

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 17 March 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Message of the Kingdom

Matthew 10:5-15

In the year 1518, in Heidelberg, Germany, there was a young theologian named **Johann Brenz**, who, through his study of the Scriptures, discovered that a man is justified by God's grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Brenz placed his personal faith in Christ; and it wasn't long before his newfound faith became obvious in his teachings.¹ He was accused of heresy; and the charges continued to mount until, in 1522, he was threatened to be called on trial for heresy (which would, of course, have resulted in his death). However, it was at this very time that he was moved to the pastorate of a church in Hall, where there was much greater reception to the Gospel; and, somehow, the trial simply didn't happen. As the years went on, Brenz did all in his power to proclaim the Gospel, with relatively little danger to his life; but then, on 16 December 1546, his security abruptly ended when the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, personally entered into the city of Hall with his cavalry, to assassinate Brenz.² Brenz had just enough time to escape, and hide in an empty hayloft; but now, he had another big problem. The problem was that he had only one loaf of bread on his person; and the bread soon ran out. However, as the weeks dragged on in that lonely hayloft, God provided for Brenz. For fourteen days, a chicken came up into the hayloft every day, and laid an egg for him! On the fifteenth day, the chicken stopped coming; and Brenz wasn't sure what to do next. But then, he heard a cry from the streets that the cavalry had left the city.³ Without food or water for two weeks, Brenz would have died; but God gave him just what he needed.

A similar thing happened to a Scottish monk named **John Craig**. While at a monastery in Bologna, Italy, he began to study the Scriptures, and discovered that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone. He placed his faith in Christ; and he began to preach this message to others. He was soon arrested, and tried for heresy; and he was set to be burned at the stake on 19 August 1559.⁴ However, he managed to escape on the night before the execution; and he began to make his way back toward Scotland. However, as he was fleeing through the backcountry of Italy, he ran out of food and money. While he was trying to figure out how to survive, a dog approached him, with a purse in its mouth. Craig tried to shoo the dog away; but it kept coming back to him, and placing the purse before him. He finally opened the purse, and found that there was gold in it—just enough to provide his needs, until he had made it back to Scotland!⁵

For two thousand years, God has been providing His servants with just what they need to accomplish His commission. Most of the time, God provides for His servants through favourable circumstances and timely intervention; and sometimes, He provides through outright miracles. Yet, regardless of what means He chooses, God *always* provides for those who are willing to trust and obey Him. This morning, we will be learning about the lessons of faith that Jesus taught His Apostles as they spread the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the cities of Israel. The title of this message is ***The Message of the Kingdom***.

Read Matthew 10:5-15.

I. The Apostles' mission field (vv. 5-6)

In last week's message, we saw that Jesus had called twelve of His disciples to be His Apostles, and to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the cities of Israel. Jesus was now giving specific instructions as to what they were to do during their preaching tour; and the first instruction was **to preach to the Jews only**. They were not to go down any **“way,”** or **“road,”** that led to a Gentile city; and they were not to enter into any Samaritan city, either. The Samaritans were *half Jewish*; but they were not to go to them. Their mission field, at this point, was *the people of Israel*. Let's read **verse 5 and 6** again. **(Read verses 5 and 6.)**

Why did Jesus command the disciples to go only to the Jews? Did He not care for the Gentiles? Of course He cared for them! We know this to be so, because back in **Matthew 8**, Jesus had healed the servant of a Roman centurion, and had praised the centurion for his strong faith in Him. In fact, He said that He had **“not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!”** Throughout His ministry, Jesus frequently invited Gentiles to believe on Him, and be saved. In fact, very early in His ministry, Jesus had done the very thing that He was now commanding His Apostles *not* to do during their preaching tour: He had gone into a city of Samaria, and had offered Himself to them as Messiah! Let's read about that.

Read John 4:21-39.

