



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.  
Matthew 10:5-15

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English Standard Version

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*“The Mission of the King”*  
The 32<sup>nd</sup> Sermon in a series on the Gospel of Matthew entitled  
*“The King and His Kingdom!”*

**Matthew 10:5-15**

*“These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. <sup>9</sup> Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts, <sup>10</sup> no bag for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. <sup>11</sup> And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. <sup>12</sup> As you enter the house, greet it. <sup>13</sup> And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.”*

*Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. We ask You this morning to give us the grace to understand what’s going on here. Help us to know how to apply this Word to our lives in such a way that it makes a difference. And help us to receive the Gospel and not reject it. So by Your Spirit open this Gospel to us and help us to see Jesus, and, as always, for this we need Your grace. Give us the desire to learn from You this morning, in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.*

## INTRODUCTION: *An Unlikely Hero*<sup>1</sup>

In his gripping novel, *City of Thieves*, David Benioff weaves a tale about the siege of Leningrad during World War II. The novel is loosely based on his grandfather's stories about surviving World War II in Russia and he takes his grandfather's name for the main character.

Having elected to **stay** in Leningrad during the siege, 17-year-old Lev Beniov, who is a shy and scrawny petty thief and the mousy son of a disappeared Jewish poet, is caught **looting** a German paratrooper's corpse. During wartime the penalty for this infraction **is execution**. And so Lev is thrown into the same cell as Kolya, an articulate and handsome deserter from the Russian Army, who's something of a braggart and a blowhard, where they both await their execution.

Then a strange colonel, Colonel Grechko, confronts Lev and Kolya and offers the pair **an impossible task** in exchange for their lives ... he'll spare them from execution on the condition that they acquire **a dozen eggs** for his daughter's wedding cake. If they can't find the eggs in one week, the Colonel will hunt them down and kill them. Remember, this story takes place during **the siege of Leningrad**, a city **suffering** from intense **deprivation**, and so finding a dozen eggs in less than a week is a ludicrous mission. But since it saves their lives, they agree to the bizarre terms and head out. Lev is an engaging and self-deprecating narrator who recounts his own lack of qualifications for this new mission ... he says ...

“This wasn't the way I had imagined my adventures, but reality ignored my wishes from the get-go, giving me a body best suited for stacking books in the library, injecting so much fear into my veins that I could only cower in the stairwell when the violence came. Maybe someday my arms and legs would thicken with muscle and fear would drain away like dirty bathwater. I wish I believed these things would happen, but I didn't. I was cursed with the pessimism of both the Russians and the Jews, two of the **gloomiest** tribes in the world. Still, if there wasn't greatness in me, maybe I had the talent to recognize it in others.”

Their new mission exposes them to the most ghoulish acts of the starved population, and takes them behind enemy lines to the Russian countryside, and they go through a series of nightmarish war zones, populated by cannibals, prostitutes, starving children, and demonic Nazi chess enthusiasts.

A cynical, yet sympathetic, observer of the devastation around him, Lev finds unexpected reserves of courage at the crucial moment and forms an unlikely friendship with Kolya, a flamboyant ladies' man who is coolly reckless in the face of danger. And in the end, although he **doesn't** see any greatness in himself, and although he feels **inadequate** and even **cursed**, Lev outwits the German soldiers, wins the pretty girl's heart, and returns to Leningrad with a dozen unbroken eggs.

In this against-all-odds odyssey, Lev becomes an **unspectacular** and **unlikely** hero. At the beginning of Matthew 10, which we saw last week, Jesus selects a band of **unspectacular** and **unlikely** heroes. There are only two remarkable things about these men: 1. they're utterly unspectacular in and of themselves, and 2. they become spectacular through their union with Christ. Matthew is telling us to look at what Jesus can do in and through and with imperfect people.

