

Jesus' Instructions to the Twelve

The Authority of Jesus to Advance the Kingdom

Scripture: Matthew 10:5-15

Sermon Series: *Matthew*

Topic: Jesus, Mission

Introduction

This morning we give our attention to Jesus' instructions to the Twelve and his authority to advance the kingdom of heaven.

This chapter, specifically beginning with verse five, begins the second of five lengthy discourses¹ that serve as an organizing framework for Matthew's gospel. Each major discourse concludes with the same literary formula, "*when Jesus had finished* [these sayings]" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). We saw those words at the end of the Sermon on the Mount and we see them this morning in the first verse of chapter eleven.



Thus far in his gospel, Matthew has presented Jesus as the fulfillment of God's ancient promises to send messiah.

1. God promised to send messiah as a descendant of Abraham (Gn 12:1-3²) and later he reaffirmed that promise to one of the descendants of king David (2 Sam 7:14). Thus, Matthew began his gospel with the genealogy of Jesus and revealed that he was both a descendant of king David and of Abraham.
2. God promised to send a forerunner before messiah (Is 40:3), and John the Baptist turned out to be that forerunner.
3. Matthew revealed to us Jesus' authority over all temptation and Satan (Mt 4).
4. Through the Sermon on the Mount (the first major discourse) Matthew presented Jesus as the Messiah by revealing his authoritative teaching.

¹ 1) Matthew 5-7, 2) chapter 10, 3) chapter 13, 4) chapters 18-20, 5) chapters 24-25.

² See also Genesis 18:18; 26:4-5; 28:14.

5. In chapters eight and nine, Matthew presented Jesus as Messiah by revealing to us his authoritative power over disease, demons, storms, and sin.
6. Transition. The final paragraph of chapter 9:35-38 represents a transition in Matthew's gospel. The Messiah has been traveling widely, teaching and preaching in their synagogues, and "*healing every disease and every affliction*" (9:35). This Messiah saw the people whom he taught and healed. When he saw them he was moved with "*compassion.*" He saw the people as "*harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*" They were in a place of great need. They were a people ready for a leader. They were alike a "*plentiful harvest, with limited laborers.*" Jesus, now decides the time is right for a forward advance of the kingdom of heaven. He now makes the unprecedented decision to share his authority "*to heal every disease and every affliction*" with twelve disciples. This is the thought that connects the ministry of Jesus (at the end of chapter 9) with the advance of the ministry (through the apostle in chapter 10:1).
7. Now, in chapter ten (the second major discourse), Matthew presents Jesus as Messiah who sends out his messengers who share his authority to advance the mission of God's kingdom. The harvest is plentiful and many laborers are needed, therefore Jesus commissions the twelve, shares his authority with them, and sends them out to reap a harvest among God's chosen people.

These Twelve Jesus Sent Out (v.5)

We see Jesus' authority as he sends out the Twelve in verse 5.

Matthew 10:5 (ESV) These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them...

These Twelve. Last week we considered each of these twelve men whom Jesus chose to send out. We looked at their backgrounds, a little bit about each of their personalities, where they ministered in the world, and how each of them died. Except for the betrayer, we discovered that each of them suffered greatly for the sake of the name of Jesus and eventually all but John was martyred for their belief that Jesus is God's Son and man's Messiah. Now we will consider Jesus' instructions to these twelve.

Jesus sent out, instructing them. The instructions comprise the whole chapter. We will consider these instructions paragraph by paragraph.

Outline of the Instructions (10:5 - 42)

1. **Where, to whom, and what to take.** Jesus begins, 10:5-15, by giving them specific instructions concerning geographic limitations and what they are and are not to take with them. He also instructs them about the extraordinary power and authority that he is giving them as they go.

2. **Presence of Persecution.** He then, in 10:16-25, warns them that this mission of his will entail persecution. The mission of the kingdom of heaven will mean persecution for his present disciples who were listening to his words, but Jesus also foresees the persecution that will come to all his future disciples as well.
3. **Fear not.** Third, in 10:26-33, Jesus calls them not to fear and fortifies their faith in him and in the Father's love for them. He also looks forward to the reward that will be given to them in heaven.
4. **This gospel will divide.** Fourth, in 10:34-39, he explains that the gospel of the kingdom will surely divide friends and family, but that obedience to him is better than even life itself. Jesus calls his disciples to nothing less that total and complete devotion.
5. **Great reward.** Finally, in 10:40-42, Jesus connects his mission with the mission of God the Father and promises a reward to all disciples who faithfully obey him on his mission.

