

# The Gospel of Matthew

## Lesson 12: The Mission of the Twelve -- Matthew 10:1-42

Picture twelve ordinary men standing in a circle around Jesus on a dusty Galilean morning. Fishermen who still smell of the lake. A tax collector who used to sit at a booth taking money from his neighbors. A zealot who once dreamed of overthrowing Rome with a sword. They are not scholars. They are not priests. They are not the sort of men you would choose to launch a movement that will outlast every empire on earth. And yet Jesus turns to these twelve, calls them by name, and hands them His own authority to go.

Up to this point in Matthew, Jesus has been the one teaching, the one healing, the one casting out demons. Now, suddenly, the work multiplies. He “gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction” (10:1). The Teacher is sending students. The Healer is sending healers. The kingdom that has been breaking in through one Man is about to break in through twelve, and the world will never be the same.

But read on, and the tone shifts. This is no triumphant pep talk. Jesus tells them they are being sent out “as sheep in the midst of wolves” (10:16). He warns of floggings, of trials before governors, of families turned against one another, of being hated “by all for my name’s sake” (10:22). He is brutally honest about the cost. Following Him, and especially representing Him, will not make life easier. It will often make it harder. He would rather tell them the truth now than let them be ambushed by it later.

And woven all through the warning is a steady refrain of comfort: do not fear. Three times in a few verses He says it. The God who knows when a sparrow falls, who has numbered the very hairs of your head, has not forgotten you. The disciple who loses his life for Jesus will find it. The cup of cold water given in His name will not go unrewarded. This chapter is for every Christian who has ever felt small, afraid, or unqualified, and who needs to hear that the King who sends us also goes with us.

**Group Discussion:** Jesus took twelve ordinary, flawed men and entrusted them with the launch of His kingdom on earth. Why do you think He chose to work through people like that, rather than through the powerful and the impressive, and what does that tell us about how God still works today?

**Personal Reflection:** Jesus says plainly that following Him may cost us comfort, reputation, and even relationships. Where in your own life have you been quietly editing your faith to avoid that cost, and what would it look like to confess Christ openly there instead?

*Read Matthew 10:1-42*

## Study Questions

1. Jesus calls the Twelve to Himself and gives them His own authority to heal, to cast out demons, and to preach that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (10:1, 7). What does this tell us about the unique role of the apostles in establishing the kingdom, and how does that role relate to the authority of Scripture we live under today?
2. Jesus sends the disciples out with almost nothing, trusting that “the laborer deserves his food” (10:10). Where in your life are you holding tightly to security and provision, and what would it look like to step out in obedience while trusting God to supply what you need?
3. Jesus tells the Twelve they are being sent “as sheep in the midst of wolves” and must be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (10:16). What does this teach us about realistic expectations for those who carry the gospel, and how do wisdom and innocence work together rather than against each other?
4. Jesus warns that the gospel will divide even families, setting “a man against his father” (10:35). Have you ever felt the sting of being misunderstood or opposed by people close to you because of your faith, and how did you respond?
5. Three times in this chapter Jesus says, “do not fear” or “have no fear,” grounding it in the Father’s intimate care, even numbering the hairs of our head (10:26, 28, 31). What does Jesus teach here about the right kind of fear and the wrong kind of fear, and how does the Father’s care free us from the wrong kind?
6. Jesus says, “whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me” (10:37). Be honest: what or whom are you most tempted to love more than Jesus, and what would reordering that love actually require of you this week?

7. Jesus declares, “whoever acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father” (10:32–33). Why does Jesus tie our confession of Him so tightly to His confession of us, and what does this mean for the Christian life?
8. Jesus promises that even “a cup of cold water” given to a disciple will not lose its reward (10:42). What is one small, hidden, unglamorous act of service God may be calling you toward, and why are we so prone to overlook the value of small faithfulness?
9. Jesus says, “whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (10:39), and calls us to “take his cross and follow me” (10:38). What does it actually mean to take up the cross and lose your life for Christ, and how is this paradox at the very heart of true discipleship rather than an extreme reserved for a few?
10. Look back over the whole chapter, from the sending of the Twelve to the promise of reward. Name one specific way Jesus is calling you, not to admire discipleship from a distance, but to take up your cross and follow Him this week.

### **Now or Later**

**Reflect on these passages:** Mark 16:15–16, the great commission to preach the gospel to all creation; Acts 1:8, the apostles empowered as witnesses to the ends of the earth; 2 Timothy 3:16–17, the completed Scriptures equipping us for every good work; Luke 9:23–24, taking up the cross daily and losing one’s life to find it; Romans 10:13–15, the necessity of sending preachers so that people may hear and call on the Lord.