Up to this point in Matthew, **Jesus** has been doing all the ministry as His disciples

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<sup>1</sup> The Introduction is adapted from *The Gospel of Matthew: God With Us* by Matt Woodley, pages 111-112. Quote is taken from *City of Thieves* by David Benioff, page 98.

watched. Jesus has healed the sick, stilled the storm, cast out demons, preached to the masses, and called sinners to repent and believe. But now Jesus does something unprecedented, **Matthew 10:1**, “*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.*” Just a few verses earlier we read, **Matthew 9:35**, “*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.*” Using the same words, Matthew claims that this band of **unspectacular, unlikely, unqualified** disciples will perform the same works as Jesus. And as Jesus gives the disciples their **mission**, He gives it to them with some very carefully delineated guidelines. And that’s the first thing we see in this passage, that ...

#### **v. 5a: HIS MISSION HAS HIS INSTRUCTIONS**<sup>2</sup>

*“These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them...”*

Here Christ is giving **specific** instructions to His disciples about this **specific** mission on which He’s sending them. I want to remind you that this isn’t the same commission that He gives to them when He sends them out into the world. Their work here is **specifically** bearing witness to Israel over a short period of time.

Jesus’ instructions have some things in them that are **very specific** for the situation. Not all of them are universally transferable. There are instructions here that are not to be applied to every missionary that has ever gone out. This is not a prohibition, for instance, about missionaries raising support. Jesus’ words cannot be interpreted that way. He’s speaking to a **specific** situation. There’s no universal prohibition on missionaries taking a little extra clothing with them when they go to the mission field, even though here Jesus puts those restrictions on His own disciples. And remembering that will keep us from misapplying His instructions.

But even though there are some things that are **specific** for the apostles as He sent them out in this first mission, there are many **principles** in this passage that are equally applicable to us today. There is much that we can learn from this passage, and I’d like to direct your attention to a few of those things. And one of those things is knowing that ...

#### **v. 5b-6: HIS MISSION HAS HIS STRATEGY**

We start in verses 5 and 6, where we have a description of the people to whom the disciples are being sent. And there’s a great message even in that, because in focusing the ministry of these disciples upon the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Jesus is virtually declaring that **the Messiah has come** in accordance with prophecy. Look at the words of verses 5 and 6, “*These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans,<sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”*

The gospel of the kingdom, the Lord says, must first be brought to Israel. It is not primarily to the Samaritans or the Gentiles that these disciples are to be sent. First they are to be sent to Israel. Why? Because the Messiah came for the sake of establishing the remnant of Israel in righteousness. The promises of God had been given in the Old Testament to Abraham and His descendants. The children of Israel had strayed into gross idolatry and immorality. They had been sent into exile, and in the midst of their misery God, through the prophets,

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**2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, *The Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew, Volume 1* by Dr. Dan Doriani, pages 419-428; *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* by Dr. Michael Green, pages 128-134; *The Gospel of Matthew: God With Us* by Matt Woodley, pages 111-116; **And the Sermon, “Go and Preach”** by Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, nd, [www.fpcjackson.org](http://www.fpcjackson.org).**

promised them that one day He would send a Messiah who would call them back and reunite them with the living God. And by sending His disciples out to the Jewish people the Lord Jesus Christ is fulfilling the promises of God to Israel.

All Israel will not respond to these disciples as they preach the gospel of the kingdom. The Lord is aware of that. That's why in verses 11-15 of this passage, He makes it clear that there are going to be some who **receive** the message and there are going to be some who **reject** the message. But it will be to those lost sheep of the house of Israel that the disciples will be sent. And there are at least **two** good reasons why Jesus' ministry would be done this way. One of them is **theological** and the other is **practical**. It's nice how those go together.

**The theological reason** is because God had made His covenant of grace with Abraham and had given His promises to the descendants of Abraham and so Jesus sends His disciples to Israel because of the special place that Israel has in God's plan. Christ has a particular love and concern for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They are beloved as Paul says in **Romans 11:28**, *“As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.”* For their forefather's sake, because of the covenant which God has made with Abraham and because of that special role that Israel plays in the plan of God, Jesus sends His disciples to the Jews first.