This is the outline of our sermons for the next six weeks. We'll spend a week on each paragraph, except for the first paragraph, on which we'll spend two weeks.

Go Nowhere Among the Gentiles (v.5)

Jesus gives instructions on where not to go and to whom they ought to go.

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."

Go nowhere among the Gentiles. This sounds like Gentiles are not intended to be members of the kingdom of heaven. Is Jesus unconcerned with the salvation of Gentiles?

Such a verse as this could be pulled out and posted on social media and without the context and could appear to prove that that Jesus was a Jewish messiah and that's it. He cares nothing about Gentiles. Can't you picture the post? "See. Here it is in black and white in the the word of God, on the lips of Jesus."



When you study your Bible, you must consider the context. One of the most significant and helpful principles of Biblical interpretation is the truth that **Context is king**. In striving to rightly interpret the word of God, the context of the passage must be considered. This includes the immediate context of the passage, of the book, and of where the book falls within the flow of redemptive history.

1. *The context of the passage.* The immediate context of passage helps us balance our interpretation and understanding of what Jesus is saying here. Just keep reading and you'll discover in v.18 that Jesus has in mind that his disciples will in fact "*bear witness before the Gentiles.*" Thus, this is not a universal and permanent exclusion of ministry among the Gentiles.
2. *The context of the book.* From the beginning of this book Gentiles have been included in God's redemptive plan. The **genealogy** of Jesus includes Gentile women, Rahab of Jericho, and Ruth the Moabite. Jesus chose to base his ministry in **Capernaum** of Galilee, which was a predominately Gentile region, which Matthew understood to a specific part of the fulfillment of God's plan.
 1. **Matthew 4:13-16** (ESV) And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."
 - A. This quote is found in Isaiah 9:1-2, thus that God long ago planned to give salvation to the Gentiles.
 2. See also 4:24-25 where Jesus' fame spread throughout Gentile regions, such as Syria, the Decapolis, and "*beyond the Jordan*" and people from these regions began following Jesus.
 3. Thus, it was always part of God's redemptive plan to include Gentiles.
3. *The context of redemptive history.* Where does this book sit on the horizon of God's plan of salvation. Matthew is a book written at the beginning of God's saving work through Jesus. We sit looking back in history upon the cross, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. At the end of the book of Matthew, at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, we find him saying something different than he said here in Matthew 10, which is close to the beginning of his earthly ministry.
 1. **Matthew 28:18-20** (ESV) "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 2. Thus, we discover that Gentiles are included in God's saving plan.

Enter no town of the Samaritans. What about the Samaritans? Does Jesus not care about the salvation of the Samaritans?

Who were the Samaritans? The Samaritans were hated by the Jews. John tells us that "*Jews have no dealings with Samaritans*" (Jn 4:9).

Samaritans were originally the Jews who lived in Samara, in the northern part of Israel, located about 20 miles north of Jerusalem.

Geographically different. Samaria became the capital city of those Jews who rebelled against the grandson of king David and divided the nation into two territories. Samaria became the seat of a rebellious majority of the kingdom led by Jeroboam who led Israel into treacherous idolatry by setting up two calves for worship. Eventually the sins of northern territory led to fall of Israel in 722 B.C. to the Assyrian empire.

Ethnically different. The Assyrian king sent his own people into Samaria to rule and govern the land.³ Over time, the Israelites who remained in the land began to intermarry with the Assyrians. Intermarrying with foreign people was forbidden in the law and thus those who did so were viewed as traitors by the Jews who did not. Jews viewed Samaritans as racially impure, as "half-breeds," since they were descendants of the intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles.

Religiously different. Because of the separation the Samaritans developed their own version of the Scriptures (i.e. the Pentateuch), their own temple (on Mt. Gerizim), and their own version of Israelite history. So deep was the hatred between them, that conscientious Jews traveling from Jerusalem to Galilee would circumnavigate the region of Samaria by crossing the Jordan river in the east, and going north around Samaria and then crossing back over the Jordan when they had gotten beyond the city. The division between the two peoples was ancient and deep.

So does this mean that Jesus did not care about the gospel of the kingdom going to the people of Samaria? **No, it does not.** In fact, the first time Jesus revealed himself to be Messiah was to a Samaritan women (Jn 4:26). And Jesus would go on to spend two days ministering among and preaching to the Samaritans.

Additionally, when we consider one of the final instructions Jesus gave to his disciples, the salvation of Samaria was specifically noted.

