

Sent Ones

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 October 2018

Preacher: Rev. Jeremy Graham

[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, you're a missional God. And we pray tonight that we would catch a glimpse of your heart for the lost and for this world.

And that we would long to be part of what you're doing in the world. This we ask through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen. Good evening, everyone. A warm welcome to you if you're visiting St. John's tonight.

I'd love to meet you after the service. We're in Matthew chapter 10 tonight. It'll be very helpful if you have your Bible open to the passage that Fleur just read for us. I've always wanted to see a leopard get cleansed.

Those spots are so obnoxious. So our passage tonight is all about mission. Mission. And in the business world, corporations love to tell you what their mission statement is.

But other than that, pretty much the only time we ever hear people talk about missions is if they're in the Secret Service or going on a spy mission or they're in the military.

[1 : 12] But in the church, if you've been around the church for a while, you might have noticed that the word mission gets thrown, just thrown around. We talk about missional communities and missionaries go to other countries.

And we just had a group of people leave on a short-term missions trip to India. And, you know, we go to missions conferences and we have a missions committee with a missions budget.

The word mission gets used on and on and on around the church. And we all kind of nod and look as knowingly as we can because it's a very important word.

We know it's very important. But the word simply means in Latin, sent ones. Sent. To send. It's just a verb meaning to send.

And it's used all through the Bible. And if I could try to boil it down at its essence, it refers to God's authority and action as the one who sends.

[2 : 11] That's biblical mission. God's authority and action as the one who sends. And as much as Christians love to use the word, friends, there is nothing in our human nature that makes you or I mission-minded.

I'm not saying we don't like to travel. I'm not saying you don't enjoy an adventure. I'm not even saying that you don't like people. I'm saying that mission is an idea that comes from God and is given to me as a revelation of who God is and what he does.

So, in other words, the heart of mission is not natural to me. It's not in my DNA. It's a gift from God which he desires to pour out on all who follow Jesus.

It's certainly, let me tell you, it's certainly not just for a few elite Christians who have the courage to go to deepest, darkest Africa or have the time and the patience to join the missions committee.

The living God of the Bible is a missional God, a sending God. From the very beginning, God's shown himself this way. If you know your Old Testament, you go all the way back to Abraham, Abraham and Sarah, and God sends them.

[3 : 34] He says, go to a new country, I will go with you and I promise to be a blessing to you and through you to be a blessing to the whole world. And then God sends Moses to his people who are in slavery in Egypt and he says, I promise that I will send you to bring good news to those people that I am going to rescue them.

He sends all through the Old Testament prophets like Jeremiah and Jonah, he sends them to call his people back to him, call them to repentance, to return to worshipping him as their Lord.

Another way of imagining God as missional is to think about, well, it's a fancy word, the word is centrifugal. I kind of actually think of my washing machine.

So centrifugal is the opposite of a black hole, right? A black hole sucks everything into itself. It takes the life from everything and it absorbs it. Centrifugal is the opposite. It spins from the middle and it pushes everything out.

So what I'm saying is that God is at the center, this missional God, and at the center is everything that is good and beautiful and holy and it comes out from him.

[4 : 45] Literally spins out from his center and it's a perfect act of self-giving service and sending. So, in the ultimate act of sending, at last, when the time had fully come, God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to save his people from their sins.

And that is what we are beginning to get a glimpse of here in Matthew 10. The mission of God as declared and revealed in his son, Jesus Christ. So for nine chapters already, we've seen that God the Father has given Jesus a mission.

And Matthew tells us twice, both in chapter four and in chapter nine, that Jesus is on a mission throughout all the cities and villages. What's he doing? Proclaiming and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and every affliction.

Do you remember that last week? Up until now, it's been a mission of one, just Jesus. And suddenly and dramatically, here in chapter 10, Jesus calls 12 apostles, literally sent ones.

And he shares the mission of God with them. He shares his own mission with them. So look with me at verse one. And Jesus called to him his 12 disciples and he gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction.

