

Representing the King Matthew 10:1-15

We continue this morning in the Gospel of Matthew. Mathew has been taking us through a section in which he is setting the stage for the building conflict with the Pharisees. He has also been building the identity of Jesus as the King, the Messiah. We have seen Him heal, raise the dead, and forgive sins, all to reveal Jesus as the promised Messiah. Through all of this, we have seen Jesus tell people He has healed or cast demons out of to not tell anyone. Jesus wanted to focus on the training of His disciples in general and the 12 specifically. Which is where we are in the gospel this morning.

In our text this morning, we find Jesus specifically commissioning the 12 to accomplish ministry on His behalf. So Let's dig into the text this morning to see what God has for us there.

The Twelve Apostles (10:1-4)

The first 4 verses of chapter 10 provide for a picture of the men called by Jesus to be His representatives and part of the foundation of the early church.

We need to go back to where we closed last week at the end of chapter 9.

Matthew 9:37–38 (ESV)

37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

We saw this last week. Jesus was showing compassion on the people of Israel as He ministered to many of them in Galilee. He then said to his disciples that it is a target rich environment, so pray for laborers to work in this harvest. The very next thing we read then is:

Matthew 10:1 (ESV)

10 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 affliction.

As I look at this verse, I first see that there is something specific about the 12. Jesus called His twelve disciples. We know that Jesus had hundreds, even thousands of disciples following Him. We have seen occasions where He had to get away from the crowd. But these 12 were specifically called by Jesus. Earlier in the Gospel and in the other Gospels, we read the accounts of several of these disciples being specifically called by Jesus.

The grammar of this verse seems to indicate that the 12 had already formed a small group within the larger disciple group. 12

men that Jesus had chosen to be His team. Within that group, we see a smaller inner circle of 3 men, Peter, James, and John. I always find it interesting to look at the men Jesus selected to be His closest followers. Dr. MacArthur wrote a book that goes a long way into providing a glimpse into who these men were. That book 12 Ordinary Men, is a great source of seeing who these men were. I am fascinated that Jesus, omniscient, and omnipotent chose the men He did. When we lose people around here, I take it personally. Then I study Jesus and His disciples, and I see what Jesus went through with men personally chosen by Him, yet when the time came for them to stand up for Him, they fled. Cursed out those who would attempt to reveal them. Even working against Him to have Him arrested. Jesus' own disciples, at least at first did not hold up very well. I recognize that I should expect the same thing.

Jesus specifically calls these men to be His closet teammates and gives them authority over the spiritual world, and the physical world. There are a couple of important things that we need to see here.

First, Jesus gives those He calls authority. It is His authority given to His chosen. The word authority here means that Jesus was giving the disciples the right to control, the power to control. Think about that for a moment. Jesus gave His disciples, specifically the 12, the right, and the power to control both the physical world and the spiritual world. Heal the sick and cast out demons. That is a big deal. Jesus had been demonstrating His

power and authority and now He was giving to His disciples. I cannot imagine what they were thinking at this time.

Second, the authority and power He is giving them is His meaning they are working under His authority, they have no authority of their own. This is a big deal for us to understand. Everything you do as a follower of Jesus, as His disciple, in under His authority and by His power. You bring nothing to the table, it is all Him. It is not uncommon for people to look at a big church and say “wow, that preacher is really good,” or that praise team is awesome.” When in reality if it is real it God that does it and not us. We work in His power and under His authority. Anything done under our own power and authority will fail. Jesus is the one building the kingdom, not us. We are His tools. You can no more give credit for the house being built to the hammer than you can take credit for the kingdom being built.

