



## **Matthew 10:1–4**

10 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 Thadd-

aeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

## **Reflection**

Jesus is filled with compassion at the crowds. He's exhausted, they keep pressing in on him, it's endless, he's only one man even if he is the Son of God; there are only so many people he can physically preach to and physically heal. And opposition to him is heating up. The Pharisees are saying he's in league with Satan; soon they'll be openly plotting to kill him. His time is running out. So today he turns to his disciples for help; and world mission is born. Jesus was the first missionary; today he is sending out the Twelve on mission, which is why Matthew Chapter 10 has become known as the 'missionary

discourse.’ In it Jesus speaks to his disciples, preparing them for mission. What does mission look like? Jesus begins to teach us, verse 1,

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

This passage teaches us about mission in the two ways it relates back to what has come before. The first way is through the word ‘authority.’ Jesus gave his disciples ‘authority.’ We’ve heard this word before used in reference to both Jesus’ preaching and his healings. The crowds over the past five chapters have been amazed at the authority in Jesus’ words and the way he demonstrated his authority by healing

people.

Jesus now gives his authority to his disciples, authority in word and deed, authority to preach and specifically in verse 10 authority,

‘to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.’

Which is the second way that this verse relates back to what has come before. These exact words form the second half of Matt 10:35 which you’ll remember is the verse that is almost identical to Matt 4:23, the two summary verses, the introduction and conclusion, the almost identical bookends that open and close Matthew chapters 5 – 9 that were all about the word ministry and healing ministry of Jesus.

These two linkages combine to make one thing very clear; Jesus is commissioning his disciples to carry on his ministry. Their mission is to be modelled off his. What does mission look like? What does the work of the kingdom of God look like? Exactly what Jesus has modelled in Matthew Chapters five to nine; ministry of word and deed.

Matthew then names the Twelve for us in the remainder of our passage. There are three brief things I'd like us to note.

Firstly, they are twelve. It's more than symbolism, Jesus is restoring the twelve tribes of Israel. God's people are scattered, and oppressed, only a remnant has survived. That remnant Jesus is calling back to him-

self, God's people are being made whole again, only expanded to include Gentiles as well.

Secondly, did you notice that Matthew lists the disciples in pairs? He's the only gospel writer to do this. Why do you think? Because Jesus divided them and sent them out in pairs. There's a timeless missionary principle here. By not staying together as a large group, but splitting up, they maximize their ability to reach large numbers of people, yet as Ecclesiastes 4 teaches us, two are better than one, they have each other's back.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, when we piece together what we know of the disciples from the wider New Testament these twelve men represent a very diverse

group. Here we have business men, public servants, revolutionaries, traitors, some destined to be famous, others destined to be obscure, glass half full types, and pessimists, some will form Jesus' inner circle, others will remain on the outer, faithful in their ministry but barely mentioned at all in the bible. A remarkably diverse group of men, not much in common at all, whose lives have been changed radically by Jesus. Take Simon the Zealot and Matthew for example. Simon was a revolutionary, a patriot, willing to take up arms against the Romans and die for his country; standing alongside Matthew, the traitor, who very willingly collected taxes for the Romans, paying for the armies that oppressed his countrymen. If these two men had passed each other on the street before meeting Jesus they would have come to blows or

worse; now they are brothers in Christ, united in his mission, pillars on which he will build his church.

## **Think**

All this gives us plenty to think about so please take some time to think through the implications of this passage for yourselves now. The first missionary, Jesus, has modelled for us what it is to be a herald for the kingdom of God. Kingdom work is a ministry of word and deed. He's modelled it to his disciples and now he's sending them out. It's the same for every follower of Jesus. Their commission is ours. Jesus leaves all his followers at the end of Matthew's gospel with its most famous words, The Great Commission, the last two verses of Matthew's, Matthew 28:19–20:



19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Their commission is our commission. Have you thought much about this verse? If this is Jesus’ primary directive to all Christians, how does your life currently measure up against this verse? Is your church dividing and sending, do you have each other’s backs on the mission field? We all know what mission looks like in terms of words, but what about deeds? Jesus so often combines the two, should we?

You might also like to consider the remarkable diversity of the disciples. None of them were all that impressive when they were called, lots of rough edges, all sorts of differing personality types and backgrounds – Jesus called them and they conquered the world. Through their ministry and by the power of the Holy Spirit Christianity spread like wildfire. If Jesus used disciples such as these, he can use you. If Jesus used disciples such as these, he can use the odd mix of people in your church to go on and do great things for his kingdom, as long as you trust him and obey him and give yourselves over to the work of his Spirit.

**Pray**

Pray again today for mission. Pray that you and I and every Christian would realise that we are all missionaries and that we would be who we are: gospel workers, kingdom workers, sharing the gospel the gospel of Jesus Christ, in word and deed, just as he showed us, and just as he has called us all to do.