

First Mission: Doing What Jesus Commands **Matthew 9:35-10:15**

Introduction

I know it's hard, but let's try to stretch our memories all the way back to the first week of December when we first looked at this passage. During that sermon we discovered that here Jesus calls his disciples into their **First Mission**. There we learned that Jesus did not come simply to be *my Lord and my Savior*. *He came to save the world; his mission has a global concern*. Therefore, it should not surprise us as to why Jesus enlists his disciples into this global, missional effort. Growth in discipleship requires us to share in Jesus' mission.

Main Idea: The underlying principle is this: **Discipleship must become missional if it to be mature.**

Now, the particular focus of that sermon was upon **seeing what Jesus sees**. I spoke of my son, Thomas, learning how to shoot his first .22 rifle. While Thomas was eager to shoot, his grandfather was eager for him to "have eyes" for his shot. He needed to mature in his vision. In the same way, unless we **see with the eyes of Jesus** we will lack his **compassion for the crowds, confidence in the harvest that is prepared and dependence in prayer**. Therefore, **a missional Christian is one who has looked at the world through the eyes of Jesus Christ**.

However, having Jesus' eyes is insufficient for maturity in mission. We must also, to extend the image from marksmanship, "pull the trigger." In other words, **maturity in mission requires obedience to what Jesus has actually commanded us to do**.

FCF: It is surprising how hard it is to actually engage in the nitty-gritty, roll-up-your-sleeves part of mission work. As a pastor, I can pick on pastors. My experience is that many pastors and pastor wanna-be's prefer the abstract, classroom stuff. We love to "talk" about being missional. We love to "discuss" the challenges of culture. We love to "design strategies" about how to reach people. However, none of that stuff really matters unless we are putting our lives to work in actually obeying Jesus' commands. **Yes, sometimes people get to work without having learned certain, important truths. However, others keep on learning, yet never obey the truths they have claimed to learn.** The truth is staying in classroom affords us protection from getting out there among the people of this world.

Therefore, being missional is not just about having the eyes of Jesus Christ it is about having his feet. In other words, we have a very real job/calling to fulfill and it cannot be accomplished in the classroom or around the campfire. How do we know this? Because in verse 5-6 Jesus tells his disciples to "go". They are to "go" and "get to work." For Jesus' disciples it would begin to be fulfilled among the lost sheep of Israel. For us it will be fulfilled "out there" among the people of the city of San Antonio—our neighbors, schoolmates, family, friends and co-workers.

Key Idea: What I want us to do this morning is consider the very practical words Jesus gives his disciples so that they might be effective in mission. **As we consider these important words for the disciples we will also find important words for ourselves, which help us to walk in Jesus' steps.**

Key Question: What does Jesus give us in order that we might do what he commands? Two things: 1) Empowerment; 2) Instruction

1) Empowered for Mission (1)

Look with me in verse 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." To give the

disciples authority in this case was grant them Jesus' divine authority. Even as Jesus had demonstrated his power over the demonic realm and a broken natural order, so now the disciples would have his cosmic, Divine authority at their disposal when they set out on their mission.

There are two important principles for us to discern here about empowerment for mission:

- **Jesus always equips his disciples with grace in order for them to fulfill the mission he gives.**

We will see this principle repeated throughout the NT. We speak about it in lots of different ways. God gives what God commands. The indicative of the Gospel comes before its imperative. Who we are in Christ enables us to become more like Christ. I could continue. Grace secures our works; our works don't secure his grace.

The principle should be clear. God never commands without granting us the divine ability to fulfill his command.

- **Jesus does not always equip his disciples with identical grace because their mission is not identical.**

We must always remember that the mission Jesus gave his disciples at this point in his ministry was to announce and herald the Kingdom of God as being at hand. They were Jesus' divine heralds. Just as Jesus had demonstrated the presence of the Kingdom of God through miracles, now the disciples would have that same authority. This authority was specific to their mission. Through the ministry of exorcism and healings, the disciples would testify that the Messianic age had drawn near in Jesus Christ.

However, our mission comes to us from the Great Commission, not in the middle of Matthew but at its end. We have not been given authority to cast out demons or heal the sick, but to "make disciples of all the nations." Jesus reminds us that he has garnered all authority to himself. Our empowerment is not rooted in the ability to work miracles, but in the knowledge of his presence with us in ministry. Jesus told us that he was with us "to the end of the age."

Drive it home:

This helps us answer two very important questions.

