

## **Matthew 10B**

- Last week we were introduced to the future leaders of the New Testament church
  - Knowing He would be rejected by Israel and must leave the earth, Jesus called and commissioned twelve men to serve Him in leading the church
    - These men would be uniquely gifted with power and authority and insight
    - And by their leadership, a new entity – the Church – would be established
  - But as I observed last week, these guys are thoroughly unqualified for their positions
    - None of them have ever received formal theological training
    - None of them were even seeking for such a position
    - And certainly none of them have any clue what lies ahead
  - But despite their lack of qualifications – or perhaps because these men were unqualified – Jesus called them to serve Him
    - Because in their weakness, the Lord's strength would shine through
    - And in the end they would be equal to the challenge, because those who the Lord calls He also equips
    - These men received teaching and training in the years they spent with Jesus, and even after
    - And they received spiritual gifts that validated their ministry
- The apostles occupied a unique place in church history, nevertheless we too share their mission – at least to a degree
  - And like those twelve men, we're unqualified and inadequate in ourselves to do anything useful to serve the Living God
    - Yet we too are being equipped in both natural and supernatural ways to meet that impossible challenge

- We receive training in the word of God, written by those apostles
  - And though we don't possess apostolic powers, nevertheless we do possess powerful spiritual gifts
  - And by putting our spiritual gift to work in obedience to Christ's call, we can accomplish remarkable things for the Kingdom
- So tonight we return to studying how Jesus prepared apostles to assume their responsibilities in the church
    - And as we do, recognize we too are being prepared for our mission by what we learn
    - So keep that in mind...this isn't just a study of how they served Christ
    - This is a study of how you will serve Him in your own mission
- The next passage is particularly important in that regard
    - We're going to study through it in parts over the next several weeks

Matt. 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans;

Matt. 10:6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matt. 10:7 "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Matt. 10:8 "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

Matt. 10:9 "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts,

Matt. 10:10 or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

Matt. 10:11 "And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city.

Matt. 10:12 "As you enter the house, give it your greeting.

Matt. 10:13 "If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

Matt. 10:14 "Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.

Matt. 10:15 "Truly 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.

Matt. 10:16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

Matt. 10:17 “But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

Matt. 10:18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Matt. 10:19 “But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

Matt. 10:20 “For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

- This passage in Matthew (and a companion passage in Luke 10) contains perhaps the most practical teaching Jesus offers on the Kingdom program
  - So as we dive into this passage, let's be sure we all understand what I mean when I say "Kingdom"
    - The Kingdom is a concept that develops across Scripture in four stages
    - Ultimately, the term Kingdom refers to a future age, a future period of history on earth which will be very different from our present age
    - The Bible teaches that the Kingdom age will begin at the Lord's Second Coming and continues for 1,000 years
  - In that new age, the Bible says Jesus will rule the entire earth and everyone in it as King of this Kingdom
    - He rules in perfect wisdom and grace, and under His rule, the world experiences a glorious period...it's the "heaven" the Bible talks about
    - And if you really want to know the details of what that time will be like for us, come to the Tuesday night Ezekiel study
  - But even before that literal place of the Kingdom arrives, the Bible speaks of earlier phases of the Kingdom
    - The Kingdom begins as a promise to Abraham in the covenants the Lord gave to that man and his descendants

- Those covenants promise that the Messiah would bring Israel a Kingdom one day
- Hebrews 11 tells us Abraham looked forward to the day that promise would be fulfilled
- Then when the Messiah arrived for Israel, which is the story we're studying in Matthew, He declared the Kingdom was at hand
  - At that point, the Kingdom transitions from a promise to a proposal
  - Jesus proposed to set up the Kingdom for Israel's sake if they would only receive Him as their King
- But as we will see in Chapter 12, that generation of Israel rejected Jesus' proposal
  - Which prompted Jesus to move to the third stage of the Kingdom concept, which I call the Kingdom program
  - The program of the Kingdom is what Jesus is training the apostles to accomplish in this chapter
  - In short, it's the work of recruiting men and women to become Kingdom citizens who are ready to walking into that future age
  - Promise —> Proposal —> Program —> Place
- So for now, the Kingdom consists of the program of work Jesus is explaining in this chapter
  - And as you can tell, Jesus gives us a list of instructions
    - Some of them are familiar to us
    - But some may sound a little strange, at least in comparison to the way we think of evangelism today
    - To make sense of all this we need to break down the passage carefully
  - So let's start with an outline for Jesus' instructions
    - The Objective - vs.5-6
    - The Message - v.7
    - The Method - vs.8-12

