

Commissioned to Serve

Matthew 10: 5-8

Today I want to begin a series focused on Jesus sending the twelve out to labor in ministry. Up until this point, Jesus had ministered alone. Granted, the disciples were continually with Him, and crowds were normally around, but these were all observers or recipients of Jesus' ministry. The time had come for the disciples to engage in ministry themselves.

In order to fully appreciate Chapter 10, we must also consider the conclusion of Chapter 9. [Matt.9:37-38](#) – Then saith he unto his disciples, *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;* ^[38] *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* Likely the disciples were unaware that the Lord would use them as an answer to their prayers. After instructing them to pray that laborers would be sent forth into the harvest, Jesus commissioned them for service in the harvest.

I know there are those who would argue that this passage has little benefit for the church today. They claim it was given prior to the cross, and the disciples ministered solely to the Jews of Israel. While those facts are undeniable, this passage reveals principles that remain relevant for all who seek to serve the Lord in ministry. In fact, this passage is relevant for all who have come to faith in Christ. Every born-again believer is expected to labor in the harvest.

As we endeavor to impact lostness in Pocket #159 in Mount Airy, we need to understand and apply these same principles if we expect to be effective in reaching those who need the Lord. As we examine the [principles](#) revealed in the opening verses of this passage, I want to consider: [Commissioned to Serve](#).

I. A Mandate to Pursue (5-6) – Having called the disciples unto Himself, and empowering them for ministry, Jesus gave a mandate for them to engage in ministry. Consider:

A. The Commission (5a) – [These twelve Jesus sent forth](#). Bear in mind, these men had traveled with Jesus for a while now. They had witnessed the miracles He performed, and heard the message He preached. They had observed Jesus engaged in ministry on a daily basis. The Lord had been discipling these men, preparing them to engage in ministry themselves. The time had now come for them to go out and labor in the harvest as well.

- The church was given the Great Commission just prior to Jesus ascending back to the Father. We have received the mandate, and if we are to be obedient to the Lord, we must engage in ministry. Many have the idea that engaging the lost and sharing the Gospel is reserved for the

pastor or those in leadership positions within the church. While these are expected to labor in the harvest, this work is not reserved for them alone. If you are saved by grace, part of the church, the body of Christ, you too have been called to labor in the harvest.

B. The Instruction (5) – *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.* Jesus was very specific in what He expected the disciples to do as they engaged those around them. At this moment in time they were not to go into areas that were primarily Gentile, nor were they to go unto the Samaritans. The time would come for these to hear the Gospel, but at this moment, Jesus instructed them to avoid those areas and people.

- Unfortunately, this verse causes confusion for many, and some assume this passage has no value for the church. Yet, if we refuse to consider the foundational principles of the passage, we will lack effectiveness in ministry. The Gospel would eventually be taken to the Gentiles, and to the entire world, but at this moment, Jesus wanted them to avoid those areas. He had given a target group that He wanted them to engage. Naturally, we can't possibly speak to every individual on the face of the earth. Therefore, it is imperative that we pray and seek the Lord's guidance regarding those we are to engage at given moments in our ministry efforts. While a shot-gun approach may reach a few, a prayerful, targeted approach is always more effective.

C. The Destination (6) – *But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* At this particular moment, the disciples were called to minister to the lost sheep of Israel. The Lord wanted them to focus upon the Jews. As we read further in the New Testament, the Lord would call the apostle Paul to minister primarily to the Gentiles.

- The Lord calls and equips specific people for specific areas of ministry. This is a principle that we must understand and embrace. Individually, some men are called into evangelism or missions, while others, like myself, are called into pastoral ministry. That doesn't mean that one takes priority over the other, but that God has specific people for specific works. It is no mistake our church meets at this particular location. In His sovereignty, God planted us here to engage this area with the Gospel.

