

Week 10

Matthew series: We are Christian

Matthew 10: **Laborer's of God**

I think Matthew is building the kingdom in his writing. Up to now he has built a case that Jesus is the one they have been waiting for. Jesus is the Messiah and Christ. He is the one that the prophets spoke of. It's like he is building up a brand. This product called the Christ is tested in the wilderness. Jesus teachings tell us what this brand is all about. There is a demonstration of the power. The power of God is wide-ranging from controlling demons and weather. This God brand is seemingly doing the impossible. It is also predictable because the prophesies told us it was coming. What do you expect God would do if he came down to save us?

Matthew 10:1 "Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness."

Jerimiah 32:27 "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for me?"

Chapter 10 in Matthew is a new beginning in my mind. Matthew has set up the expectations and the structure of what the kingdom of God should look like. This brand is called Christianity. Is Jesus selling a brand like Pepsi? It's a yes and no scenario. It's more about a come taste and see. It's more like this is what Jesus can do in the kingdom, so do you want to try it out? This chapter marks the beginning of our chance to market the kingdom. The chance for people to experience the power and plans of God. The disciples are the first group to try out the kingdom. Why do you want to be a Christian?

Matthew 10:16 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

Joshua 1:6-7 "Joshua, be strong and brave! You must lead these people so they can take the land that I promised their fathers I would give them. 7 Be strong and brave. Be sure to obey all the teachings my servant Moses gave you. If you follow them exactly, you will be successful in everything you do."

The theme of this book is displayed right from the beginning by both John the Baptist and Jesus **“repent for the kingdom of God is near.”** What does that truly mean to you? The early church held to this motto. Through the centuries this was the theme of building the church. In the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth the church began to change. This was called the holiness movement. People became spiritually aware all of a sudden. Is it God’s new way or were the people trying to change God? This new movement promoted healing, spiritual gifts, and charismatic preaching that Jesus is love, joy, and happiness. Is that a true picture of the kingdom of God?

I look at Matthew 10 as our beginning. Jesus selects twelve men to follow him. Some of these men were followers of John originally. I feel that this first section of Matthew 10:1-4 is significant. These are ordinary people who lived ordinary lives. They were the outcasts of society. They did the tough jobs like fishing and tax collecting. This is a statement that everyone is welcome into the kingdom. The rest of this chapter is a tough sell. If I was selling Pepsi would I tell you it tastes great and will make you happy? Yes, I would so that you buy more. Jesus is selling Christianity in a different way. He says you will receive nothing. People will treat you bad. They will denounce you, beat you, and kill you. Does this sound like an appealing brand of religion? Does it look like the holiness movement?

Matthew 10:37 **“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”**

Isaiah 40:30-31 **“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”**

Read Matthew 10 and 1 Corinthians 7. Extra reading if you want is John 6. This is a hard chapter. Put yourself inside as one of the twelve. This is the Christian life. Do you still want to believe?

1. This is our crossroads. Do we follow chapter 10 of Matthew to the letter or make our own version of Christianity? Maybe that worked in Jesus day but not in modern culture. These are fair thoughts. Do we sell everything and live life with nothing but the belief that God will provide? This is a tough sell. Still, there is truth in it. We should rely on God to provide because he loves to bless us. If we proclaim the gospel, does God have an obligation to provide? The answer is yes and no unfortunately. God can and will bless ministry but he is under no obligation to do so. It is his great pleasure to do so.

So where do we stand? Romans 8:31 ends with **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** This chapter of Matthew 10 gives us a clear picture of the power of God. Is this the way we should live or is it something more? The problem is painting Christianity and God into a box. So many people paint God into a corner by saying pray this way, live this way, and act this way. These disciples are told to not go to the lost? This is strange stuff. Jesus says he has come for the poor, maligned, and forgotten. Yet, Jesus sends his first disciples to the house of Israel. The believers in God. Why?

There is a Christian song I love called *Shake this planet*. It says “were going to shake this planet and turn it upside down.” That is what Jesus is trying to do. He is sending the rejected of Israel to Israel. Jesus is disrupting the way Jewish people did religion. God is looking for good people that believe in God to step up their game. To shake up the Jewish community in the

name of God. The poor and lost still matter, but Jesus is hitting the stale religious structures hard with the least of men: the disciples.

