

Main Street UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Matthew 9:35-10:16 **“Living Extensions”**

August 9, 2015
(10th Sunday After Pentecost)

Pastor Phil Thrailkill
Main Street UMC
211 North Main St., Greenwood, SC 29646
Church Office: 864-229-7551
Church Website: www.msumc1.org

“Following Christ From City Center!”

IVA: MATTHEW 9:35-10:16
"LIVING EXTENSIONS"

New Essay = 9:35-11:1, 2/5 Discourses

1) 9:35-38 SUMMARY OF TRAVEL, PREACHING, HEALING, PRAYER FOR LABORERS.

Black = Mark, Red = Matthew, Blue = Common With Lk. (Q)

ND
35

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages,

Mk. 6:6 // 4:23, Frame For 8-9, 1) Scope

a teaching in *their* synagogues

He Will Include Them In His Vision, His Work, His Struggles
Jesus As Model Missionary, Teaching The Kingdom

b and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,

3:2, 4:17, Father's Rule Is Near //Mk. 6:6b, 2) Kingdom Word

c and healing every disease and every infirmity.

10:1, 8 (3x), 3) Kingdom Deeds, Demonstration

36

When he saw the crowds,

Second Great Discourse Begins
//Mk. 6:34, 2 Metaphors: Sheep (No Shepherd), Harvest (No Hands)

he had compassion for them,

Rare Emotion In Mt., *Compassion* = Mt. 14:14, 15:32, 18:27, 20:34

because they were harassed and helpless (torn apart),

Scattered/Aimless, Desperate Condition, 9:34

“like sheep without a shepherd.”

Leaders Absent, Num. 27:16-17, 1 Kgs. 22:17, 2 Chron. 18:16, Ezek. 34:23

37

Then he said to his disciples,

9:36, *Sheep* // 10:6, 16 (3x), Nation Without Proper Leadership

DD

“The harvest is plentiful,

Judgment On Current Leaders, Q//Lk.10:2

but the laborers are few;

Jesus And The Limits Of The Incarnation

pray therefore

Proverb, Measure Of Urgency, Receptive People

The Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Hos. 6:11, Joel 3:13, Time Is Now, 13:39-42, *Close Of The Age*

38

7:7-11, First Response, Pray For Workers To Join Us

Answer To Their Own Prayers

ekballo = Thrust Out, God's People = Mission Field! Pray!

Christological Statement

2) 10:1 CALL AND COMMISSION OF THE TWELVE (New Leaders, New Israel).

ND 1 And he called to him his twelve disciples / Promotion! 2 Fronts: Demonic Expelled, Disease/Weakness Healed //Mk. 6:7, 3:15, Disciple =Apprentices, 19:28 (Judges) and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out,/ Evil/Illness Consistently Distinguished and to heal every disease and every infirmity. 9:35d, 4:23, Basic Kingdom Stuff! Healing Added To Mk. 6:7 Pre-Easter Mission, Shares Power (Spirit), Extended In Them

2') vv.2-4 LISTING OF THE TWELVE IN SIX PAIRS. Post-Resurrection List, 4:18-22

ND 2 Guardians Of The Jesus Story, Twelve (vv.1, 2, 5, 3x), (11:1, 20:17, 26:14, 20, 47) The names of the twelve apostles are these: Successors, Apostle = One Sent Out/vv.5, 16 Apostello A Restored Coward To A Suicidal Betrayer 1 first, Simon*, who is called Peter, and Andrew* his brother; 16:19, Mk. 3:16-19, Brothers Together 2 James* the son of Zebedee, and John* his brother; 4:18-22, To This Point Only 5 Named* 3 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Nathanael 4 Thomas and Matthew* the tax collector; 9:9, Order Reversed In Mk. 5 James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus (Labbaeus); Dt. 19:15, No Call Stories For 7 4 6 Simon "the Cananaean" (Zealot) and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Casualties, Wolf Within Symbolic Community, Strategic Expansion: He/Them/Us List Of Rabbinic Students, b. Ber. 29a

1' 10:5-16 MISSIONS SPEECH, PART 1: DIRECTIONS, WARNING. //Didache 11-13

DD 5 a) These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, Amalgam (Mk. Q, M), Shift From Third To First Person Twelve (10:1, 2, 5), //10:16, Secondary Introduction, M = vv.5-8 "Go nowhere in the way of the Gentiles, Urgent, Short, Focused, Limited Galilean Mission: Text Case and enter no town of the Samaritans, 1) Limited Scope/Duration: Mt. 28:19 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Is. 42:6, 53:6, //9:36, 15:24, Rom. 1:16, Only Jews This Time

Shalia, "A man's agent is as himself," Urgent, Limited, Short Duration

Equipment: 1) Yes (vv.7-8), 2) No (vv.9-10) Not Some Are Lost But All, Light To Nations Is Lost

No Teaching Yet! 28:19-20 = Full Revelation, They Were The Equipment!

