

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

Matthew 9:35-10:8

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Year A - Proper 6, Text: Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-20)
Year A - Proper 6, Text: Matthew 9:35-10:8 (9-23)

Verses 9:35-38 This passage makes up the closing verses of Chapters 8-9, the narrative section that follows the Sermon on the Mount. It describes Jesus visiting some of the towns and villages in Galilee and teaching in their synagogues.

Note that Matthew says that Jesus *taught* — he did not *preach*. Strictly speaking, the Gospel writers make no reference to Jesus preaching, but there are many references to Him teaching. This is an important insight that we professional church workers need to ponder! Almost all parish pastors preach regularly, but not all pastor teach or lead Bible Studies on a regular basis.

Verse 9:36 Jesus not only taught, he healed many who were sick and diseased. Verse 36 reports Jesus grieving because the people were harassed and helpless, and did not know what to do. They were like sheep without a shepherd. The point is, most likely, that the people were being exploited by their political leaders, and what the religious leaders were teaching them was of little benefit. They were bad “shepherds.” So Jesus exhorts the disciples to ask God to provide leaders to cope with the enormous spiritual need that prevailed in the land.

Verses 10:1-4: Jesus Himself summons and sends the twelve disciples to go out among the people to deal with the demons possessing them, and to heal them of every disease and sickness. We might note that Matthew contains no story of Jesus calling the twelve disciples. Most likely there is a link between twelve tribes in the Old Testament, and twelve disciples.

The disciples are referred to here as apostles – “those sent forth.” In this mission, Matthew makes no reference to Jesus commanding the disciples to teach. The command to teach is given only after Jesus rises from the dead (Matthew 28) — by which time the disciples understand more fully and clearly Jesus’ identity and message. After all, knowing that Jesus rose from the dead deepened their insights enormously.

Verses 10:5-6: We read that Jesus told the disciples not to work in any Gentile region or in Samaria. They are to minister only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Perhaps the idea is that Jewish hearers will understand more quickly and deeply the witness the disciples give, and will in turn bear witness to others in their communities.

Yet, the Gospels speak of Jesus Himself ministering to the Gentiles (Matthew 15:21-28), healing a Samaritan afflicted with leprosy (Luke 17:11-19), and speaking with a Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, John 4. God’s plan for the Gentiles would come later!

Verse 10:7: The disciples are told to proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. When Matthew makes reference to the Kingdom of Heaven, he is referring to the same “Kingdom of God” talked about in the other Gospel. Matthew, being a good Jew, no doubt wants to avoid any misuse or mispronunciations of the name of God. He uses “Heaven” as a reference to God himself.

But note well! The disciples are not to proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven is *on its way* to Planet Earth. Rather, *it has come* to Planet Earth and Jesus is the King of that Kingdom and its first Citizen, so to speak. Jesus lives a life radically different from the lifestyle taught in the synagogues of Jesus’ day.

Verse 10:8: The disciples are to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and drive out demons. The first three things referred to reflect Isaiah 35:5-6. The prophet said that when the Kingdom of God breaks in, “the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk, and the dumb will speak.”

The disciples’ ministry will therefore declare: “The Messianic Age has broken in!” Jesus is the Messiah—but a Messiah very different from what the people were expecting! He washed feet and called His followers to do the same. And the disciples who have received freely are to proclaim these truths freely.