There's a **practical reason** as well. We know from the gospels, especially Luke, that there were many godly people in Israel who were waiting for the Messiah to come. Simeon and Anna are just two examples of godly Jewish folk who believed the Old Testament and were waiting for the Messiah to come. What better place to send the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ? And this is done in order to lay the foundation for the church, which will go to the ends of the earth, and which will break across national and ethnic lines.

What better place to build a core group of followers of Christ than those who've already embraced the Word of God in the Old Testament and who've already embraced the promises that the Messiah was coming? And so the Lord Jesus Christ sends the disciples out to the Jewish people first.

As He sends them out He uses that phrase, *“**You are to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,**”* and in so doing, Jesus is telling us that He's the Good Shepherd. If you can remember back to last week, in our responsive reading, we read in **Ezekiel 34** that God rebuked the leaders of Israel, both the priests and the judges, for not fulfilling their responsibilities. Their responsibilities were to establish Israel in righteousness. And the shepherds of Israel, He says in **Ezekiel 34**, had not done that job.

And so in **Ezekiel 34:11-12**, God says because the shepherds of Israel have failed, *“For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for My sheep and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup> As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out My sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.”* The Lord Jesus, by sending His disciples out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, is saying, *“**I am the Good Shepherd.**”* The Messiah has come; the Lord Himself has come to seek and to find the lost sheep of the house of Israel in accordance with Old Testament prophecy.

First of all, notice that Jesus' mission and His approach to mission is the same as the Apostle Paul. You remember in **Romans 1:16**, Paul says, *“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.”* He begins first with evangelizing the remnant of Israel and then He branches out to the

Gentiles around Him. Jesus' ministry proceeded along the same lines. And so Christian ministry has always reached out both to the Jew and to the Greek. Both to those who are descendants of Israel and to those who are not. Both to the Jew and to the Gentile.

By the way, when you do that today, many people will accuse you of anti-Semitism. How could you possibly present the gospel to those who are of the Jewish race? That's anti-Semitic. Actually, I think it's just the opposite. You see, here the Lord Jesus Christ is saying we **must** go to the Jewish people with the gospel. It would be anti-Semitic for us **not** to go to Israel. Notice it is a **Jew, Jesus**, telling us to take the gospel to the Jewish people. And it's His **Jewish followers**, the Apostles, who are to take the gospel to the Jew as well as the Gentile. Christ is the only Savior of mankind, and therefore He must be preached to everyone. It's not an act of hatred to do so. It is the greatest act of love because we want to see all mankind united in faith with their Creator. And so Jesus calls on us to preach the gospel to both Jew and Gentile.

Notice also that the Messiah comes looking for **the lost sheep** of the house of Israel. Sheep are confused by ignorance and sin. They're wandering helplessly and it is to those who are helpless that Jesus comes. Sometimes we think that we need to fix ourselves up before Jesus can come and do us any good. Jesus came to those who are **lost sheep**, and it is precisely those **sheep** who realize that they're **lost**, that He's come for. There's nothing that we do to prepare ourselves. He has come for us in all our **lostness**. That's His strategy — **to seek and save the lost**. How does He want us to do that? Well, He tells us that ...

#### v. 7-8: **HIS MISSION HAS HIS MESSAGE**

We learn another thing here in verses 7 and 8 — we see what the disciples were to proclaim. And we see the power that Christ entrusted to them as they make that proclamation. They were to go out and preach the good news of the kingdom of God. Starting at verse 7, *“And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.”*

The message of the kingdom of heaven is the message that, in accordance with the Scripture and the prophecy of the Old Testament, the Messiah is here to establish God's reign in the hearts and lives of His people. That's the glorious good news of the gospel. The kingdom of the Messiah who is the Lord of Heaven, **is now being established**. That's the message that they were to go and preach to the people who knew the Old Testament, the people of Israel, the Jewish people.