7 b1)+ And preach as you go, saying, //9:35, Continuity: John, Jesus (Mt. 8-9), The Twelve 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' //3:2, 4:17, Lk. 9:2-5, 2) Kingdom Word/Deed: 3:2, 4:17 Say + Do

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. //11:5-6, 4 Verbs: Continuity With Jesus You received without paying, give without pay./ 2 Cor. 11:7, True Gift, No For Services Image Of Poverty/ Dependence, Not Mistaken For Cynic Philosophers

9 2)- Take (acquire) no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your (money) belts, //Mk. 6:8-11, 3) Vulnerable 10 no bag for your journey, No Begging, Avarice, Travel Light, Unencumbered, No Avarice nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; Lowest Slave Dress. Q//Lk. 10:4-13, I Cor. 9:14, 1 Tim. 5:18 for the laborer deserves (is worthy of) his food. 6:11, 25-34, Lk. 10:7b, Trust God For The Basics Embodied, Empowered Storytellers From Jesus

1) Receptivity (vv.11-13), 2) Resistance (vv.14-15) //Mk. 6:11, Lk. 10:10-13

11 b'1)+ And whatever town or village you enter, Who Is Open? Prepared? 4) Approach find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart. Stability, Not Move Around

As you enter the house, salute it. "Peace to this house," Lk. 10:5ff., Receptive/Resistant Responses

12 And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; No Violent Reaction To Rejection

13 but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you./ Prophetic Word Of Power, Forces A Decision

14 2)- And if any one will not receive you or listen to your words, 2 Levels: Person/Message 5) Judgment

shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. b. Sanh12a, Acts 13:51, Warning

15 Truly, I say to you, //10:23, Jesus The Seer, Return From Foreign Lands, Treated As Pagans

it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment Is. 1:9-10, Gen. 18:20-19:28, God's People Split

for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. Acts 13:51, Receptivity Of A Whole Area

16 a') "Behold, Where Do We Stand With Him? Not All Want Jesus As Their Shepherd

I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; 9:36, Lk. 10:3, Not Good Image! 6) Wariness & Purity

so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Prudent/Blameless, Mt. Not Report Return, 10:23 //Mk. 6:30-32

Mission Is Crucial, Shared, Sustained, Complex, Strategic, Demanding, Jesus-Shaped (M. Green)

A Brief Treatment Of IVA. Matthew 9:35-10:16

With 9:35-11:1 we come to a new essay in Matthew’s gospel, the second of his five discourses, most often title *the missions discourse* since it deals with the sending of the twelve as extensions of Jesus’ ministry. While 9:35-38 is a summary report, it also functions as the first component of 9:35-10:16 since it was not unusual for a paragraph to end one section and begin the next in a Janus-like fashion. The arrangement of IVA. 9:35-10:16 is a 4:2 concentric pattern (1. 9:35-38, 2. 10:1 // 2’ 10:2-4, 1’ 10:5-16) with the opening and closing units (1/1’) having multiple inclusions: *cities and villages* [v.35] // *town or village* [v.11], *preaching* [v.35c] // *preach* [v.7a], *the gospel of the kingdom* [v.35c] // *the kingdom of heaven* [v.7b], *healing* [v.35d] // *heal* [v.8a], *laborers* [vv.37-38] // *laborer* [v.10c], *sheep without a shepherd* [v.36d] // *lost sheep* [v.5a], *sheep* [v.16]. At the center in 2//2’ are two disciple units concern the commissioning (v.1) and listing (vv.2-4) of *the twelve*, so named because they represent a symbol of new Israel gathered around Jesus. The frames (1//1’) contain first person direct discourse (DD), the centers (2//2’) are in third person narrative discourse (ND).

