

Mark 6 7-13 And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. 8 He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bag, no bread, no copper in *their* money belts-- 9 but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics. 10 Also He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. 11 And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" 12 So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*. (NKJV)

This morning we are going to look at what it means to represent Christ. Mark did not report this communication of Christ in great detail, but Matthew did in Matthew 9:35-11:1. Mark's short narrative communicates the main facts, but as we read Matthew we get the feel for what this event would have been like for the disciples. I would like to refer to Matthew this morning. And by covering the text in Matthew we will, by default, cover the text in Mark.

Now Matthew starts out with a statement that helps us to understand what drove Christ to send the disciples out. We see Christ's motivation.

Matthew 9:35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (NKJV)

What this paragraph tells us is Christ's reaction to seeing people without spiritual leadership.

Note where this arose. Christ was out in the field. He was working. He was paying a high cost to do ministry to people who needed it, even if they weren't aware of it. Christ was not in an ivory tower. He was not separated with distance from those He ministered to. He was accessible to the needs of the people. And I am sure He paid a price for that. As such, He serves as our perfect example.

36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

Then Christ looked at the multitudes. Keep in mind these were multitudes who were following Him. They were multitudes who wanted His time, His attention,

His power, His ministry. These were needy people who often **took** but rarely **gave**. These were the people who Christ saw.

Now how do we respond in that kind of situation? Does their need tug at our hearts? Do we see their need and ponder how we can meet it? Or do we see and hear the need and get irritated? Do we want to distance ourselves from all these needs so we will feel better and enjoy our lives more? Do we act overwhelmed by them? Do we wish they would just **go away**? Do we want to delegate the need so we can meet it at a more convenient time? Or do we just sit back figuring that someone else is supposed to meet those needs? We are all doing something about the need we see. And usually, the most deceptive thing we do, is fool ourselves with our own sentimentality. We will see a clear need. We will see that there is opportunity for us to serve, even if just to show up and be there, but we do nothing. And we will talk about the need with much concern. In fact we will **fool ourselves** with concern. But we will not **put feet** to our concern. We will not discover something we can do **to meet that need**. And when we are done, we replace **being** loving with **feeling** loving. And at the end of the day, that is not love. If Christ had loved us like that, we would all still be lost.

Maybe I am talking mostly to myself this morning. Because I know clear instances where I **could** and **should** do better. There are places where I know of needs, but I feel that any wisdom I may have is inadequate to the need. I feel so awkward in the social situations. I may very well face rejection. It is so very uncomfortable. And after all, aren't there a lot of more qualified people out there? And really, no one is calling and **asking** for this help. Wouldn't I just be intruding?

Does any of this sound familiar? Is this what plays in your head too?

Well, all of that may make sense, except for the example of **our leader**, the example we are supposed to follow. Consider the comfort he had with His Father. Consider the discomfort He was facing coming here. Consider all the difficult spots He was going to get into. And for who? People who would fail to appreciate Him. Needy people. Foolish people. People who were not calling on Him. No, we are all left with **no excuse** for not putting feet to our concerns. We are left with no excuse for not making the phone calls or visits that we know we should make. We are left with no excuse for not at least trying to meet some needs that are clearly visible to us.

Now what was the need Christ was seeing?

He was seeing people who **were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd**.

Weary- this word means to be enfeebled through exhaustion. The best illustration I can think to describe this is how Mike described **how he felt** after running a marathon. He had trained for weeks, and one day as he was running he decided that he was going to go for the distance. I don't know if it was 10 or 20 miles, but

when he was done he wanted to bend over into a pond to splash water in his face. But he decided not to because he knew if he fell over he wouldn't be able to pull himself back out. Now that kind of exhaustion is the epitome of what our word means this morning. Enfeebled through exhaustion.

And that is what people are doing all over. They are wearing themselves out in a pursuit for **something** and they don't even know what the **something** is. They want peace and joy. They want a feeling of well-being. And they chase it all day every day and it continues to elude them.

And scattered- The word for this means scattered by force by the one doing the scattering. When we combine this with the analogy of sheep in the absence of a shepherd, we begin to see better what Christ means.

We are surrounded by people who have **no direction** and **no protection**. They are worn out because they don't know where to go to get what they need. And they are scattered because the enemy can attack them and they have no protection.

They are kept away from that which they need by the devil's efforts.