By the way, note the difference in emphasis of that message. Compare that message to Jonah's message. Jonah goes to Nineveh, and what is his message? Ruin is near, but there is a chance of salvation if you'll repent. There is a different thrust in Jesus' message: Salvation is near. Do not be ruined by rejecting that salvation. The positive emphasis on salvation, on the coming of the kingdom, is apparent in this text. This is the same message that was preached by John the Baptist, **Matthew 3:2**, *“Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand**.”* And it's the same message that was preached by the Lord Jesus at the beginning of His ministry, **Matthew 4:17**, *“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand**.”*

Truth always should be repeated in preaching, because we need to be reminded of truths that we've learned once before. And so the Apostles go out preaching that message. They are sent out confirming that message with miracles — healing the sick and so forth. They are sent out as public blessings to show the love and the goodness that are part of the gospel message and so again, they take that message out as a fulfillment of prophecy.

In **Ezekiel 36**, the prophet Ezekiel tells us that when the new covenant comes, when the Messiah comes, God is going to bring a new heart and a new Spirit to us. And one of the things that's going to happen when we **receive** that message of the kingdom is that we're going to **repent**. And so Mark tells us in the parallel passage in **Mark 6** that the **response** to the message, '*The kingdom of heaven is at hand,*' is for us to **repent**. The message of the gospel always brings **both joy and repentance**. We realize our own unworthiness and our own undeserving nature and simultaneously we're filled with joy because of the provision of God's grace in Jesus Christ. And so the message of the gospel is always **received** in **both joy and repentance**.

Notice as well verse 8, where Jesus explicitly tells His disciples that they've been given their miraculous powers **freely**; they haven't paid for them, they haven't earned them. They've been equipped with them by Christ Himself. Therefore they're also to give to others **freely**. They're not to take advantage of those powers to build themselves up. They're not to take advantage to make a profit off of those powers. It would be very tempting, wouldn't it, having the power to raise the dead. You could make a profit fairly quickly with that kind of power. And Jesus said, you received that power **freely**, you give it **freely**. The ministry of the gospel is a ministry of giving to others.

The proper response to the **incarnation** of Christ, to the Jesus' **instructions** to the Apostles and to us, and to the **preaching** of His kingdom ... is a life of **giving**. We live in a time where the focus of our society is on **receiving**. The commercialism of the culture has something to do with that. And yet the whole tenor of the **Incarnation** is in the other direction. It's in the direction of **giving**. The consideration of Christ's instructions to do good to others without reward should free us up to do good to others without reward. The disciples were to go out **not to get, but to give** people the hope of salvation. They weren't to go out in order to make themselves great, or to improve their own reputation, but to offer the gospel freely to the people of Israel. It's precisely that self-giving love for others that says I'm not looking for any return in this for me. I'm simply looking to give you that which is best. There's no answer to that love. Loving, serving, giving ... all go hand-in-hand with proclaiming the gospel. It's His instructions, His strategy, His message, and when we understand and obey that, we'll learn that ...

#### **v. 9-10: HIS MISSION BUILDS TRUST**

Notice also in verses 9 and 10 that we see the providence of God in that the disciples must learn to trust in Him in their mission. He says, verse 9, "*Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts, <sup>10</sup> no bag for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.*"

The disciples aren't to prepare in any normal way for this mission. They're not to take a bag for their journey or even two coats or sandals or a staff. Because of the shortness of the journey, but probably more important because of the urgency of the mission that He is sending His disciples out on, Jesus essentially tells them, 'Don't take time, don't encumber yourself with trying to collect all these other things. You just trust that the Lord will provide for you on this mission.' The disciples are told to travel light, and that forces them to trust in God's provision, and it forces them to trust in Jesus' promise that God would provide. And they learn a great lesson in that.