The issue of sources is a complex amalgam of Mark, M, and Q. Matthew has woven his sources into an edited presentation with attention to major themes. He begins in 9:35 with a travel report of Jesus’ teaching from Mk. 6:6 which he expands with a threefold description of Jesus’ mode of operations (teaching, *preaching*, *healing*); 9:36 echoes Mk. 6:34 with an addition that the crowds are *harassed and helpless*. He ends the first thought unit in 9:37-38 with a exact quote shared with Luke 10:2 (Q). Jesus’ kingdom ministry is offensive; he does not wait in one place but travels, and his mode is both word (teach, announce) and deed (healing) with the world illumining the deed and the deed demonstrating the word. But it’s more than can be done alone, so with a proverb (v.37b) and an invitation to pray (v.38) he prepares to gather the twelve and send them out in pairs.

The source for 10:1 is Mark 6:7 with the additions of the word *disciples* and an expansion beyond exorcism *to heal every disease and every infirmity* in imitation of Jesus’ (9:35//4:23). First they follow; now he begins to include them in his work. Matthew’s listing of the twelve in vv.2-4 follows Mark 3:16-19 with several rearrangements and additions: 1) the introductory phrase *The names of the twelve apostles are these...*, 2) the word *first* before Peter, 3) the placing of Andrew–Peter’s brother– second, 4) the addition of *his brother* after *John* and *the tax collector* after *Matthew*. The post-resurrection list of six pairs begins with a restored Peter in the lead and the dead Judas at the end. Following Jesus into warfare is not without casualties and losses. His apprentices (*disciples*) are now to be sent out as personal ambassadors (*apostles*). It’s a battlefield promotion!

The missions speech (1’ vv.5-16) is a 4:2 concentric pattern with *sent out* (v.5a) // *send you out* (v.16) and *lost sheep* (v.5d) // *sheep in the midst of wolves* (v.16) as inclusions. Verses 7-8 are unique to Matthew; the remainder of vv.9-16 draws on Mk. 6:8-11 with several punch lines on the worth of the laborer (v.10c = Lk. 10:7b) and the danger of the mission (v.16b = Lk. 10:3) from Q. The scope is limited at this time to fellow Jews: *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. At the center are two sections (b. vv.7-10 // b’ vv.11-15), each with a positive and negative word. Their work of offering the kingdom imitates Jesus (vv.7-8); they are to trust his authorization, not their resources (vv.9-10). The mission will meet a divided response, and while blessing is offered (vv.11-13) , judgment is enacted (vv.14-15) on the resistant. Four animals are named in the two proverbs of v.16.

LIVING EXTENSIONS

"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 infirmity....."

With Jesus nearly nothing is proprietary; he gives it all away.

M A T T H E W 1 0 : 1

A 2012 HBO Documentary followed the performance artist Marina Abramovic in her work titled *The Artist Is Present*. Over a period of 90 days, 850,000 streamed through The Museum of Modern Art in New York City for the chance to see the unusual exhibit. Dressed in a bright red gown, she sat on a plain wooden chair. One by one, visitors would walk onto stage and sit in a chair across from Abramovic as she started silently into their eyes. She did not speak, did not gesture or nod her head; she simply remained present and stared into their eyes. The results surprised nearly everyone. Every day people broke down into tears, usually after just a few minutes of silent staring. Tears often filled her eyes as well.

What was behind this phenomenon? A 32-year-old New Yorker talked about the rare chance to connect deeply with another human being and said, "We insulate ourselves in America. Everyone goes around with headphones You can be near all these people, and still be in your head." Another summed up the exhibit this way: "I see you. I weep when you weep."

Abramovic noted that as people became quiet and still she could sense the deep, lonely pain many carried, "I gazed into the eyes of many people who were carrying so much pain inside I could immediately see and feel it. I become a mirror of their own emotions. One big Hell's Angel with tattoos everywhere stared at me fiercely, but after ten minutes was collapsing in tears, weeping like a baby."¹

I tell this story because it offers a partial glimpse of what it may have been like to have Jesus look you in the eyes, particularly if you were one of those who was ill or inwardly tormented by spiritual evil, feeling you were under some strange curse

¹ Sean O'Hagan, "Interview: Marina Abramovic," *The Guardian* (10-2-12); Jim Dwyer, "Confronting a Stranger, for Art," *The New York Times* (4-2-12).

