

Matthew 10 The Disciples of the King: The Mission of the Church
Jeremiah 1
Psalm 23

April 12, 2015 (Peter)

How would you like that mission?!

You are called to proclaim the word of the Lord.

But you are told up front that the kings, the officials, the priests,
and the people of the land will all fight against you.

They will all hate you.

But do not be afraid – “I am with you.”

Is that enough for you?

Jesus will say the same thing to his disciples.

Is it enough for you that Jesus has promised to be with you?

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

When Jesus walked through the valley of the shadow of death,
when Jesus endured the cross –

he could still say, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

And even so, we may sing Psalm 23 with that confidence!

Sing Psalm 23

Read Matthew 9:35-10:42

I’ve been reflecting this week on how often I abstract “bearing the cross”
from the Cross of Jesus.

We can talk about marriage as “martyrdom” –

laying down your life for your wife (or your husband).

But the longer we talk about that,

the more we start to focus on the benefit – the reward – that we *really* want
(namely, a wife – or husband – that pleases us!).

And so “bearing the cross” becomes religious code for “how to manipulate my wife.”

I find myself constantly struggling to remember that the Cross of Jesus
is not about how to get what I want!

Taking up my cross *always means* following Jesus –

being reoriented to *his priorities* – his kingdom – his righteousness.

The reward that Jesus promises is *not* that your wife will love you!

In fact, Jesus says that he has come not to bring peace to the earth – but a sword!
Following Jesus may *well* result in the hatred of your wife, your family, and society!

There is a reward!

There is the best of all possible rewards:

Jesus himself!

And if God has been so gracious as to give you a spouse
who thinks that Jesus is the most awesome reward imaginable –
then you can take up your cross and follow him together.

But if your spouse matters more to you than Jesus?

Then you are not worthy of Jesus!

Yeah, I know.

That's easy to say – but it's hard to hear.

So let's work through this chapter together and hear what Jesus is saying to us.

In Matthew 5-7 we heard the Message of the King
as Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount.

In Matthew 8-9 we saw the Power of the King,
as Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead.

We saw last time that verses 35-38 of chapter 9 conclude the section on the Power of the King,
but they also set the stage for chapter 10 – the Mission of the Disciples.

Introduction: Laborers for the Harvest – The Twelve and Us (9:35-10:4)

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.”*

Because no sooner does Jesus say,

“Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest,”
then he calls the twelve and sends them out with authority over unclean spirits,
to preach and to heal.

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;^[a] ⁴ Simon the Zealot,^[b] and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

There are twelve disciples – twelve apostles –
showing the continuity with the twelve tribes in the Old Testament.

Matthew lists the names of the twelve.

The different gospels provide a few different names.

For instance, Matthew is also called Levi

(Luke 5:27 calls him Levi, but Luke in Acts 1:13 calls him Matthew);

Some identify Thaddaeus (Matt 10, Mk 3)

with Judas the son of James (Luke 6/Acts 1:13; Jn 14:22) –

but it is also possible that Thaddeus died in the middle of Jesus' ministry,

and Jesus called Judas son of James to take his place.

But here in Matthew 10 we are told about the Disciples of the King –
and particularly the Mission of the Twelve, and of the Church.

One of the main challenges in this passage is that on the surface,

Jesus is giving a charge to the Twelve for a particular mission.

So you could say that the whole of Matthew 10 is not directed to *us*, but to the Twelve.

There are certainly several statements that point in that direction:

v5 – “Go nowhere among the Gentiles” – obviously that does not apply to us.

v9 – Jesus says to take *nothing* with you –

we did not tell the Cabalticas to do this!

v23 – “you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel

before the Son of Man comes” – plainly does not apply literally to us!

So how do we understand Matthew 10?

I would suggest that we should read Jesus' instruction to the Twelve
through the lens of the Great Commission.

At the end of Matthew's gospel

Jesus himself will apply Matthew 10 to all the earth.

After all, Matthew writes this *to us*.

The 12 were called to go on a particular mission at a particular time in a particular way.

The particulars of our mission may be somewhat different.

We are called to go to *our neighborhood* –

which may include both Jews and Gentiles.

We probably will not heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,

or cast out demons –

but we *are* called to show mercy to those in need.

The point is that Jesus called the Twelve not merely to *preach* the gospel, but to *live* the gospel.

In the same way, the church today –

and particularly preachers of the gospel – should not be concerned

to “acquire” money and possessions,

rather, “the laborer deserves his food.”

It’s exactly the same point that Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount –

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth” (Mt 6:19).

Where are your priorities?

And how does your use of material possessions reflect those priorities?

If the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, then what should you be doing with your time and money?

