

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.² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

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. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. 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.

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

¹⁶ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.¹⁸ You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;²⁰ for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

²¹ “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²² And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴ “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.²⁵ It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!

Introduction

We’re going through a series in Matthew’s Gospel before Communion each month.

This series covers the 5 teaching blocks in Matthew’s Gospel.

We can identify these teaching units with confidence because of Matthew’s own structure division in his gospel.

We have completed the first section in Mathew chapter 5-7 which is often called the sermon on the Mount. We are now moving to chapter 10 where Jesus commissioned the disciples. We will cover this teaching block in two messages; part one today and part two at our next Communion on Sunday April 7th.

This second teaching block contains the instructions that Jesus gives to His disciples prior to them going out on their first mission trip.

Over the last 24 years I have hosted about 12 mission teams from Canada and the U.S.

The teams that have been well trained, well prepared and focused on the reason for their mission trip have been the most blessed and successful.

Therefore, I know personally the value of preparation and training for mission trips.

Jesus knew the value of preparation and training, and also of empowerment.

I remember one leader who said to me after every drama presentation, “did we clearly present the gospel message well?” This was the best team that we had.

They were young men and women between the ages of 18-21, but they had been well trained to present the gospel through song, drama, chalk art, and personal testimonies.

As we study chapter 10 I hope that we will learn something that will prepare us to share the gospel message with the people living in Japan, especially this Spring.

Before we begin to study the passage I would like you to notice the verses prior to our passage.

Matthew 9: v. 35-38 (N.K.J.)

³⁵Then 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. ³⁶But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. ³⁷Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

There are three things to notice about these verses.

1. Jesus had compassion for the people. They were like sheep having no Shepherd.
2. His message was validated through miracles.
3. Jesus asked people to pray that God would send out labourers into His harvest.

The passage before us now is in a sense an answer to prayer and an equipping of gospel workers.

1. Jesus chose & empowered His disciples for a specific purpose. – 10: v. 1-6 & v. 8.

The first thing that we discover from v.1-4 is that Matthew identifies the names of the 12 Apostles that were being sent out on a mission trip.

Matthew also tells us that Jesus gave them power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness and diseases.

It is important that we do not have Apostles in the Church anymore.

These Apostles were called and empowered by Jesus to do a specific job.

It was needed at that time in history for these men to have special powers in order to produce miracles which would authenticate the gospel message.

By using this word, I mean proving that the message was TRUTH.

Jesus Himself performed the same miracles to authenticate His message of the Kingdom of God also.

Therefore, to extend His ministry, in order to widen and develop it, Jesus needed some help.

Soon Jesus was going to die, be raised from the dead, and then go Heaven.

Later He would send the Holy Spirit to empower every believer to be a witness for Jesus.

For the people at that time, it was a real and necessary experience to be able to perform miracles.

For us today, it is mainly the Holy Spirit using the word of God, to convict people of their sin and the need for forgiveness in their lives.

God may choose to heal people physically. He may even choose to raise people from the dead. That is His sovereign will.

However, our commission from Jesus for ministry today is contained in:

Matthew 28: v. 18-20. (in the N.K.J.)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

Notice the great commission is “Making Disciples” “Baptizing them” and “Teaching them the scriptures”.

This is the main focus for us today.

If miracles happen as we are obeying the great commission, then praise God for that, but miracles of physical healing are not the focus.

The greatest miracle is that we can be born again, receive God’s Holy Spirit, go to Heaven when we die and one day our bodies will be raised from the dead and we will live in a perfect world.

We have already discussed the qualifications for leaders in the Church today in 1 Timothy Chapter 3: v. 1-13. These qualifications concern mainly character of the heart and an overflow of God’s Holy Spirit.

These qualifications do not include the ability to perform miracles.

John 20: v. 24-29. In N.K.J.

²⁴ Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Thomas had a personal resurrection appearance from Jesus.

However, Jesus declared that the people who have not seen Jesus, but still believe in the message of the Bible, it is those people who will be blessed.

This is us today.

Notice in v. 5-6 Jesus specifically told His disciples NOT to go and preach to Gentiles or Samaritans.

They were only allowed to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Jesus had a specific focus in mind. He was only wanting the Jewish people to hear the message at this time.

It was later in time that the message of the gospel was given to the Gentiles.

John 1: v. 11-13. In N.K.J.

¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

2. Jesus promised provision for His Gospel workers, through Gospel supporters. v. 9-15.

Jesus told his disciples to be totally dependent upon God for their provision of food and clothing. It was a real faith mission trip.

However, it was the people who the disciples stayed with that had to support their mission trip.

Today this type of support for mission workers still exists.

Missionaries and Evangelists today are normally supported by Gospel supporters.

It is true that in the past Churches used to fund their own missionaries, but today 90% of all missionaries and Evangelists are supported by individuals who support their gospel work.

This type of support should be done on top of our tithe for the Church that we attend. I believe that is the Biblical way. I know if we do this type of support it can be very sacrificial, but God is able to make the difference if we do these things.

When God calls individual people for Gospel work, He always provides for them.

If I hadn't learnt to trust God for my financial needs when I was at the Faith Mission Bible College over 30 years ago, I would not have lasted very long in the ministry.

Wherever God has guided me to serve, I have always been faced with having to trust God for finances. The amazing thing is that in 90% of the cases, God has always provided the finances needed through praying people who have a heart for Gospel work.

This week I remembered something that happened to my wife Wendy over 30 years ago.

We were living in a town called Dalkeith, just outside Edinburgh in Scotland.

I was attending Bible College at the time. Wendy was looking after our 2 year- old son Andrew.

We were living by faith, with no income at all.

A few months previous to this incident, Wendy had challenged me to go off in faith and trust God to provide petrol for our car. The petrol tank was nearly empty at the time.

