

READING

Reading from Matthew 9:35 through 10:15 from the ESV.

³⁵And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;

³⁸therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

¹And 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.

²The 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;

³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

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

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

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

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

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

⁹Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts,

¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.

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

¹²As you enter the house, greet it.

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

¹⁴And 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.

¹⁵Truly, 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.

SERMON ILLUSTRATION

If you'll notice from the passage that we read first, we see Jesus going throughout the land. He was preaching the word and healing and restoring people. Not only was he doing that, he did it so that his disciples would see not only what he was doing, but his heart. Matthew saw it and probably just wrote down what Jesus said,

³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus wanted his followers to see what he saw.

Then Jesus said,

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

Jesus wanted his followers to pray like he prayed.

Then Jesus called twelve men to be his Apostles, and in verse 5, it says,

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out

Jesus wanted his followers to learn to go as he went.

So, this is what we are going to talk about today from this passage. **Jesus invites us to follow him; To see what he sees, to pray as he prays, to go as he goes.**

SERMON ILLUSTRATION

Before we engage with the world and attempt to do anything, we need to go through this process. We need to see the world as Jesus does; we need to pray for our world around us so that we are moved, and often we will find that God wants us to go, and be an answer to our own prayers.

This is because “God is working in you to will and to do his good pleasure” as it says in Philippians 2:13.

When we pray for something that is stirring our hearts, it is because God is moving you to pray. He has placed you in this time, in this place, in our family, with your friends and he puts things on your heart. So when you pray for a need, you are just catching up to God. He is moving you to pray so it is little wonder that he is also moving you to go and act.

Often, we get disconnected from the world around us. I think this is part of Satan's strategy. The Bible says that we have a spiritual enemy that is trying to mess up God's creation – and that is us as people.

I believe part of the strategy is to give us the opposite of myopia or near-sightedness. I have myopia, nearsightedness, my vision is about 20-80. Not terrible, but I can't really see the faces very well of the guys in the audio cart. But Satan wants us to have far-sightedness or Hyperopia. Why? He wants us to focus on things that are far away and that we can do nothing about, instead of what is right in front of us.

The Bible says, the greatest command is to love God with all of our heart and soul and mind, and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Satan loves it when we are focused on our newsfeed and getting wrapped up about things that are far away that we can do nothing about. We burn our emotional energy on what we can do nothing about. And we isolate ourselves in our homes and don't even know our neighbors; or at work we don't interact with co-workers. We are becoming a living enactment of the movie Matrix, a science fiction movie about how people actually lived in a little cocoon and were fed an imaginary life through an electronic feed into their brain. We are becoming a country of virtual living, even though we still walk around.

So, we are disconnected from the world around us. Jeanine and I saw some cross-cultural examples of this in 1993 when we went to live in Moscow, Russia as part of our work. We packed our bags and our two-year old son Brad, and headed off.

Moscow was definitely not what we expected. In 1993 they were just two years since the collapse of the Soviet Socialist system. The people were struggling to learn to govern themselves. During our time there, the new

Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, decided that he had had enough of the Parliament not wanting to reform, so he called out tanks to shell the parliament buildings.

During the conflict, Jeanine, listening to the radio, famously asked, “They keep talking about sending in “troops.” “How many are in a troop?” And I said “one” unless you are talking about a girl scout troop. And she also said, “These Russians are so weird. They are throwing drinks at each other. ‘What? I said.’ “Yea, Molotov cocktails, whatever those are...”

But I think what really surprised us was the lack of common social initiative. What do I mean? Things like a broken swing set for the kids in the common area for the apartment blocks. They would be in dis-repair so that the kids could not use them. The wooden seats on the swings were missing and no one came to fix them. We would expect that a repairman for the apartment would come and fix the broken equipment. Or we would expect a good neighbor would take some initiative and repair them - at least so his own kids could use it.

That and the general disrepair of the city were what was most shocking to us; broken sidewalks everywhere; chunks of concrete laying around. Now I am not trying to disparage the Russian people. But seeing this showed the larger social dysfunction that socialism and communism had brought.

As I said they were just two years out of a system where you generally just kept your head down and took care of yourself – or risked some sort of consequence. They also did not have any resources or building supplies. We learned that the playground equipment was pilfered of the wood because wood could not be gotten easily. Our friends in trying to repair their rented apartment were hindered for two months just to find some tar to repair the subfloor under the floor.