1. “The Kingdom of Heaven Is at Hand” – Changing Others Is *Not* Your Job (v5-15)

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, ⁹ cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. ⁹ Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics ¹¹ or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.*

I want you to see right up front that *changing others is not your job.*

In Matthew 10, we hear how Jesus told the twelve what to do.,

Matthew never tells us “how they did.”

You cannot change people’s hearts.

You cannot even change your *own* heart!

Your task is to proclaim the message of Jesus –
and live a life in keeping with that message.

Think about how the gospel converted your ancestors!

If you have any German, English, Scottish, Irish, or Scandinavian roots,
then your ancestors were probably converted by monks.

The monks would come to a new territory and request permission to start a monastery.

The Germanic tribes were astounded at the simplicity and the celibacy of these monks.

They saw how these men lived simple, holy lives –

not pursuing wealth, power, or pleasure –

but denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Jesus –

even to the grave, as many of these monastic missionaries were martyred.

And what is the message that they were to proclaim?

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The Kingdom of Heaven –

that’s an interesting phrase!

The kingdom of heaven is where the righteousness of God has sway.

God’s way of ordering his community.

The kingdom of heaven is where heaven’s King is in charge.

As Jesus taught us to pray,

“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Kingdom of Heaven comes in any and every place where the rule of the King is accepted.

¹¹ *And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.* ¹² *As you enter the house, greet it.* ¹³ *And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.*

The Kingdom of Heaven is where the *peace* of our Lord Jesus Christ reigns.

Those who receive you – and your words – become part of the kingdom of heaven.
And the peace of God – the peace of Christ – *your peace* – true *shalom* – abides there.

The apostles were to go to a village and look for hospitality.

Hospitality means ‘love of strangers’ –
and in the ancient world travelers could expect that *someone* would take them in.
Jesus says to find someone “worthy” – someone who will listen to the message of Jesus.

Think about what this means:

if the house is worthy – if the village is worthy – if the *nation* is worthy –
then the peace of Christ will remain there.
But if the house is not worthy, if the village is not worthy – if the *nation* is not worthy –
then “let your peace return to you.”

And Jesus is very clear what we are to do in such a case:

¹⁴ *And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.* ¹⁵ *Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.*

Abraham had received the three messengers in Genesis 18.

Abraham had been *worthy*.
But Sodom and Gomorrah did *not* receive the two messengers in Genesis 19.

In the Fourth Century, the emperor Constantine listened to the word of Christ.

That was a *good thing*.
It’s a wonderful thing when princes and rulers come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!
And for a thousand years after Constantine,
we saw the rulers in many parts of Europe and Asia and Africa
bow the knee to Jesus.

At the time of the Reformation, many of the princes of Europe wanted to know:

‘How can we govern our people in a manner consistent with the Kingdom of Heaven.’
Rulers in England, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands,
and many others places – wanted the *righteousness* of the kingdom
to characterize their cities.

Jesus says that if a village receives you and listens to your word,
let your peace come upon it.

Today, all that is changing.

Yes, there are a handful of godly politicians
who want to know what the righteousness of the kingdom looks like today.
But the United States Constitution says that the sovereign power
belongs to “We, the People.”

And “We, the People” are not listening to the voice of Jesus.
Our rulers are *not asking*
“how can we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?”

The house is not worthy.

Perhaps it is time to shake the dust off our feet and leave.

I realize that’s an odd phrase.

What does it mean to “shake the dust off your feet”?
The phrase has strong Jewish roots.
When a Jew would leave Gentile territory,
they would “shake the dust off their feet” when they left,
so as to avoid bringing “Gentile dust” into Jewish territory.
Jesus now says that when they go to a Jewish town or house,
if the *Jews* will not receive them – or listen to their words –
then they are to treat those Jews like Gentiles.

Jesus is beginning to teach his disciples
that what matters is not being a biological descendent of Abraham,
what matters is whether you listen to Jesus!
Jews who refuse to listen to Jesus are no different than Gentiles.
Gentiles who *listen* to Jesus are just as good as Jews!

Paul and Barnabas will shake the dust off their feet against the Jews of Antioch in Acts 13:51.
In a similar way, Paul shook out his garments against the Jews in Corinth in Acts 18:6
saying, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent.
From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

I want you to think seriously about what Jesus is telling his apostles.

The Pharisees were trying to accomplish *national* repentance and restoration.
The Pharisees thought that if they could get Israel – as a nation – to live the right way,
then that would bring the favor of God and the restoration of the Kingdom.

But that is *not* the way that the Kingdom of Heaven comes!

Let me be clear:

I agree that abortion is *murder* –
and that same sex marriage simply *isn't* marriage.
But how does Jesus say that we should live in a hostile culture?

Jesus had said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (7:1).
As Pastor Jon pointed out a few weeks ago,
this is one of the most misunderstood and misused verses in the Bible!

