others, which people find offensive.

We've all seen examples of evangelism which leave a bad taste in our mouths because they probably also leave a bad taste in Jesus' mouth. I don't want to offend people by being offensive. But if Jesus offends people, as he often will, well then I shouldn't be too surprised or discouraged by that. Jesus is telling us here it will happen. When it does, we turn the page and move on.

Having said that – and this is the third thing we learn here – let's also not imagine that those who reject Jesus today are doomed to reject Jesus for good. Yes, the consequences for a lifetime of perpetual rejection of Christ are serious. Jesus doesn't mince words here. In verse 15 he declares that the destruction that happened to Sodom and Gomorrah when they rejected God will seem minor compared to the destruction awaiting those who ultimately choose to reject him. Unreceptivity to the gospel is the greatest sin. In fact, all sin can be forgiven by God except the sin of refusing to accept God's forgiveness. As John Calvin once put it, "God is offended by no crime so much as by contempt for his Word: not for murder or adultery or for any other crime are we told to show detestation in so serious a rite."¹⁵ Let's never downplay the consequences at stake here. Without Jesus, people really are in trouble.

But as I have come to realize, the person who is absolutely dead-set against Jesus today may, by the gracious working of God, come to open their heart to him on some future day, often when life goes south. That's what often happens when what people thought

¹³ Luke 12:11-12

¹⁴ See Matthew 9:35-38

¹⁵ Cited by Bruner, 470.

was their trusted source of identity, security and meaning in life turns out to be empty and fleeting, they suddenly become open to taking a second look towards Christ. So we don't give up on people even though we may have to walk away for a time and wipe the dust off. We don't give up entirely because their story isn't over.

In fact, I once heard somebody compare the journey of coming to trust Christ as a journey of 100 steps. Your encounter with somebody may be, for them, be just step 7, meaning they reject you because they are still a long way from faith. What you don't see, however, is that God used you to move them from step 6 to step 7. That's progress. On the other hand, maybe your encounter happens to lead to the final step, step 100, and you are fortunate to experience the joy of seeing somebody finally come to place their faith in Christ. Wonderful, but don't think too highly of yourself. There were 99 other steps before you showed up that God used to bring that person to the point where they were ripe to receive Christ when you came along.

It's certainly never our job to condemn people, even when they seem to be condemning themselves. Since Jesus taught us we must love our enemies, that certainly includes those who reject us because we are associated with Jesus. And if we truly love such people, we will naturally experience sorrow when they choose to remain lost. And if these are people who will remain in our lives, sometimes because they are in our own families, we will continue to pray for them even as we resist, for a time, talking to them about Jesus. As the old saying goes, sometimes its better to talk to Jesus about people than to talk to people about Jesus. Prayer is always where we begin. It's also where we sometimes have to wait.

I hope what I have shared here this morning, all gleaned from Jesus teaching here in Matthew 10, has been helpful for you as you consider God's call on your life to go make disciples. I really do believe that he is giving us a blueprint here for how we are called in our time to go and bear witness to the good news of the gospel. Perhaps his teaching has even helped to dismantle some of your excuses for not going. What we are learning here is training meant to equip us for the central purpose and mission of our lives, which is to represent Christ and the hope he offers to a world in desperate need of hope.

So continue to pray with me as Jesus teaches us to pray. The harvest continues to be ripe. If, as we pray, we are willing to then be sent out into the harvest, going to do a little research by paying attention long enough to find

out who around us may be receptive, I am certain that the Lord will open up opportunities for us to extend the peace of God. As we do, we may be surprised at just how often that peace is embraced, and embraced all the way to saving faith in Christ.

Amen.

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The Next Step

A resource for Life Groups and/or personal application

1. Read Matthew 10:9-15. Pay attention to Jesus' instructions here. What do you notice?
2. Which part of Jesus' instructions to the disciples seems most applicable to us today? Which part seems least applicable? In general, do you think these instructions apply to us?
3. When the disciples found people who seemed worthy (i.e. receptive), they were called to let their peace come up on those people. What would this look like today? How do we "extend the peace of God's blessing" to others we may sense are receptive to receiving it? Be as specific as you can.
4. Describe somebody in your life who, at this point, seems like a "person of peace."
5. Are you known by people you know outside the church as the "Jesus guy" or the "Jesus lady"? Would you like to be known as such? How might you make this happen?
6. Why do you think Jesus tells his disciples to wipe the dust off their feet as they leave those who are unreceptive to the gospel? What would this "wiping of dust" look like in our context?
7. What excuses do you tend to come up with when faced with Jesus call to go and share the Christian gospel with others? How do you imagine Jesus responding to those excuses?
8. How has this teaching/message changed your view on evangelism?

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



Parents/adults, share with your kids about who it was in the past who first shared the gospel with you? How did that happen? How did you receive it?