Are **you** weary and scattered this morning? If so, you need to be gaining the benefit from your **Good Shepherd**. If you will call upon Him, He will answer your call. Are you **worn out** trying to find something that will make your life worthwhile? Have you chased dreams over and over that have only led to more despair? Do you feel like, at every corner is another new danger awaiting you, tearing you down more and more. We were not designed for that. We need **direction and protection**. We need a good shepherd who loves us and guides us and protects us. There is promise after promise that this is **exactly** what Christ does for His children. It is ironic that we will **so quickly run** to anything but the thing we really need. We will run to anyone, but the One who really loves us. If you are weary and scattered this morning and don't know Christ, call on Him this morning. He will take you into His flock.

Now it is understandable that those who don't know Christ would be weary and scattered. But there far too many of us believers who could describe our lives the same way. We find ourselves with the same patterns of thought as the world around us, the same pursuits of pleasure, the same entertainment, and the same feelings of remorse and hopelessness and fretfulness and meaninglessness. And the problem? We are failing to trust in our Shepherd. O we will call it lots of things. But at its heart, it is unbelief. We won't follow Him willingly into the pastures He leads us. We won't trust Him to protect us from the dangers to our souls. We have a Shepherd but we refuse to receive His love and protection. O, again, we have a million reasons we use on ourselves and others to convince ourselves we are being smart. But all we do is rob ourselves of the goodness of God. This world is bad enough. Why make it worse by rejecting the guidance and protection of the one who loves us?

Anyway, this is how Christ saw those who were affected by the lack of true leadership. And the need was clear. These people needed good spiritual leadership. This would not fix everybody's problems. Because some people simply will not receive Christ as their Lord. Some will not accept his call on their lives. But for those who will, every one of them will be rescued.

So what is needed in the end is the word of truth about Christ to be preached. Christ saw the suffering and evaluated the solution.

Then the next thing He says is

"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

First notice how Christ saw the multitudes again. They were without protection and direction. But they were also **opportunity for great worth**. Inside of those needy foolish masses were people who Christ had chosen for Himself. But those people would not be brought to Christ without work.

We do well, when we look over any crowd, to see the crowd the way that Christ did. He saw the masses as containing individuals for whom He would die.

Sometimes I want to look at groups like a liberal political convention or a party crowd or a homosexual activist crowd and think those people are all lost. I want to simply avoid that crowd. And yet Christ probably has a harvest inside of most any crowd. There is no group of people that is not worth reaching with the Gospel.

So there is a valuable harvest residing in the masses.

Next Christ is essentially calling his followers to **join with Christ** in the meeting of this need. He told them to pray because the need is greater than the current laborers can meet. So what is the logical conclusion? We need more laborers.

Workers. People who will **do work**. People who will **put feet** to their concern.

And how is that going to happen? It will only be a miracle. God must place that in people's hearts. So **ask God to do this thing**. Ask God to provide more workers.

Think of the effect this would have had on the twelve. Christ told them to pray for laborers. So they probably do. Now, how are they going to respond when Christ tells them that **they are the ones** that are selected for this job? If they **meant** their prayers, they can't hardly back out. It may also help them to realize that this is

bigger than a job decision. God has chosen them to meet this need. That is how a called minister must view His calling. True ministry is from God and about God.

So we need to keep that in mind as we get to work.

Now on to Matthew 10:1 **And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.**

So Christ called the twelve in to talk to them alone, without the surrounding crowd.

And he authorized them to deal with demons and sicknesses. Another passage throws in death as well. He gave them power. Up until this point they must not

have had it, or maybe it was limited. Now it is fully given. They will be doing the same things that Christ was doing with the same effectiveness.

Now think about this. What would go through your head if this was given to you?

You might think, "Wow. I sure am going to make a big splash wherever I go."

Wouldn't it be easy to think of all the things flesh could do with this?

Well, we might, but by the time Christ is done I think all of those ideas will be washed away with the reality of the mission they will be on.

Then Matthew tells us the names of the 12. We will skip over that.

Then Matthew goes on:

5 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Here Christ narrows the scope of where the disciples are to go. He defines their mission parameters by geography. You are going to cities and they must be Jewish cities. Christ does not forbid ministering to Gentile individuals. But the thrust of this mission is toward Jewish communities. Christ came first to His own. This would leave those Jewish people who rejected Him without an excuse. And only the Jews are going to understand the importance of the Messiah, the Kingdom of God that they are preaching.