Matthew 10:11 **“Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave.”**

Exodus 4:21 **“The LORD said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.”**

2. I do not want to sell you false goods. Christianity is fun. I have had so much fun in worship as in reading the Bible. I love preaching and spending time in a life group. Still, there is another side that can't be undersold. To sell Christianity is to tell the truth. People generally hate Christians. We are annoying because the truth hurts. That is not just a saying. People hate the truth. These days they call it the era of false truths. How did we get here? Because we want to be there in the non-truth world. The truth hurts.

Matthew 10:16-25 hurts. We will tell people the truth and they will call us idiots. We will lose friends, family, and loved ones. To be a Christian is not about being healed, speaking in tongues, and having authority or power. If you believe that then you have been sold a bad batch of Christianity: return it now. The disciples were not the “in” group. Christians were never the “in” group. However, they are the “in” group with God. It depends on how you view being “in.” To love God is to love unconditionally. Yet, to love God is to uphold the integrity and honesty of the Gospel. The most gut wrenching thing of the gospel is the terms between heaven and hell. This chapter asks the disciples to give those they meet a choice: heaven or hell? It is gut-wrenching and a tough sell.

Matthew 10:22 **“and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”**

John 6:66 **“From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”**

3. I believe I struggle with Matthew 10:26-39 more than many other bible verses. I know ministry leaders that spend 60% of their time in ministry, yet they only spend less than 40% at home with their wives and families. Is that by God's design? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7 “For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.” Read 1 Corinthians 7. Then come back to Matthew 10. In a Christian history class I learned that several hundred men became monks in the early years of the church. They believed that in solitude they could be clean of sin and distraction. Several hundred also returned to the world. Why? They stated that sin and distraction still lurked at their door in solitude.

The Christian life is meant to share the gospel. It's kind of hard to do that in solitude. We are asked to give our best to our families like God gives to us. It's hard to do that if your never there. Christian history has struggled with finding balance. There is kingdom work and earthly living. What is the balance? We need not fear life because God is with us. We can be in Gods favor while living in this world. That does not mean you ignore God for family or ignore family for God. Christianity is powerful and intoxicating. More than anything it will consume you

because it says God is a consuming fire. Think about this statement: respect the power, and do not abuse its intent.

Matthew 10:39 **“Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”**

Hosea 13:11 **“gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath.”**

4. Let’s talk about rewards. There are crowns. There is treasure. There is salvation. We will receive a lot in heaven. As to what we get is up for debate. What kind of crown? Are we a king? What kind of treasure? Will we be rich? Jesus says there will be rewards. Is the reward avoiding hell? That seems like a reasonable reward to me. Yet, we are curious, aren’t we?

Matthew 6:2 **“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.”**

To work for a reward on earth is foolish. That is bad Christianity. To expect a reward in heaven is foolish. That is bad Christianity. The point Jesus is making is that we are rich in God. We are rich following Christ Jesus. We may be without supplies. We may be rejected, but we will never lose what we have gained. What we gain is a savior and God that invests and cares for those who follow them. That is the real message and reward of Matthew 10.

Matthew 10:42 **“and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”**

Proverbs 16:8 **“Better is a little with righteousness Than great income with injustice.”**

What does it all mean?

Matthew is in the room. He is staring at you in the face. He is holding out his hand. Are you in? He set it up. Jesus is the promised one. Jesus is the good teacher. Jesus can heal wounds. Jesus is God. He is the one who speaks words and then does what he claims. At work do you get that? At home do you get that? People have said that this book is too complicated. All the writer is trying to do is make it easy. Matthew is pointing the way to heaven.

This is indeed a crossroads. Odd, in John 6:66 it says “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.” Weird that it’s 666, creepy. Yet, people leaving Christianity is common. Why? They stared at chapters like Matthew 10 in the mirror and refused the offer. What is the offer? That Joy, comfort, and hope will be given. That pain, heartbreak, and disappointment will be given too. The Christian life is hard.

Parents punish us for wrongs committed. Sometimes they say it is for our own good. I’m not so sure. Yet, as kids we learn and grow from the punishments. These same parents bless us with gifts. They hug us when we hurt. They provide for us until we can stand alone. God is our Father in heaven. The one thing I can offer you to choose God is Jesus. He stood in our shoes with his Father. He laughed and endured pain on this earth. He has walked a mile in our shoes. He can make a difference in our lives if we chose. That’s what Matthew 10 is pointing to.

Matthew 10: 40 **“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”**

Exodus 3:14 **“God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'”**