

March 5, 2017

## “The Mission Before Us - Part 1”

Matthew 10:5-15

**FCF:** Our authority problem (ultimately with God)

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) We are but disciples and followers of Jesus.

(magnet) Ours is then to trust and heed His commands.

### **SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

I have a list. See if you can tell me what these things have in common. From the time you could walk, you hated to be picked up. You insisted on dressing yourself. In grade school, you were repeatedly sent to the principal’s office. You took hating school to new levels. In time, teachers had it out for you. And by your senior year, you had cutting class down to an art form.

What does this mean? You have an authority problem. You can’t handle anyone telling you what to do. Of course, the reality is we all have this. It has little to do with temperament or personality. Our authority problem is a heart issue. And it’s tied to our relationship with God.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** Matthew 10:5-15

### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

### **SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Let’s dive in. Jesus is now sending His disciples on their first assignment. Last week, we saw that this sending reflects these three things - His deep distress for the lost, His surprising willingness to delegate tasks, and then the beautiful diversity He has in mind for His church.

Which brings us to this (**READ Matthew 10:5a**). To rightly understand this text, we need to recognize a couple of things. For starters, what follows is a specific charge for a specific mission. And so while much of this will transfer to today, some of it won’t. That said, we must also be clear on something else - who is being sent and who is doing the sending. This is vital.

Jesus is Lord. We are but His disciples and followers. Ours is then to trust and heed His commands. We are but His disciples and followers. Ours is to trust and heed His commands.

And Jesus makes this clear in at least three ways in our text. First, in declaring where we are to go. Second, in declaring what we are to do. And, third, in declaring how we are to do it.

### **I. WHERE WE ARE TO GO**

So, first, we see where we are to go. What does Jesus say? (**READ Matthew 10:5-6**)

#### *A) A Startling Restriction*

##### 1. Not to the Gentiles

This is a startling restriction. They are to stay in the region of Galilee, not to go to the Gentiles.

##### 2. Only to the Jews

They are to go to their countrymen, their fellow Jews, those described (**READ Matthew 9:36**).

#### *B) The Rationale*

##### 1. Practical reality

What is the rationale for this? Two things. First, the practical reality that they were not ready to go to the Gentiles. Not just because of a lack of skills but presumptuous and prejudiced hearts.

## 2. Theological reality

But then there was the theological reality of the promises of God to the patriarchs and the way this plan was to unfold. We see it in the early church. Note Paul's words ([READ Romans 1:16](#)).

The broader mission would come. But for now, for the Twelve, there was this restriction.

*Application:*

But what of us? Jesus' disciples are not under such restrictions now. It's the opposite.

What can we learn from this? Consider these words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer ([READ quote](#)):

In his very first word Jesus lays down a limitation of their work, a circumstance they must have found strange and difficult. The choice of field for their labours does not depend on their own impulses or inclinations, but on where they are sent. This makes it quite clear that it is not their own work they are doing but God's.

"The choice of field for their labours does not depend on their own impulses or inclinations."

Well, what does it depend on? And who? The Lord of the harvest. He appoints and sends. To where? To everywhere and everyone. Beginning with, well, I'll let you work that out with Him.

He is Lord. We are His disciples and followers. Ours is to trust and heed His commands.

## II. WHAT WE ARE TO DO

Which takes us to what we are to do. Again, Jesus' words ([READ Matthew 10:7-8a](#)).

### A) A Balanced Ministry

#### 1. Of word

Jesus has in mind a balanced ministry. First, of word. That is, the heralding of the gospel of the kingdom. "The King has come. The reign of the tyrant is done. Long live the one true King."

#### 2. Of deed

So, first of word. And then of deed - the signs that accompany and confirm that good news.

### B) The Rationale

#### 1. The extent of the need

But why? What's the rationale for this balanced ministry? Partly, it's the extent of the need. The Fall had real effects and brought the need for healing on all fronts - mind, body, and spirit.