The Russians were suffering hyperinflation too. A loaf of bread (kleb) was 3 rubles when we came and 20 when we left some six month later. The ruble fell from 300 to the dollar when we came to nearly 3000 when we left. So, it is no wonder that the people were broken down and unresponsive.

All of us can feel helpless to fix even the smallest things sometimes. The Pandemic has added one more thing that we feel is affecting us. We have our jobs and the need to make money, the limits of physical strength to deal with, etc. etc.

Jesus wants us to overcome our own dysfunction and isolation too. **To be able to see, to pray and go. We need to be people that are different from the culture.** Involved not in protests over large social norms, but rather people that are engaged with what is on God's heart; the person standing right in front of you. We all want to be involved and to serve God, but different things hold us back: fears, tiredness, not knowing what to do.

We want to be involved. Let's look at the passage to see how this can become a reality.

Matthew 9:35–36

³⁵*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.*

³⁶*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

The first way to overcome our dysfunction is to see God as he is; his heart and to see what he sees.

Jesus had compassion for the people because they were sheep without a shepherd. That may not mean much to us since we seldom see sheep.

When Jeanine and I were up in Idaho one time for a wedding, we were driving and had to stop for a flock of sheep crossing the road. Other than that, I have not had lots of interactions with sheep.

But as we saw from the sermon two weeks ago, God was criticizing the shepherds of Israel (or the teachers of Israel) because they were not doing their jobs in shepherding the sheep. This is in Ezekiel 34. There were sick and injured that were not cared for; there were those that were straying and the lost that were not being sought. That is what Jesus saw when he saw the crowd. People in all sorts of trouble and sickness and dysfunction in need of a shepherd or a doctor to use another metaphor.

One of the biggest things that we can do to engage in the world is first to see the world as God does. To see what Jesus sees.

There are several reasons that I want us to come together to watch “The Chosen.” One of them is this; that we need to see people as Jesus is depicted as seeing them in this TV series, and talk and pray about it one another. This is a way for us to begin to undo our isolation that we are trending into. If you want to encourage your pastor, go to one of these groups and fellowship and allow yourself to start seeing as Jesus sees. **Sure you can watch “The chosen” from home, but the point is to be together and pray together and encourage one another to see as Jesus sees.**

I would like us as a church to watch the two hour live streaming event of “The Chosen.” They brought together nine random Gen-Z kids to watch “The Chosen” and the problems that those kids described in their lives was

heart-breaking. And the transformations they went through was incredible too as they saw a credible and biblical depiction of Jesus.

The first way to overcome our dysfunction is to see God as he is. To see the world as he sees it.

VERSES 9:37-38 WE NEED TO PRAY AS JESUS PRAYS

Once we see what Jesus sees, it will move us to prayer.

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."*

The next step in overcoming our isolation and dysfunction is to pray. We need to pray for those closest to us. Our family and friends and students over the wall and on UCF or people in our neighborhood or at work. If we do this consistently, God will begin to work.

Notice that Jesus says the harvest is plentiful. This is because God has been working. He has planted the field and tilled up the hard soil. There are people that God has made ready. We need to go and work in our little corner of the field. We are the day-laborers. We need to do our part and let God do his part. We often want to do God's part and have him do our part. We will talk more about that later. It is God's field. **We need to pray for our part in it.**

VERSES 10:1-5 WE NEED TO GO AS JESUS GOES

The next step in overcoming our isolation and dysfunction is to go.

¹*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.*

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.*

What we see here is the first commissioning or ordination of people for ministry in the New Testament. Jesus had chosen his disciples, verse 1,

¹*And he called to him his twelve disciples*

Verse 2,

²*The names of the twelve apostles are these*

So, we see that they went from “disciples” to “apostles.” That is because the word Apostle means “one who is sent” on behalf of someone else, an “emissary.” But I think it is more. They were given the title because God had chosen them for a special role. They were now Apostles and would continue that role throughout the rest of their lives.

We should understand that this commissioning was for them as Apostles. Though we learn from what Jesus is doing through them, we also understand that this is unique.