Matthew 10:2–4 (ESV)

2 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 Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Matthew then names the 12 disciples but uses a different word for them, Apostles. This is the only place in the Gospel of Matthew that Apostle is used. The English word apostle is simply a transliteration of the Greek word ἀποστόλων (apostolōn) or apostalos. The origin of the Greek word ἀποστόλων (apostolōn) is not really known. We think it may be a naval term. Part of the root is the same word as used of a ship. It is believed by many that the origin of the word comes from the Greek navy and the force they would send out from the ship. In normal usage in ancient Greek, the word always carries the idea of being sent with authority. It is used in the New Testament to speak of someone who is commissioned or sent with the authority of the sender as an official representative. Ambassador is often used to describe the New Testament understanding.

So he in verse 2 is the only place in the Gospel of Matthew that these 12, who we believe had already been formed into a group separate from the rank and file disciples, were called apostles. I think Matthew uses the word here specifically because Jesus was sending them out as His representatives. Jesus had just given them authority over the physical world and the spiritual world and was sending them out. That is the definition of an apostle, so Matthew uses that noun for the group. He does not do it again.

We also see in verse 2 something very intriguing to me. He says, “First, Simon, who is called Peter.” What does first here mean?

Most scholars say that first here only means the first in the list. Every listing in the New Testament of the 12 original apostles begins with Simon Peter and ends with Judas Iscariot. To me, that seems to denote some order. It is clear in Matthew that no special position was conferred on Peter, He was not the first Pope. But it is also clear in Matthew as well as the other Gospels and Acts, that Peter was often the first to speak and the first to leap. I think it is safe to say that Matthew was not ascribed to Peter any authoritative role, but Peter really was the leader of the 12 after Jesus. I don't think you can escape the reality that all listings show him first.

What Matthew does not tell us, but we know from the other gospels is that Jesus was sending them out in teams of two, indicating that teams are the obvious choice for ministry.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles (10:5-15)

When we compare Matthew's Gospel to Mark and Luke, we find there was some time between the 12 being specifically grouped together and Jesus sending them out. Matthew is not misleading us, just not giving us a complete timeline because his point is not to tell everything that happened but to build a specific narrative of Jesus and His followers.

Matthew 10:5–6 (ESV)

5 These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of

the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

First, in verse 5 take notice of the words “sent out” it is the verb form of the noun Apostelos. It just reconfirms that they are commissioned by Jesus to go out in His name.

Jesus also gives specific instructions on where to go and where not to go. Go only to Jews, go only to houses where you are accepted. Don't go to Gentiles and don't remain where you are not accepted. The target rich environment still remained the people of Israel. Jesus was still offering the kingdom to them. As we discussed last week, it was a legitimate offer being presented by Jesus. Now Jesus was sending out His direct representatives, His ambassadors, the apostles to aid in spreading the message of the kingdom.

Jesus gave the apostles specific instructions. In verse 5, we read Jesus sent out Instructing them. The word instructing needs to be seen as having greater force and weight than simple teaching. This particular word really carries the weight of ordering them, commanding them. The apostles had no choice but to do what Jesus directed them to do.

Jesus' order for the apostles to not go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans was not because they could not be saved or were not part of God's redemptive plan. But rather because God's plan was to offer first to Israel and then to the Gentiles.

Romans 1:16 (ESV)

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

Jesus was still in the phase of offering the kingdom to Israel. Jesus says to go to the lost sheep of Israel. This is an interesting phrase to me.

Jesus, as the shepherd, is looking for those sheep that have wandered off or been carried off. He is providing the lost sheep an opportunity to come back to the sheepfold. The message being delivered to Israel by Jesus was that your king is right here, turn to Him now. The message of the kingdom was truly a message only for Israel. They were the ones seeking the king and His kingdom, they were the ones looking for the Messiah.

Matthew 10:7 (ESV)

7 And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’

The message they were to spread was that the king and His kingdom were right here right now. That is indeed the gospel message. The king of the universe is right here right now.

Matthew 10:8 (ESV)

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

Jesus now gets a little more specific. The king and His kingdom are right here right now, and to authenticate your message, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. Why did Jesus instruct them to the things He had just been doing? As we saw last week those are the things that Israel was looking for the Messiah to do. By the apostle doing those things, they would be authenticated as His representatives.