Acts 1:8 (ESV) "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."



³ 2 Kings 17:24-31.

So, yes, Jesus is concerned about the salvation of the Samaritans. Then, why does Jesus here say what he did?

Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (v.6). Jesus said this because as Messiah, he first comes to fulfill all the promises that God made to *Israel*. "Salvation is from the Jews"⁴ first, and then to the Gentiles. Out of all the people on earth, it was the Jews whom God chose to first reveal himself. It was to the Jews that God first said, "...obey my voice and keep my covenant, and you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples..." (Ex 19:5). God made an everlasting covenant of love first with Israel. Thus, it is right that Jesus and his messengers go first "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

This phrase, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," reminds us of what Matthew has just written in the transitional paragraph (9:35-38). Jesus was a Messiah filled with compassion. His heart is moved with love for his own people first, the Jews who were his biological family. He looked out upon the crowds of people following him and he was moved with compassion for them because they had no leader. They had no one to help them find their way to God. The Pharisees had failed them. The Pharisees should have *helped* the people to obey their God, but instead they turned out to *harass* the people and hindered their entrance into the kingdom (Mt 23:13). Jesus saw his family (i.e. the Jews) as a loving shepherd would see scattered sheep that had no shepherd. They were lost and helpless. Thus, he would send his disciples out to gather them and bring them into the kingdom of God.

But, praise God, because the salvation of Israel includes the salvation of Gentiles. When God made his great and sweet promise to Abraham, that saving promise included Gentiles, Samaritans, and indeed "all the families of the earth."⁵ God said to Abraham, "...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gn 12:3). Recall the sweet words that Jesus, just two chapters back, said to the centurion, who was a Gentile.

Matthew 8:10-12 (ESV) "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness."

The heavenly kingdom will include "many from the east and west." That means many Gentiles will be welcomed into God's heavenly kingdom. Many non Jews will "recline at table with Abraham." Many people "from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue"⁶ will enjoy eternal joy in the presence of God and his glorious Son.

⁴ John 4:22.

⁵ Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 26:4.

⁶ Revelation 5:9

God's love to the world began to flow with the Jew first and then overflowed onto the Samaritans, Gentiles, and indeed every nation on earth. Here, in Matthew 10, we sit at the beginning of Jesus' authoritative ministry and mission in the world. But today, we sit on the other side of Jesus' authoritative command to his disciples to be his witnesses all over the globe. Jesus' authoritative mission began with the Jews, but it did not end there. We shall see this very clearly as we move forward through this gospel.

Polite Proclaimers, Not Pushy Protagonists (v.7, 14)

Next, notice *how* Jesus commanded his disciples to conduct themselves as they go on his authoritative gospel mission. We will return next week to the other verses in this paragraph, but note verses 7 and 11-14. It seems to me that he calls them to be *polite proclaimers, not pushy protagonists*.

Matthew 10:7 (ESV) "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Matthew 10:11-14 (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. 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."

Proclaim the kingdom of heaven; words. Their mission is one of '*proclamation*' or '*preaching*.' The word (*kēryssō*) can be translated either way. It means "to publicly announce religious truths and principles while urging acceptance and compliance—'to preach.'"⁷ Their mission entailed the ministry of "**words**" (v.14). (There were other aspects of the ministry which we will consider next week.) They were to go out speaking, preaching, and proclaiming the truths of the kingdom of heaven and the fact that God's kingdom was "**at hand**," that is, that the kingdom was no longer far away, but rather had drawn *near*.

Whatever town or village. The disciples were to go from town to town and from village to village taking the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. This is identical to the ministry of Jesus.

Luke 4:43 (ESV) "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."

Just as Jesus came for the purpose of preaching from town to town, so Jesus sent out his disciples proclaiming, preaching from town to town and village.

⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 416.

Find out who is worthy. And they were to be *polite* proclaimers. As the disciples went from town to town, they were to “*find out who in it was worthy and stay there until you depart.*” The word ‘worthy’ here does not refer to moral character, but rather to able to provide lodging. We know this because the word is defined by the following phrase “*stay there until your depart.*” It means find out who is able to house and feed you while you are in the town. In other words, seek out the person who can put you up without being a burden on them. This is very polite.

This was typical in middle eastern cultures of the day. At that time there were no hotels or inns for travelers to lodge in. Therefore, the rules of hospitality dictated that guests and travelers had “unquestioned rights to provision and protection.”⁸ We see this in several places in the OT (Gn 18:1-8; 19:1-8; Jud 19:15-24).