[6 : 09] And in the sending out of the 12, Jesus reveals the heart for mission shared by his Father, himself and the Holy Spirit, the triune God. And as we'll see, this mission, which begins in Jesus, it's going to pour out first to the 12, but it's not even going to stop there.

From the 12, Jesus is preparing to send out every man, woman and child who acknowledges him as Lord and Savior, who is equipped and filled with the Holy Spirit.

And if you know Jesus in this way, he is sending you. And as I said already, this is not something natural. This is not something that we naturally long for.

We are not missional creatures apart from God sharing his heart for mission with us and indwelling us with that transformative energy of being sent ones. But when he does, when he does give us this, oh, this heart for the lost, then our hearts, they're stirred up and we long to be sent.

And that's what Matthew 10 is showing us. What happens next when he stirs us up with this longing to be sent? So I want to have a closer look at these 15 verses under three headings. Jesus sends with authority.

[7 : 23] Jesus sends to proclaim. And he sends with urgency. So let's start with Jesus sends with authority. So Matthew 5-9 are all about Jesus' authority.

His authority to teach, to heal, authority over nature and sickness, even death, even his authority to call men and women to follow him. The thing about authority is people who have it, they hardly ever want to share it.

They hold it tight and they use it to control and influence those around them. But not Jesus. 10 verse 1. He called to him his 12 disciples and he, what?

He gave them authority. Authority over the very same illnesses that he has cleansed. And then in verses 2-4 we find that the names of these 12 men are given. Some of them you might have heard of before.

Some of them, we don't know anything about these guys. And the amazing thing is that Jesus chooses all types. Small business owning fishermen like Simon and Andrew.

[8 : 30] Sinful tax collectors like Matthew. Hellenistic Greek speaking Jews like Philip. religiously passionate men like Simon the Zealot. And even, even a man who would betray him like Judas Iscariot.

And just like in the case of Jesus, the 12 apostles are to use their authority paradoxically not to be served but to serve. Not to be served but to serve others.

So look down at the middle of verse 8 with me. Right in the middle of verse 8 the sentence begins like this. You received without paying, give without paying. Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey or two tunics or sandals or a staff for the laborer deserves his food.

So this isn't going to be a traveling money making show. The mission minded 12 are to remain entirely dependent on God to provide for every need that they have.

And what about us? What about you and me? Does Jesus send us with authority like this? Well, this is a really big question. We need to start by asking how many of Jesus' instructions in chapter 12 are universal and how many of them are particular to the apostles and to their situation here? [9:51] So I want you to look at verse 5 for the first hint. Did you pick up on this one? Verse 5. These 12 Jesus sent out instructing them. Go nowhere among the Gentiles enter no town of the Samaritans but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Well, if you've read the New Testament that doesn't sound like a universal principle, does it? Even just a few chapters later in Matthew's gospel Jesus is going to contradict those words. So these instructions they must be primarily at least a directive to these particular 12 men being sent out at this time in this place.

But what kind of principle though is at work here that might in fact apply to us? So I want you to keep one finger in Matthew 10 and just turn to the right to the very end of Matthew all the way to Matthew 28.

The last paragraph verses 16 to 20. Here Jesus again is going to reference his authority and talk about how he's going to use his authority. This is known as the Great Commission.

[11:00] Verses 16. Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him they worshipped but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

So this is after Jesus' resurrection and he declares that all authority in heaven on earth has been given now to him. And what does he want to do with it? He wants to share it.

Not just with the twelve or the eleven actually now but in fact with all of his disciples. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. I will be with you to the end of the age.

This is going to be a commandment that carries on until Christ's return. It's for every believer. So no, we don't have the exact same mission as the twelve in Matthew 10.

[12:05] There's no doubt that it's unique. But yes, we are also sent with authority. Not an apostolic authority that somehow gets passed down from these twelve men right down to us today.

but our authority to make disciples to bring good news in Jesus' name in word and deed it comes directly from the Lord Jesus through the authority of his word and his Holy Spirit.

And it's not some sort friends, it's not some sort of authority that we are going to use ourselves to promote or lord it over others that are weaker than us.

Again, just like Jesus, just like the twelve, our authority is Christ-like. It's paradoxically for serving, not for being served. It's entirely a gift from God.

