

HAPPY FATHERS' DAY!

Well last week we said that we as Christians are both a called people and a sent people; looking at the calling of Matthew the tax-collector, we said that we as Christians are called by God out of the foreign land of life without Jesus, to our true home of life with Him. God's desire for us isn't that we stay in the land without Him and visit the land with Him only in times of crisis. No! As a called people, we've answered Jesus' invitation to follow Him. The Christian life is the process of learning to trust Him in every aspect of our lives – at home, at work, in our relationships with family, friends and enemies. Life with Jesus is **living for** what we were **created for** in every aspect of our lives. And the more I've thought about it this week, Life with Jesus is really about living for WHO we were created for

Now at the same time that we are a called people, we are a sent people. In fact, we are called, to be sent.

Page 1035 in the Pew Bible, Chapter 10.

Now the Gospel this morning includes the end of chapter 9 where Jesus says that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few, so pray that the Lord of the harvest would *send out* laborers into the harvest. Then Matthew starts off chapter 10 by giving us a list of the 12 that he's *called*, and then in verse 5 he *sends them out*. We could spend a couple of hours picking through each word and phrase, and I encourage you to do so in your personal study. But for the purposes of this sermon, we're going to talk through a couple of the pieces from chapter 10, and then we're going to finish it off by talking about the harvest.

In verse 1 of Chapter 10, as Jesus *calls* the 12 to himself, they're called 'disciples'. As disciples, they're sitting under the teaching and authority of Jesus. But in the very next verse, they're called 'apostles.' The word 'apostle' *means* 'one who is sent for a purpose.' Jesus' disciples are being *sent out* for the purpose of participating in the Glory of God as His kingdom expands. A great and privileged part of **being called** to be a part of Christ's body is **being sent** to participate in Christ's work. Now they don't cease to be disciples when they're sent out as apostles – there's no graduation from discipleship, and that's an important point, because we're not expected to know everything before we participate in His work. Nor should we stop learning once we've been sent. Learning and growing in Christ is a life-long journey. But along the way, and often as a part of our

learning and growing, we are sent out, to work alongside Jesus in the world.

So as Jesus sends them out, He gives them some instructions.

Verse 7. Jesus tells them, “proclaim as you go, saying, *‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’ – Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons* – Jesus tells them to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

That is the exact same message that Jesus began his ministry with in Chapter 4 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” So the message of the apostles is to be the message of Christ, namely that the kingdom of heaven isn’t up in the clouds; it’s here. It’s at hand... because Jesus has come. It’s the beginning of the New Creation, the beginning of God righting all that’s gone wrong in His

Creation. And so these strange and supernatural-sounding things that Jesus is telling the apostles to do, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, casting out demons, it's all related to the kingdom of heaven being at hand; it's what God wants for his children – healing, life, wholeness & spiritual cleanliness, & spiritual light instead of spiritual darkness. It *sounds* supernatural, but it's really the most natural thing in the world. In fact I feel sure that when we get to heaven it'll feel far more natural than anything we've ever experienced here, because it's what we were created for. But in the meantime, who among us doesn't have some area of their lives that needs healing or new life or deliverance? And do we believe that Jesus can and will bring the healing and reconciliation that He promises to those places in our lives? Absolutely! The lesson for us then is that as a people both called and sent,

we live in the world *with the conviction* that ‘the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ because Jesus has come and is coming back. If the Holy Spirit dwells in your heart then you have the privilege of bringing Christ where He’s needed around you. Is your neighbor going through a hard time? Maybe a co-worker feels alone. Maybe it’s a Christian friend, or a non-Christian friend. The kingdom of heaven is at hand because Christ is present and working through us.

Next Jesus instructs them, “*You received without paying; give without pay*” – Now I’ll say that this has caused me pause this week because I feed my family with the wages I make as a minister of the Gospel. Jesus does say that the laborer deserves his food, or his wage. But as I’ve wrestled with this this week, I’ve come to the conclusion that because we’re all called to be sent, whether we get paid for

it or not, this can't be just about finances. This is all about where we're looking and who we're trusting for our provision and our reward. If we're living in the conviction that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, do we trust that God will provide for the things he's called us to? This is something that I have to ask myself constantly – it's a matter of focus. Am I ministering for what *I* get out of the deal, whether it be a paycheck or pats on the back or whatever, or am I doing it for what *God* gets out of it? For *His* kingdom and *His* glory? He'll pay - in ways far beyond finances - but because His focus was on me when I received the Gospel, I want my focus to be only on Him when I proclaim the gospel.

The last thing I want us to take a look at is verse 14. Jesus says “*If anyone will not receive you or listen to your words,*

shake off the dust from your feet when you leave” It is **our** job to obey God as he sends us out; and of course I don’t mean it’s a job of drudgery. The same God who hung the stars in the sky is employing us to do His work of reconciliation in the world – it’s a privilege, an honor and a joy to participate in His work for His glory. But our part is to obey and serve as he sends us. God’s part is to move hearts. Not every door is open. If the door doesn’t seem open, it’s OK to move on for a while. Again, this is about trusting God. Certainly we pray for God to open the doors, but He’ll move when He’s ready, and it will be just the right time. This doesn’t mean we don’t love and pray for the people we’re moving on from, and it doesn’t mean we won’t be back, but it’s silly to keep banging your head against a locked door. I know, I’ve tried. It also doesn’t mean that a seed hasn’t been planted that will grow years

later. But it's not hard for it to become about us not failing, rather than trusting God to pick the right time to succeed.

So as a people called out of the world to be sent back into the world, we live in the conviction that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, we trust God for the reward, and we trust God to move the hearts of those around us.

Well it's tomato picking time around the islands, (y'all know more about it than I do, but I wanted to learn), so I had a talk with Adair McKoy this week about the harvest, and about the laborers who are sent into the harvest. He said that there are some who are sent into the fields to harvest the crop, and there are some that are sent to the packing shed to receive and care for the crop that's been harvested. Both jobs are really important. The ones in the

field are great at what they do – under the direction of the harvest manager they know just how to tell when a tomato is beginning to mature on the inside enough to be brought in – if it's not ready, they'll leave it and come back later.

But the crew back at the packing shed is a different crew.

Their job is to make sure the crop is appropriately cleaned and taken care of. One of the most important jobs is to make sure they don't dry up after they're brought in.

And when the tomatoes have matured enough at the shed, they're sent out.

Now the analogy breaks down there, because we don't eat the people we bring in, or send tomatoes back to the fields, but it works pretty good, doesn't it? Some of us are sent primarily into the fields, and some of us are sent primarily to the church to minister to those who are brought in. But

there's a job in the Kingdom for all of us and it's really up to the Lord of the harvest to decide what job He gives us.

Each one of us is called to be sent, called out of life without Christ and into a life of discipleship and apostleship, sent out to the fields to proclaim in word and deed that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, to participate in His glory.

Amen or Pray.