Jesus was very weary and hungry that afternoon when He was at Jacob's well; yet, there was something that was weighing so heavily on his mind, that he couldn't eat until He had shared this burden with the disciples. He gave them the illustration of fields that are ready for harvest; and he compared gathering bundles of grain to gathering the souls of men. Furthermore, He informed the disciples that He had given *them* the responsibility of bringing in this harvest of souls. Yet, *who* were the souls of whom Jesus was speaking? They were the people right before their very eyes—the **Samaritan** people of Sychar! The disciples had had as little to do with the Samaritans as possible as they went into Sychar to buy food that day; yet, here was this Samaritan woman—and a particularly sinful one, at that—doing what they had *not* done. *She* was busy telling the people of Sychar about Jesus Christ! She had been saved only a few minutes; yet, she was already out in the harvest field, gathering people to Jesus Christ!

Now, fast-forward from that day at Jacob's well to the day just before Jesus commissioned the Apostles to go out and preach throughout the cities of Israel. What Had Jesus said to them on *that* occasion? He had used that same “harvest” illustration that He had used back at Jacob's well! He had said, **“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.”** Clearly, Jesus was referring to the crowds of *Jewish* people that were all around them; yet, He was using the same illustration that He had used in reference to the *Samaritans*. I'm sure that the disciples had *not* forgotten this fact! Even though Jesus was now commanding them not to go into any city of the Samaritans, they couldn't help but remember that Jesus *had* once taken them into a city of Samaria to gather a harvest of souls! The Apostles were still struggling with their feelings of prejudice toward the Samaritans; but they surely realised that their attitude was not right, because Jesus had been teaching them a very *different* attitude for quite a while!

Why *did* Jesus command the Apostles not to go into any city of the Gentiles, then? Because the Kingdom of Messiah—that coming 1,000-year reign of Christ over the whole world—was promised to *the Jews*. The New Covenant, which was promised in **Jeremiah 31**, was offered to the *Jews*. Jeremiah had said, **“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.”** Both houses of Israel—the Northern and Southern Kingdoms—were offered the “New Covenant”; and the *Gentiles* were not included in it. Now, by God's grace, we Gentiles *have* now been grafted into the spiritual promises of the New Covenant; but we must always remember that the New Covenant *was* made with the Jews. That is why the Gospel of the Kingdom

had to be offered to the Jews *first*. To this day, the Gospel is still “*to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.*”

Brethren, as we grow and mature in Christ, we must learn to see the world as God sees it. First, we must realise that God has a special love for Israel, because of the promises that He made to their father Abraham; and we should *always* pray for them, and do all that we can to reach them. However, we must also remember that God loves *all* the peoples of the world. *We like* this truth, of course, since all of us here are Gentiles; but there are some Gentile peoples who are not so easy to love, because they have been taught to hate, steal, destroy, and kill, from earliest childhood. Though they are not lovable, we must love them, too! When we go out into the world every day, and see people passing by in front of us, the thought that should come to our minds is: “How many of these people know the Lord? How can we get the Gospel to them?” We should also have the right *motive* for taking the Gospel to them. We shouldn’t witness for Jesus simply because we *have* to do so; he should witness for Christ because we *love* Him, and because we love others!

II. The Apostles’ mission and message (vv. 7-8)

(Read Matthew 10:7-8 again.) In these verses, we find that Jesus gave the Apostles a twofold mission. The first part of their mission was that they were to preach an urgent message—the message that “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” This is the “Gospel of the Kingdom,” which we read about back in **Matthew 9**. The “Gospel of the Kingdom” was the message that the Kingdom of Messiah would be established very soon, *if* the people of Israel would meet a condition: and that condition was that they must believe on Jesus as their Messiah! The Apostles did not, themselves, yet fully understand the central message of the Gospel (the message that Christ would die on a cross for our sins, and rise again the third day); but they *did* understand that they needed to believe on *Jesus* to have their sins forgiven, and thus be allowed entry into the coming Kingdom. This was the message that they preached to the people.

The other part of their mission was that they were to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils. As we saw last week, these miraculous powers were signs of the messianic age. It had been prophesied by **Isaiah**, and by other prophets, that the Messiah would do these things; and now, not only was the *Messiah Himself* doing these things, but He was giving to twelve of His followers the ability to do these things, as well. (Later in His ministry, Jesus gave *seventy* of His followers the ability to do miracles, and sent them throughout the cities of Israel, too!)