#### 2. A continuation of His work

So this balanced ministry meets the extent of the need. And serves as a continuation of Jesus' work ([READ Matthew 10:1](#)). For the Twelve, it was the same message. And the same power.

Jesus is Lord. It is His to determine and declare where we go and what we are to do.

*Application:*

Again, their mission was in a specific historical context very different from ours. That said, what can we learn here? At least this - we are still called to a ministry of word and deed.

It is the same message, the same good news of the kingdom. And it is the same power by which that message will land home for people. So there is something for two groups of folks this

morning. First, to the despairing. Someone you care for, with whom you have shared this news, has not embraced it. Listen. That is Christ's work. You are carrying a load that is not yours.

Second, to the jubilant. Someone you care for, with whom you have shared this news has embraced it. Be glad but be wary - especially as you compare your experience to the despairing and wonder what they did wrong. You may well be taking credit that is not yours to take.

He is Lord. We are His disciples and followers. Ours is to trust and heed His commands.

### **III. HOW WE ARE TO DO IT**

Which then takes us to how we are to do this. As with the rest, this demands a posture of submission. Now, there's a lot going on here and we will only be able to briefly summarize it.

#### *A) An Integrity of Witness*

##### 1. Giving freely

This is about an integrity of witness. And it begins with giving freely (**READ Matthew 10:8b**).

##### 2. Trusting fully

Give freely. And trust fully (**READ Matthew 10:9-10**). Jesus is not prohibiting such things. But this was a short term mission. So preparations weren't needed. "Take what you have and go."

##### 3. Going quickly

Give freely. Trust fully. And go quickly (**READ Matthew 10:11-15**). "Seek out the 'worthy' - those who receive you and your message. Those who don't are ultimately not rejecting you but me. You need to be clear on that. And move on. The stakes are high and others need to know."

#### *B) The Rationale*

The rationale for all this? The need for consistency between our message and methods.

##### 1. Generosity of self

A generosity of self. They'd been freed from a life governed by comfort, ease, the accumulation of things - freed to give themselves, all they were and had. And they needed to show that.

##### 2. Trust in God's provision

Trust in God's provision. God provides for His own. The Creator of all things, who loved them enough to send His Son and give Him up, can be trusted for daily needs. They had to do that.

##### 3. Willingness to tell the truth

A willingness to tell the truth. They had heaven's approval in Christ. They had been freed from the need to be liked, set free to love others enough to tell them the truth. They had to speak that.

There had to be an integrity of witness, a consistency to their message and methods.

#### *Application:*

Again, we have to take into account the specific historical context here. But there are still lessons for us to learn. As Frances Schaeffer said, we are to do the Lord's work the Lord's way. We are to go forth, each of us, in a way that fits the hope we have, the goodness of the gospel.

He is Lord. We are His disciples and followers. Ours is to trust and heed His commands.

## CONCLUSION:

Of course, such submission sounds awful to us. It runs utterly counter to our impulses. But let's consider to whom we are to submit - to Jesus. And when we consider that, it has a way of instilling trust. Which then frees us to a humble, glad, and expectant submission. For in following Him, in submitting to Him, there is no need to fear. But we do need to heed Him.

I'm reminded of a scene from C. S. Lewis' *The Silver Chair*. Four signs had been given to Jill and Eustace by the great Lion, Aslan. The signs were to be guides in their quest to find Prince Rilian and return him to his father, King Caspian. Here is Aslan's charge ([READ quote](#)):

Stand still. In a moment I will blow. But first, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart, and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters.

Of course, if you know the story, you know that Jill and Eustace fail to remember the signs. And they get themselves into a good deal of trouble. But never too much trouble for mighty Aslan.

It's a great story at many levels. And, if nothing else, it illustrates the need to "follow the signs" and the ways of Jesus - the wisdom of His ways and His sovereign mercy that works even through our failure to do so. Which then rightly sparks a desire to follow His signs all the more.

He is Lord. We are His disciples and followers. Ours is to trust and heed His commands.

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) We are but disciples and followers of Jesus.  
(magnet) Ours is then to trust and heed His commands.