Representatives of the Messiah they were all looking for. They came talking about the kingdom, doing the things they were looking for the Messiah to do. It showed who they really were.

Matthew 10:9–10 (ESV)

*9 Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts,
10 no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals
or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.*

Jesus then instructs them on the financial end of it. Remember Instructed means commanded, so Jesus is commanding them to not take any money from anyone for healing, casting out demons, cleansing them leprosy, etc. This is not about getting rich, It is all about serving the king.

There is also a sense that Jesus was setting them up for some lessons in dependency in Him, trusting Him, having faith in Him. I was talking with Tony Webb the other day. It seems like some of their funding will be going away soon, and Tony was still trusting God to supply everything that he needs to continue to operate the way Jesus wants him to. He was trusting God for everything. True faith in the right person, Jesus.

Jesus told the apostles, don't even take a bag for your stuff or anything. Don't pack a bag with extra clothes, just depend on God. Jesus wanted the apostle to focus on HIM and not on their own needs. Jesus knew that if they depended on God, they would have the blessings of seeing Him care for them in ways they could not even imagine.

Matthew 10:11–12 (ESV)

11 And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.

12 As you enter the house, greet it.

Jesus also ordered the disciples to check out the town when they get there. Look for the most worthy person in town and stay with them and not go all around town.

As I was studying this, I looked closely at the word “worthy” here in our ESV Text. The Greek word translated here as worthy has kind of a broad range of meanings. The best I could make out about this word is that it means, in this context, “properly fitting” or “corresponding to what should be expected,” or

perhaps “which corresponds to one’s having repented.” So I think what Jesus is saying here is when you get to town look for others that are already followers of Jesus and stay with them. Enlist them for support and care. Someone who already has become a follower of Jesus and is sympathetic to the mission you are on. Jesus is instructing His apostles that they were to team up with people who support the mission they are on. Even though the Apostle Paul was not part of this first group of apostles, it was a lesson he learned and practiced in his ministry. It was common for Paul to go into a new town and go to the Synagogu, and there look for other followers of Jesus or at least those who wanted to know God better. There is also a good indication that Peter and the other apostles did the same thing.

Matthew 10:12–13 (ESV)

12 As you enter the house, greet it. 13 And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

When you go into the house, greet the occupants and ask God to bless them. I believe Jesus is using the common etiquette of the day to reflect on the kindness and hospitality of a house owner is responded to by Jesus followers.

The idea of peace here is not simply the lack of tranquility. It is more an expression of the blessing upon a house that was custom for travelers to bring on a house that would put them up. A prayer of blessing from the King that sent these teams on this

ministry trip. If they accept you pray for them a prayer of blessing from God. If they don't accept you then keep the prayer of blessing upon yourself. People that are unwilling to accept the message of the kingdom do not deserve to have the blessing of the kingdom is essentially what Jesus is telling them here.

Matthew 10:14 (ESV)

14 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 town.

I love this picture, but it makes no sense if you don't know some of the historical contexts. It is clear from several passages in Psalms, Isaiah, 2nd Samuel, as well as others that dust/dirt is a sign of being unclean. It was common practice for Jews to shake off the gentile dirt from their shoes when they crossed back into Israel. Jesus uses that symbolism in His instructions to the apostolic teams. If you are not accepted if they will not listen to the gospel message of the kingdom shake of the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. By doing that the apostolic teams were signifying that those homes or towns were unclean or not followers of Jesus. A symbol that the homeowner and everyone in town would recognize and know what was being said.

Matthew 10:15 (ESV)

15 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.

Here in verse 15, Jesus tells the apostolic teams that those homes and towns that reject the kingdom message will have a difficult future. Jesus begins with “truly.” This is the Greek word ἀμήν (amen) which is a robust forceful word. Jesus was getting their attention to make sure they heard and understood what He was about to say.

