

INSTRUCTING THE TWELVE

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Matthew / Matthew 10:5-15

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[Matthew 10:5-15](#) (2016 ESV) — **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. **9** Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, **10** no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. **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. **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.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of [Matthew 9](#) Jesus commands His disciples to pray that God the Father – the Lord of the harvest – would send out more laborers, because, as Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”

The truth is that, as of that moment, Jesus was the only laborer in the harvest.

As we have already seen in [Matthew 10](#), Jesus' apostles were the first answer to that prayer. He was going to send them out into the harvest fields. They didn't actually go until after [Matthew 10](#) is complete; [Matthew 11:1](#) says, "When Jesus had finished instructing His twelve disciples, He went on from there to teach and preach in their cities." All of [Matthew 10](#) is devoted to preparing the Twelve.

TRANSITION: So [Matthew 10](#) really gives us a lot of information about this first mission trip, as well as providing us with a basic foundation for all such ministry. Let's listen to what Jesus says to them.

[Matthew 10:5](#) (2016 ESV) — 5 These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them ...

The words "sent out" and "instructing them" are inseparable. Jesus did not simply give them some general suggestions about how to proceed. He gave them authoritative commands about each step. They were not on their own to figure out all the details. Jesus didn't say, "I want you to go throughout Israel, representing Me; I'll let you figure out the details."

TRANSITION: So, what sorts of instructions does Jesus give His apostles?

WHERE TO GO

[Matthew 10:5-6](#) (2016 ESV) — 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.

He tells them where to go. The apostles were to focus first on Israel. They were not to go into Samaria, or into Gentile regions. He would eventually send His apostles out to the entire world, but for now He constrains the location of their ministry.

This was the pattern established for the early church. Jesus commanded His apostles in [Acts 1:8](#) to begin their preaching ministry in Jerusalem, and then extend into Judea, and then go into Samaria, and then, finally, out to the world at large.

Paul writes in [Romans 1:16](#) that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, and that it was offered to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile.

Jesus didn't mean that His apostles were to refuse to speak to anyone but Jews; they didn't have to stop talking if a Samaritan or Gentile appeared in the crowd. But Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, sent to fulfill God's promises to Israel, and to establish the Kingdom of David. The Jews had the right to hear first.

TRANSITION: So, they were to go first to Israel. What were they to say?

WHAT TO SAY

[Matthew 10:7](#) (2016 ESV) — 7 And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

I hope this sounds familiar.

Matthew 3:1-2 2016 ESV

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 4:17 2016 ESV

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

What was the message the Twelve were to preach? The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew doesn't mention repentance, but Mark does: “So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.” ([Mark 6:12](#)).

They had a specific message that they were to proclaim. They weren't to teach about parenting, or how to have a fulfilling prayer life. They were to declare that the Kingdom of God had come, established by the rightful King of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Son of David. They were to urge all people to repent of their sins, and believe in Jesus and the Gospel of the Kingdom.

This was not THEIR message about Jesus, but JESUS' message about Himself. It was the good news that in Jesus, God was reconciling sinners to Himself. There is only one way to be reconciled to God, and that is through faith in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. That faith is exercised not just in words – “I believe in Jesus!” – but in action – “I repent of my sin!”

TRANSITION: The apostles were to proclaim the message given to them by Jesus; what were they to DO?

WHAT TO DO

[Matthew 10:8](#) (2016 ESV) — 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.

I sure hope this also sounds familiar.

Matthew 4:23 2016 ESV

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Matthew 9:35 2016 ESV

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.

In this first short-term missions trip, the apostles were to say what they had heard Jesus say, and do what they had seen Jesus do. He gave them the power to do these works; it might be clearer to say that He lent them the power to do these works. He healed by His own power; they would also heal by His power. It was never their power that brought about healing, but His.

So, their ministry of preaching the Kingdom and repentance of sin, and of healing all sorts of things, was a direct extension of His ministry. It would always be an extension of His ministry. It continues to be an extension of His ministry. They would proclaim His Word; we proclaim His Word. They would work by His power; we work by His power.

Ministries vary. There were only Twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, only Twelve that He chose and sent out in this unique way. Even after the Spirit came at Pentecost, there were only Twelve apostles (Judas was replaced by either Matthias or Paul). Those apostles had unique, one-time roles in the church.

None of Jesus' other disciples were ever commissioned or sent out like the Twelve. This was true on the day the church was born, and it remains true today.

TRANSITION: Jesus was not yet sending the Twelve out permanently; that would come after Pentecost. But they would be gone for a brief season of time, perhaps a few weeks. How would they survive during that time?

GOD WOULD PROVIDE

[Matthew 10:8-10](#) (2016 ESV) — **8** 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 or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.

The Gospel cost Jesus' disciples nothing. The authority to speak in His name cost them nothing. The power to work miracles cost them nothing.

So on the one hand, they were not to charge as they spoke His Word and exercised His power. He didn't entrust them with these things so that they could get rich, but that others might receive the riches of the Gospel.

And on the other hand, they were not to take along silver and gold of their own, or a bag for goods, or even extra clothing. They were not to be concerned with their daily needs; those needs would be provided for them by the Lord, at the right time, through the people He chose.