Now, I cannot stress enough how important those words “*at hand*” are. The Greek behind this phrase is *heggiken*, which means “**has drawn near.**” Folks, this was not an empty promise! The golden Age of Messiah—the 1,000-year reign of Jesus on earth, from Jerusalem—truly was “near”! The very fact that John the Baptist had already appeared was a “flashing neon sign” that the Kingdom was just around the corner! The very last statement in the Old Testament was a prophecy about the future ministry of John the Baptist: and in that prophecy, Malachi said, “**Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.**” There is no question that John the Baptist was the fulfilment of this prophecy. Though he was not the *literal* Elijah come back in the flesh, he did come in the “**spirit and power of Elias.**” As the forerunner of the Messiah, John’s mission was to turn the hearts of the people to God, lest the LORD should come and “**smite the earth with a curse.**”

Yet, this raises a question: “How could John be the fulfilment of the ‘Elijah’ prophecy, when most of the nation of Israel *did not* turn their hearts to God?” How could John be “Elijah,” when so few people responded to his message, and repented? I believe we can find the answer to this question in **Matthew 11**.

Read Matthew 11:2-19.

In **verse 12**, Jesus said that the “*kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*” (in other words, the preachers of the Kingdom would be persecuted); but then, in almost the next breath, He said that “*If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*” What was this “*it*” of which Jesus spoke? It is the “*kingdom of heaven*,” of which Jesus had just been speaking!

What is Jesus saying, then? He is saying that “*if*” the people would receive the Kingdom of Heaven (in other words, if they would believe John the Baptist’s preaching, and receive Jesus as their King and Messiah), **then** John would be the final “Elijah” of whom Malachi prophesied—the one who would restore all things, and usher in the Kingdom, and prevent the land from being smitten with God’s “*curse.*” The word “*if*” implies that there was a *condition*: and the condition was that Israel must *believe John’s message* in order for the Kingdom to come. If the whole nation had accepted John’s message, and believed on Jesus, then the Kingdom could have been ushered in *within their lifetimes*. However, since the nation did *not* receive Jesus as their King, **John was not the one to restore all things.**

Who *is* the one who will restore all things, then? If it be not John the Baptist, then who is it? Let’s see what Peter said about this.

Read Acts 3:19-21.

What is the “*restitution of all things*”? It is the restoration that *Christ* will bring to the earth when He sets up His Kingdom. Yet, in **Matthew 17:11**, Jesus said that **Elijah** will truly come first, and “*restore all things.*” What does this mean, then? It means that Christ is the *ultimate* Elijah—the one who will finish the job that John the Baptist started. John truly is the fulfilment of the “Elijah” prophecy; but Jesus is the *ultimate* fulfilment of it, since He will succeed in restoring all things. *Every soul* that enters the 1,000-year Kingdom will have a restored, regenerated heart; and the Person who will accomplish this regeneration is none other than Jesus the Messiah. All violence and war will be done away with; the whole earth will be restored to a pure language (Hebrew); the ground will bring forth food abundantly; and the world will have abundance of peace under the personal rule of King Jesus!

III. The Apostles’ methods of ministry (vv. 9-15)

(**Read verses 9-15 again.**) Thus far, Jesus had instructed the Apostles as to *where* they were to preach the Gospel. He had also told them what their *mission* was. Now, He was giving them instructions as to *how they were to conduct themselves* as they went about their preaching tour.

First, Jesus commanded them to “*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*” In that one simple statement, Jesus set the standard for His

servants, for all times: we are to give *freely* of ourselves to others! Jesus had given the Apostles power to do great miracles: but they were not to abuse that power by making merchandise of people. They were not to demand (or even hint) that anyone “pay a little fee” for the service of healing. How *could* they expect such a thing, when Christ had freely given them the gift of eternal life, and many other blessings besides? The message that Jesus had been teaching them from the very beginning was to “**Love...your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again** [expecting nothing in return]; **and your reward shall be great.**” Brethren, is this *our* attitude? We are not Apostles, of course, and we do not have the special gift of healing, as they had; but we *can* bless others in a thousand ways—first and foremost, by sharing the Gospel with people, and also by meeting people’s emotional, physical, and material needs in whatever way we can. Anything we do for the Lord and others should be done without any expectation of receiving something in return. Jesus gave His life for you freely; now, freely give to others!