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of judgment and that the God of Israel you heard about in the synagogue was far away and just not interested in *little-ole-you*. But when your eyes met his— male or female—you knew that he knew and was not offended or surprised. You were loved with warm compassion as help arrived in the form of a rabbi from Nazareth. Then, with a word or a touch or a gesture, something happened. You were surrounded by energy; something shifted; a shiver of joy went through you; some speak of it feeling like warm oil pouring down over their heads; the phenomena of the Holy Spirit are many and varied. But after such an encounter you were restored to function; the dominion and rule of God the Father had come through Jesus to you in all your particularity. You were an individual for whom God cared. How often Jesus must have smiled when he announced that *the kingdom of God was at hand* and then through his hands and words watched it work on people to great effect through his immediate partnership with the Holy Spirit. Each healing was a Trinitarian moment, an experience of the life-giving love that lives between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as they pour themselves into one another.² For a moment you were inside the circle of divine life with great effects.

Everyone carries a sin load, what came to us and what we added,³ and this weight pulls us away from God. It's common to us all, but some have more-visible needs. For lepers it was scaly skin and social isolation based on fear and loathing, for the lame withered legs and the inability to work, for the blind a world of darkness and begging, for the fevered the lethargy it brought, and for those with spirits attached like leeches to some idol or moral sore or trauma, a sense of defilement and an inward pressure to do what you knew was wrong.⁴ But Jesus saw our plight and took action to separate people from their sins through forgiveness and from their diseases through healing and from their ignorance through teaching and from their loneliness in his new community and from their attachments to evil through spiritual freedom. In his presence folk were restored to physical, mental, spiritual, and social function out of compassion and as a window into the new world.

² Kallistos Ware, "The Trinity: The Heart of our Life," in James S. Cutsinger, ed, *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelical, Catholics, and Orthodox in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 124-154.

³ The U.M. Articles of Religion, Article VIII, "Of Original or Birth Sin," *The Book of Discipline 2012*, 65.

⁴ See Chuck Kraft, *Spiritual Warfare for Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2105).

As a police chaplain in Charleston I was sometimes found at the MUSC emergency room on a Friday evening with ambulances rolling in one after another. One night I looked across the waiting room and it hit me, “This is what it looked like when Jesus faced a mass of angry, hurt, broken, frightened, beleaguered people with nowhere else to turn.” Every day found Dr. Jesus in the emergency rooms of crisis and up and down the wards of the chronic and in the isolation rooms of despair and misery, and occasionally in the morgue. But he was not alone. Following him on his grands rounds of the Galilean villages were his interns, twelve of them watching him interact in each new situation on two levels, with the person in front of him, and with the invisible persons of the Father and the Spirit from whom he received insight and power. Jesus lived at the intersection of need and help; he was wide open to the next person and fully transparent to the One who sent him and the One who filled him.

Just last week I had a vivid example of Jesus and his training method. As always, I first knock at the door of a hospital room before entering. As I walked in a young woman with stethoscope around her neck was palpating the bare abdomen of a male patient. I’d seen my father do it and listen to the acoustics and sensations that came back. A *thunk* and a *thud* give you different information in the art of physical diagnosis. I stood there till she was finished, then introduced myself. She was a first year resident in family medicine, as was her husband. He’d been a missionary in a war torn country in Africa. A question flashed in my mind, “I wonder what God has ahead for them?” and shot up a prayer of thanks. They knew the basic sciences and had studied the organ systems in medical school; now they were interns, practicing the art of medicine, integrating clinical data into diagnoses and treatment, then reporting to a senior resident and clinical professor for coaching on what they got right and what they missed. And this is much like what Jesus did with the twelve because the goal was for him to reproduce himself in them over time: three years to download the data of divine revelation and open their eyes to the powers of the kingdom of God at ground level. The purpose of believing was in order to follow, and the purpose of following was to be trained around the clock in who Jesus was and what he was doing; they were not just learning about him but *learning him*, to be imprinted with his ideas and way of seeing the world, to begin to experience the same Holy Spirit that worked through him.⁵ They would learn from him as students; he would then release them as interns in a needy world as his living extensions, as his agents. Every day it was lecture and lab, classroom and bedside, didactic and

⁵ On this angle of approach to discipleship, see John F. Baggett, *Seeing Through The Eyes of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

pragmatics in an alternating cycle of spiritual formation with Dr. Jesus. It was the finest education ever offered. Jesus was the CAT-scan; he saw into people!