- The Result - vs.13-15
  - The Mindset - vs.16
  - The Cost - vs.17-31
- This is our guide for how we serve as ambassadors of Christ, fulfilling the Kingdom program He gave to His church
    - We aren't apostles and we may not be called to live vocationally as missionaries or evangelists or pastors
    - Nevertheless, we are all disciples, and all disciples are called to participate in the Kingdom program in one way or another
- So let's begin with the first part of this outline, the Objective of the Kingdom Program
    - In vs. 5-6 Jesus tells disciples that their objection is to recruit fellow Jews into becoming citizens of the Kingdom
      - Now for a Jew in Jesus' day, the notion of inviting fellow Jews to be part of the Kingdom would have sounded ridiculous
      - Jews were taught that every Jew was assured entry into the Kingdom simply by being born of Abraham
      - For the same reason, they also believed that no Gentile could enter the Kingdom since they were not of Abraham's family
    - Of course, Israel was working under a false understanding created by their religious leaders
      - The Old Testament never teaches that being Jewish is automatic ticket into the Kingdom
      - Similarly, the Bible doesn't teach that being Gentile or Samaritan excluded you from the Kingdom
    - So before Jesus could teach these men *how* to reach the world with message of the Kingdom, he had to explain that God *wanted* to reach the world
      - Salvation wasn't just for the Jewish people
      - And in fact, it wasn't even guaranteed to Jews

- The Kingdom was an opportunity for glory, but no one had an automatic ticket
- Therefore Jesus gives the disciples the objective of seeking people, of being evangelists for Christ
- Furthermore, the Bible says that entry to the Kingdom comes as a matter of faith; by pledging faith in the Jewish King of that Kingdom
  - Therefore, the objective of the Kingdom program is seeking people who will place their faith in the King – Jesus
  - And by faith a person may trade-in their passport for this world, and in exchange they receive a passport for the Kingdom to come
  - They become citizens of Heaven serving a King Who will return soon to claim His Kingdom
- But notice how Jesus defines that objective for His apostles in v.5
  - Jesus tells them to focus exclusively on their Jewish brethren, not Gentiles or Samaritans, at least not for now
    - In the Bible, humanity is divided into three groups, generally speaking
    - First, there are God's chosen people; Israel
      - These are the literal, physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and they are a distinct group of people on the earth
    - Secondly, we have Gentiles, which are by definition, all non-Jewish peoples on earth
  - Finally, the Bible recognizes a third group called Samaritans
    - We could say Samaritans are Gentiles, since they are not technically Jews
    - But Samaritans descended from Jews, and they claimed to be legitimate Jews
    - Therefore, the true Jews saw Samaritans as a distinct category of people, separate from Jew and from Gentile

- Which is why at times you'll see the New Testament making a distinction between Gentiles and Samaritans, as it does here
- More importantly, why does Jesus limit the disciples' initial efforts at evangelism to reaching just the Jews?
  - Two reasons: First the Kingdom was promised to Israel, and therefore it's only through the Jewish people that the promise can be fulfilled
    - God's covenants, including the promise to bring a Kingdom, were given to the Jews
    - There is no covenant in the Bible between God and the Gentiles
    - There are covenants given to all mankind prior to the existence of Jews/Gentiles, but none given specifically to Gentiles
  - Therefore, when it came time to fulfill His promise to bring a Kingdom, the Lord went to His people first
    - The Jews would have opportunity to receive what they were promised
    - But the Lord also promised to Abraham that through Abraham's seed, the Lord would bring salvation to all nations

Gen. 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you,  
And the one who curses you I will curse.  
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

- Notice the Lord said it would be "in you" meaning in Abraham's family line that the Lord would make blessing available to all peoples on earth
  - In other words, God selected Abraham and worked through his family to bring a plan of redemption into being
  - Through what God did in that man's family line, all nations on earth have an opportunity to be included in God's plan of redemption
- And so by its nature, God's plan places Israel in a place of prominence
  - Everything we have in the promises of God exists because of Israel

- As Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, salvation is of the Jews but it comes to everyone through them
  - Paul puts it this way when talking about his desire to see Israel saved

Rom. 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Rom. 9:4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,

Rom. 9:5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- The covenants and promises that come in Christ "belong" to Israel
  - God made promises to Israel and then allowed Gentiles to enjoy those blessings by faith
  - But because God's work of redemption began with Israel, He has determined that every step of the process will also begin with Israel
  - As Paul puts it:

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

- Secondly, Jesus sends the apostles to Israel alone at this point because Israel has yet to make a decision concerning Jesus' proposal
  - Remember, I told you that Jesus' proposal will ultimately be rejected, which is why Jesus departed the earth for a time
    - Theoretically, had Israel embraced Jesus as their King and accepted His proposal, then Jesus would have established His Kingdom at His first coming
    - Our present age would have ended at that moment, and the Kingdom age would have begun
    - Of course, had that happened, you and I and every Gentile in the church would have been excluded from that Kingdom
  - But prior to their rejection, this possibility existed and the Lord was going to be true to His word in making the Kingdom available to Israel

- So for now at least, the offer still stands and therefore the apostles are instructed not to seek for Gentiles and Samaritans
- In fact, had these men disobeyed Jesus and tried to reach those groups, their message would have fallen on deaf ears
- Because the Spirit of God was not yet at work to bring Gentiles to faith in Jesus...the work was focused on Israel
- Only after the question of Israel's acceptance or rejection was decided would the Gospel move to those other audiences
  - Again, Paul says it this way:

**Rom. 11:11** I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- Israel's stumbling over Jesus wasn't a permanent fall for that nation
- But it does become the means by which God brings the offer of the Kingdom to the Gentiles
- But since we're still a few chapters away from the rejection moment, the objective for now will be the Jewish nation
- The next thing to notice is the way Jesus refers to those we seek: He calls them the lost sheep of Israel
  - Earlier, at the end of Chapter 9 we talked about shepherding as a picture of pastoral ministry
    - And we remember that Matthew said the people of Israel were troubled, like sheep without a shepherd
    - And now we hear Jesus saying He wants to reach the lost sheep of Israel
    - Which gives us another opportunity to extend our understanding of this metaphor
  - You probably know that sheep are a metaphor in the Bible for the children of God, those who by grace are saved through faith in Jesus
    - Both the Old Testament saints in Israel and the New Testament believer in the Church are called sheep

- And you probably also remember that unbelievers are commonly compared to goats
  - We see this contrast at work clearly in Matthew 25, when Jesus teaches about what transpires immediately after His Second Coming

Matt. 25:31 “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Matt. 25:32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

Matt. 25:33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

Matt. 25:34 “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Matt. 25:41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

- Notice that the sheep on Jesus' right are ushered into the Kingdom
- While the goats on Jesus' left are going where the devil and angels go
- I mention all this because when you look at the objective Jesus gave to His disciples, we find Him using the metaphor in a curious fashion
  - Jesus said their objective is to go to the lost "sheep" of Israel
    - Well, we know the word "lost" refers to the unsaved, those who have not believed or received the King yet
    - But when the Bible uses metaphoric language to describe the lost, it calls them goats, not sheep
    - Sheep are God's children, the believers who have joined the family of God by faith
  - So why didn't Jesus tell these men to go to the lost goats of Israel and invite them to become sheep?
    - Wouldn't that be a more consistent use of the Biblical metaphor?
    - And the answer is no...that's never how the Bible views the objective of the Kingdom program

- Our objective is not to turn goats into sheep, because we couldn't do that even if we tried
- No, our objective is to find the lost sheep, whether the lost sheep of Israel or the lost sheep among the Gentiles
  - Jesus is the One Who saves
  - The Bible says Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of our salvation
  - He authors our salvation through faith and He brings our salvation to perfection in the day we are resurrected
- None of us have the power to bring faith to anyone...our best arguments are inadequate
  - The Bible says that faith in Jesus is a process of being born again by the Spirit of God
    - Jesus uses the picture of birth, of being born physically, to help us understand what it means to be saved by faith
    - It's a process of being born spiritually
  - And when you think about who to credit with your physical birth, you typically credit your earthly parents
    - Physically speaking, the union of a man and a woman results in a new human being coming into existence
    - But if you think about that process for a moment, how much credit can our parents really take for bringing us to life?
    - My dad couldn't change a light bulb without help...I don't think he gets much credit for giving me life
  - My point is that even though we see the process in human terms, it doesn't take much thought to realize that the real work is being done behind the scenes
    - God forms the person and gives that person the breath of life
    - And He chooses to use human procreation as the means to bring us into existence
    - But crediting our parents with giving us life is like crediting Shakespeare's quill for writing MacBeth

- Which is why Jesus compares coming to faith with being born
  - Only Jesus calls it being born again because our spiritual birth takes place after our physical birth
    - We were born first by water (referring to the fluids of the body), and we are born again by Spirit, referring to how we come to faith
    - Just like physical birth, being born again involves both an earthly process and a spiritual process
    - As in the case of physical birth, being born again usually depends on human beings taking certain actions
    - Like in the case of these apostles, we go out into the world to fulfill an objective...we teach, witness, preach, baptize, etc.
  - But behind the scenes, the real work is going one...the Lord is moving hearts by His Spirit
    - He's preparing men and women to receive our message so that as we encounter them, salvation results
    - When we see that moment, we shouldn't tell ourselves that we just turned a goat into a sheep, because that's not what happened
    - What happened is we found a lost sheep
  - That's how salvation works, and the entire Kingdom program depends on understanding that God is doing the real work
    - You remember when Jesus told the disciples this:

