

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourth Sunday In Lent, March 30, 2025

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 498:1-4, 427:1-2, 506, 410, 409.

Lessons: Isaiah 40: 31 – 41: 10, Hebrews 13: 1-9, Mark 6:1-13.

Text: Matthew 10:5-15.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

You heard last Sunday that Jesus had much to say in Matthew chapter 10. He was sending out his 12 apostles and ***“gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”*** (Matthew 10:1, NIV84) He told them: ***“As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’”*** (Matthew 10:7, NIV84)

Then he not only gives them specific instructions but he also assures them that they are not to fear his enemies, who are also their enemies because of their witnessing their faith in him.

As we review today what Jesus did and said when he sent his disciples out on a mission journey to the Jews, we are reminded of

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- 1. The mission of the first 12 disciples is**
- 2. To preach that “the kingdom of heaven is near”.**
- 3. This is still the mission of believers.**

In this chapter, Jesus named the “twelve disciples”, also called the “twelve apostles”. A disciple is one who follows someone else. An apostle is one who is sent out to do something on behalf of someone else, a delegate; a messenger, and specifically, an ambassador of the Gospel.

Jesus had a special mission for these twelve men when he sent them out at this time. ***“Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”*** (Matthew 10:5–8, NIV84)

They had a special mission to reach out to Jews at this time, because Jesus was sent first to the Jews, the house of Israel, the descendants of Abraham. But we must remember that God wants ***“all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”*** (1 Timothy 2:4, KJV)

They were given special gifts similar to the gifts that the Holy Ghost gave to Christians later as recorded in the New Testament. I can’t say with absolute authority that the Holy Ghost does not give these kinds of gifts today, but the special gifts the Holy Ghost gave to men as recorded in the New Testament were for the special, specific purpose of proclaiming and spreading the Word of God, often to people who spoke and understood languages different than the first followers of Jesus spoke as their native tongues.

Remember that Satan and his allies often have abilities to perform miracles, often counterfeit miracles. Paul writes to the Thessalonians about the coming of the Antichrist from within the visible church, ***“the lawless one”***: ***“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,”*** (2 Thessalonians 2:9, NIV84) The message, not the miracle is the important thing. The Holy Ghost has recorded for us all the books of the New Testament and the Old Testament giving us exactly what God wants us to know.

We see in the command to his first disciples that Jesus had a very specific commission or purpose for what they were to do and how they were to do it.

After telling them where they were to go, the first thing he tells them is what they are to do: ***“As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’”*** They were to preach, that is, to proclaim, to tell, to teach. In the previous chapter we read that Jesus himself had been doing the work they were now to do. He couldn’t do it all by himself and he wanted his apostles to help with his work.

That’s still the way it is today. We cannot leave the work of teaching, telling, witnessing, proclaiming and preaching to just one man. Every one of us is called to be a witness for Christ. Every one of his followers, his disciples, is to ***“go and make disciples of all nations.”*** (Matthew 28:19, NIV84) and to ***“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*** (Mark 16:15, NIV84)

So what is the “good news of the kingdom”? I think you know what it is. Jesus is the king, the all-powerful Son of God. He came to rule in men’s hearts and in their lives here on earth, and to directly rule all things in eternity after all people who have ever lived on this earth have been judged. He came to earth to destroy the power of the devil and to redeem mankind so that not one single human being has to suffer eternally in hell. He came to save us from our sins, from the eternal punishment our sins deserve. Believe this, and it is yours, a free gift from God. Reject it, doubt it, don’t believe it, at your peril. For Jesus assures us that ***“Whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** (Mark 16:16 NIV) If you don’t believe the good news Jesus came to bring, you will be damned eternally!