It is interesting that Matthew consistently distinguishes between diseases and infirmities— which are natural afflictions in a fallen world— and demons, which are spiritual oppressions. The first is healed, the second expelled, both by the presence of God moving upon people. The Trinitarian love of God heals bodies, and the same love restores the integrity of the human personality from squatters who’ve taken up residence in the human dwelling. Dirty houses invite vermin, and so do dirty lives. Fallen human beings— and that’s all of us— are vulnerable at multiple levels: at the physical level to microbes and viruses and genetic disorders and accidents and all that medicine fights against so mightily, and also at the level of spirit to fallen angels, which in the modern Western church we’ve largely denied and dismissed. The Christian view of the human person is nuanced. We are highly interactive beings, and at more than one level at the same time. Jesus dealt with people at all levels. His teaching and preaching appealed to the rational and emotional faculties; his healing dealt with broken bodies, and his ministry of deliverance with enemies inside the walls of the self. It was multi-level kingdom ministry customized for each person on the spot. Our first baptismal vow begins with the loaded phrase, “Do you renounce *the spiritual forces of wickedness?*” What do you think it’s talking about?

A first there was not much the disciples could help with: a little crowd control, make arrangements, listening to all Jesus said and watching all he did. It was a steep learning curve. They could have left any time. They did not, and in the sharing of Jesus' mission found themselves belonging to him and one another at a deep level. In the service they call it *unit cohesion*.

TURNING TO THE TEXT

1) vv.35-38 Preparation For The Transition.

Verse 35 through 38 paint a glorious and a difficult scene, glorious because of the river of compassion pouring through Jesus, difficult because of what remains impossible so long as there is only one kingdom worker, Jesus alone. The glorious part is verse 35, “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, *teaching* in their synagogues and *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* every disease and every infirmity.” He did not wait for people to come to him; he went to them.

And wherever Jesus went, the resources of God were displayed. His was a single, bright spotlight on an otherwise dark stage, and in that circle people were illumined and made whole; joy exploded in one village after another. So when you pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, *on earth* as it is in heaven....” this is what you are asking for, not just to improve things a bit or to go to heaven when you die. We are praying for the power divine love to descend now. After Jesus left a village, it was not long before the old problems returned because the world had not yet changed. The afterglow lingered and what happened was always remembered and retold, but soon the shadows crept in again. Jesus’ visit was a brief glimpse of the kingdom of God. This is what the world is headed towards; everything remade from the top to bottom and inside to outside. It was no longer an impossible dream for Hebrew poets and prophets to write about; they had seen it!

Matthew loves to highlight the scope of the kingdom and its effects. It was not just *some* of the cities and villages but *all of the cities and villages*. Not *some* diseases and *most* infirmities but *every* disease and *every* infirmity. Even skeptical historians agree Jesus was an effective healer and exorcist.⁶ In his presence marvelous things happened to people. Some seek sociological and psychiatric explanations, but these have limited usefulness. For all that we can learn from other disciplines, the church has its own read on the issue. It was the Triune God giving an example of what is possible in this world and a glimpse of what it ahead for creation when finally healed through resurrection at the end of the age. Jesus is our window into God’s future. In him the light of God shines on the present moment. And wherever the circle of light moves, even today, people are touched.⁷

Alongside Matthew’s summary report of Jesus’ travels is placed a report of a different kind, a depressing report on the condition of God’s people. In case no one has informed you, to call us *sheep* is not a compliment. Sheep are dumb and smelly; without alert and courageous shepherds they are easy prey. The temple was full of priests, and the villages had their rival religious factions, but the care of God’s flock Israel was not being tended. God’s people were harassed and helpless, an abandoned

⁶ See the summary of J. Bishop, “WHAT DO SCHOLARS MAKE OF JESUS’ MIRACLES?” 58 QUOTES BY SCHOLARS,” <https://jamesbishopblog.wordpress.com/2015/04/23/what-do-scholars-make-of-jesus-miracles-58-quotes-by-scholars>.

⁷ See Eric Metaxas, *Miracles: What They Are, Why They Happen, and How They Can Change Your Life* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2014).

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flock with negligent leaders. And when the crowds streamed towards Jesus in battered condition, it hurt his heart; he felt for them, and he did something.

Compassion is a blend of love and pity that reaches out beyond the initial feeling to do something. First came the occasion and Jesus' emotional response, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them." We are then told why, "...because they were harassed and helpless, " and finally the reason for their sad condition, "because... they were like sheep without a shepherd." The religious leaders of his day were not doing their jobs. Jesus came to fill the gap and do what no Jewish priest or scribe could do. Eventually his open heart of compassion became the bleeding heart of Calvary as Jesus reached out his arms to embrace the world's pain. So when your heart is pierced with the pain of another, do not cover it up or distract yourself too quickly; it is God's compassion awakening your dull heart. When my heart is pierced, it means I am called to action, the first of which is prayer.