**Mark 10:25** “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

**Mark 10:26** They were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?”

**Mark 10:27** Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.

- Jesus remarked that rich people have so little incentive to receive the Gospel

- Their security and pleasure in this world makes the offer of the Kingdom seem unattractive by comparison
- So Jesus used hyperbole of a camel and a needle to explain how rich people cannot find their own way into the Kingdom
  - The disciples say if that's true, then how can anyone be saved?
    - If simply loving riches is enough to keep someone out of Heaven, who could make it?
    - Because certainly we all love riches?
  - To which Jesus says, you're right...if getting to Heaven depended on us, we would remain hopeless
    - But praise the Lord it doesn't work that way
    - What's impossible for us is possible with God, and that's how every single soul gets to heaven, rich or poor
    - God does the impossible work of preparing our hearts to receive the foolish message
    - So that when that message comes to us on a certain day, we will receive it gladly having been born again by the Spirit
- The evangelist who delivers that message didn't turn a goat into a sheep, he or she simply found the lost sheep that God had prepared to be found
  - And understanding that this is our objective – going out to find lost sheep – changes everything in why and how we fulfill our calling
    - If you begin your work in evangelism thinking that you are responsible for turning goats into sheep, you're likely to be overwhelmed
    - Immediately you're wondering, do I have skill and knowledge to bring something to the point of faith?
    - Can I refute the arguments? Can I answer all the questions?
  - And then perhaps you start to worry, what if I mess this up? What if someone goes to Hell because I wasn't good enough to save them?
    - Who can handle that pressure? Who could measure up to that standard?

- Not me! Not you...not even the apostle Paul
- Listen to what Paul said about his objective as an evangelist

**1Cor. 2:1** And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

**1Cor. 2:2** For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

**1Cor. 2:3** I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,

**1Cor. 2:4** and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

**1Cor. 2:5** so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

- Paul said he intentionally didn't focus on sharing the Gospel with a bunch of persuasive words of wisdom
  - As if he were trying to convince goats to trade in their horns for a coat of sheep's wool
  - Instead, Paul says he came in weakness, fear and trembling...is that your impression of Paul? It should be
- And notice he said that he embraced this objective because when someone came to faith, he didn't want their faith to rest on his power of persuasion
  - If someone says they believe merely because you convinced them to your side of an argument, that's not saving faith
  - Not unless it's accompanied by the power of God through the work of His Spirit in the heart of that person
  - Unless a person is born again by the Spirit, they are not God's
  - Unless God makes the person one of His sheep, we can do nothing in our power to bring them into the Kingdom
- My favorite picture of this process is that of a child being asked by His father to hunt for eggs on Easter
  - Think of those eggs as the lost sheep that our Father in Heaven has asked us to seek for the sake of the Kingdom

- The child hunting those eggs isn't producing the eggs by their search effort...the eggs are already there waiting, the child is simply trying to find them
- So they search eagerly, fully expecting to find one around the next corner
- The child is eager and excited to look, because she knows her father has placed the eggs in the yard to be found
- There is no doubt the eggs are already there...the challenge is locating them
- Likewise, we know our Father delights to bring all people to know Him, and He is at work by His Spirit preparing hearts to respond to the Gospel
  - These hearts are everywhere around us, like eggs hidden in our garden
  - And so like a child, we should be exited to search, to seek for the lost sheep knowing if we look long enough we will find them
- And even better, you don't have to be especially talented in the search process...you just have to be persistent
  - As I say, serving God in the Kingdom program isn't a matter of ability...it's a matter of availability
  - And when you understand and embrace the biblical objective of evangelism – seeking lost sheep – you get a whole lot more excited about doing it
- If you tell me I have to turn goats into sheep, I'm immediately discouraged because I'm forever aware of my spiritual limitations
  - But tell me I only have to locate the sheep that God has already prepared to receive the Gospel, then suddenly I'm saying, "I got this!"
  - Not because I feel any more competent than I did before, but because I suddenly realize that this impossible task didn't depend on me
  - God was already doing the impossible for me...He's just inviting me to join in His work so I can be blessed to watch Him saving souls
- Will you join the Father in His work?

- Will you seek for the lost sheep of Israel?
- Will you make yourself available for the hunt?