- a) **Why can't I work miracles like the apostles?** Importantly, the Bible does not teach that God no longer works miracles; he does. However, Jesus has not given the church the same miracle working authority that he gave to his apostles. Instead, he has given us his presence by the Spirit. **Because the focus of our ministry is different he has gifted us differently.**
- b) **Why should I ever doubt God's provision for the task of mission?** What Jesus wants us to learn is the same the disciples had to learn: we never go out on the mission field by ourselves and in our own power! **We may not be able to work spectacular miracles, but we can work miracles nonetheless. We are called to patiently invest in the lives of the people around in the knowledge that we are not the only ones at work. Jesus is right there with us accomplishing his divine will.**

I find Christians today fretting because they perceive themselves to lack faith because they do not seem to be able to work spectacular miracles. In truth, I don't know anyone who can do that. However, our obsession with such things has distracted us from the real empowerment Jesus has given us, which is go out to the city and lead people to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

2) Instructed in Mission

The second thing Jesus gives his disciples is practical, hands-on instruction about the task before them. He gives them the “who, what where and how” of missionary endeavors.

- **Who? (2-4)**

Of course, “the who” of this mission effort are the disciples themselves. Importantly, Jesus identifies them by name to emphasize their “first place” among the wider circle of discipleship. These were the ones that Jesus had recruited and was training in Kingdom life.

- **What? (7-8)**

Their task was two-fold: a) proclaim the Kingdom and b) embody the Kingdom. It was word and deed ministry.

- a) **This ministry of proclamation is very important because we tend to minimize it.** We tend to think missionary efforts are about getting people to do something. However, missionary efforts are really about announcing what God has already done in Jesus Christ. It is more invitation to enter into God’s reality that is saving the world than it is about doing something to save oneself.

When the disciples announced the Kingdom, they in effect proclaimed God really is Lord of the universe and you better listen up. Jesus proves it.

- b) **The ministry of mercy or embodying the Kingdom is no less important.** As I said, we don’t have identical authority with the apostles, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be doing everything in our power to help the people of our city. To embody the Kingdom means that we are actually rolling up our sleeves and getting involved in mercy ministry, not just writing checks or recruiting others to do it.

Guadalupe centers, VBS downtown, Agape, mercy ministry team with the Deacons!

- **Where? (5-6)**

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Jesus’ instructions is his prohibition against going to the Gentiles. Jesus requires Jesus’ disciples to focus upon the people of Israel, whom he refers to as “lost sheep.” Scholars have long debated his purpose. I think the most likely answer is that the disciples were not yet prepared for the challenges of reaching another culture. Ministering among the people of Israel would be challenging enough.

Again, we can discern a principle: missionary efforts start at our front door. Sometimes I hear people say that ministering in another culture is easier than ministering in your own. That’s crazy. That statement just reveals how little real impact we have had in another culture. Real mission starts with those closest to us, not farthest.

- **How? (9-15)**

Finally, Jesus instructs the disciples in their manner or the “how” of their missionary efforts. They are told to acquire no possessions for their journey, but to live by faith. As Jesus had provided for them spiritually, so must they trust him for their material provision.

They were to learn to live through active dependence 1) on the Lord 2) on those the Lord gave who responded to their ministry. By depending upon those who were “worthy”, which referred to those who received their ministry, they depended upon the Lord’s gift of material provision.

Of course, this dependence has an important qualification. If no one receives them they are to go to the next town. **Missionaries are to appear dependent, but never as beggars or as swindlers.** God is sufficient for their mission. If their mission is not received then the call is to move on.

Again, there is an important principle Jesus wants us to discern for mission efforts. We are to receive what God provides on the mission field. But we are never to be beholden to those we are seeking to reach. Our faith is in the Lord and he provides for the task at hand. If such provision is not ready at hand, perhaps it means we are to move elsewhere.

Concluding Thoughts:

I know that most of us hearing these words are not being called into full-time vocational ministry or missions. Therefore, much of what we have talked about does not seem to apply. Not exactly.

- 1) Some of you the Lord may be calling into vocational ministry. I want you to consider that.
- 2) Most of you the Lord is calling you to become a missional person in the callings you already possess. What does this mean in practical ways? We don’t have the privilege of remaining abstract about such matters.
- 3) We don’t have the privilege of saying we “can’t do it” or that “we don’t know how”. That doesn’t matter. God is with us and has equipped us for our mission efforts.