

Proclaiming the Kingdom

Matthew 9:35–10:8



Introduction:

Dear friends in Christ!

Our meditation this morning is based on the Gospel reading for today.

There Jesus shows that discipleship is very important. It is important for the ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, for the salvation of the lost. Right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus prepared and sent twelve of his followers to proclaim the Kingdom, he sent them to the cities and villages throughout the land to “the lost sheep” to tell them of the coming of the kingdom of heaven (10:6–7).

Now, those twelve were the first ones of many disciples, including us this morning. But being a disciple that proclaims God’s word, that announces the Kingdom, that seeks the lost, isn’t easy, is it. Jesus said it, and we have seen it. That’s why sometimes we expect others to do it for us, and yes to do it well. Yet Jesus says that we all are part of the harvesting process and must be involved in one way or another. Discipleship is a hard business.

To illustrate this, we have something to show you, a conversation with Jesus, that goes something like this....

Discipleship is hard isn’t it! It is for full time worker and for all members of God’s church. And what makes it harder is that we sometimes misunderstand Jesus instruction, we think proclamation of God’s Kingdoms equals activities. The proclamation of the Kingdom, is that, a proclamation, it involves telling, saying explaining, praying, working with one to one with somebody else. And discipleship is not only for the called workers of the church, but for all of us. Think about it, all those who are baptized are Disciples of Christ, and as Disciples of Christ, you are sent to share the Good News of God’s kingdom.

We have learned that truth, haven’t we, or yes, every time I speak with anybody about faith, the catechism, and what not, I get this answer “we need to confess our sins, receive forgiveness and preach the Gospel” meaning those are essentials to the personal faith. Which is great, it is the point. However, how well do we preach the Gospel? How well do let others know about God’s Kingdom as we say we should? You answer that question personally. However, I can tell you that there is one thing that has proved to be hard or at least we don’t want to participate in, and that is inviting others to attend church with us. We don’t want to do it. Isn’t inviting others a part of our discipleship then? Of course it is but for some reasons, we just don’t want to. And even when we do, we prefer not to talk about God’s kingdom. Yet here in our Gospel reading we see that Jesus intentionally sends his disciples to spread the Word.

Not only he sends them, but he intentionally prepares them for the task. But notice how he prepares them, he does it with some instructions, nothing more, that’s it. Jesus gives them instructions, as are found in chapter 10 of the Gospel of Mathew, of

which our text is just the short first portion. But that's it! That was their preparation. It was a hands-on preparation.

That' was the beginning of their Discipleship in action. Being a disciple means being active, and is not what the crowds following Jesus were expecting, as Jesus had begun to show already. He showed them that it was a word and action. For example, earlier in the same book of Matthew 7:21–23; there Jesus told his disciples that “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Being a disciple means the disciple is known by Jesus and the disciple does the will of the Father.

Then in chapter 8:18–21, Jesus pointed out to two of those who offered to follow him that being a disciple of Jesus was no easy and comfortable calling. It requires putting him ahead of home and even family, perhaps having “nowhere to lay his head.”

In chapter 9:9–13, Jesus responded to the Pharisees who objected to his association with “tax collectors and sinners” by telling them that following Jesus was not an exercise in conservative religiosity, or a club that they were forming. It's totally different! Just hear what Jesus says of himself: “For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” Jesus was coming to die on the cross to save just such sinners as these.

Now as Jesus prepares to send his laborers into the harvest, he prepares them for what they will encounter, that could include, poverty, rejection, persecution, even losing of their own lives, just as Jesus himself would be persecuted and die (10:16–23). They will even be taken to court, and even killed by their own brothers and fathers and children, all for Jesus' sake.

But here is the most important part of the lesson, the disciples where not going to operate on their own. The disciples were under the authority of Jesus, that's why there is a short instruction only, they were just the vessels the servants, the messengers, and everything else was on Jesus power.

That's why that business of “I can't do it” doesn't please God, it is not in line with God's will, for he is the one who empowers his disciples to do his work, but goes with us saying yes Lord I'll go, I'm your disciple, and after all Lord “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68)

Those disciples went by and in Jesus authority. Nothing about these men themselves would equip them for such bravery or dedication. They were just common people, nothing special about them, and if you look at them, you will despise them, think about this, think about who these disciples were (10:2–4):

One of them was as a tax collector for the Roman government, and for being a tax collector he was already a social outcast. The next was a rather impulsive fisherman and his brother and two business partners.

Then you have a couple of working-class guys from Galilee. Another who repeatedly expresses doubts and uncertainties about what Jesus says and does. To complicate matters, you find among them a political extremist; oh and don't forget a traitor who cared only about money. Do we see ourselves in those profiles? Absolutely!! Yet Jesus still desires us to be his disciples.

What really matters is not who these twelve were, or their lack of obvious qualifications for the job. What matters is that Jesus gave them his own “authority” to carry out the tasks that he has assigned to them. Just as the saying goes, ***God doesn't call the qualified, God qualifies the called!!***

It is Jesus authority; it is his message that the disciples are to share with others. And at the heart of that message is the proclamation that the “kingdom of heaven is at hand” (10:5–8). To repent and believe, to believe and trust, to trust and live in God’s will, that’s how other disciples will be made.

It is not the accompanying signs that were central to the task of being a disciple, the healing or the casting out of demons. For Jesus, the healings and exorcisms were simply signs that bore witness to the coming of the kingdom of heaven, are signs of his Jesus authority working through his disciples. Healing diseases and defeating Satan’s henchmen were and are signs of Jesus’ final defeat of the devil and all the effects of sin with his death and resurrection, on the one hand and on the other were tools the disciples could use in their ministry, but that was not the ministry. The ministry was the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, of God’s kingdom.

The mission of the twelve was the beginning of a discipleship that is marked by words and action as we go, as Jesus sends us. Yes us! Not the paid servants, not the leaders, but each one of us for each one of us is also a witness to the resurrection, as we learned a few Sundays ago.

Discipleship is our call, your call, as a member of this congregation, there are no other options, there are no “I can’t do it” there is not, I not equipped for it. There is no I don’t like to invite others to church... and you know why there is no such a thing? Because you belong to him, you belong to Christ, and because all authority belongs to him, and his authority is your authority. Didn’t Jesus say: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mat. 28:18-20)?

So, why should we invite others to Church? Why should we tell others of God’s Kingdoms? Because you are Jesus disciple!

And as his disciple, remember that your sins have been forgiven, you have been reconciled with God, as we heard in the epistle reading for this morning: “...God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:8–11)

But there is another reason for taking our discipleship seriously, is the spiritual need that is out there. The “lost sheep” around us, they matter to God too, just as you matter to him. But he is using you to reach out to them. That’s a clear need, however, we do we have it clear ourselves though. The need is great.

Conclusion:

The need is great but the time is now. The fields are great and the workers are few, Jesus says, but here is the Good News, Jesus’ sending the twelve to preach the Kingdom began a harvest that has brought us, too, into the flock, no Longer lost sheep without a Shepherd, and as you say yes Lord, here I am as your disciple, many more will also come to the Shepherds fold, the fruits of the Gospel proclaimed even by simple people like you and I.

It is not easy, but then again, who said it is, or better yet, Christ is on our side, he is our authority and our Shepherd who enables us.

After all we are no longer lost sheep, without a shepherd. We have been brought into the kingdom.

In his name, amen.