

Matthew 9:35-10:10 – “Called and Sent”

Through the last few chapters of Matthew we’ve been tracking through Jesus’ Galilean ministry – the place He concentrated His public ministry. And this section of His ministry is bookended by a repeated verse, almost verbatim.

- **Matthew 4:23**, *"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people."*
- This verse opened up His public ministry, now this repeated verse that begins our study today prepares us for the new phase of ministry; one that will increase in opposition, but will also increase in scope through the twelve disciples.

1. The Harvest is Plentiful – 9:35-38

9:35 - *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

Jesus didn’t isolate Himself. He didn’t just have the people come to where He was. He went to all the cities and villages. Some people estimate that at this time there were 2-3 million people living in the estimated 204 cities and villages around Galilee. Jesus had a heart for these people. And again, notice the threefold ministry:

1. **Teaching** – He explained what the Word of God said, doing so in their synagogues. Synagogues were open for qualified people to come and address the people and bring explanation to Scripture.
2. **Preaching** – Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom. This was not the ‘salvation through Jesus’ message we preach today, but it was a preparatory message that God’s kingdom was at hand because the King was here. It was a call to open their hearts to the King.
3. **Healing** – This revealed the authenticity of His Kingship. This was not the focus of His ministry, this simply proved His ministry and validated what He said.

9:36 - *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.*

As Jesus ministered there in Galilee, multitudes came to Him. And as they did, He was ***moved with compassion***, this spoke of a deep sympathy for the people. He saw the people as sheep with no shepherd. They have been harassed and helpless, scattered and lost. The religious leaders should have been shepherding them, but they were like wolves preying upon them. The Good Shepherd was now in their midst, but the people needed to be aware of this and see their need for Him. So Jesus gives this fitting instruction to His disciples:

9:37-38 - Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸ Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

Jesus didn't say the seeds are plenty, or the soil is really rich, He says the harvest is full! It's ready for picking. But who's going to do it? The laborers are few.

So, He tells His disciples, pray! Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers. As we begin to pray for this harvest, the Lord begins to work in us and excite us to be participants of this great and rewarding work.

- Do you pray for this harvest? Do you pray for God to use you in this harvest?

What is this harvest exactly? It's those that need to be pulled away from the grip of the enemy and put their faith in Jesus. There are those that are desperate and hurting in this world. They're empty and without hope and are looking for a lifeline. They're the sheep that are weary and scattered.

But Jesus also spoke of the harvest as being a time of judgment (Matthew 13:30). In other words, there is coming a time where if people don't respond to the gospel and put their faith in Jesus they will be lost for eternity. And how will they hear unless someone goes and shares this truth with them.

- It's estimated that of the world's 8 billion population 2.6 billion are Christians. That means there are over 5 billion people on a path that leads to an eternal hell. That should rock us to the core.
- May we pray for the Lord of the harvest to send laborers, and may it start with me!

As Jesus speaks of the need of more laborers, He gets ready now to commission the twelve for this purpose.

2. The Twelve Disciples Are Called – 10:1-6

10:1 - *And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.*

With Jesus' calling always comes His enabling. And here we see Jesus enabling His disciples to carry on the work He has begun.

He gave them **power**. This is different than the power that Jesus felt flow out of Him when the woman touched the hem of His garment. That was the Greek *dunamis*. This word is the Greek *exousia*, which means authority. The disciples are given the authority over demons and sickness. Their works are going to validate that they are agents of Christ.

Now let's look at these 12 men:

10:2-4 - *Now 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 Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.*

Jesus had many disciples. Throughout the Gospels we see many that followed Him but then slowly drifted away. But these 12 were different. Jesus selected 12, perhaps representative of the 12 tribes of Israel.

- "The number 12 corresponds to the 12 tribes of Israel, thus expressing Jesus' claim on the whole nation. "The Twelve" became an official designation or title for those appointed by Jesus on this occasion (cf. 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43). Though significantly linked with Israel, they are never called a new or spiritual "Israel." Rather they were the nucleus of a coming new community, the church (cf. Matt. 16:16–20; Acts 1:5–8)." ¹

These 12 were selected as apostles. An apostle was one that was to be sent out; commissioned to share the Gospel. Similar to an ambassador.

- "A man had to meet certain qualifications to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. He must have seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1) and fellowshiped with Him (Acts 1:21–22). He had to be chosen by the Lord (Eph. 4:11). The Apostles

¹ Grassmick, J. D. (1985). Mark. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 116). Victor Books.

laid the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and then passed from the scene. While all believers are sent forth to represent the King (John 17:18; 20:21), no believer today can honestly claim to be an apostle; for none of us has seen the risen Christ (1 Peter 1:8).”²

Simon, who is called Peter – I love Peter. I think we can all relate a little to him. He’s impulsive, a man of action, prone to mistakes, but he became a key leader.