II. A Message to Proclaim (7) – *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Jesus instructed the disciples to proclaim the message of the Kingdom as they ministered. Notice:

A. The Priority (7) – Jesus instructed the disciples to preach as they engaged others. This has the idea of “*a herald, a public crier, to proclaim or publish.*” It is interesting to note that Jesus didn’t instruct them to merely go live a godly life among men and allow their actions to speak for themselves. Naturally, Jesus expected these men to maintain a pure and upright life, but He also expected them to proclaim the Good News of Christ. They would encounter many who had not heard, those who needed to be instructed in the ways of the Lord.

- I cannot emphasize this enough. We too must be willing to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to those who have yet to hear. They may observe our lives and notice that we are different, but until we take the necessary time to explain what has made such a radical change in our lives, they will never know the truth. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. We cannot expect people to be saved from their sin if the Gospel is not presented in a clear manner!

B. The Reality (7) – *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* As the disciples went, they were expected to preach the Kingdom was at hand. The Lord gave them a specific message to deliver to a specific people. They were to proclaim that Christ had come. Christ and His provision for mankind was to be the emphasis of their message. Jesus wanted the disciples to let the people know that He had come to fulfill the will of the Father regarding humanity’s need.

- This principle seems to have been lost in modern evangelicalism. There are many messages being proclaimed today, but little Gospel preaching. We must do all we can to improve social and physical suffering, but never at the expense of the Gospel. The world needs to hear of Christ and His provision for our sin. They need to know that He alone provided our atonement, and He is the only means of salvation and reconciliation to God. If we fail to proclaim the Gospel, we have failed in what Christ has called to perform. We must proclaim the Gospel.

C. The Urgency (7) – *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Jesus instructed the disciples to proclaim the Kingdom was at hand at that moment. Christ had come and He was in their midst. The time to receive Him as their Messiah had come. There was no need to look for another – Christ had come to redeem mankind. They must preach with urgency, encouraging people to respond to their message. There was no time to waste; the hearers must respond to the message and believe Jesus was the Christ.

- I hope you sense the urgency today. The Lord is coming again, and only those who are saved by His grace will inherit eternal life in His presence. Those who reject the Gospel, or fail to respond, will not be allowed entrance into heaven. They must repent of sin and receive Christ in this life. Once they die, it will be too late. We are surrounded by those who desperately need to hear and tomorrow may be too late!

III. A Ministry to Perform (8) – Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Jesus had gifted the disciples with supernatural abilities to use in ministry. While we do not possess the gifts, the principles and outcome of effective ministry remain the same. Consider:

A. The Healing (8) – These men had the power to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and even raise the dead. They had the ability to heal others in the name of Jesus. While we lack ability to bring about physical healing, the Gospel has the power to heal and transform lives. There is power in the name of Christ and His Gospel. Those who come to Him in salvation are completely transformed, healed of their iniquity. We have the solution for the spiritual ailments people face. We must be willing to share the Gospel so other can experience healing in Christ!

B. The Hope (8) – The disciples also had the ability to cast out devils, along the power to heal. Such healing and deliverance from bondage brought hope and restoration to those they touched. The Gospel continues to heal and deliver from bondage today. Many around us live in desperation, without hope in the face of an uncertain future. We have been entrusted to share the Good News of Christ that has the power to liberate folks from their bondage and offer eternal hope in Him. The church has the message the world needs to hear and embrace. I pray we will take this message of healing and hope to those who stand in need.

C. The Humility (8b) – freely ye have received, freely give. Jesus expected these men to serve all they encountered in love and humility, recognizing their great need and sharing what they had received from Christ. They were undeserving and yet Christ came to them. He wanted them to freely share what they had been given.

- This principle needs to be emphasized today. Unfortunately, many believers have developed a sense of arrogance and self-righteousness. We tend to cast a condescending attitude toward those bound by sin. We must remember where we were when the Lord came to us. Were it not for His grace, we could have been in a similar or worse position. None are beyond the reach of His grace, and we must be willing to freely share what we have received.

Conclusion: I trust you will agree this passage is relevant and needed in our day. Has the Lord burdened you about the needs around us? Are you concerned about this pocket of lostness in our city? Will you come and seek the Lord to encourage and equip you to be a faithful witness for Him? If you are unsaved, come to Christ in repentance and faith. He stands ready to save you by His grace, bringing healing and hope to you as well.