

o8. Jesus instructs his disciples concerning their mission

Matthew 9:36 - 11:1



We have heard Jesus' words, spoken with 'authority' (7:29).

We have watched Jesus' 'deeds of power' (7:22).

Matthew is now ready to present Jesus' intention to share this authority and power with his disciples who are to carry on his mission.

Matthew 11 takes up the narrative thread of Matthew 8-9

Introduction: Jesus, Israel's Shepherd Matthew 9:36 (Mark 6:34)

When he saw the crowds,
he had compassion [ἐσπλαγχνίσθη] for them, (see Matthew 8-9)
because they were harassed and helpless,
like sheep without a shepherd. (see Numbers 27:17)

Matthew 9:37-38 (Luke 10:2)

Then he said to his disciples,
'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few;
therefore ask the Lord of the harvest
to send out labourers into his harvest.'

Matthew 10:1 (Mark 6:7)

Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority over the unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every sickness and every weakness.

Matthew 10:2-5 (Mark 3:16-19)

These are the names of the twelve apostles:

first Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew,
James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John, (see Matthew 4:18-22)
Philip and Bartholomew,
Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector,
James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus,
Simon the Cananaean and Judas of Iscariot who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:

Jesus' Mission Discourse Matthew 10:5 - 11:1

1. The disciples' mission of peace to Israel
and God's judgment of those who reject them : Matthew 10:5-15

Matthew 10:5-6

“Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew wants to highlight the privileged opportunity that Israel was offered.

‘Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy’ (Romans 15:8-9).

Matthew 10:7-8

As you go, proclaim the good news,

“The kingdom of heaven has come near” [see Matthew 3:2; 4:17]

Isaiah 52:7

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’

Cure the sick [sharing in Jesus’ ministry Matthew 4:23; 8:16; 9:35]

raise the dead [see 9:25 - daughter of the leader of the synagogue]

cleanses the lepers [see 8:3]

cast out demons. [see 4:24; 8:16; 8:32; 9:33]

Matthew 10:8-10

You received without payment; give without payment.

Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts,
no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff;
for labourers deserve their food.

Mark 6:8-9

He ordered them to take nothing for their journey
except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts;
but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.

Matthew 10:11-14 (Mark 6:10-11)

Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it.

If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.

Matthew 10:15 (Luke 10:12)

Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

The persecution of the Disciples : Matthew 10:16-23

Matthew 10:16 (Luke 10:3)

See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves;
so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

‘innocent as doves’.

‘pure in heart’(5:8). not resisting evil with evil (5:29).

loving our enemies (5:44) perfect as our Father is perfect (5:48).

keeping our heart fixed on God (6:21) .

‘I want you to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil’ (Romans 16:19). ‘Be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation’ (Philippians 2:15).

Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

‘wise as serpents’

We have to learn to discern. We have to face and come to understand the realities of the human condition as they are manifested in ourselves and in those around us. Jesus recognised hypocrisy (6:2,5,16; 7:5); so must his disciples. We must know when we are being led to sin, and know what to do about it (5:29-30). We are not to pass judgment on people (7:1-5), but we must be discerning and not ‘give what is holy to dogs’, nor ‘throw pearls before swine’ (7:6). We must be able to recognise false prophets (7:15-20).

The disciples will be persecuted but the Father will look after them.

Matthew 10:17-22 (see Mark 13:9-13)

Beware of people! for they will deliver you up to councils, and in their synagogues they will scourge you, and before governors and kings you will be led for my sake as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

But when they hand you over do not worry how or what you shall speak, for it will be given you at that hour what you shall say.

For you are not the ones who are speaking. It is the Spirit *of your Father* (see 28:19; 3:11) speaking through you.

Brother will deliver brother to death, and the father his child; and children will rise up against their parents and kill them.

And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But whoever endures to the end will be saved.

- they will experience the inspiration of the Father's Spirit (10:20)
- the person who 'endures to the end will be saved' (10:22)

'When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes' (Matthew 10:23)..

- Jesus' Resurrection
- Destruction of Jerusalem (70AD)
- God's ultimate judgment of history thought of as imminent

Matthew 10:24-25

(Luke 6:40)

(see John 13:16; 15:20)

No disciple is more than the master

and no servant more than his lord.

It is enough for a disciple to be as his teacher

and a servant as his lord.

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul,

how much more the members of his household? (see 12:46-50)

Context is that of suffering/persecution

Matthew 10:26 (Mark 4:22)

So, do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be known.

Matthew 10:27-31 (Luke 12:3-7)

What I say to you in the dark say in the light.

And what you hear in the ear proclaim on the housetops.
And do not be afraid of those who can kill the body
but cannot kill the soul. Fear rather the one
who is able to destroy both the body and soul in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin?

And one of them will not fall to the earth without your **Father**.
But with you even the hairs of your head are counted.
Therefore, do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:32-33 (Luke 12:8-9)

For everyone who will confess me before people,

I will also confess before my Father in heaven.

But everyone who denies me before people,

I will also deny before my Father in heaven. (compare Mark 8:38)

This is the judgment of the eschatological judge
who must declare things as they are

‘If we are faithless, he remains faithful’ (2 Timothy 2:13).

Matthew 10:34-36 (Luke 12:51-53)

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth;
I have come to bring not peace but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

One's foes will be members of one's own household.

‘Put no trust in a friend, have no confidence in a loved one;
guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace;
for the son treats the father with contempt,
the daughter rises up against her mother,
the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
your enemies are members of your own household’ (Micah 7:5-6).

Matthew 10:37-38

Whoever loves father or mother more than me
is not worthy of me;
and whoever loves son or daughter more than me
is not worthy of me;
and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me
is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:39 (Mark 8:35)

If you find your life [ψυχὴν] you will lose it.
If you lose your life because of me you will find it.

(see also Matthew 16:25; Luke 9:24 and 17:33; John 12:25)

Matthew 10:40-41 (compare Mark 9:37)

Whoever welcomes you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

Whoever welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward;

and whoever receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous.'

Prophets have a special mission. It seems that in Matthew's community there was a group called 'the righteous' who also had a special mission. Jesus wants his disciples to support them.

We are reminded of Paul's exhortation: 'Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching' (1 Timothy 5:17).

Matthew 10:42 (Mark 9:41)

Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'

The same applies to the 'little ones' in the community. Each disciple has a special mission, a unique gift of loving. Jesus is appealing to his disciples to care for each other.

"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me ... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:34-36, 40).

Matthew 11:1

When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples,
he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message
in their cities. (Mission of disciples is post-Resurrection)