

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 9TH-10TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

YOUR TURN (MATTHEW 10:1-4)

MORE THAN LIKELY, SOME TIME HAD PASSED

There was probably a space of time between chapters 9 and 10. We have moved from the testing of Jesus (ch. 4), the principles of the kingdom (ch. 5-7), the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and now the empowering and commissioning of Jesus' disciples.

- **At some point God's people have to respond to the Gospel.**

"HE GAVE THEM AUTHORITY"

Jesus gave authority (permission and power) to His followers to go throughout Israel and heal, deliver, and drive out evil spirits. This commission would extend to the entire world in Matthew 28.

- God loves all peoples, but He gave Israel the first shot at being the catalyst in accepting and spreading the Gospel.

AN ODD GROUP OF PEOPLE

The selection of the 12 disciples proves God will use people from all walks of life as long as they're willing. **It is not about ability, but availability.**

- V1 says "disciples," but v2 says "apostles." We are all disciples, but "apostle" was used to describe someone with first hand contact with Jesus. Paul was an honorary apostle.

THESE MEN WERE THE FOUNDATION

Revelation 21 says the foundations of heaven have the apostles' names written on them. 11 of the apostles are responsible for taking the gospel into the world. Judas teaches us that not all called by Christ will accept it, and some will even become enemies.

- **As disciples, we're called to spread the gospel with authority and love.**

DIRECTION (MATTHEW 10:5-15)

SPECIFIC ORDERS

Jesus sent out the 12 with specific objectives. The clarity of Jesus' instructions shows that God has expectations and goals in mind for us when we follow Him. **God has an inflexible standard that He calls His followers to uphold. We can vary in method, but not in mission or major theology.**

"...TO THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL."

Again, Jesus loves all people, but Israel was the starting point. The Jewish religious leaders had failed Israel, so the disciples were sent out to "proclaim the kingdom of heaven has come near."

- They were also told to heal, raise the dead, and drive out demons. The exact ministry Jesus did.

LIKE HIM, BUT NOT HIM

We must balance this out. Many people take these passages to mean that everyone should be healed or there is something wrong with our or their faith. This is an inaccurate and dangerous theology. **We're followers of Christ, not Christ. We must trust in the sovereignty and will of God and not our abilities.**

TRUSTING GOD TO PROVIDE AND PROTECT

The disciples were told not to take anything and to trust in the provision of God. They were also told to "freely give" because they have received from Him freely.

- **American Christians live comfortable lives that tend to cause us to hoard our blessings. We need to remember that ultimately we've earned nothing.**

EXCITING, POWERFUL AND OFTEN DISAPPOINTING

The work of following Jesus is rewarding, exciting, and deeply purposeful, but it is also very hard and disappointing at times.

- **Because of the tension of being a Christ-follower, Jesus tells us not to do it alone.** He even sent out His disciples 2-by-2. **There are no lone rangers in true Christianity.**

"...FIND OUT WHO IS WORTHY"

Jesus told the disciples to find "worthy" people to stay with when they entered into a new city.

Worthy literally means weighty, basically people receptive to hearing truth. This is important. **It isn't about who is comfortable or popular to be around, but who is willing to listen.**

"...BUT IF IT IS UNWORTHY..."

They were told to "let your peace (blessing) return to you" if households or cities weren't receptive to the truth. They were also told to "shake the dust off your feet when you leave."

- This is very unpopular, but **when people aren't receptive, we're to leave and find ones that are. The gospel must be received, not forced upon.**

WORSE THAN SODOM AND GOMORRAH?

V15 implies that **the message disciples of Jesus take out to the world is not only an invitation, but a warning.** We will all be judged, and without the forgiveness of sins, we are damned. **We must convey this message with love and empathy in the hopes that it will be heard and accepted.**

HARD TIMES (MATTHEW 10:16-23)

"LOOK..."

I'm sure being sent out to do miracles, heal, cast out demons, and share the good news was exciting, but being sent out "like sheep among wolves" was probably a sobering statement.

- Christians need to remember that **we'll face rejection and possibly persecution. Jesus' unadulterated message will always receive opposition.**

WITH WISDOM, GRACE, AND TRUTH

When followers of Jesus choose to go out into their world and live and share their faith, we must go out "as shrewd as serpents, but as innocent as doves."

- This means **we show love and grace while also using common sense, wisdom, and not compromising biblical truth.**

IN HARD TIMES, LEAN ON THE SPIRIT

V17-20 Jesus warns that Christians will face opposition on local levels all the way up to "governors and kings." When we face opposition at any level, we are to trust that God will give us the words to speak. **The Spirit will only lead us if we have a relationship with Him. We must be praying, reading, and obeying.**

OUR FAITH WILL EVEN DIVIDE FAMILIES

God loves the family and desires for it to be healthy, but He also knows that people who reject Christ will turn on their believing family members.

- This is painful, **but we must keep our focus on the eternal family. We must also make sure we don't treat others with this kind of rejection.**

"YOU WILL BE HATED BY EVERYONE..."

This is hyperbole. Not everyone will hate Christians, but there will always be a rejection of the truth in this life, even to the extreme of violence and slander against Jesus' followers.

- **Those who "endure to the end will be saved," maybe not physically, but eternally** (Stephen in Acts).

A SENSE OF URGENCY

Though Israel was small, there was still a lot of ground to cover. So, Jesus tells them to "flee to another" town when they face persecution because the message needed to get out.

- **There should still be a sense of urgency in Christianity because we're not promised tomorrow.**

TRAGEDY WAS JUST A COUPLE DECADES AWAY

V23b is more than likely referring to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when the Romans came in and destroyed the city. Jesus was telling His followers to be urgent about spreading the gospel because **He knew that when tragedy struck the people wouldn't be ready to deal with it.**

A SURVEY OF THE LAND

- The original disciples were commissioned to survey the people and see who wanted to hear the truth about God. Our mission is still the same today. **Are we active in God's plan? How does the survey of our land look?** Are we followers of Christ in action or just title?

NOMINAL (IN NAME ONLY)

- Jesus didn't come for a geographical or socio-economic group. He came for anyone who chooses to **do the will of the Father. Do we do His will? Do we even know what His instructions concerning how we live are?** Do we lean on religion more than a real relationship with Jesus?

PROACTIVE VS. REACTIVE

- Do we have a sense of urgency about our lives and the lives of others? **Do we know the Gospel is an invitation and a warning?** Are we prepared for the trials, temptations, and opposition that will inevitably come in the future? How have we handled this time? Are we closer to God?

LET'S CUT TO THE CHASE

- How are we as a society doing? Have we as Christians accepted the role of disciple? We are the "light of the world." Are we following the Father's instructions? Do we even know His instructions? Are we proactive with our faith, or will we be reactive and possibly too late? **Are we nominal "Christians," or disciples?**