When Jesus says, “Judge not,” he’s not saying that “everything goes!”
Jesus says “Judge not” because *God will judge!*

And you see that here in chapter 10.
The reason why you do not judge is precisely because *God will judge!*
You are not the judge.
You are the herald of the judge – the messenger of the gospel.

But if they reject your word, don’t let it bother you.
Rejection is part of what it means to follow Jesus!
Jesus was rejected by men – and so will the church!
In the Sunday School class on evangelism
we’ve been talking about how to bear witness to Jesus.
We are often afraid of rejection.
Jesus says, don’t worry – you *will* be rejected!
I was rejected, too.
And if you are my disciple, then you will be rejected as well!

Even the apostles were not called to be “successful” or to “convert people.”
They were called to be faithful.

Now, I know, sometimes we use the language of “faithfulness” to excuse our lack of action.
But seriously, Jesus says “if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words” –
then it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah
than for that town.
Yes, Jesus expects us to be faithful in our witness – to be faithful in our lives –
to reflect the message of the gospel in the way that *we*
deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him!
And when we fail, Jesus expects us to be faithful in our repentance!

But it is *not* your job to change people’s hearts.

If someone refuses to receive you – if someone refuses to listen to your words –
then shake the dust off your feet when you leave!

Remember this, when you are talking with people about the gospel:
one day, they will have to face King Jesus and answer for their refusal to listen to you!

(And this should help us learn to be patient and kind with those who reject us!
Their rejection of us is a small matter.
Their rejection of Jesus will be fatal!)

But Jesus knows what he is doing:

he is sending us out as sheep in the midst of wolves!

And he urges us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. [read 17-20]

2. “The Servant [is] Like His Master” – Your Calling Is to *Endure to the End* (v16-25)

¹⁶ *“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹ When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

The orators of the Empire knew how to craft speeches in order to obtain what they wanted.

Jesus tells us – don’t worry about crafting speeches.

The Spirit of your Father will speak through you.

Already here, we see how Jesus is pointing forward in history.

It is not likely that the Twelve were hauled before Herod at this time!

Jesus is talking about what will happen in the book of Acts – and afterwards!

You see a beautiful example of this in Acts 24, where the orator, Tertullus, delivers an eloquent and flowery speech before Felix, the governor.

It is full of praise for Felix – and vague and general accusations against Paul.

Then Paul replies with simplicity and truth.

If you know the gospel – the good news of what Jesus has done for our salvation – then you know enough to speak in any situation where you are placed!

Verses 21-22 then speak of how bad it will get:

²¹ *Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name's sake.*

Why are Christians hated today?

Too often, it’s *not* because of the name of Jesus.

Too often, it’s because Christians are trying desperately to hold on to cultural and political power.

And I understand!

It’s hard to let go of Christendom.

It’s hard – because we see that Christendom (for all its faults) was trying to apply Christian principles to our society.

It was better (by far!) than Roman and pagan society.

And it is better (by far!) than the postmodern paganism that is now replacing Christendom.

But Jesus says, “You will be hated by all for *my name’s sake*.”

Why were the early Christians hated?

They weren't trying to enforce Christian morality on the Roman Empire.
Rather, they were hated because they proclaimed a *kingdom*
that was fundamentally inconsistent with Rome's authority.
And everyone could see that following Jesus
would fundamentally change their priorities.

Because the way of Jesus is the way of the cross!

So, what is this "way of the cross."

The way of the cross is not just "self-sacrifice" or "self-denial."
Every culture – every religion – includes an aspect of self-denial.

Stanley Hauerwas says it well:

"Self-sacrifice, often justified in the name of family or country,
can too easily be tyrannical.

The language of sacrifice is often used by those in power for perverse ends.

Jesus does not commend the loss of self as a good in and of itself.

He demands that we follow him because he alone has the right to ask for our lives." (109)

But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ *When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

Verse 23 helps us see how Jesus' instructions to the twelve apply to us.

Jesus says that the twelve will not go through all the towns of Israel
before the Son of Man comes.

We often think of the coming of the Son of Man in terms of Jesus coming *back* to earth.

But that's not the way that the Bible uses the phrase.

The coming of the Son of Man is drawn from the book of Daniel –
where the Son of Man *comes to the right hand of God the Father!*

In other words the coming of the Son of Man refers to the *enthronement* of Jesus.

The Twelve will not complete their task before Jesus is seated at the right hand of God.

When Jesus ascends to the right hand of God – when the King sits down on his throne –
that is when the Kingdom of Heaven is established.

And that is why Jesus says:

"the one who endures to the end will be saved."

What matters is not how "successful" you are!

What matters is that you *endure*.

If you are like Jesus, then those who hate Jesus will hate you.

