

Sowing Seeds

By Pastor Greg
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Matthew 10:5-15

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Moses led the nation of Israel out to the desert, but what was he going to do with them? They had to be fed, and feeding 2 or 3 million people requires a lot of food. It is reported that they would have needed 1500 tons of food each day, and it would require two freight trains, each at least a mile long, to transport that amount of food. They would need 4000 tons of firewood each day to cook the food, requiring a few more freight trains, each a mile long. If they only had enough water to drink and wash a few dishes, it would take 11,000,000 gallons each day and a freight train with tank cars 1800 miles long. And each time they camped at the end of the day, a campground two-thirds the size of the state of Rhode Island was required. Do you think Moses figured all this out before he left Egypt? I think not! The bottom line is that where God leads He will provide.

I love the promise God makes in Isaiah 55. And the impression He gives is that He is the One behind all that most of us take for granted. Lest we forget that it is He who provided the seed to the sower and it is He who provided the word to accomplish His will here on earth.

So Jesus has called the twelve together and sent them out as workers for the harvest. After He called them together, though, He gives them some specific instructions. First He begins by giving them direction. *“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; ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* It’s interesting that Jesus tells them to go and talk with their fellow countrymen. It’s as if He is saying, “Let’s start small”. Think about it; it would have been far easier to talk about the Kingdom of God with those who knew what the Kingdom of God meant in the first place. It wasn’t until later on that Jesus says “Go out and tell everybody”. For us I believe the same is true. When we respond to His call it’s not like He’s going to pat us on the head and send us out without some direction. Okay, so Jesus has placed this passion in us to tell people about Him or to care for people

who are hurting. That's His direction you're hearing. But the thought of standing before a whole crowd of people or starting up some sort of caring ministry is scaring the pants off of you. Start small; begin in a simple way. If we will listen to God whispering in our ear, His direction is simply to talk with your friend about what's on your heart or to reach out to that coworker who is struggling. Responding to the direction God has given us is what's important, not the size of the crowd you reach.

Next, Jesus instructs them with what to do. ⁷ *"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'* ⁸ *"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.* Jesus says to show these people the truth about God's Kingdom by what you say and what you do. This is an essential part of the Christian message, and here's why. When the Bible talks about the Kingdom of Heaven, it doesn't mean some spiritual place of peace and contentment that we experience only after death. The Kingdom of Heaven is also something that invades the earth; something that a person can feel and touch. When a Christian really starts living what they have learned from Jesus, it should affect the level of their care and love toward others. It should cause them to rise to action when there is injustice or to lift a helping hand when people are suffering. Being a Christian is more than mere knowledge, and the Kingdom of Heaven is more than thinking spiritual things. God has sown the seeds of peace in your heart. And as Christians, you and I have an opportunity to make this world we live in a bit more tolerable; to be the instruments through which God brings peace on earth. That is why it is essential that we do while we say, and to say while we do.

Jesus also tells His Apostles what attitude He expects from them. ⁹ *"Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰ or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support."* The lesson here is kind of confusing at first. But the point Christ is trying to make is that this message about the Kingdom is not for sale. I mean, think about how absurd it would sound for these Apostles to charge for the work they were doing. "10 shekels for a blessing, 20 for a healing". That kind of talk just doesn't make sense. Even the Levites in the Old Testament were not paid to be Priests at the Temple. What they were given was to support them so that they could give all of

their time to the work of being a priest. For us today, the idea that this needs to be said seems kinda strange; who could imagine going to a friend and asking for prayer just to have that friend charge 10 cents a minute. But sadly, that sort of thing does happen. There are people who have made the message of the gospel a money making enterprise. And somehow I think we Christians in North America have missed this specific instruction from Jesus. I believe we need to remember that God is the One who has given the word; what we have to say about His Kingdom does not belong to us.

And finally Jesus gives them some encouragement. ¹¹ *“And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city.* ¹² *“As you enter the house, give it your greeting.* ¹³ *“If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.* 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.* 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.”* ¹ (Matthew 10:5-15) As the Apostles traveled they were bound to meet people who either had hearts willing to listen or hearts that were hard. The instruction from Jesus was to not waste their time on people who refused to hear and see. This is probably one of the most difficult lessons for me to follow. I seem to keep going back to those who refuse to even consider that the message of Jesus might just be true. But if I understand what Jesus is trying to say, we’re supposed to throw the life preserver to those who are crying out for help, not those who would ignore it even if it hit them on the head. When we remember that this Word belongs to God and we are simply stewards of this great treasure, we’ll stop spending too much time and effort trying to reach those who don’t want to be saved in the first place and instead look for more opportunities to save those who are willing.

The bottom line to all this is that when Christ calls you to do something for the Kingdom, He will also equip you for the task. If we will listen He will give us direction, instruction, expectation, and encouragement for whatever ministry we may do. It is His work we are doing; He will not let us fail.

¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Mt 10:5-15). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.