“Listen carefully, hear what I am about to say!” Jesus wanted to make sure they understood that rejection of the Messiah was a very serious offense. Remember, Jesus was genuinely offering to Israel the messianic Kingdom. Even though He knew that they would not accept the offer was still legitimate and valid.

Homes or towns that rejected the Messiah would have a harder time than Sodom and Gomorrah. Think about that for a moment. What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah? They were destroyed by God from above, and that is better than what the homes and towns that reject the Messiah will receive.

So knowing that most homes and towns of Israel did reject the Messiah, what was their punishment. Well, within 40 years they were completely overtaken by Rome. Jerusalem destroyed, and the temple lay in ruin. They ceased to be a national people and were scattered all over the world. Not to be a country again until

May 1948 after 6 million Jews were killed in WWII and millions more killed by Rome and all the other people that occupied the Levant for the next 1900 years. They faced near extermination by Islam 700 years later. The most oppressed people in the history of the planet. Still, despite having a strong protective military and possession of their homeland, the forces of Satan continue to work against Israel. Votes in the United Nations almost always go against Israel. Almost every nation in the world is aligned against Israel. They live every day with rockets and missiles raining down on them from the enemies around them. Somedays as many as 200 or 300 in one day.

What happens to homes and towns that reject the Messiah. It is worse the sudden destruction that Sodom and Gomorrah experienced. It is a life of opposition and struggle. Where school children have to know where the gas mask is and houses have to have fallen out shelters. It is the anguish of constant struggle.

Jesus was giving the apostolic teams a glimpse into what the world would be like in the future, including our day!

Conclusion

So we have seen Jesus appoint 12 of His disciples to be apostles. We have seen that these apostles were sent out by Jesus in the towns and homes of the Galilee region. Jesus gave them some strict instructions on what to say and who to say it to.

As apostles, they were representatives of Jesus, the Messiah, the king and representatives of His kingdom. Everything they did and every place they went they would be His representatives. Jesus told them He was sending them out in His power and authority to accomplish the mission they were assigned to.

So what does this means for us today almost 2000 years later? I think their message it is still the same. It is still the gospel message of the kingdom. Of Course, you do not get to participate in the Messianic Kingdom without being a follower of Jesus. We do not know when the literal 1000 year kingdom will come, but we are still to present the gospel message of Jesus' Kingdom.

For the church, the kingdom will be a time after we have been translated or resurrected, and we return to earth with Jesus after 7 years of fellowship in heaven during the tribulation. We will reign with Jesus for 1000 years. I wish I knew what that means and what it will look like, but what is really important is that the only way I can participate in that kingdom is to be a follower of Jesus and return with Him to set up the kingdom.

I also know that the Jewish homes and towns that rejected the Messiah standing in front of them had and continue to have a really difficult time. The same holds true for those non-Jewish homes and towns that reject the Messiah. What does their future look like? Well, there are two words to define it. Hell and

separated. Separated from God for eternity is what rejection of the Messiah looks like.

We are to present the gospel to all who will listen and those who reject we are to knock the dust of their homes and towns and continue on to homes and towns that will accept the Messiah.

That does not mean we give up on those towns. But the priority remains those who will listen and are willing to participate.

The bottom line is that we have been commissioned by Jesus with His authority and the power He has given to the church through the Holy Spirit, to go out and present the gospel. That means it is our job to put ourselves in the position to reach out to others, To call others, to visit others to start up conversations about the gospel with others. To visit a dying friend to make sure they trust God to care for them. To help people that need help. To invite friends to come to movie nights, to invite people to church. And all the things that go into being a gather for Jesus.

Father, my prayer is that we all take a look at what we are doing and where we are doing it. To examine if we are being good representatives of You and Jesus. To see if we are operating in your power accomplishing the good works you have established for us.

Thank you, father, for calling us to be your children and your slaves, to represent you to a lost and dying world. Amen