God wonderfully provided a gift of money and I was able to fill up the car with petrol.

Now it was Wendy's turn. We only had £1.00, which is about 140 yen. Wendy needed to go shopping for some food. It wasn't very much, but she could get some bread. I stayed at home and prayed and Wendy went shopping with her £1.00. Wendy arrived at a large supermarket and wondered what she should buy. Suddenly a lady came up to her and gave her £5.00. Thirty years ago, £6.00 would have been enough to get about 3-4 day's food provisions. Wendy came home rejoicing and told me the story. I asked Wendy who the lady was. She said that she might attend the Church where we had just started to go. We discovered later that this was the case. That lady, together with her husband have prayed and supported Wendy and myself ever since. It was sad to receive an e-mail from that lady a few weeks ago. She told me that the doctors have advised her that due to her cancer, she only has a very short time to live. She has a husband who has just retired from being a teacher, and two grown up children, and some grandchildren. Her family will miss her, but when she gets to heaven she will be rewarded for her contribution to Gospel work. I thank God for this lady, and ladies like her. They keep gospel work going all over the world!

3. **Jesus said that gospel work, done God's way will always face opposition.**

v.16-23.

The first thing that I want to say is that the world outside of the Church fellowships are quite happy for Christians to remain in their Church and practice their faith.

If Christians remain in their Churches and do not go outside of it with the Gospel, they do not face opposition.

However as soon as Christians take mission seriously and try to reach out to their community or people in their work place, then the opposition begins.

If we are not aware of the spiritual battle involved when we go out to share the gospel, we might easily give up.

That is especially the case in Japan.

However, when we go out as a Church at Cherry Blossom time to share our faith, we must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

When we go to Osaka Castle Park at Cherry Blossom time, the security guards will only ask us to leave for two reasons.

The first reason is that if anybody complains about our presence they can move us on. The second is if we sell anything. This is why everything we give out is free.

We sing songs, and give free books and tracts, and animation portraits are drawn professionally and given to children or adults who stop and request one.

There is going to be lots of opposition from the hearts of people against the gospel, so we don't want to create any more by breaking any rules or laws in Japan.

I hope that we are all going to go to Osaka Castle Park as a Church to share the Gospel during the cherry blossom time.

If we do, we need to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as Doves.

I know that some of you sitting here today, might be saying in your hearts.

"Well Pastor Alistair, I can't come to the Osaka Castle Park during Cherry Blossom time because I would not know what to say."

Jesus answers your concerns in v.19-20.

Jesus says to you today that the Holy Spirit of God will help you and give you the words to say.

If you are a Japanese speaking Christian, you have no excuse. If you can't speak much Japanese, don't worry, God will help you. I know that because God helps me and I can't speak much Japanese either.

The Holy Spirit is looking for willing instruments that He can use.

We are not the "Gospel Message", we are the "Gospel Messengers".

Just giving out Christian literature can be the seed that God will use in the future.

Please come to our special event on Sunday 7th April in Osaka Castle Park.

We have invited a world famous Japanese Bible animation artist to help us again this year.

Before we leave this section on opposition to the Gospel message we need to consider why people are opposed to the message.

Today in the 21st century when people hear a message, they usually say,

"Do I like it?", and "Am I comfortable with it?"

These questions seem to block out the real question "Is it true?"

Once we proclaim Christianity as the only way to Heaven, we will get opposition.

Christianity is a message of repentance, which demands a changed life that puts God first in everything that we do.

We need to live the Christian life in surrender to God's Holy Spirit if we are going to be effective witnesses for Jesus.

People will read our lives first before they read the Bible.

Therefore, we need to make sure that we are really living the Christian life according to God's word.

4. **Jesus teaches us that we must be like Him. – v. 24-25.**

In v. 24-25, Gospel workers are challenged to be like Jesus. The disciples at the time knew exactly how Jesus behaved and what He was like.

Today our role model is the Jesus of the Bible. Yes, other humble servants of Jesus can challenge us by their lives but only Jesus Himself can help us to live like Jesus.

The real cost of mission is to be like Jesus. He is the supreme example of humility.

Philippians 2: v. 1-8. In N.K.J.

Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.

Jesus laid aside his glory in order to take on the humility of human flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Jesus fully surrendered to God's will for a specific purpose.

That purpose was to be punished for the sins of the world.

He did this all so that rebels like us might find forgiveness and everlasting life.

To be an authentic Christian and Christ-like, you have to be prepared to surrender your life in complete humility to God.

You do this so that He may use you for His purposes.

The more we live like Jesus, the stronger our witness for Jesus.

Conclusion & Application

The call and commission of the 12 disciples provides the Church today with some timeless truths which we could call the 6 principles for Gospel Mission today.

1. The motive for gospel mission must always be compassion and the basic means of mission are people and prayer. We are to be compassionate, we are to pray and we are to work.
2. We don't have to be great to reach people with the gospel. We only have to go to where Jesus sends us.
3. **Gospel goers depend upon gospel givers.** To put it another way, if God calls you to serve Him in Gospel ministry, you need lots of prayer supporters and people who are prepared to give financially to keep you in gospel work.

4. **Our Character as a Christian is a witness for Jesus Christ.** It is how we live our lives and manage on the faith support that God gives us that matters.
5. **We must proclaim the Gospel in the same way that Jesus and His disciples proclaimed the Gospel.**
We must not water down or dilute the gospel. We must not adjust it to fit into culture or modern thinking. We just proclaim it as it is in the Bible.
6. **Our Mission is dangerous and divisive, but it is worth giving our lives for.**
Jesus gave His life for us, so we need to give up our lives for Him.
We can't save people, but we can be the **messengers of God's Salvation.**