Stay there until you depart. Jesus also commands his disciples to stay in the place they originally lodge. They were not to go bouncing around from house to house. They were not to be political people pleasers moving from place to place, but rather to simply stay with whomever was able and willing to receive them and provide shelter for them. They were not to impose themselves on people, but politely stay only so long as they were welcome.

As you enter the house, greet it. Jesus wanted his disciples to be polite and grateful guests. When they arrived in someone’s home, they were to enter with greetings and blessings. If the household was “worthy,” which here most likely means receptive to them, their mission, and their message, then they were to allow their “*peace to come upon the house.*”

The sense of *blessing* was much more prominent in their culture than it is in ours. We see this in the deep sense of desire by dying fathers to pronounce a blessing upon their children before their time is up. There was among the Israelites a strong belief that speaking a blessing over a person—or a household—had a very real and lasting effect. Jesus too holds this belief since he instructs his disciples to allow a blessing by them to abide upon the household or family or town who receives them and to withhold such a blessing from those who reject them.

Shake off the dust from your feet. Verse 14 is the first hint that Jesus knows that not everyone will welcome the mission or message upon which he is sending the Twelve. Those who do not receive them or “*listen to their words*” are to be deemed by them as corrupt and polluted. This is why “*their dust was to be shaken off from their feet and left*” by the disciples.

The Mishna (a collection of rabbinic commentary on the law) taught that the lands of the Gentiles were unclean⁹ and simply to walk through such land would cause a Jew to

⁸ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 184.

⁹ Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah : A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), ‘*Ohol*. 18:7 B, 980.

be unclean.¹⁰ Thus, Jews made it a practice, after walking through Gentile land, of shaking off the dust on their feet or their clothes as a way of ridng themselves of any corruption or uncleanness that might be on them through the presence of the dust.

Thus, Jesus is instructing his disciples to consider as unclean, the house, or village or town that rejects them, their mission, or their message.

Jesus sent his disciples out to politely proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, to preach that the kingdom of heaven was now near. They were to call the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” They were to show the compassion of Jesus to homes, families, villages, and towns. They were stay where they where welcomed, and to leave when they were not. They were not to be a burden nor overstay their welcome. And when they were rejected at one town or village, they were to leave and go on to the next. For the sake of the kingdom, they were to be polite persuaders, not pushy protagonists.

Conclusion

Jesus has instructions for how his mission is to be carried out. We need to know them and obey them.

Jesus shares his authority with his disciples whom he sent out on his mission. He could complete his mission all by himself. He is certainly powerful enough and capable enough to do it alone. But he chooses not to do that. He invites his disciples to join him. That invitation extends to us today.

There are different stages of Jesus’ ministry. At the beginning, he gave his first attention to the Jews. They are God’s first love. But now, Jesus has expanded his soul-saving mission to include the Samaritans, Gentiles, and even all the nations of the earth. The gospel of Jesus is a message for the whole world. If his we would love Jesus, then we must love all nations.

Jesus tells his disciples to go out and greet those to whom they were sent. They were to share the peace of the gospel with all who would receive. For those who would not listen to them, they were to turn away from and move on to someone else. They were to be polite proclaimers, not pushy protagonists. We carry a gospel of great blessing. We must be prayerful in how we share, but not pushy.

My fellow Christians, we have been entrusted with a great and glorious gospel. The kingdom of heaven is a hand. God’s Messiah has come. His name is Jesus of Nazareth. He laid down his life as atonement for the sin of all who would trusts in him and he took up his life again to pour out his Holy Spirit within those who have faith in him. Receive this truth. Proclaim this truth. Take

¹⁰ Ibid, 'Ohol. 18:6 C.

the message with you every day. Be politely urgent about this soul-saving message, but don't be annoyingly pushy. Be prayerful and obedient and through you, Jesus will bring in an abundant harvest.

Discussion Questions

1. What were the motivating factors that moved Jesus to send out the Twelve?
2. What authority did Jesus give the twelve as he sent them out? What did he grant them power to do? What were they to say and preach?
3. Where did Jesus tell them to go and not to go?
4. Why did Jesus put these limitations on this mission?
5. What does it mean to "let your peace come upon" a house? What does it mean to withhold it?
6. What were Jesus' instructions concerning those who rejected the disciples?
7. What does this passage teach about Jesus? What about God?
8. What questions does this passage raise? What questions (from this passage) do you wish you could have answered?