But you can *endure* their hatred – because you know that Jesus endured their hatred –
and he is now risen from the dead,

and seated as King of Kings and Lord of Lords at the right hand of the Father!

²⁴ “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant^[e] above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign^[f] those of his household.

When we are slandered and persecuted,
we should not make a stink about it!
We should give thanks that we have the privilege of sharing in the sufferings of Christ!

That’s why Jesus goes on to say:

3. “Have No Fear of Them” – Jesus Will Make All Things Right in the End (v26-33)

²⁶ “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Don’t be afraid!
Jesus is King!
Do not fear what *people* can do to you!
Fear God!

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?^[h] And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Jesus makes it clear that nothing happens “apart from your Father.”
A sparrow does not fall to the ground apart from him.
Jesus does not go into detail about the doctrine of predestination here!
Rather, he makes a simple statement about God’s providence:
do not worry – do not be afraid –
God is in control of all things.
If you are going to be persecuted and martyred for the sake of Christ,
don't worry – it cannot happen apart from your Father –
and he values you more than many sparrows!

You are simply called to *endure* –
and further, to *acknowledge* Jesus before men:

³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

What you say in front of other people is important.
Jesus is Lord.

He is your King.
If you deny him before men – if you talk and live as though Jesus is *not* King –
then he will deny you before his Father who is in heaven.
But if you acknowledge him – if you talk and live as though Jesus *is* King –
then he will acknowledge you before his Father in heaven.

What does this mean?

When you go to work (or school) tomorrow –
I want you to pay attention to how you talk and act before others.
You don't need to clutter your vocabulary with "religious" language –
like the fellow who added "praise God" to every sentence!
["Could you please pass the macaroni and cheese, praise God!"]

Rather, do you talk and live as though Jesus is King –
and his kingdom – his righteousness – his way of doing things –
is what matters most to you?

Now, just so that we're clear –
this will not result in making you more popular (read verses 34-39):

4. "Whoever Does Not Take His Cross and Follow Me Is Not Worthy of Me" (v34-39)

³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Take your cross and follow me.

Are you willing to be crucified by the Romans?

Jesus understands that it is really easy to say "I will die for you, Jesus!"

That's why he talks about your family.

"I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother."

Will you love me more than your father or mother?

Will you love me more than your son or daughter?

What does it mean to "take your cross" and follow Jesus?

It means to have a new family – a new identity – a new community.

Loyalty to Jesus and his mission – his Kingdom – is your first priority.

But if you do this, then "whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

You do not bear the cross because you love to suffer.

You are called to *rejoice* in your suffering –
but you are not called to *enjoy* your suffering!
The reason why you rejoice in the midst of suffering
is because of the cross of Jesus!
Jesus did not endure suffering because he thought it was fun.
It was, “for the joy set before him” that he endured the cross.

In the same way, we take up our cross and follow Jesus
because we see the *joy* set before us.

And we do see the *reward* promised in verses 40-42:

5. “He Will By No Means Lose His Reward” – What’s in It for Me? (v40-42)

⁴⁰ “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.” ⁴¹ *The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward.* ⁴² *And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”*

We never hear about the results of the apostles’ preaching tour,
but we do hear about what will happen to those who receive the twelve –
those who listen to the apostles’ teaching.

Last week we read 1 Kings 17 – how the widow of Zarephath received Elijah.
She received a prophet’s reward.

Jesus starts with the “big stuff” in verses 40-41.

If you were one who received the Twelve on their preaching tour –
if you received them and listened to their words –
then you received Jesus!

But what if you are poor?

You don’t have room for a prophet – or a righteous man – to stay at your house.

That’s why verse 42 is here!

“Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple,”
In other words, even the smallest act of discipleship is worthy of reward
(giving a cup of cold water to some small, insignificant member of the body).

Many Christians do not like the language of “reward.”

They want us to do what is right *simply* because it is right – not for a reward.

But you cannot escape what Jesus says.

And further, Jesus himself endured the cross, *for the joy set before him!*

In the same way, Jesus calls you to endure until the end – to take up your cross and follow him –
for the joy set before you!

The Westminster Confession says this beautifully.

After pointing out that our works cannot save us, the Confession states:

“Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ,
their good works also are accepted in him;
not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unprovable in God’s sight;
but that he, looking upon them in his Son,
is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere,
although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.” (16.6)

God accepts our *persons* in Christ –

he also accepts and *rewards* our works –

not because *we* are perfect –

but because he has accepted us in Jesus.

Matthew never tells us about the result of the disciples’ mission.

“Success,” for Jesus, is not measured by how many people “believed” –
or how many people were healed.

Your responsibility is to be faithful.

Your calling is to *endure* in following after Jesus.

Those who endure to the end will be saved.