

February 26, 2017

“Not What We Expect”

Matthew 9:35-10:4

FCF: Flawed assumptions about Jesus

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Jesus’ ways are not what we expect.

(anchor) We need to take that to heart as we take on His mission.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

I suspect that historians will say much of our culture’s logical fallacies. We seem to excel at making unsound arguments from unstable positions, basing our claims on flawed assumptions.

We’re all guilty. We say our school rivals are jerks. Which colors our first impressions. We were bullied by a football player in school. So we assume all football players are bullies. We are offended by the hypocrisy of Christians. Which creates a barrier to the claims of Christ.

That was true for me years ago. Perhaps it was or is for you. Which makes for flawed assumptions about Jesus and what it means to follow Him. And a need to set the record straight.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Matthew 9:35-10:4](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

It’s good to be clear on who you’re following before you set out to follow them. Suppose you’re getting ready to caravan on a road trip. You notice that the lead car has a RADAR detector on the dashboard. Another driver pulls you aside and says, “I’ve followed him before. He’s a speed demon. Keep up or you’ll lose him.” It’s good to be clear on those sorts of things.

Matthew has written his Gospel with some obvious structure in mind. There’s a pattern, a movement, that alternates between narrative and discourse, historical accounts and teaching. There are five teaching sections. We’ve seen one already in the Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5-7, answering the question, “As citizens of the kingdom, how are we to live?” We have another such section here in chapter 10, answering the question, “As those sent out, how are we to go?”

It’s good to be clear on who you’re following before you set out to follow them. It’s good to know how you’ve been sent before you set out to go. What we learn from our text is that Jesus’ ways are not what we expect. And we need to take that to heart as we take on His mission.

Jesus’ ways are not what we expect. And we need to take that to heart as we take on His mission. How are His ways unexpected? What is it we need to take to heart? Three things are worth noting. First, the distress Jesus feels. Second, the delegation Jesus makes. And, third, the diversity Jesus creates. These are all quite unexpected. And well worth our deeply knowing.

I. THE DISTRESS JESUS FEELS

First, the distress Jesus feels. Consider why He sends us ([READ Matthew 9:36](#)).

A) The Pressing Need

Matthew would have us to see that part of why Jesus sends us is the pressing need.

1. His assessment of the flock

Jesus makes an assessment of the flock. They are harassed, flesh torn apart. They are helpless, thrown upon the ground. They are like sheep without a shepherd, abandoned and defenseless.

2. His indictment of the shepherds

This is an indictment of their shepherds, the religious leaders of the day. This is harkening back to the Old Testament prophets, a condemnation of the faithlessness of the leaders. So Jesus sees a pressing need. That stirs compassion within, something deep in the great Shepherd's heart.

B) The Opportunity

That pressing need is part of the distress He feels. But then there is the opportunity.

1. Not the harvest time

(**READ Matthew 9:37-38**) Understand that this is not an image of harvest time or of the last judgment. Jesus is not referring, as He does elsewhere, to chaff being separated from the wheat.

2. But a harvest crop

This is not the harvest time but a harvest crop. There is a plentiful yield in view, a bounty to come. Many souls prepared, waiting and ready for this good news, the gospel of the kingdom.

Why then does Jesus send us? Because of the twofold distress that He feels.

Illustration:

How we feel about something hinges on how we see it. Do we see as Jesus does? It's easy for two people to look at the same thing and see two very different things. Think of those hidden pictures. One person looks and sees a beautiful woman. The other sees an old hag.

Application:

Looking at the crowds, the Christian should see as Jesus does - both a pressing need and an opportunity. Which is at least a partial answer to the accusation, "Christians are arrogant." Possibly but not necessarily. To make an exclusive truth claim is not the same as being arrogant. We're all making exclusive claims. And ours is one borne of conviction and compassion.

So, how should we see? The way Jesus sees. And what should we do? What Jesus says. Pray earnestly. For laborers - messengers into all fields, salt and light into all callings and across this globe. And for a harvest - a yield, a work of the Spirit of God, an embracing of the gospel.

Such is the distress Jesus feels. We need to take that to heart as we take on His mission.

II. THE DELEGATION JESUS MAKES

That takes us to the delegation Jesus makes - how He sends us (**READ Matthew 10:1**).

A) Authority Given

Clearly, authority is given by Jesus to these twelve disciples. What does that mean?

1. Statement of continuity

Partly, it's a statement of continuity. Choosing twelve reflects the twelve tribes of Israel. It's a symbol of the continuity of God's plan of salvation, a plan progressively unfolding in stages.

2. Called to represent

But it's also a calling to represent. To be an apostle was to be "a sent one". It's tied to the Old Testament concept of legally representing another, to speak on behalf of the one who sent you.

Let's be clear. Apostles in that sense are unique. There are no persons alive today rightly referred to as "apostles". That said, we are still sent. I'll come back to that idea in a bit.

B) Honor Bestowed

So, with the twelve, we see an authority given. And then honor bestowed as well.

1. The expansion of the work

A shift is taking place in Jesus' ministry, an expansion of the work. Matthew has bookended the first phase. Note the similarities ([READ Matthew 9:35; 4:23](#)). Which sounds much like what we read at the start of chapter 10. Jesus intends to continue and expand this work through them.

2. The necessity of more workers

And with the expansion of the work comes the necessity of more workers. This is really quite startling. Paul spoke to it ([READ 1 Corinthians 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:2](#)). As Leon Morris notes ([READ quote](#)), "Without God, we cannot. Without us, He will not." This is honor bestowed.

