

April 7, 2019

Lesson 6: Call and Mission

Scripture: Matthew 10

Context:

Following the lesson on call, we move to a discussion of how the disciples will fulfill their mission that Jesus calls them to do. Throughout the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives his disciples the authority to further the mission he has begun. Every story and parable return to the disciples fulfilling what Jesus does with authority to do all those things in his name.

The account begins by naming all the disciples that follow Jesus as his closest pupils, all named in pairs. They are given instructions to go out and make announcements about the kingdom of heaven being here as well as demonstrating acts that show God's power. The emphasis though is on the fact that these disciples are manifesting concern for God's hurting people.¹ There is to be no payment for what they do as they are simply going where God has called them to go.

Jesus is also quick to inform the disciples that they are not to carry out their mission for profit. He instructs them not to take money or even extra clothes for their missionary journey. They are only to take the clothes on their back with nothing else to carry.

The disciples are also called to follow a code of hospitality. While we do not have adequate knowledge of the hospitality rules of Jewish Galilee in the first century, we do gather that there is a code of etiquette for how to welcome strangers.² In the case of the disciples, as they travel, they are to only stick to places where the people welcome them. If they are welcomed there, they are to stay and give the place a blessing. However, if the place will not welcome them or listen to their message, they are to shake the dust off their feet and leave. To "dust of your feet" off a place was a Jewish sign of rejection as found in the books of Nehemiah and Acts.³ Those places that resist the gospel and refuse to engage in hospitality will receive more judgment than the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus makes it clear they are meant to move on.

Throughout the rest of chapter fifteen beyond the first fifteen verses we continue to read of instructions that the disciples will carry this mission forward even though it will be hard. The gospel will divide families and some people will not be receptive to what it asks of them. The disciples may be rejected and when they are, they are to be reminded that those individuals have rejected Christ himself. So they are to keep going and move on to the next place.

Application

¹ Douglas R.A. Hare, "Matthew," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (John Knox Press; Louisville, KY, 1993), 111.

² *Ibid.*, 112.

³ *Ibid.*, 113.

Whenever we think of mission, we tend to conjure up certain images. For some people, the image is of missionaries in Africa or of going to a more impoverished part of the country to do repair work. Many United Methodist youth can probably testify to the power of getting your hands dirty and learning more about how to deal with sheetrock.

Yet in this case we hear that mission is more than a short-term trip. Mission is a call and an ongoing endeavor. When Jesus commissions his disciples, it reads as though he expects them to be in it for the long haul. They are to constantly travel and search for the opportunities to deliver good news to the people they serve. And if people don't want to hear it, they are to brush off their feet and go to the next place to serve.

It's interesting that Jesus does not send the disciples to far off lands to complete their mission. They are to do their work in the communities that belong to the country of Israel. Jesus wants them to focus on where they currently live or serve without looking to other places first.

Do you see the place where you live as a mission zone? At Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Montgomery, there is a sign before leaving the parking lot that states: "You are now entering the mission field." It comes just as you leave the church as to remind you that while you've been fed and equipped as a community of faith, the next step is to serve the communities that are off the church grounds.

The mission field is everywhere. It is not just for cities or places with neighborhoods. Mission fields include small towns and rural hamlets. There are people everywhere who are hurting and may have never heard or experienced the love of Christ. The commission that Jesus gave his disciples over two thousand years ago rings true for today. There are people all over the world, including within our communities, who may be hungering for the gospel. It becomes our role to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

What we also gain from this text is that there may be those who resist the gospel or the good news. We are reminded that not everyone is ready to be a part of the Christian faith and that there are even Christians who resist good news. Christians who are never open to new ways of being or who treat newcomers poorly are not real disciples. They are members who equate belonging to a church as the same as belonging to a country club. They receive and receive, but never really give or understand reciprocity in a relationship. A disciple is someone who is open to new ideas and new ways that the Spirit may be leading.

What do you see as part of your calling in the mission field that is your community? Where do you feel God calling you to reach out and serve? How do you exhibit radical hospitality? As you think about your own walk with Christ, think about your own spirit when newcomers or new ideas come your way. Do you welcome those who are new to your community or your walk with Christ? How do you treat people as they walk through the doors of your community, your church, and your home? Think about this passage and what it says concerning those who welcome others and those who do not.

Rev. E. Hunter Pugh
Associate Pastor
First United Methodist Church
1380 W. Main St.
Dothan, AL 36301

E-mail: hunter@fumcdathan.org