Verse 1 again,

¹*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.*

Jesus endowed the apostles with special powers or authority over disease and demons and even death. These gifts were given as signs of the Kingdom. That it really had come, and that the Messiah was Jesus who

sent them. These gifts were used by the Apostles to prove that the Kingdom had come. We see a few of them in detail in the book of Acts; Peter and Paul each raised a lame man to walk. Peter and Paul each raised a dead person back to life. But not so many, the point is not the miracles, but the miracle of reconciliation to God through Christ.

Churches and cults get into trouble when they believe that there are modern day Apostles. When they say that their church or their apostles are authoritative along with the Bible. That is where false teaching and heresy enters in. This is what we spoke about in our first sola, “Sola Scriptura” or Scripture alone. The Bible is our own authority, not some man or church. If it does not align with the Bible, then it is not true and not to be trusted.

Now on the other hand, Jesus has given us access to a super-power that can heal the sick and overcome death: That is the word of God and word of our testimony that God has done for us.

Jesus does not send us into the world empty-handed. We have God’s word and the good news of the Gospel: that God loves them, and his favorable will is that he will forgive their sin through Jesus.

We see the names of the Apostle listed here. Interestingly, Matthew groups them in twos; maybe these were the two-person teams that Jesus sent out.

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.*

We know quite a bit about Peter and Andrew and James and John and a little about Philip and Matthew and Bartholomew who was probably the

Nathaniel in John 1. By elimination Thaddaeus is probably the “Jude” that is referred to in the other Gospels of Mark and Luke. He may have been the one to write the book of Jude.

These men were called to be Apostles and they gave their lives to the gospel, and they changed the world.

The next step in overcoming our isolation and dysfunction is to go.

God has not called us on the same sort of mission, to go preaching town by town, but he has called us to something that we are to follow him into; to go. We need to go as Jesus goes. There are several things we need to see in the remainder of our passage.

Verse 5,

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.*

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

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

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

When we think about going as Jesus goes, it means to go forward with the same principles that he taught his disciples. He gave them instructions and only later would they see the wisdom in them.

First, he said, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

He gave them a limited objective.

He was not trying to exclude the Gentiles (or non-Jewish people) but rather to give the Jews their first chance. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, Salvation is from the Jews. It starts with them.

Also, he may have done this to keep things simple in this first outing. They would not have to deal with racial and cultural animosity but could focus on the message.

He gave them a simple message.

‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ When we go to non-believers, we need to stick to the simple message. Sometimes they bring up objections, we should answer simply, then return to the gospel. “Do you know that God loves you and wants to be reconciled to you?”

As the Apostles preached the Kingdom of heaven is at hand, and healed people, the question would be, where did you get this authority? It would

have gone right back to Jesus. Jesus gave them the power and he is the Messiah. “Repent and believe in Jesus the Christ.” That would have been the message.

He gave them a simple ethic.

⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. ⁹Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.

The ethics are do not worry about your food and where you will stay, but focus on the message and how that it was freely given to you by grace, so freely give and proclaim God’s grace to others.

In this short journey he told them to go without any provisions. Some people think or teach that missionaries should go without any preparations and just trust God.

But Jesus later told the Apostles, before he died, in

Luke 22:35–36 (ESV)

³⁵And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.”

³⁶He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.

Times were about to change. We do make preparations, but most of all we need to trust God still in our going.

There are a couple more things. **Jesus gives them a simple judgment.**

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.*

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.*

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.*

In this short-term mission, **Jesus gives them a simple judgment. It helps them to see the significance of what they are doing so that they are not dissuaded or quit.**

They are to see that what matters is that people repent and accept the message. We are ambassadors for Christ. When we are rejected, then they are rejecting Christ, so long as we have made Jesus the focus.

God commands that people believe in the Gospel. People are told to “obey” by believing.

The Apostle Paul saw this as his mission as an Apostle in Romans 1

Romans 1:4–5 (ESV)

⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

Paul saw that having faith was being obedient to God. That is what he requires.

Similarly, Jesus said to some Pharisees that were not believing in him,

John 6:28–29 (ESV)

²⁸Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

The work of God that matters to him is believing in Jesus, his son.

Jesus explained the Gospel like this,

John 6:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

CONCLUSION

In this passage Jesus shows that he is the example. We need to see as he sees. We need to pray as he prays. We need to go as he Goes.

When we do this we will find that we are healed of our inertia and isolation. We will acquire God’s heart and that will move us to pray. When we pray consistently, God will send us to go.

We need Jesus to heal us and our land. We can learn much from this passage.

Please pray with me.