

The Calling of the Twelve, A Gift for You

Matthew 10:1-4

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Introduction:

Today we come to a new section of Matthew's Gospel as we begin chapter 10.

- Up until now, Jesus has been the only one doing the work of the ministry.
 - Although He has called many disciples to follow Him,
 - He has neither authorised nor empowered them to join Him in the work.
 - They have been there only as students and learners,
 - And He has been the One who does all the preaching and all the healing.
- But here in chapter 10, this all changes!
 - Here Jesus is found calling his twelve closest disciples to be apostles!
 - Apostle means "sent one."
 - It refers to one who is sent on official business—
 - and in this case, the business of King Jesus.
 - They are to become his co-labourers in the work of the ministry.
 - You will remember that at the end of chapter 9, Jesus looked on the multitudes and saw their tremendous need because they were like sheep without a shepherd.
 - He had great compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless.
 - And so He urged His disciples to pray that the Lord would send forth labourers.
 - He was looking for a multiplication of workers...
 - And so it is that in the very next passage (Matthew 10),
 - We find Him answering the prayer for labourers by sending out the twelve to do the same work that He had been doing.
 - He begins with a kind of apprenticeship in which He sends them out on short-term missions in pairs...
 - Then they return to Him for further instruction...
 - Then He sends them out again.
 - Their final calling will not come until after His resurrection when they receive the filling of the Holy Spirit and go out to proclaim the complete gospel...

- Then they will declare that the Messiah has redeemed us—that He has been crucified and raised again...
- But until then, they will proclaim that Messiah has come to redeem His people and that His kingdom is at hand.
- What a great privilege for these men!
 - They are going from being mere disciples (or learners) to being co-labourers with the Lord in the work of the kingdom!
 - In verse 1, they are called the 12 disciples (and students of the Lord they would always remain),
 - but in verse 2, they are called apostles, and this was something new and marvellous!
 - They were actually entering into the Lord's work!

Now in preparing to preach from this passage,

- I asked the kind of questions I always ask of any text:
 - Why has the Lord given us this passage?
 - How does it apply to us as God's people?
- The Bible is a very unique book because it is written for the purpose of guiding us into the way salvation.
 - It is not written as a mere story to entertain us...
 - Nor is it a mere historical account to satisfy our curiosity...
 - But it is given to us to teach us everything we are to believe concerning God and how we are to live before Him.
 - And the goal of preaching is to take what is written in the Bible and apply it to God's people so they can imbibe and live in the truth.
- So as I looked at this passage concerning the calling of the twelve,
 - I found that their calling could be looked at from two very different perspectives:
 - 1) We could look at how these apostles are Christ's gift to the church... and what it means for us that Christ sent them...
 - 2) Or, we could look at the calling of the apostles as an example of our own diverse callings to serve Christ
 - (whether you are called to be a neighbour, a husband, a wife, a student, a tradesman, a technician, a physician, a mother, or even to a hospital bed).

- As you can see, these are two very different ways of looking at the calling of the apostles.
 - To illustrate the difference, you might think of a great painter...
 - From the first perspective, you may look at him as one who gives you something you could not have apart from him—beautiful paintings to beautify and enrich the world... you want to receive something from him that you can't get from anywhere else.
 - From the second perspective, you look at him because you are an aspiring painter who wants to learn from his example... you want to be like him.
- We are too look to the Lord Himself in both of these ways!
 - On the one hand, we are to look to Him as our unique Saviour who carries out the work of our salvation all alone—
 - offering Himself as the only sacrifice to take away our sins—a work that we are not to imitate, but to gladly receive...
 - We look that we may receive what we cannot do for ourselves.
 - Yet, on the other hand, we look at Him as our supreme example whose love and graces we are to imitate—to love as He loved and to serve as He served.
 - In this respect, we want to be just like Him.

So which perspective was I to present to you?

- Should we look at the apostles as Christ's gift and consider what we receive from Jesus in sending them to us?
- Or should we look at their calling as example of our own Christian calling that we might learn how we are to serve the Lord in His kingdom?
 - Liberal churches often focus on the example because they do not want to admit that they need Christ to do something for them that they can't do for themselves...
 - Revivalistic churches often ignore the second—looking at Christ only as Saviour, but not as an example.
- I have decided to do both—but not in the same sermon.
 - This week, I intend to show you how the apostles are Christ's gift to you...something to give thanks for!
 - Next week, I will (the Lord willing) show you their calling as an example for you... something to imitate.

