

Matthew 9:35 - 10:23

Read the passage: [The Message](#) or [The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

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The lesson given for this Sunday has a shorter version, 9:35 - 10:8, and a longer one, 9:35 - 10:23. My choice of a shorter version is 10:5-23 since this gives more of the direct teaching of Jesus to his followers. (And that's what I'll comment on here.)

Verses 5-6. Note the instruction here to not go outside of the people, Israel. The "lost sheep" is a reference to Matthew 9:36, and refers primarily to the poor and peasants who had no leaders.

Verses 7-8. Jesus mandates his followers with his message and his authority over death, disease and demons.

Jesus then instructs them on how to live as itinerants, what to expect, and how to handle difficulties. These teachings were important because his followers would only have known village life - relying on family and kin for sustenance - and being totally unfamiliar with the social realities of being an "outsider."

Verses 9-10. Give instructions for living as an itinerant; traveling light and relying on hospitality and "payment for services" for sustenance.

Verses 11-15. How to receive hospitality from strangers when it is offered; and how to react when it is not. "Shaking the dust off your feet" would be the modern equivalent of "giving them the one finger salute as you leave." That is, it was a rude expression for rude treatment.

Verse 16. Common sense advice that just because you are doing God's work does not grant you immunity from the faults and failings of human nature.

Verse 17-20. This seems more like a foreshadowing of what would happen later to Jesus and his followers than any present concern. Forecasting this experience demonstrates Jesus' authority and closeness with God. It also has the effect of assuring his followers that (a) opposition is not a sign of failure or that Jesus was not trustworthy as a leader; and (b) paradoxically, getting arrested is the only way you will have a chance to speak to the elites, so use it to testify. And don't worry about what you will say - God's Spirit will speak through you at the time, as needed.

Verses 21-22. This testifies to the severity of the disruption that following Jesus will bring. The Jesus group will become our new family, our new primary kinship.

Verse 23. Again, another paradox. Fleeing persecution is an occasion for ensuring that their testimony is taken to other towns and cities. "Before the Son of Man comes" is either Matthew himself inserting a comment for his own community during the time of persecution following Jesus' death and resurrection; or Jesus was babbling. The comment seems to be completely out of context within the text itself as the sending out of the 12 at this point in Jesus' ministry was not anticipated to be a prelude to the coming of the Son of Man.

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