Look what Christ calls those who they are being sent to. Lost sheep. I'll bet that rang a bell with them. The scattered and weary sheep are their targets of ministry. It could be here that Christ was telling them **who would respond to their ministry** and who they are **really being sent for**. It is not for **every Jewish citizen**. It is only for **those who know they are lost**. It is for those who feel deeply their need for God and what God has to offer. Those who are rested and comfortable are not going to respond. The self-complacent sheep will be in the crowd, but that is not your real target. The **lost** sheep, those who **know** they have a problem... they are your target.

He goes on:

7 And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Mark tells us that the disciples preached that people should repent. Matthew tells us more of the gist of the message. This message proclaims something monumental. There is something historically important going on. There is a chance to get in the kingdom of heaven. And its king is **Jesus**. They are to proclaim the **rule and reign** of King Jesus. Follow Him. We don't know exactly what they declared, but it must have included the truth that you cannot enter in that kingdom by efforts. You must repent of your sin and come to God through Christ. That had to be conveyed somehow in their message, even if not completely understanding all the details.

But it is important to note that they were sent first to preach. Then the healings and exorcisms would take their proper supporting roles. The disciples were given power to heal but they were commanded to preach first. Then they are told to:

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons.

These are amazing abilities given to the apostles. They were all things that Jesus had been doing. And doing them would verify the authority and validity of Christ. We read this but I don't think it strikes us what this would be like. Suppose you were told that from today on, anyone you lay your hands on will be healed. Think of the implications. Think of the possibilities.

Now look what comes next. If you had the power to fix all these problems, what would likely be one of the first things to run through your mind? Can I charge for that service? Christ immediately gets that out of the way.

Freely you have received, freely give.

Nope. No invoices. This ministry will be free. No profit motive. No getting rich. In fact, not only will you **not profit**. You will need to live in utter trust of God. I don't even want you supplying for your own needs on this trip.

He goes on...

9 Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, 10 nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.

Jesus is essentially sending them out with just the shirt on their backs. In Mark we see that sandals and a walking stick are allowed. So what Matthew is probably saying is that there will be no spares. No provisions. No extra garments. I have read that a moderately wealthy person would wear 2 tunics. The disciples are not allowed that luxury. No money. No suitcase.

If you ever wanted a boot camp designed to help you stop worrying, here it is. If you go through this process, you are going to learn to depend upon God. These disciples have resources to do a lot of amazing things. But they don't have a single thing to secure for themselves food, clothing or shelter.

Where is food, clothing and shelter going to come from? A principle.

a worker is worthy of his food.

And if we were there, what would be the next thing out of our mouths? But Jesus, what if the people we visit don't know this rule? Evidently God would oversee this operation. He would see to it that the disciples would be taken care of. And at the same time the Jewish people would be required to pay the expenses of this wonderful ministry. And the disciples would learn that this principle pertains to how they would **continue to minister**. Those being ministered to, especially by the Word of God, are to support the one who is supplying them with that ministry. Now, how about housing?

11 Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out.

I am not sure how they would do this. This is not a process that would guaranty good results. Evidently the word “worthy” gets coupled with the service that would be provided. So essentially they were looking for someone in the city who is worthy to stay with, not just a worthy person. There may be a lot of worthy people whose houses are crammed with kids. The questioning seems to be asking, who would be a good Christ honoring person to stay with while we are here.

It looks like it may be an important decision as Jesus doesn’t allow for upgrading your housing arrangements. If someone agrees to allow you to stay, you stay in that house until you leave town. I am not sure why, but it would be the least offensive choice. It would keep your mind free from looking for your best advantage. And it would allow you to keep maximum attention on your ministry.

12 And when you go into a household, greet it. 13 If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

Apparently this is speaking of entering households to do ministry. The greeting given would be “Shalom” or peace. If the household welcomes the disciples and the preaching of Christ, then that peace that they offered, that greeting, would stay upon it. That household would receive that blessing. The disciples would remain and continue to minister until they were done. The blessing would be complete. But if they would not receive that ministry, then that household would lose that blessing. Peace would walk right out the door when the disciples left. Since the saving message was leaving with them.