So first of all, I show you why you ought to...

I. Give thanks to King Jesus for sending out the twelve.

- A. He sent them out to proclaim God's deliverance and salvation.
1. The number twelve is the number of restoration of God's people, Israel.
 - a. There were twelve tribes of Israel and by sending twelve apostles, Jesus was showing very clearly that He had come to restore the kingdom!
 - There were the twelve sons of Jacob,
 - and the twelve jewels on the breastplate of the high priest
 - and the twelve stones beside the Jordan where Israel crossed over...
 - and now Jesus has come with His twelve apostles.
 - The people of Israel whom Jesus ministered to would have immediately understood this connection.
 - b. Jesus was not bringing something new, but He was coming to fulfil all the promises that were made to Israel of old.
 - Jesus makes this connection when He later tells His disciples:
 - Matthew 19:28: So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
 - These twelve are going to be the foundation on which His kingdom is established.
 - They will rule over the whole kingdom of those who are saved because they will be the Ones who give us Christ's word.
 - Everyone will look to their word who wishes to serve Christ.
 - They are being sent to restore the nation to God by the gospel of the kingdom.
 2. And that the work was redemptive work rather than the execution of wrath is shown by the kind of work they were given to do...
 - namely, preaching the gospel and doing works of mercy...
 - a. Jesus was sending them out to proclaim that the time had come which God had set to redeem His people!
 - That the Messiah had come,
 - not to condemn the world,
 - but that the world may be saved through Him.
 - b. And so it was not for the apostles to do works like Moses and the prophets had done—
 - They were not to send plagues on Rome the way Moses sent plagues upon Egypt...

- They were not to announce that the ground would open up to swallow up rebellious men alive...
- They were not to call fire to fall from heaven to destroy those who opposed them.
- It was rather for them to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, give sight to the blind, and preach the gospel.
 - The works were in keeping with the nature of the restoration that God was now bringing to the world through Jesus.
- c. It is not that Christ has nothing to do with works of judgement...
 - For He Himself will come again with sword in hand to judge the wicked and will cast all who oppose Him into the Lake of Fire with the Devil...
 - It is not that He has nothing to do with judgement and condemnation,
 - but that now is the day of salvation...
 - He had come to offer Himself on the cross as a ransom for sinners—
 - He had not come to judge, but to be judged for the salvation of His people...
 - And so the apostles were sent forth to join Him in proclaiming the day of salvation—
 - to tell all Israel that Messiah had come to save His people from their sins.

B. Jesus sends them because He wants all His people to know the good news!

1. As we saw at the end of Matthew 9,
 - a. He was moved with compassion when He saw the multitude because they were like sheep without a shepherd.
 - They ought to have had lots of shepherds in Israel to point them to the coming Messiah—
 - to teach them to look to God's promise to save them from their sins from the light of the Old Testament.
 - b. But when Jesus went through the cities of Galilee He found that there were no such shepherds...
 - They had corrupted the word through ignorance and malice.
 - Instead of leading poor sinners to the promised Messiah,
 - They were leaving the sheep without any hope...
 - Teaching them to trust in their own works or righteousness...

- Just like today...
 - One said, “If you are good people and do your best, God will accept you.”
 - Another said, “Perform these ceremonies and you will be fine.”
 - There was no comfort for an honest soul in words like that!
 - Jesus found that no one was leading the sheep to trust in Christ!
 - He yearns for them to know the truth!
2. But Jesus could not possibly get the message out to all the people alone...
- a. And so He sent out these twelve to join Him in the work of proclamation.
 - For this work, He needed lots of help!
 - Not only while He was here, but even more after He was gone!
 - Someone would have to carry the message of salvation to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.
 - b. Jesus disciples could not help in paying the penalty of our sins...
 - That was something He had to do alone.
 - He and He alone was qualified to offer Himself up as a sacrifice on the cross to take God’s punishment for all of us...
 - They could not contribute one iota to that great work!
 - But they could tell people about it—
 - How God had sent His only Son to His people from their sins!
 - So that is what Jesus appointed them to do.
- C. He appointed them to be His voice to the whole world in all the ages to come!
1. John, one of Jesus’ chief apostles, explains the role of an apostle in his first epistle.
 - a. In 1 John 1:1-4, he says:
 - 1 John 1:1: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.
 - b. This great work involves two things:

- 1) First, the apostle had to be someone who actually saw the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh.
 - He has to hear His voice, touch Him, and look upon Him...
 - He was an eye-witness and an ear witness.
 - 2) Secondly, the apostle had to declare what he had seen and heard to the church...
 - He had to tell the world about Jesus Christ—the One who came to save the world.
2. What this means is that these men are the connecting link between Christ and the world.
- They are the eyes by which we all look upon Jesus, and the voice by which we hear Him.
 - They connect us to Him by giving us the word of faith...
 - John says, “these things we write unto you that your joy may be full.”
 - a. They are said to be the foundation of the church, with Christ as the chief cornerstone, because the church is built on the word concerning Christ which they convey to us.
 - There is no other way for us to learn of Him...
 - “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”
 - God has appointed that His people would learn of Christ for salvation through the word of the apostles and prophets.
 - Though He comes to us by His Spirit to open the word to us, He brings the word to us through preaching.
 - To this day, we must continue in the apostle’s doctrine as it is recorded in scripture if we would be saved.
 - When Jesus prays for the church He prays for the apostles and for those that will believe through their word.
 - Those are the only two categories among those that are saved...
 - The apostles and those who believe through their word.
 - It is through the preaching the word of the apostles that Jesus gets His glorious message out to the world!
 - It is often thought to be a foolish method, but it is the method He has chosen.

- b. And don't you love the way John says, "These things we write to you that your joy may be full!"
 - You are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd until the word comes...
 - But as soon as you hear and believe the word of God,
 - your joy is full because we learn of Jesus Christ!
 - You rejoice because you learn that you are not saved by your own works, but by His work!
 - You rejoice because you learn that you don't need to seek your comforts and our hope in this world,
 - Christ is the hope glory!

TRANS> Give thanks to King Jesus for sending His apostles to show us the way of salvation!

- But note further!

II. Give thanks that He not only sends them, but also fully equips them for their work!

A. Jesus does not send them out without equipping them!

1. What good would it do us if they had brought us a false message, a distorted message, or a confused message?
 - We would no more know the way of salvation than if they hadn't come at all!
 - But how could these ignorant blundering disciples possibly get the such an important message right?
 - How do you know that it is a message you can rely on?
 - You are being ask to entrust your entire destiny to their word!
 - Sure, they may have seen Christ and told us what they saw and heard, but what if their message is somehow deficient?
2. Well I declare to you that it is not deficient because Jesus Himself has empowered them for their work.
 - By divine power, He has enabled them fulfil their role as the conveyers of the truth about Him to the entire church.
- a. Now we cannot actually see Him empowering them to infallibly preach the word...
 - But He did make visible His empowerment of them by giving them the ability to do miracles.
 - Matthew 10:1 says:

- “He gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.”
- 1) Jesus gave them the power to do in His name the very same sort of thing that He Himself was doing!
 - They cast out demons and healed the sick and even raised the dead.
 - And what is interesting, their opponents did not deny the fact that they did these things....
 - Some of them claimed that they did it by the power of Satan, but it was impossible for those who witnessed the miracles to deny them.
 - 2) You see, the signs they did were not at all like the cheap imitations you get today when people try to pretend that they can do these things...
 - a) Consider the miracle of tongues in Acts 2...
 - People who try to imitate tongues today always speak in what they claim are angelic tongues that no human can understand...
 - But when the apostles spoke in tongues, everybody understood in their own native tongue!
 - It was a sign for unbelievers, not an emotional release for believers!
 - It was something an unbeliever was forced to look at and say,
 - “Wow, that is clearly a miracle—
 - I don’t like the message of these men,
 - but I must admit that they have done many mighty works.”
 - b) In Acts 3, we read how Peter and John caused a man who had been lame from birth to walk!
 - He was not a man on television that nobody knew!
 - He was a man that was carried up to temple to beg each day by those that knew him.
 - He was well known in the community and those who grew up with him knew that he had never walked in his whole life.
 - Peter and John command him to walk in the name of Jesus and immediately he is leaping around!
 - Those who opposed the message of Peter and John could not deny that a great miracle had been performed.
 - Acts 4:14 shows the would-be deniers in some what of a pickle. It says:

