

Thursday, March 2, 2023  
Season of Lent  
Day 8

### **Matthew 10:1–15**

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

<sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup> Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

<sup>9</sup> “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— <sup>10</sup> no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. <sup>11</sup> Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. <sup>12</sup> As you enter the home, give it your greeting. <sup>13</sup> If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup> If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.”

### **Reflection**

When God formed Israel as a nation, He divides them into 12 tribes. Later in Israel’s history, as they struggled with fidelity to God, the tribes were divided into two kingdoms: 10 and 2. So, it is significant that Jesus calls to himself 12 apostles (sent ones) from among the group of his disciples. Israel is being restored in the present moment through Jesus. And, now, Israel is being restored through them, which is why they are—for the present—to only announce the good news to Israel.

Jesus’s kingdom movement is not a sectarian one; it is not exclusive or reclusive. Jesus’s disciples have experienced and enjoyed the presence of the kingdom, so now they are to extend that same kingdom life to others. The church’s apostolic mission is essentially to invite others to enter into the kingdom of God through the Lordship of Christ.

But, this is also a prophetic ministry. The prophets of old confronted Israel when it went astray from God will. They were to announce Israel’s error, called for repentance (renewal), redirected Israel into the proper obedience to God. So, the good news about the kingdom is also (potentially) bad news, “repent and believe that the kingdom has come near.” As prophets Israel was to extend hospitality to them, so they were to take no extra provisions but to live by the gospel.

Finally, for those who rejected the good news of the kingdom, they were to give a prophetic warning by enacting the prophetic judgment of God by leaving the very dust of the town behind. The family of Lot was rescued in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, but none will survive God’s judgment if they will not receive the good news of the kingdom.

It is here that we must be VERY cautious. We cannot conclude that people have not received our apostolic witness to Jesus because they are evil people who must be judged. That’s not our role. It maybe that our message was rejected because we didn’t actually invite into the kingdom. Our message may be rejected because we didn’t actually embody the kingdom: we didn’t heal, raise the dead, cure leprosy, or drive out demons. Our message may have been rejected because we were not really extending God’s *shalom* (peace). Ours is to witness, not judge. When someone says “no” to the gospel, that maybe the end of our work with them. After all if we are not open to a real “no” then we are not actually open to a true “yes.” We only want to exert power over someone—that is not the gospel of peace. While we have been called to move on, placing those into God’s hands, there may be another envoy on its way. We can trust God. He wants them to enjoy the kingdom more than we ever could.

### **Prayer**

Lord, grant us the courage to be sent out with your authority to invite your people into your kingdom. Help us to share not just your word, but also your power. Reveal your kingdom of peace in us so that we can extend it to our neighbours. Help us to be more committed to the process of witness than the outcome of converts. Amen.