First of all, they learn about the urgency of the mission that Christ is sending them on. It's so important that when they're sent out, they can't take time to pack. And we must never

allow the urgency of the gospel **to be lost on us**. The kingdom of God is at hand. Who knows, as we're with our friends and neighbors this summer, whether or not that will be the last time that we'll be with them. The kingdom of God is at hand. Christ has made us witnesses. That's what we are. It's not a question of whether we're witnesses or not. It's a question of whether we're good ones or bad ones. He's made us witnesses. How will we bear witness to the urgency of the gospel itself? The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

We are also taught in this passage about trusting in Christ's provision. We are to trust in His provision in the work of ministry. As we said before, this is not a universal command that the Lord is giving to missionaries. He is not saying, 'Don't raise support, don't go out with any material possessions, don't go out with any extra clothing, don't go out with any funding.' That's not what He's saying here. In this case, He's demanding that His disciples trust in His provision as they go out on their mission. That's very important for us, especially when we have so much. The more we have, **the more important** it is to trust in Christ's provision. The more the Lord has given you, the more tempting it is to trust in what He has given you ... instead of trusting in Him.

Even as a church. The more He's given us as a church, the more tempting it is for us to say, "Well, we have all the resources we need. All we need to do is a little planning." But Christ's ministry is only carried out in His power. And the more we have, the more we need to trust in His provision for that ministry, because it doesn't matter what we bring to the table. Our resources mean nothing in the work of the kingdom. His resources mean everything, and we must learn to trust in Him just like those disciples did. So, it's all good ... right? Not so fast, because the last thing we learn in this passage is that ...

#### **v. 11-15: HIS MISSION CREATES DIVISION**

Finally, notice the procedure He gives to the disciples to follow. In verses 5 and 6, He told His disciples what the people that they were to go to. In verses 7 and 8, He told them the message they were to proclaim, and He gave them power in order to confirm that message. In verses 9 and 10, He told them to trust in the providence of God. And now He gives them the procedures that they're to follow in verses 11-15. And He makes it clear that the message they are going to take to Israel is of **eternal significance**, "*And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.*"<sup>12</sup> *As you enter the house, greet it.*<sup>13</sup> *And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.*<sup>14</sup> *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.*<sup>15</sup> *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 disciples are called upon to display an extraordinary balance of **generosity** and **discernment**. They're to be **generous** in the sense that everywhere they go, if they're **received**, they're to pronounce their blessing on that place. They are to pronounce the peace of God upon those who **receive** them into their homes. But they're also to be **discerning** because those who **reject** their message are to be **rejected**. In fact, He tells them to "*shake the dust from your feet.*"

That's a symbol from ancient Israel. When one was outside Israel one was on Gentile territory, pagan land. And when you came back, before you came back into Israel, you shook the dust off your feet so that you would not bring pagan soil into the holy land. And the Lord is saying, "If someone rejects the message of the kingdom, you shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them, that you're not going to bring that pagan soil back into the holy land."

We must recognize the gravity of this message that Christ entrusted to the disciples. It **divides** the world, doesn't it, into those who **receive** Him and those who **reject** Him. In this culture of political correctness, it's important for us to recognize that the Christian message **divides** the world. There are those who **receive** it and those who **reject** it, and there's no in between. And the **receiving** or **rejecting** of the Christian message means either heaven or hell.

**It is of the utmost significance!**

And the Apostles were to remember that as they went out into the world. We must also remember that Judea, the Judea of the disciples, had never heard the gospel like we have. If Judea in Jesus' time was more liable because they heard the disciples, whereas Sodom and Gomorrah never had that privilege, then how much more liable are we who have heard the gospel — most of us, for most of our lives, have been in Christian churches where the Word was read and where the Gospel was preached. **We're liable.**

And the only possible response, the only good response to that message is that we would embrace it, embrace the kingdom, trust in Christ, place your faith in Him, rest in Christ alone as the only provision for your sins, and by grace, through faith, receive Him as your Lord and Savior. **'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'**

Think about that ... You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have given us a King. In this passage, we see Your Son sending people out to proclaim the gospel, to tell others that the King has come. Help us to be people who proclaim the kingdom. And so, O Lord, if there is anyone among us this day, who comes here not trusting in Christ, we would ask that by Your Spirit that You would draw that person to Yourself — by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone — that they might embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior. And, as always, help us to know and believe that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen.*

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### **Mark 1:14-15**

*“Now ... Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*