All that Jesus did he did out of compassion. But there was simply more work than one man— even the Son of God- could do. Jesus had a real human body, able to be in only one place at a time with one person at a time. He needed sleep and food, as well as think time and prayer time. It's part of the limits of the incarnation. If you can see a need and feel nothing, something human in you has died. And if you don't ask *why* the pain exists, an intellectual light has gone out. What we see and what moves us is a clue to the call of God. You see things others do not and have reactions they do not. God is speaking. So don't tell me about the problems you see in Main Street Church or in the city of Greenwood or in the United States of America unless you are willing to be part of the answer. It's not my job to act on your insights; that's your job. What you see you get to do something about, and what you pray for you must be willing to participate in as part of the answer. Love cannot be delegated.

While Jesus is the lead character, but there are also twelve sets of eyes on his every move. He called; they followed. He healed and dealt with spirits; they watched and asked questions. He made it look so easy. He had *the moves* and *the mojo*. There was a method in him doing and them watching, but things were about to change. The seesaw would now tip in their direction. *Listen* would become *speak*; *watch* would become *do*; *him* would become *them*, and *one* would become *six pairs*

in just a short time.⁸ So what did Jesus do? He invited them into the problem and invited them all to talk to God about it. Verses 37 and 38, “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; *pray* therefore the Lord of the harvest to send our laborers into his harvest.’”

It is in prayer that we take the greatest risk, and that is the risk of personal involvement. It is no longer a problem *out there*, but *my problem*. No longer *those people* but *my people*. In prayer we risk getting God’s perspective and feeling God’s heart. Jesus depended on the Father and the Spirit for guidance and resources, and the twelve are now invited into that same dynamic. Their training is not just watching him do kingdom ministry; it is learning to listen and depend on the same one he did. And it means real work. That’s why Jesus shifted the imagery from shepherding, which mainly involves being watchful and alert, to *laborers* in a harvest field. During the small window of harvest time there are long days, short nights, and real work.

Dana Stevens tells of her five year old niece Michaela who- during a visit to her grandparents- was invited to a neighbor’s farm to pull corn for the first time. Her grandparents saw it as a good teaching time. At first the work was great fun, but after a few minutes Michaela looked at her grandmother and said, “You know you can buy this at the grocery store, don’t you?”⁹

The work of evangelism, the work of listening to broken people, the work of prayer, the work of training others, the work of the church is real labor and incredibly messy. It looks easy till you try it. Watching Jesus do kingdom ministry was easy; they had a ringside seat for the greatest show on earth. Doing it themselves would be a stretch. Armchair quarterbacks are all experts. But can they throw the ball? Can they call a play? Can they take a hit? Or just sit on their duffs eating Cheetos?

2) vv.1-4 Expanding The Work Force.

The first verse of chapter 10 is a turning point and a change of status. A new name is given to the twelve; for this specific, short-term assignment they are not just

⁸ For a helpful contemporary reading of this pattern, see Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), chapters 4 and 5, “Why Jesus Invested in a Few,” 59-74; “Jesus Preparatory Empowerment Model,” 75-99.

⁹ PreachingToday.com search under Mt. 9.

disciples or *learners* but *apostles*. They have followed Jesus; now they will be *sent out* under his authority. Jesus did not limit the scope of kingdom blessing only to those who were well enough to seek him out. He did not have just a *come to me strategy* but also a *go to them strategy*. His was not the Little Bo Peep theory of “leave them alone, and they’ll come home, wagging their tails behind them.” No, six teams of empowered disciples will scatter to the points of the compass to take his message and powers to the villages. Six months ago they were fishing and collecting tolls. This was a strange, new script. I admire their courage.