So first, Jesus sends with authority and second, Jesus sends to proclaim. This is the purpose of his sending. So what are the apostles here in chapter 10?

[13:14] What are they being sent to say? What are they being sent to do? Have a look at verse 7. And proclaim as you go saying what?

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. We've heard these words before, right? Jesus has said them, John the Baptist has actually said them. And to proclaim literally means to herald.

How's your medieval imagination? Do you remember the herald? the man or woman whose job it is to be the messenger for the king or queen? The herald speaks with the authority and voice of the monarch.

She proclaims an important message. So the same verb is used in chapter 4 and chapter 9 of Jesus proclaiming or heralding the message of the kingdom. That's what he wants his apostles to do.

He wants them to say, listen up, the kingdom's here, get ready. This is important. And I love, I love that Jesus does not send the 12 ahead of him to get things ready.

[14:15] I want you to go set the stage up, get the gig ready, get the lights and the, you know, the loudspeakers ready because in a couple days I'm going to show up and I'm going to get on stage and I want to deliver that message.

The Jesus Power Tour is stopping in Magdala. Get it ready for me. I'll be the headliner. No, he sends these 12 to multiply the same message in ministry that he himself is doing.

But I ask you, is there more in this chapter to proclaiming than just words? Do we see any examples of more than just words? Look at verse 8 with me. What does Jesus tell them? He says, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, cast out demons.

And again, these are the same miracles that Jesus is described as doing in chapter 8 and 9. They are signs of the kingdom. Powerful visual declarations that confirm the spoken message that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

But the context makes it so that we have to ask a very important question. Are these instructions in verses 5 to 15, are they only for the 12?

[15:31] Or again, are they for everyone who follows Jesus? The stakes are pretty high this time. Because many earnest believers through the centuries, they have been convinced that casting out demons, miracles of healing, even raising the dead, those should be expected as regular signs of effective and powerful ministry.

And I think there are actually two extreme examples that are both equally unhelpful that we have to recognize. So on the one hand, there are those who would control God by telling Him that He has to keep doing.

He has to keep doing these miracles through all of His disciples because He promised that that's what's going to accompany gospel proclamation. But on the other hand, there are those who would control God by saying, you cannot keep doing those miracles.

The Apostolic Ages is complete. It's finished. The miraculous has ceased. Do you see how both are equally harmful and both grieve the power and the wisdom of God?

Do you see how God is not, He's not somebody that we control, we tell what to do. And it seems to me that if we look at Scripture, the pattern reveals there are certain moments, certain periods in history where the Lord has delighted to perform miracles as signs and confirmations of His divine blessing and powerful work in the world.

[17:04] There are particular high points, you could say, in God's big story. In the Old Testament, you could think of Moses and Elijah. In the New Testament, you would think of Jesus, but also Peter and Paul.

And down through the ages, there are significant moments, I think, significant testimonies from the church all over the world that when the gospel goes into a new territory, a pagan land, the light going into the darkness, that the Lord delights to proclaim the gospel in word and deed as a gift of grace so that the lordship of Christ can gain a foothold in enemy territory.

That those are places where the testimony of Christians and non-believers has been that God has done miraculous signs and wonders. However, that's very different than saying miracles are normative and all Christians are entitled to experience that power right at my fingertips day after day.

And of course, most people who read chapter 10 and they want it to be normative, well, they get to the verses, verse 9, where it says, acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts and they don't want that to be normative.

They're going to pick and choose the verse. You can't pick and choose what you like. But to reiterate the main point here, these miracles in verse 8, they're signs of the kingdom that accompany the proclamation of the word, powerful visual declarations that the kingdom of God is at hand.

[18:40] So secondly, Jesus sends us to proclaim. And thirdly and finally, Jesus sends with urgency, with urgency. urgency. What's the hurry? That's what my kids say whenever I'm stressed out and we're late for school and we're at the door.

What's the hurry, Dad? I don't mind if we're late. Jesus first alludes to the urgency of his mission back in last week's sermon in chapter 9, verse 38.