The next instruction that Jesus gave to the Apostles had to do with their **material provisions**. Let’s read it again. (**Read Matthew 10:9-10.**) What provisions were the Apostles to take with them for their trip? None! Can you imagine what the Apostles must have thought when Jesus dropped *this* command on them? They were to go out to preach without *any* provisions—no extra garments, no extra shoes, no money, no scrip (wallet, or purse), and no staves. (They *really* “travelled light”!) That would take a *lot* of faith: yet, Jesus had been preparing them, and building up their faith, for this very moment.

Now, what are we to make of *this* command? Is this command still for us today? I remember pondering this very question when I was a young believer. I knew that God had called me to be a missionary; but did God really want me to go to a foreign country without any provision? Were the missionaries who went around to churches to seek financial support to go to the mission field trusting God? That’s a fair question, which demands a good answer. The answer is simple: **This command was not given to all believers of all times!** The Apostles were not *supposed* to settle down in a certain town or city, and establish churches there: they were literally to “preach on the move.” They were to go from town to town swiftly, and preach that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, so that the people would be prepared to receive their King, and His Kingdom! Their ministry would be brief, and fast: thus, they had to “travel light,” and trust God for their provision. If this command were meant for all believers of all times, then it would have been wrong of the Apostle Paul to use his tent-making skill to support himself as he established churches. If the Lord had expected *Paul* to go out and preach the Gospel without any provisions, then he would have been disobeying God!

There are many times in Scripture when God gave a command that was meant for a specific group of people at a specific time; and this is one of those times. This command was meant for the *Apostles*, at this particular time. Now, a couple years later, after Israel had rejected and crucified their Messiah, Jesus *did* then send them out to take the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, and to make provisions as they went, and to receive wages. In fact, this saying, “**The workman is worthy of his meat,**” was repeated by Paul in **1 Timothy 5:18**, when he said, “**The labourer is worthy of his hire.**” (In other words, it is *right* for a pastor to receive modest wages for the labour he does for the Lord.) For now, though, they were to go to the cities of *Israel* only, with no provisions. They were not to take provisions, because the Jewish people were *expected* to provide accommodation for them. This was not presumptuous of the Apostles, because they were representatives of the *King of Israel*; and thus, the people of Israel *were obliged* to make accommodation for their King, and for His representatives!

So, then, are we to ignore this command? Or is there an application that we can make to our lives today? Yes, I believe there is some application. Allow me to give a personal example. Before my wife and I came to Ireland, we had to raise our full support from American churches, because the Irish government wouldn’t allow us into the country otherwise. Yet, when we arrived in Ireland, we didn’t

really have the full support that we needed. In fact, we were significantly short of what we needed. Why did we come without complete funding? Because we knew that souls were hanging in the balance; and we felt the urgency to get here as soon as possible. For years, we struggled to make ends meet, and sometimes felt the sting of hunger. However, in time, God brought more support to us: and He *always* provided just what we needed. If we had not taken this step of faith, there are souls that would *not* be in the Kingdom of God today. A young man whom I met on the doors within the first month after we came to Ireland eventually got saved because of the Bible and the personal letter that I gave him. It was 13 years before he got saved; yet, if we hadn't been in Maynooth in May 2006, and knocked on his door, he would not have had that seed planted in his heart. If we had waited even a few more months, events would have unfolded so differently, that we probably would not have moved to Athlone when we did (if at all); and perhaps *none* of the people who have been saved through the outreach of Redemption Baptist Church would have heard the Gospel. The application, then, is this: should God call you to a task, don't get bogged down with worry of "How will I take care of myself?" Trust God to meet your needs!

Before we close this morning, I would like to direct your attention to one more instruction that Jesus gave His Apostles. (**Read verses 11-15.**) Jesus' instructions were simple: after going into a town, and preaching the Gospel and healing, they were to ask who in that town was "*worthy*"; and if any were "*worthy*," the Apostles were graciously to accept the invitation to stay in their home during their visit, and "salute" (give their blessing upon) that house.