Their ministry was really a faith ministry. Churches remain the same today. We receive offerings, and even encouraging giving at times, but we charge nothing. No one gets a bill. We trust as a church – and I trust as your pastor and teacher – that the Lord will provide for our corporate needs, and my personal needs, according to His faithfulness.

The Lord would provide for their food and water, and possibly for their clothing as well; after all, He told them not to take extra clothes. That sort of sounds like the Israelites in the wilderness, doesn't it? As the Twelve trusted in Jesus and followed His instructions, He would provide their basic needs. What about the need for shelter?

[Matthew 10:11-13](#) (2016 ESV) – 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.

They were to find the right host in each town. That meant finding a worthy person.

Jesus doesn't define what He means, but it's safe to say that He meant someone who was a sincere worshiper of God, who was known to be moral, of good reputation in the community, and known to be hospitable toward those who were traveling. He doesn't tell them to find the most important man in the town, or the richest man, or the most influential. He is focused on the character of this man.

They were to give a greeting to the house, that is, to the household. Again, Jesus doesn't give the specifics, but I think it's safe to say that they were to greet the household in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, according to His purposes. They were ambassadors going out in the name of the King. The King sends His greetings and blessings. Some would reject His Kingship, and so also reject them. In that case they were to take their peace with them. They were to make it clear that those who reject the King will be rejected by the King, and will not have peace with Him.

The apostles might have said something like this: "We come to you in the name and authority of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Israel, who has come to bring the Kingdom of God and of David to fulness. In His name you can have peace with God the Father for all eternity!"

To those who rejected the Gospel, they might have said something like, "You have rejected the King of peace, and the King of Israel. You remain enemies of God, under His judgment." Like Paul says in [Acts 18:6](#), they might have said, "Your blood be upon your own heads."

They were to demonstrate God's rejection of them through a physical act.

[Matthew 10:14-15](#) (2016 ESV) — 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.

Those who are contemptuous of Jesus the King, rejecting Him and His Gospel, remain under the judgment of God. The Twelve were to treat them that way, shaking their very dust off their feet when they left. That action was a picture of God's rejection of them. God the Son took on human flesh in order to live in the dust with us. If we reject Him, He will reject us. There will be no fellowship with Him, no peace with Him.

I think we would agree that we should take the Gospel to as many people as we can. But Jesus says that those who have heard the Gospel and rejected it have lost the right to hear it over and over again. That doesn't mean others won't share the Gospel with that person. And of course, they might change their mind, and become more willing to hear. But when we are met with a firm rejection of Jesus Christ, we are to stop talking, and leave that person where they are. This sounds harsh, but it may be the very means the Spirit of God uses to soften their heart.

You see, we believe that evangelism is a divine activity. Our role is simply to speak the words of the Gospel faithfully. We cannot make someone hear or understand. We cannot soften their heart and cause them to long for forgiveness and salvation. We can only speak what has been given to us to speak. That is the only treasure that we possess. Many do not want that treasure. We have nothing else to give them. If someone is willing to hear and think and consider Christ, we should continue with them. If someone flatly rejects the Gospel, we are to move on to others who are willing to hear.

Because of sin, we are all born under the judgment of God. For the sake of His love and mercy, God gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him would not perish on the day of judgment, but rather have everlasting life. We did nothing to deserve salvation. Salvation by grace through faith is the ultimate in NOT RECEIVING what we do deserve, while simultaneously RECEIVING what we will never deserve.

To reject the Lord Jesus Christ, to despise Him, to mock Him and belittle Him, is to commit a terrible crime, one so serious that even Sodom and Gomorrah, wicked as they were, will suffer less in the day of judgment than those who reject Christ.

BRINGING IT HOME

Let's bring it home.

Jesus did not send the apostles with a message that was foreign to them; He sent them with the Gospel that they had heard and believed. He sent them to be fishers of men, but HE had already caught THEM. He sent them to WORK in His harvest, but they themselves had already been HARVESTED. The message was His; they were granted the privilege of speaking the Gospel. The power to work miracles was His; they exercised it in His name, not their own.

Do you see that everything, without exception, goes to His glory, and His alone?

This morning we are partaking in the Lord's supper. In it we remember what Jesus did for us. We can grow deep in the Lord and His Word, we can become wise and righteous by the mercy of God, we can have a wonderful ministry of serving the Lord and His people, but we never grow past the need to remember what Jesus did for us on the cross. The Lord regularly brings us back to that moment when we first trusted Him, when we had the realization, "Jesus died for ME, and I worship Him with all my heart! Jesus rose again for ME, and I will love Him with all my heart, all my mind, all my soul, and all my strength!"

[First Corinthians 11:26](#) says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

So this celebration of and participation in the Lord's table is not just that we may remember what Jesus has done for us. It is also to remind us what He IS doing for others, even today, and perhaps even in our own midst. In sharing the bread and the cup, we declare to everyone, "Since I believe in Jesus, He did this for ME!" and "If you believe in Jesus, then He did this for YOU!"

Let's turn our hearts toward the gift we have received, and the Lord who gave it to us.