

June 18, 2017
 Sermon for the Second Sunday after Pentecost
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Matthew 9:35-10:8

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 9:35–10:8 (ESV)

The Harvest Is Plentiful, the Laborers Few

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

The Twelve Apostles

10 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

The time had come in Jesus' ministry for the word about what God was doing through Him to be spread more broadly throughout Israel and even to the world. To accomplish this, Jesus called twelve of His followers and prepared them to go to cities and villages throughout the land and proclaim to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" the coming of the kingdom of heaven (10:6–7).

But Jesus did not simply select twelve men and send them out. Jesus' lengthy speech in Matthew 10, of which our text is just the short first portion, is intended to prepare the disciples for their task.

Jesus' preparation of the disciples includes a sober warning about what being His disciples will mean for them.

Discipleship isn't at all what the crowds following Jesus were expecting, as He had already begun to show. It wasn't about fame and glory, what we refer to sometimes as the "Theology of Glory". Some do believe that following Christ should be all about carrying a halo on top of our head, like the old Imperial margarine commercial, we call out, I'm a Christian and da da da daaa!

But it's not like that. Much of the world doesn't want to hear about Jesus. Even when Jesus was walking the earth, the people wanted to keep up with the status quo, to keep doing what they wanted to do and just pay lip service to God. I'll call on Jesus when I need Him, but for right now, I don't want none of the religious stuff. I'm doing fine, you keep your Bible warm for me, I'll pick it up later.

In Mt 7:21–23, Jesus told his disciples that *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

Being a disciple of Jesus is not about prophesying or even performing miracles in His name. It’s not about glory this side of heaven. There will be trials and troubles.

We can catch a glimpse or a shadow of it now. Today is a day we have set apart to honor our earthly fathers. A real father, biological or step father knows that as they are raising their children, there isn’t that much glory. That comes later, sometimes when we are older and we see the kind of person that our child has become. They don’t necessarily learn that from our words but much more from our actions as they watch us live out our lives as adults.

If you don’t believe me, wait until you hear your precious little child utter their first curse word, the one that they heard from you when you were cut off in traffic or when you hit your thumb with that hammer.

They watch and learn everything from us. From yelling at their little league coach like it is the world series to watching you humble yourself as you make the effort to go to church every Sunday, even when the lake is calling your name that morning.

In the same way, as followers of Christ, the true disciple is the one who is known by Jesus and who does the will of His Father.

In Mt 8:18–21, Jesus pointed out to two of those who offered to follow Him that being a disciple of Jesus was no easy and comfortable calling.

It requires putting him ahead of home and even family, perhaps having “*nowhere to lay his head.*”

In Mt 9:9–13, Jesus responded to the Pharisees who objected to his association with “*tax collectors and sinners*” by telling them that following Jesus was not an exercise in conventional holiness. It is a radical reorientation to the mission of Jesus Himself, “*For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*” Well that doesn’t make conventional wisdom but nonetheless, Jesus was coming to die on the cross to save just such sinners as these.

Now as Jesus prepares to send His laborers into the harvest, He prepares them for what they will encounter: poverty, rejection, persecution, even losing of their own lives, just as Jesus himself would be persecuted and die (10:16–23).

They might be dragged before governors and kings, just like Jesus was. They might be delivered over to death by their own brothers and fathers and children.

They might be hated by all for Jesus’ sake
But Jesus’ disciples will face these sobering prospects and be able to bear them and even overcome them because Jesus sends them with His own authority. (10:1)

Nothing about these men themselves would equip them for such bravery or dedication. They did not represent the cream of Jewish society. Among them were those who were not thought highly of at all. (10:2–4):

There was one who, as a tax collector for the Roman government, was a social outcast. He was hated because of his job and association with the Romans.

Another was a fisherman who couldn't keep his mouth shut. He and his brother and two business partners, a couple of working-class guys from Galilee

Another who repeatedly expresses doubts and uncertainties about what Jesus says and does. He had to see things to believe them.

There was a political extremist and a traitor.

But what really mattered was not who these twelve were, or their lack of obvious qualifications for the job.

What mattered is that Jesus gave them His own "authority" to carry out the tasks that He has assigned to them.

In Mt 9:6, Jesus shows the people that He has received the authority to forgive sins as he healed the paralytic saying: *"⁶ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"*—he then said to the paralytic—*"Rise, pick up your bed and go home."*

In Mt 28:18, the fact that Jesus had been given "all authority in heaven and on earth" is the basis on which He sends His followers to the ends of the earth to make disciples in His name.

The central task Jesus gave His disciples authority to perform is the proclamation that the *"kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (10:5–8).

As we hear about the task assigned to the Twelve, we are inclined to focus on the healings or the casting out of demons.

For Jesus, the healings and exorcisms were simply signs that bore witness to the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

Healing diseases and casting out satan's henchmen were signs of Jesus' defeating of the devil and all the effects of sin.

That would happen when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave. That is the coming of the kingdom!

The mission of the Twelve was an extension of the mission of Jesus to take that proclamation to the "*lost sheep of the house of Israel.*"

That is why they should expect to be received as Jesus Himself was received, not always with glory and happiness but with rejection and crosses of their own.

But the mission would not be halted; this preaching mission of the Twelve was just the beginning of the task.

Jesus declared that in the end times, "*This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations*" (24:14).

And so, the kingdom of heaven that the disciples were sent out to proclaim has also come in these last days to you, not the lost sheep of Israel but, as Jesus would say in another context in the Gospel of John, to "*other sheep that are not of this fold*" (Jn 10:16).

Through the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven through God's Word and Sacraments, the forgiveness of sins is yours in Jesus.

This is where it was all headed:

Jesus' sending the twelve to preach the kingdom began a harvest that has brought us, into the flock, no longer lost sheep without a Shepherd.

You are no longer lost sheep, without a shepherd. You have been brought into the kingdom. Amen.

.And the Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

You are no longer lost sheep,

You have been brought into the kingdom.

Matthew 9:35-10:8

- I. Jesus' preparation of the disciples includes a sober warning.
- II. Jesus' sends His disciples with His own authority. (10:1)
- III. The central task is the proclamation that the "*kingdom of heaven is at hand*". (10:5–8)