How Jesus accomplished this transfer of authority is not explicit. Was there a laying on of hands, or did he simply speak to them? And since their commission involved the exercise of potent spiritual gifts— powers like healing, discernment, deliverance, faith and the like— it’s best to see this as a temporary empowerment with the Holy Spirit. Jesus operated by the power of the Spirit, and if they are to do the same work with like effects, then they too must be anointed and filled with the same Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit, Jesus was powerless, still the Son of God, still sinless, but powerless. In answer to the questions, *How* did Jesus do it? and *How* did they ever do it? R.A. Torrey gave this answer a hundred years ago:

“Jesus Christ obtained power for his divine works not by His inherent divinity, but by his anointing through the Holy Spirit. He was subject to the same conditions of power as other men.”¹⁰

Jesus healed not of his own independent action but in constant, deep cooperation with the Father’s will and the Spirit’s enablement. This transfer of spiritual authority to the disciples is a Trinitarian moment of divine revelation. They have prayed to the Lord of the harvest, meaning God the Father; the Son Jesus stands before them, and they are being opened to the powers of the Holy Spirit. Did they understand all this? Of course not. But who ever said that you had to understand something before joining in the joy of it? More often it is understanding that follows experience, not the reverse. Chapter 10, verse 1: “And he called to him his twelve disciples and *gave them authority* (the transfer) over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity.” They prayed for more workers, and Jesus answered the prayer immediately by raising them to that level. It was a battle field promotion; they became the answer to their own prayers.

¹⁰ Quoted in Bill Hull, *Straight Talk On Spiritual Power* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 45.

Jesus did it alone; they would now do it in pairs relying on one another as a team. His empowerment was permanent; their's temporary. They would go; he would stay behind. They watched him for a season; he would now watch them. He operated by faith and listening; they would learn to do the same. Jesus was inviting them into his reality, no longer as observers but participants. He was reproducing himself in and through them, giving a taste of what it would mean after his resurrection to be the *body of Christ*. It was a preview of Pentecost and a brief experience of The Great Commission. Short-term, closely supervised, with clear boundaries, and very risky. They will learn dependence on the Spirit and on one another. It was a laboratory of learning, designed by the master teacher himself.

“Yes, Pastor Phil,” I hear someone say, “but they were special, not like us average folks.” I disagree; they were blue collar tradesmen, small business people, white collar tax collectors. They held different political views and were as ambitious as any of us. The first one listed, Peter, was a braggart and ultimately a coward. Judas, the last listed, was ultimately a scoundrel who did business with the Evil One and sold Jesus out for money, then committed suicide rather than come clean and repent as Peter did. Ten others are strung out in a list between Peter the coward and Judas the traitor. Not a very impressive group. I belong here; there's room for me with this bunch. The raw material Jesus had to work with was no better than twelve people drawn from this congregation. They may have cathedrals named after them today, but not then. They saw the joy he brought, the truths he taught, and how his heart went out the crowds. They were now invited to enter the same reality.

That's how it was with Jesus and the twelve. What Jesus did— which was announce the kingdom and back it up with major power— had not been seen before, much less the idea of average folk being welcomed into the new reality. In her elegant English, Evelyn Underhill put it this way, “The church wants not more consecrated philanthropists, but a disciplined priesthood of theocentric souls who shall be tools and channels of the Spirit of God.”¹¹ More money is not the issue; the issue is people willing to become channels of the Holy Spirit in imitation of Jesus, and these twelve brave, uncertain souls were just that. Would to God that the same spirit of adventure could be restored to thousands of our pastors who are discouraged, worried, and defeated. The flame of our cross and flame logo is burning low! In the early days, when we were still a bit raw and dangerous, John Wesley announced:

“Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth.”¹²

1') vv.5-16 Marching Orders.

The last section, verses 5 through 16, is a missions briefing, words Jesus spoke before they left to see if the promises were true. It was a risk for him and for them. Without the presence of the Spirit, nothing would happen; the belief would then be entrenched that only Jesus, the Son of God, the pure and perfect one, could be a channel through whom such potent love could flow. Jesus would then be a high ideal to be admired and worshiped, but not a practical model to be followed and imitated.

The scope was limited; it was a local mission to local Jews. No Gentiles or Samaritans at this time. It was a mission not to outsiders but in this test case only to God’s people. When things are bad enough, as they are here, God’s people need to be re-evangelized and reacquainted with the love and mercy of God.

It was one message with multiple, beneficial effects. The twelve did not have to write sermons and become masters of Scripture. Their message was short, only seven words in English, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” in other words, “God the king is now near enough to touch.” And then, once you’ve announced it, guess what? The Spirit of God shows up and you *do the stuff*¹³: heal the sick, raise the

¹² From a letter to Alexander Mather (August 6, 1777). Here is the full letter:

“No, Aleck, no! The danger of ruin to Methodism does not lie here. It springs from quite a different quarter. Our preachers, many of them, are fallen. They are not spiritual. They are not alive to God. They are soft, enervated, fearful of shame, toil, hardship. They have not the spirit which God gave to Thomas Lee at Pateley Bridge or to you at Boston. Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth” (laurenporter.wordpress.com/2010/04/23/give-me-one-hundred-preachers).