Now, what did Jesus mean by "*worthy*"? Did He mean "good"? No, He didn't! The Bible says that there is "*None righteous, no, not one.*" What *did* He mean, then? **Verse 14** gives us the answer. (**Read verse 14.**) Those who were "*worthy*" were not those who were "good": they were those who "*received*" the Gospel. How could they be called "*worthy*," even though they were sinners? Because Jesus' perfect righteousness was judicially put onto their account when they placed their faith in Him! **Romans 4:5** says, "*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*" When a sinner believes on Christ, God places Christ's perfect righteousness on that sinner's "moral account book"; and from a legal standpoint, He now sees that sinner as "*worthy*," because he has Jesus' imputed righteousness! Let's see what the Lord said about those who are "*worthy*."

Read Revelation 3:1-5.

Read 1 John 5:4-5.

Apparently, the church of Sardis had been careless in "vetting" people's testimonies of salvation, and had admitted into membership some who were not truly saved. Yet, there were those among them who *were* "overcomers"; who *were* keeping their garments clean; and who *were* "*worthy*." Yet, what does the Lord mean by "*worthy*"? Does He mean that they had lived righteously enough to *earn*, or to *keep*, their salvation? No, he doesn't! How do I know? Because John defined an "*overcomer*" as someone who has been "born of God" by believing on Christ as the Son of the living God. A saved person *is* an overcomer, by position; and *because* he is an overcomer in position, you can expect to see a *pattern* of overcoming sin in his life. *That* is why the people who took in the Apostles were called "*worthy*." They weren't called "*worthy*" because they had earned their salvation through the "good deed" of hosting the Apostles: rather, their kindness to the Apostles was an *outward evidence* that they had believed the Gospel, and had judicially been called "*worthy*," for Christ's sake.

Now, there is one more part to this instruction. Not only were the Apostles to salute those who were “worthy”: they were also to shake off the dust of their feet against any house or city that was *unworthy* (in other words, those who rejected the Apostles and their message). Now, how do we find personal application in *this*? Are *we* to shake the dust of our feet against houses and towns that reject the Gospel? Well, let’s put it this way: If I were to shake off the dust of my feet against Athlone for their corporate unbelief, I would have had to abandon Athlone long ago, and have moved on to another town! Clearly, this is a command that applied to the Apostles, at that time. Is there *any* application to us today, though? I believe there is. Sometimes we *do* need to speak hard words to those who refuse to listen. Sometimes people need to hear the jarring truth that their window of opportunity to respond to the Gospel is short, and that if they will not listen, you must move on.

Read Acts 13:42-49.

This past summer, as we were handing out invitations to our children’s Bible club, there was a man who angrily handed a flyer back to me. He told me that we were somehow “endangering” kids by “indoctrinating” them. Then, all of a sudden, he changed his mind, and tried to take the flyer back from me. He ordered me to give it back to him, so that he could look up our church online (apparently, because he thought that he would find some “deep, dark secret” about our little church, and report us to the authorities). However, I pulled the flyer back from him, and told him that I would *not* give it to him, because he had rejected the truth. Instead, I told him that I would give it to someone who would consider the message. Might God yet arrest this man’s heart at another time, through another divine appointment? I pray so! (In fact, my wife still prays for that man every time we pass his house.) However, I knew that at that time and place, he needed to hear the hard truth! Jesus said, ***“Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.”***

Conclusion: Folks, our time to respond to the Gospel is short. Those who receive the light of truth that has been offered to them will be offered more light; and if they respond to *that* light, they will be given yet more light, until they find the door of salvation, and enter in to eternal life. However, those who *reject* the light again and again will have the light *removed*. The Jews of Jesus’ day didn’t have limitless opportunities to respond to the Gospel: and neither do we have limitless opportunities today. The Bible says, ***“Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.”*** If you have not been saved, please do not put it off any longer! If you do know Christ as your Saviour, I would urge you to *trust in the Lord’s provision*. Don’t be afraid to launch into a new realm of service to Christ. Whatever He calls you to do, He will equip you for it; and He *will* provide your needs. Just trust and obey Him!

¹ Johannes Brenz, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Brenz.

² *Ibid.*

³ Robert Morgan, *Preacher’s Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), pp. 383-384.

⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Craig_\(reformer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Craig_(reformer)).

⁵ *Preacher’s Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations*, pp. 383-384.