- Acts 4:14-17: And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.”
- c) The written accounts of these things appeared in the same generation that they were performed,
- nobody even attempted to deny the miracles because they were undeniable.
 - Many of the Jewish writers from that time simply argued that these things were done by the power of the devil.
- b. God Himself is the One who appointed this method for confirming those who spoke in His name.
- It was a way of showing us that just as His divine power was with them to perform signs, so it was with them to speak His word.
- 1) When Moses first went down to Egypt, he asked God,
- “How will the people know that you sent me?”
 - And God gave Him signs to perform before them...
 - He said, “Cast down that staff in your hand”...
 - Moses did so, and it became a serpent.
 - Then God said, “Put your hand in your bosom”
 - Moses did so and when it took it out, it was withered...
 - God said “put it in again” and when he took it out, it was healed.
 - Then God said, “If they will not believe the first sign, let them believe the second—
 - and if they will not believe the second sign,
 - God assured him that many more signs would be given— even the plagues.
 - By these signs, Moses was confirmed as a prophet for God.
- 2) God is very serious about maintaining the integrity of His word!
- I could only wish that people today were serious about it!

- a) The regulations that God said for prophets were very extreme!
 - If any one claimed to speak in His name,
 - that person must be able to prove it and if he could not, that person was to be put to death!
 - God did not want His word to be uncertain in any way whatsoever!
 - He knew that that would be harmful to you, the people He loves!

- b) The regulations for prophets are given in Deuteronomy 18:
 - There was a demand for 100% accuracy in all that they spoke. It says:
 - Deut 18:20-22: “But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.” And if you say in your heart, “How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?” — when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.
 - If a prophet like Moses were performing a sign and the sign did not happen, he was to be utterly rejected.
 - You hear people boast about prophets that get it right 80% of the time or things like that...
 - But there was no boasting for God’s prophets about 99% accuracy!
 - 99% accuracy meant death!

- c) In equipping His apostles for their work, Jesus made them capable of passing this test.

TRANS> This means that you can fully rely on the words of the apostles to be the absolute, undiluted, uncorrupted truth—the very work of God!

B. In 2 Timothy 3:15-17, Paul says that the words of scripture (which are given to us by the prophets and apostles) are able to make us wise for salvation.

- He says to Timothy:
 - 2 Tim 3:15-17: “and from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

- Notice some of the things Paul says about the word...
1. He says that the words of scripture have this power to make us wise to salvation because they are given by inspiration of God.
 - a. The word inspiration is more literally God breathed—
 - It is as if they have come out of the very mouth of God.
 - The scripture is precisely what He wants us to know.
 - 1) Jesus gifted His apostles with divine power so that they were able to give us the word of God and record it for us in scripture.
 - He did it so that for all time His people might have an infallible, divinely interpreted record of all that He did for our salvation.
 - He did it so that we might confidently believe the message and be saved.
 - 2) Not only do they tell us what He did, but they also give us the meaning of what He did.
 - Not only do they tell us that He died and rose again,
 - but they tell us that He died for our sins and that His resurrection declares God's acceptance of His sacrifice.
 - They tell us that all who rely on this sacrifice will be pardoned.
 - b. Jesus would not do all the terrible work of redemption and then have it fail to be properly communicated to His people...
 - He gifted His apostles to speak God's pure word it in order that we might believe and be saved.
 2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 not only says that the words of scripture are divinely inspired, it also says that they are fully sufficient!
 - a. In other words, in the scripture you have everything you need to know about faith and life!
 - There is nothing missing, no inadequacy.
 - b. The language Paul uses is very powerful!
 - He says that the scripture is:
 - profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - The "man of God" refers to the minister of the gospel.

- Paul is saying that the pastor has everything he needs in the scripture to be able to lead God's people to Christ.
- The words "thoroughly equipped" translate a Greek word that was used for the fitting of a ship before going out to sea...
 - It had to be "thoroughly equipped" because once you get out to sea, you can't run down to the corner store to pick up supplies!
- Paul says that the scriptures are like that...
 - We do not need to look anywhere else to find all that we need.
 - It is here that God speaks to us.

TRANS> And so you see that Jesus, wanting to make His salvation known,

- has sent out the twelve apostles to proclaim Him as Saviour...
- and has fully empowered them to bring us the infallible word of God.
 - Now it is only for us to believe their testimony and receive the gospel.