Andrew – This was Peter’s brother. He’s the one that introduced Peter to Jesus, and he made a practise of this elsewhere. Be an Andrew and introduce people to Jesus.

James – He was killed by Herod (Acts 12:2) and was the first of the twelve to die as a martyr.

John – Together with his brother James they were known as the sons of Thunder. They were ready to call fire down on a town that rejected Jesus (Luke 9:54). This man of fire was warmed by the love of Jesus and became known as the disciple of love. He wrote the Gospel of John, 1-3 John, and Revelation. John became a great pastor.

Jesus doesn’t call based on who you are, but on what He knows you can be.

Philip – He was from Bethsaida, the same city as Andrew and Peter (John 1:45). He brought Nathanael to Jesus.

Bartholomew – Many believe this was another name for Nathanael. He was a natural skeptic who questioned Jesus saying, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” (John 1:46).

Thomas – Speaking of skeptics, Thomas was known as doubting Thomas. He would not believe Christ’s resurrection unless he had tangible proof.

Matthew – We’ve talked already about Matthew in 9:9. His former occupation as a tax collector made him a hated man by many of the Jews.

James – He’s referred to as the son of Alphaeus. Little is known about him.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 36). Victor Books.

Lebbaeus – His surname was Thaddaeus. Luke 6:16 identifies him as Judas, the son of James.

Simon – He's listed as a Cananite. This is not a geographical reference as though he was from Canaan. It is actually a term meaning zealot. This is how Luke identifies him – Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:15). Simon was the guy wearing the red, "make Israel great again" hat. The zealots were an extremely nationalistic group, who had a great zeal for the law. They were quick to stir up trouble with Rome and foreigners, at times becoming even violent. Could you imagine his meeting with Matthew who had partnered with the Romans? I'm sure you could cut the tension with a knife.

Judas Iscariot – Judas is known throughout Scripture (and history) as the one who betrayed Jesus.

One has to wonder why Jesus would ever choose him as an apostle? But perhaps the question more fitting to ask is why would Jesus ever choose me? We know Judas served a purpose in the whole Sovereign plan of God to bring about forgiveness and deliverance through a crucified Saviour.

These 12 were just regular ordinary men. There was nothing special or great about them when it came to their spiritual giftedness. But that's not what Jesus was looking for. These were men who in the world's eyes were uneducated, they were prone to pride and jealousy. Yet it's these men that would turn the world upside down. Jesus worked through a bunch of nobodies to help you see that He doesn't just draw from the circles of nobility.

Mark 3 fills us in a little more as to what made these men so influential.

Mark 3:13–14, *"And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. ¹⁴ Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,"*

- These were those that were just to be with Jesus. If we're hanging out with Jesus, if we're spending time learning of Him, it's going to translate into a life that is counting for Jesus.

Acts 4:13, *"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."*

- This is so on point for us. Don't get hung up on your ability or credentials. Be with Jesus and you will learn and grow and be effective.

As we read on it's important to note that these specific instructions we're going to be looking at were applied to these 12 apostles and not to us.

3. The Twelve Disciples are Instructed – 10:5-10

10:5-6 - *These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Was Jesus judging the Gentiles? Were they excluded from this message? No, we've already seen that Jesus' ministry included the Gentiles. The Gospel is universal – it's for all. But at the onset of sending out the 12, they were to go to the Jew first.

- **Romans 1:16**, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."*

The Promises of the Messiah were given to Israel. Their current state is that they are lost. The very things they were longing for and hoping for are now present and available through Jesus Christ. So these 12 were to go and open the door for Israel to see that the kingdom of God was now at hand.

10:7-8 - *And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.*

They were to go and represent Jesus. They were to say what He said and do what He did. This was the same message Jesus preached (Matthew 4:17), and the same work Jesus did.

These were to be the credentials that validated their ministry.

The disciples were to do all this work freely. Because they've been blessed in such great measure, they were to bless others on that same basis.

10:9-10 - *Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, ¹⁰ nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.*

They're told to take nothing along with them. They're to travel light, they're to be unencumbered with stuff that might distract, hinder, or weigh them down from carrying out the Lord's work.

There is an urgency to this mission they are being called to and they need to trust the Lord for all their needs.

- ***For a worker is worthy of his food.*** As a general principle, those who minister spiritual things have a right to expect physical recompense in return (Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:4-18; 1 Tim. 5:17-18). That is the principle Jesus wanted to teach His disciples.

This would be a great faith building mission for them personally as well as building faith in others.

How can they call upon others to trust God if they themselves are not trusting Him?

I'm thankful that where God guides, God provides.