¹³ A memorable phrase from John Wimber.

Matthew 9:35-10:16 15

dead, cleanse lepers, and send demons packing. God shows up in power. It was a short message followed by long ministry time. You made the announcement of God's nearness, and then someone much superior went to work through you. All you had to do was listen and obey and support your partner while he listened and obeyed and supported you. And together you do what Jesus did. He was physically distant, but his Spirit was there. It was good training for life after his resurrection and ascension.

But when such spiritual phenomena actually happen, a new temptation arises, and that is to make money off the gifts of the Holy Spirit and forget that since it came free of charge, it is to be dispensed at the same price. I call it *merchandising the anointing*, and it corrupts all who participate. But Jesus said, "You received without pay, give without pay." The great missionary to Africa David Livingstone wrote:

"Do not think me mad. It is not to make money that I believe a Christian should live... The noblest thing a man can do is, just humbly to receive, and then go amongst others and give."¹⁴

And to make sure this was a lesson in trusting the invisible provision of God and not what he could manage, Jesus had them leave a pile of stuff at his feet. Credit cards, cash, extra clothes, car keys, suitcases, cell phones, weapons. He left them looking like a pack of beggars. He, in effect, gave them the *invisible* resources of heaven, then stripped them of everything *visible* except a human partner. And if they followed his instructions, they wouldn't miss a meal, "...for the laborer deserves his food." "Give us this day our daily bread" means one thing when there's bread in the cupboard and quite another when you're walking into a village empty-handed and empty-bellied. This is precisely why short-term mission trips are one of the few things that wakes up sleepy North American Christians. They get out of their comfort zones and find God is more than sufficient! Jesus deliberately made them vulnerable. Empty hands bearing divine gifts, an army with no visible weaponry. It doesn't fit common sense; it makes perfect kingdom sense.

For Jesus less is more, and he deliberately strips them of everything their identity and emotional security depended on. One by one— or rather two by two— they laid their wallets and outer cloaks at his feet. Peter pulled out a peanut butter and jelly sandwich he'd hidden away and tossed it down as Jesus grinned. Today it

¹⁴ PreachingToday.com search under Matthew 10.

would mean laying down diplomas and giving up titles. All that remains is the promise of Jesus and the presence of your partner. Van Dunn writes:

"Ministry is not a human possibility. It is possible only in dependence upon God. Therefore, preparation for ministry does not consist in the development of inherent human possibilities but in the shedding of all illusions of self-sufficiency and independence so that the transcendent power of God may direct and sustain those who are called and sent."¹⁵

They were not to be naive. They were not to be unnecessarily provocative when rejected, just *wise as serpents and innocent as doves*. "And if they say No," warned Jesus, "don't say anything back. Don't get mad. When you get to the edge of town, knock the dust of their village off your sandals." It was a widely accepted symbol which translated, "when you go to hell like Sodom and Gomorrah, don't say we didn't warn you." Some are awakened by mercy, others by fear of judgment.

Jesus' last happy thought was this one, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves." Doesn't that just make you feel all safe and cozy? It's dangerous out there! All the needy, ornery, resistant people who bear the name of God's people and don't know God. In effect he says, "Have at it, guys! See you in a few days. You've watched me; now the roles are reversed. When it's good, it's real good, and when it's bad, you might survive." And so out they went, the very first missionaries. Jesus smiled and waved and went back to the pool and rubbed on some extra sun screen! There were going to be some very good stories when they returned.

CONCLUSION

At the top of today's sermon manuscript is a summary. It reads, "With Jesus nearly nothing is proprietary." Whatever the Father gave him, he gives to us through the same Holy Spirit. You can have as much as you want and as much as you can contain. I am not satisfied. I want more, Lord, and I want more for your people. Show us what you see and teach us what you do. Pour your Spirit upon us, and fling us out into the harvest field. The harvest is waiting; the workers are few. Are you available to join and be trained by Jesus?

¹⁵ *Forming Ministry Through Bible Study: Reader's Guide to the Gospel of Mark* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1987), 61.
