

Jesus calls the Twelve...

Matthew 10

Jesus did not only call the twelve (verses 1 to 4), he also gave them power to do what he called them to do. The same principle holds true today: those whom God calls, God equips. The main feature of this list of names is its diversity. Jesus chose his disciples from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. About all they had in common was the fact that none of them was from a privileged or high-status background (see 1 Corinthians 1 v 26 to 29).

These twelve (except Judas, of course) have an important place in God's plan of redemption, including a special role in the future judgement (Matthew 19 v 28), and in the founding of the church (Ephesians 2 v 20). The Bible also promises that their work will be remembered throughout eternity (Revelation 21 v 14)... So, why did Jesus call Judas (v 4)?

Jesus sends out the twelve 'apostles' (Matthew 10 v 5 to 15)

Jesus tells the apostles (a) where they are to go (v 5, 6); (b) what they are to do (v 7, 8); and (b) how they are to provide for themselves (v 9 to 15)...

- If God's purpose was to save the world, why did Jesus command the twelve not to go to the Gentiles (non-Jews), or to the Samaritans (half-Jews), but “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (v 6)?
- Some of Jesus' instructions here are 'mission-specific' and would not apply to every situation. However what principles of Christian service are implied here, which are always applicable?

Persecution will come (Matthew 10 v 16 to 25)

- Jesus warns the twelve that persecution will come – what does he say is the reason for this (v 22)? What should the disciples' attitude be? What resources are promised?
- “I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (v 16) – in this succinct but rich parable, Jesus refers to four different creatures: what are the distinguishing characteristics of each? Who are the disciples to “beware of”?

“You will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes” v 23 – this may refer to Jesus' resurrection appearances, or to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judea by the Romans in 70 AD; or it may mean that the mission to the Jews will continue until Christ's Second Coming (refer “day of judgment” in v 15).

Have no fear (Matthew 10 v 26 to 33)

- Why are the disciples to “have no fear” of their persecutors? Whom should they fear, and why (v 28)? Instead of being afraid, what should the Jesus' disciples be doing, even in the midst of persecution? What does this passage tell us about God?

Not peace but a sword (Matthew 10 v 34 to 39)

- If Jesus is the promised “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9 v 6), what do you make of verse 34? If the Ten Commandments include the command to “honour your father and your mother” (Exodus 20 v 12), what do you make of verse 35? What is especially chilling about verse 36?
- What does it mean for a follower of Jesus to “take his cross” and “lose his life” (v 38)?

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Rewards (Matthew 10 v 40 to 42)

- So, according to these verses, who gets rewards? How easy is it to give a “cup of cold water” to an ordinary, humble Christian worker? What do you think that means in practical terms today?

Prayer – Lord Jesus, help us to follow you, to leave self behind and to put you first in everything. Help us to 'receive' and welcome righteous people and “little ones”, because they are your disciples and servants – help us to serve them in humble, practical ways, because together we are serving you, the Lord. Amen.