People were not to look for an earthly kingdom and an earthly king. The message Jesus’ followers were to proclaim was the good news of the kingdom of God. We read in Luke’s Gospel ***“Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you.’”*** (Luke 17:20–21, NIV84)

Scripture tells us again and again how ***“Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.”*** (Luke 8:1–3, NIV84)

Even after Jesus ascended into heaven, followers of Jesus continued to preach the message of the kingdom. For example, we read of Philip in Samaria: When the people ***“believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. [A man named] Simon [who was previously an unbeliever] himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.”*** (Acts 8:12–13, NIV84)

In the book of Acts we read of how these apostles and the Apostle Paul proclaimed the message of the kingdom of God to many nations, starting on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead.

At the time of our text, the 12 apostles were sent out to preach. Jesus gives them some very specific directions. He tells them not to worry about earthly matters. They are not even to take money with them. ***“Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.”***

Think for a moment of how much preparation we make when we go anywhere. Today we are much more concerned about such earthly things than these men were to be at this time. The Israelites, the people to whom the apostles were sent were familiar with God’s Old Testament commands to give a tithe, one-tenth of their income for the cause of the Word of God. So they would be familiar with the importance of providing for those who were to tell them ‘Thus saith the Lord’, ‘This is what God says.’ For Old Testament believers, this was a command of God, and they were familiar with priests and Levites, descendants from the tribe of Levi for whom they were to provide material blessings.

We find in Jesus’ instructions to his apostles an extension of the attitude believers have and should have toward servants of God. This principle is continued in the New Testament times, in which we are still living, which Scripture plainly records with these words: ***“for the worker deserves his wages.”*** (Luke 10:7, NIV84)

At this time the apostles were told specifically ***“Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.”*** (Matthew 10:11–13, NIV84) In this way they were to rely on the gifts of fellow believers. And, as Paul’s letters to Timothy tell us,

they were not to be ***“a lover of money.”*** (1 Timothy 3:3, NIV84), or in the striking words of the King James Version, they are to be ***“not greedy of filthy lucre.”*** (1 Timothy 3:3, KJV)

So they, just like all Christians, were to be content, to be satisfied with what God provided for them. They were to rely on such provisions through fellow believers.

Paul explained contentment in just this way writing to Timothy: ***“But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*** (1 Timothy 6:8–10, NIV84)

Jesus also tells the apostles as he sends them out: ***“If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.”*** This figure of speech reminds us of how we wipe the dirt off our feet when we come into a home. The symbolical act of shaking off the dust from the feet or shoes signifies rejection of that which is unclean, rejection of those who reject the message of Jesus Christ. This, of course, would be done in a spirit of love and sadness which would surely fill our Lord’s heart at the thought of such rejection of the message of the Gospel of the kingdom. This is not done in a spirit of vengeance, for God plainly tells us ***“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*** (Romans 12:19, KJV)

The Lord will repay people for rejecting the Gospel. Listen to Jesus’ next words: ***“I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.”*** What a terrible statement of judgement upon those who reject the Word of God!

The vengeance upon such a city that rejects the Gospel will be taken over by the Lord Himself. Even Sodom and Gomorrah, which are given as examples of the punishing justice of God, would not be so utterly rejected at the final judgment as will be the inhabitants of a city or village who refuse to listen to the servants of Christ and in this way deliberately throw away the grace offered by Jesus, the Redeemer.

That is how important the Gospel-message is which Jesus commissioned the twelve to proclaim!

But just as these 12 men were to give away the gospel of the kingdom of God, so we are to do the same. He is also sending us out, each and every one of us. And just as Jesus told these men ***“Freely you have received, freely give”*** (Matthew 10:8, NIV84) we are not to sell the Gospel. The Gospel is free. But God does expect us to take care of those who give it away. This is a direct contrast to many today who publicly ask for and sometimes even require or demand that people pay for the Word of God, such as, for example, we find some wealthy televangelists doing.

This message is urgent!

The wickedness of the world right now reminds us of the urgency of living and telling the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that others may be saved by the words of God we have freely been given.

Paul wrote in Romans chapter 13 ***“Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”*** (Romans 13:11–14, NIV84)

Lord, let us walk with you and freely give away that message of the kingdom of God. May we have confidence that he will walk with us when we walk with him. Amen.