Again, how does Jesus send us? It's seen here in the delegation that He makes.

Illustration:

Of course, this hardly seems efficient. It's like when, as a parent with young children, you ask them to help you with household chores - cleaning the bathroom or setting the table. You usually end up with more work than before. It hardly seems efficient. But it's so very wise.

Application:

And Jesus is still delegating to us. As His emissaries and ambassadors. But other ways as well. He entrusts some to be church officers, civil authorities, or parents. In each of those, as those sent, we have the encouragement of His backing. And great motivation to faithfulness.

We too are to delegate. We are to entrust and empower others for service and ministry. We should never think it's all up to us but rather trust Jesus' ways and who He is raising up.

Such is the delegation He makes. We must take that to heart as we take on His mission.

III. THE DIVERSITY JESUS CREATES

But there is one more thing. Not only the distress Jesus feels and the delegation He makes but then also the diversity He creates. That is, who He sends ([READ Matthew 10:2-4](#)).

A) Different Backgrounds

There's a lot to say here. Let's start with just the different backgrounds reflected here.

1. The stories

The stories - Peter is always listed first while Judas is always listed last. We know quite a bit about a few of these on the list. But with the others, we really hardly know anything at all.

2. The status

Such are the stories. Then the status. We have two sets of brothers in the group. And then various professions. Some had a white collar background. Others were more blue collar.

B) Different Perspectives

Those different backgrounds then lead us into the different perspectives. This is vital.

1. Poles apart

Especially with Matthew and the Simon listed towards the end. Matthew was a tax collector - for the government, working in service of Rome. Simon was against the government, working to overthrow it. He was a Zealot - a political activist, a revolutionary, possibly an insurrectionist.

2. Brought together

Do you see how different these two men were? And yet, they had been brought together in the service of Jesus. In fact, it is really only the power of Jesus that could break down such great barriers and bring them together. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2 ([READ Ephesians 2:14-22](#)).

So, who does Jesus send? Consider the diversity that He creates.

Illustration:

Surprising friendships have a way of pulling on our hearts. I'm reminded of the bond between Steve Brown and Tony Campolo. Steve says, "(We) don't agree on much of anything but Jesus." Reflecting on a TV show they did together years ago, Steve writes ([READ quote](#)):

During the commercial breaks, I stayed at the table and drank coffee. Do you know what Tony did? He would take that time, often getting out the little New Testament he carries in his pocket, to talk to the people on the set about eternal issues and the importance of knowing Christ. I - the conservative whose theological and political views I genuinely believe were correct - sat and watched as my "weird, pinko, communist" friend told the lost about Jesus.

It is hard for me to hear people attack my friend. You see, I know Tony. I know his commitment to Christ, his love and concern for the poor and the oppressed, and his gigantic heart. I believe he is wrong about most things, but decided that I would rather spend time with Tony than with those who are right, who agree with me about political and social issues but who have become mean and rock hard in their certainty.

We have a lot to learn from that friendship. We really do. We need to let Jesus bring us together.

Application:

Let's talk politics. The divisions in this country are killing us and it's bleeding into the church. We are making lesser issues into ultimate issues and it's undercutting our message.

We do need to debate. That said, there's quite a bit that is debatable and a matter of Christian liberty. So politics has its place. But a partisan spirit, knee jerk reactions and sound bites, the personalizing and the demonizing, has no place. We are far too slow to recognize the complexity of issues. We are far too quick to make assumptions about motives and jump to conclusions. Scott Sauls tells this story in his book, Jesus Outside the Lines ([READ quote](#)):

During the 1992 presidential elections a friend of mine told me about an awkward moment in his Bible study. One of the group members expressed excitement because that Sunday, she had seen a bumper sticker promoting the "other party" in the church's parking lot. She was excited because, to her, this was an indication that non-Christians had come to visit. Imagine the awkwardness when another member of the group chimed in, "Um...that's my bumper sticker that you saw."

Let me be frank. I fear that that could happen here. I do. And I pray that it never does. I don't know if you noticed but party affiliation is not in our membership vows. Nor in the creeds.

Such is the diversity Jesus creates. We must take that to heart as we take on His mission.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus is (among other things) different, distinct, and a departure from all that we know as normal. And He has to be. For the One come to save the world has to stand out from it.

Many moons ago, I went through the senior life saving course and was certified to become a lifeguard. I never actually did anything with it but I know a bit about what goes into it. To work as a lifeguard, you have to have certain qualities besides the whistle and a nice tan. First, there's ability. You have to be able to swim some distance. Second, there's knowledge. You have to be ready to administer CPR. Third, there's a cool head. You have to be able to come behind and lay hold of a panicking swimmer. The point being that a lifeguard can't be like the average normal swimmer if they're going to be able to help the average normal swimmer.

Don't misunderstand. Jesus is like us. He is fully human. He jumped into the waves and got completely wet. But He is not utterly like us. And that should be no small relief. The One who jumped into the waves made them. It takes both sides - like and unlike - for Him to save us.

We see that here in Matthew. Jesus and His ways - the distress He feels, the delegation He makes, and the diversity He creates. And none of it is what we expect. None of it is what we're used to. But that's good. And to the extent we take this to heart, it brings deep relief. Which then makes Him someone we want to know all the more. And then to actually follow.

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