He told his disciples, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest. Literally, beg, plead with the Lord for laborers. So harvest season, I mean, can you tell I'm not a farmer?

But I've read on the internet that harvest season is time sensitive. A farmer doesn't binge watch reruns of Friends on Netflix.

Not when they have to go out and gather the harvest, right? No, she's up before dawn, she's working in the field until well after dark, until those crops are safely in storage.

[19:48] And so this is Jesus, one of his favorite images for mission, the mission field, we call it, right? He sends out his apostles with authority to proclaim the good news after giving them specific

details about how discerning they should be about entering a certain home, looking for a worthy person, what they're to say.

And then he ends it all, the last verse, verse 15, with this very sharp and harsh warning. Look at the last verse. 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, the town that has rejected you.

So that little throwaway line, truly I say to you, whenever you see that in scripture, don't pass over it. See it in blinking lights. It's like, look out, look out, this is really important what I'm about to say. And so he brings down the hammer. He says, Sodom and Gomorrah, these Old Testament cities that are famous for their wickedness, they were cities that were famous for refusing to repent and change.

God destroyed them with fire. And this is, that's less than what I'm going to do to those who reject the urgency of this message.

[21 : 03] And this introduces a key aspect of all mission. all mission that, all the mission of Jesus, all the mission of the Twelve, and all the mission of all the saints down through history.

We should expect opposition. Verse 14, in fact, presupposes opposition and rejection of the gospel. 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 that town.

So, so a Jew who was going through a Gentile area or something, passing by something that was unclean, they would literally, after they had gotten rid of, gotten past it, they would literally brush off the bottom of their shoes, their sandals, as a sort of a ritual way of saying, symbolic way of saying that I'm, I'm making myself clean again.

That's the image here that Jesus is using. Expect to be ignored. Expect to be mistreated. To be thrown out of town. But don't, don't freak out.

Don't yell or turn your words of peace into anger. The end of verse 13 reads like this. Let your peace, instead let your peace simply return to you.

[22 : 19] Don't take it back. But, this is kind of a euphemism. It's saying, expect it to have no effect. Those words of peace given in good faith, expect them to have no effect on those who reject the good news you bring.

Your peace, your peace will be like an uncashed check. It will be returned to you. Of course, brothers and sisters, the danger is that when we experience this persecution or when we just feel fatigue in missions, that we will forget the urgency that we are being sent with.

And that's why Jesus has this warning here in verse 15. If gospel proclamation, if it makes you shy, if it makes you fearful, if it makes you ashamed of the gospel, if you feel fatigued or worn out, remember that eternity, eternity is at stake for men and women and boys and girls who are hearing this message.

Jesus' words about judgment, they're not here to scare us straight, but to spur us on with the urgency of the task. So thirdly, Jesus sends us out with urgency.

And as we close, I want you to recognize that we have the privilege in Matthew 10 of glimpsing the missional heart of God. And some of us, I know that some of you have a knack for mission.

[23 : 50] Some of you love this stuff. Some of you love going to missions, lunches, and support missionaries, and you read about the worldwide church all the time. But let me be clear, Jesus isn't in the guilt business.

We don't have Matthew 10 in order to remind us how badly we're doing at missions. Can't you just be more like St. Peter? That's not why it's here.

None of us is mission-minded on our own strength. We're all too tainted by sin to just naturally leap up and launch out in gospel mission to the glory of God.

And Matthew 10, the good news is that this is only the tiniest drop of the ocean that's coming as the gospel unfolds.

So that by the time we get to, after Jesus' death and resurrection, to Pentecost, we see this ocean just overflowing that the best gift of all that this God who loves to send sends is the Holy Spirit sent as our helper for the purpose of mission and transformation.

[24 : 54] mission is a tender gift of God. It's an invitation to participate with him in the powerful work he's doing in the world.

He doesn't have to share it. He doesn't need your help. But he loves to send us. He loves to send us to the lost, to the least, to the littlest among us.

He will send you with his authority. He promises that. He will send you to proclaim. And he will send you with urgency.
So pray urgently to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers. Amen.