There is something to notice here. Our greatest focus in our ministries to fellow human beings should be on those who are the most receptive to our ministries. It is fruitless to try to force someone to come to Christ. It is a waste of time to spend all of our ministry focus on those who are least receptive to our words of truth. It will serve to do nothing but **harden them** and **frustrate you**. But when you minister to someone who **listens** and is **receptive** and **responds** to your ministry, that empowers and encourages you to do more. It is a reward, in and of, itself. We need to keep that in mind as we chose how we will spend our time.

Now what is the ultimate response to those who **will not listen** to the gospel.

14 And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

Back in Jesus day, the Jews used to shake off their sandals when they came out of Gentile lands. This was a sign of contempt for the other lands and a signifying of

their uncleanness. Well this is what Jesus told the disciples to do when coming from a person who has rejected and scorned Christ.

You can bet that people would see the disciples doing this and the onlookers would get the point. Jesus **wanted them** to get the point. He was not so much interested in avoiding conflict as He was **clarifying positions**. He wanted the rejecters to know that their rejection was noted and it was significant.

And if those people never repented, they would taste of horrible judgment from the hand of God one day. Sodom and Gomorrah tasted of terrible judgment without warning from God all of a sudden. Their judgment will look tame in comparison.

Do you realize this same thing is going on today when we declare the Gospel? It is serious stuff when we represent God's message. Those who hear it and will not respond are in terminal danger. Their rejection is winning for them the judgment of God. We need to know that as we present the Gospel. Sometimes it feels as if what we are doing **has no effect at all**. But it is having an effect. It is always either saving or damning. And we don't get to pick which one.

Now, up until now Christ is giving instructions. We see the "why" Christ is sending the 12. We see the "who" He is sending. We see the "how" they are to go about the ministry trip.

But now Christ begins explaining the big picture of what is going on. Now He begins describing it from where God sees it. And the picture is not going to be what the Disciples want to hear. They probably still have in mind a political kingdom with seats of power and influence. They probably still have in mind being some kind of big shot at the end of all this. Now listen to what Christ has to say in the light of that.

16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Jesus is not preparing them for a glory trip. He is preparing them for adversity. And He is assuring them that if they do their job correctly they will receive adversity.

I am sending you out like a bunch of sheep into a wolf pack. Average life expectancy in that arena is small. And there is no doubt whom the winning party will be in that conflict. Christ is telling them that this is what they can expect. So they are going to need to be very wise and very harmless at the same time. They cannot use physical force for defense. They have none of those resources. But at the same time, they have the backing of God. This all requires **a different way of thinking** than a bunch of rough and tumble fishermen would be used to.

John MacArthur says this:

The basic idea is that of saying the right thing at the right time and place, of having a sense of propriety and appropriateness, and of trying to discover the

best means to achieve the highest goal.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 8-15.

We are going to stop here this morning and finish this text next week, Lord willing. In closing, let's look at the big picture again.

Here are the disciples, Christ's right hand men. They are being sent out with amazing powers to do supernatural deeds. People who came into contact with these men would be healed. Demons would be cast out. Dead would come back to life. These are things that are highly valued and greatly needed in any society. So, how is all of this going to be received?

Well, it is going to be a mixed bag. Some will think that the disciples are the greatest people they have ever met. Some will hate their guts and want to kill them. That is the reality we live in. That is what happens in a world that Satan has been allowed great influence in.

We must be mentally armed for living in our reality. We can't hold any illusions that say that this world is our home. We cannot believe that we were created and recreated for this measly existence. Christians are not. They have a higher purpose. And that purpose supersedes everything else. Suffering is not an oddity on this planet. It is a certainty. And the more we represent God, the more suffering we are likely to bring upon ourselves.

Christ is sending out his best, most loyal followers. Does He love them? Of course He does. Does He protect them from suffering? He certainly didn't protect them from **all** suffering. He **promised them** suffering.

As Christians, we must have this mindset. **We must**, or we will use the evidence of suffering as God's lack of care for us. And no idea could be more devastating in a world where suffering is a certainty.

While we are here, there is a high purpose for our lives. There are people on this planet that God has called to Himself. And we are to live to God's glory and look for opportunity to bring these people to Christ. As we do that, we can expect opposition. But what we are doing is **so important** that God allows suffering to continue for His dearly loved ones. Think how important **the salvation of His children must be** if, because of it He allows the suffering of His loved ones to continue. His lost sheep, His children who do not yet know Him are that important to Him. Are they that important to us?