So give thanks that He has sent these men to declare the gospel...

And give thanks that He has fully equipped them for their work...

And lastly...

III. Give thanks that Christ choose *such* men as these twelve to do this work

A. Consider that these men are mere men (not angles or demigods)... and ordinary men at that.

1. By using such men for His work, Jesus teaches us plainly that the excellency of the power is of God and not of the men!
 - a. Salvation has gone into all the world from these fishermen, a former tax collector, a former zealot and some that we don't even know what they did...
 - Surely it is not because of the greatness of these men because they are not great men!
 - It is rather by the divinely powerful working of Christ!
 - It is not human wisdom in which we trust
 - but the wisdom and power Christ.
 - b. Too often, the church has given too much glory to men.
 - Christ intentionally gave us very ordinary men to teach us not to do that!

- If they had been the wisest men in the world, we might have been inclined to trust in them...
 - The world is always ready to follow wise men,
 - but these men do not claim their own wisdom—their wisdom is all from Christ.
 - Our reliance must always be, not on men, but on Christ who sends them.
 - And if it is, we will pray earnestly for the simple men He sends!
 - We will not boast in the men, but in Christ who sent them and uses them.
2. But Christ's use of ordinary men also works in the opposite way...
- a. It means that we must humble ourselves to receive the word of God from mere men—even from very ordinary men!
 - It is a humbling thing to receive the word from men of very ordinary gifts and abilities, but God has appointed us to do just that.
 - Those who run in high circles often refuse to bear the reproach of the cross unless it has been gilded and polished and set up in a cathedral.
 - High society will mock at Christ unless they can dress Him up to suit their tastes...
 - But let us follow Him in simplicity and faith.
 - b. Many were too proud to receive the word from Peter and James and John, and the reason is that they were too proud to receive the word from Christ who was crucified.
 - Let a man come with all sorts of credentials and they will hear him...
 - But if you wish to be saved you must hear from these lowly fishermen of Galilee—and a despised tax collector!
- B. Consider further that among these men there is also Judas who betrayed the Lord.
1. Jesus deliberately chose this man to show us that He even uses unbelievers in His work.
 - There is no doubt that Judas had the power to heal and to cast out demons and that he also was given power to preach.
 - It is not because of the virtue of the man, but because of Christ that His word is heard through men.
 2. And not only did He use Judas before his apostasy,
 - He also used his apostasy.

- a. Judas was an integral and essential part of the Lord's plan.
 - God had purposed that Jesus should be delivered up to be crucified...
 - And He had purposed that He should be betrayed by one of His own disciples.
 - Many of God's covenant people in Israel rejoiced when Judas did this!
 - It gave them an excuse not to believe!
 - "The official teachers of the word have rejected Him," they said.
 - God gave them this excuse to judge them and to deliver them over to their unbelief!

- b. Learn from this that every false teacher of the gospel is also an integral part of God's plan.
 - God has a purpose for heresy.
 - There are many ordained preachers today who deliver Christ over to be crucified.
 - Some by adding to His word, others by taking away from it.
 - They are there to attract all those whom God wishes to judge!
 - He delivers false disciples over to these teachers for damnation.
 - In 1 Cor 11, Paul said:
 - "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you."
 - God greatly uses them to test His true disciples and to make them stronger.
 - Because of false teaching, true disciples have had to diligently search the scriptures,
 - and so they have come to know the truth more fully.
 - Yes, even Judas is there to further the salvation of the elect.

TRANS> And so you see that the work of Jesus is purely a work of His grace and power...

- It is not something that man can do, but something He does, using man.
- Your trust is never to terminate on the men Christ calls, but rather on Christ who uses them for His glory.
- By giving us such men as He did to be apostles, Jesus teaches us to turn our faith not to them, but to Him.

In the calling of the twelve, you see His great love for us...

- How He provides for us that we might be led to Himself as our shepherd for salvation.
- The apostles are those men who stand from age to age pointing to Jesus Christ through the record they have left us in scripture.
 - Christ has sent them to do just that so that you will not be sheep without a shepherd.
 - Let the ministers of the gospel lead you to the word of Christ given by the apostles that you may feed upon Him and have everlasting life.
 - Believe the word of the apostles and you will be saved.