

“Jesus’ Mission Through Us”

June 14, 2026

First Christian Church

Scripture text: Matthew 9:35-38; 10:1-8

Today’s Scripture lesson begins with Jesus on a roll. It says He “went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness.” From the very beginning, Jesus matches “proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom” with “curing every disease and every sickness.” Some individuals and even some churches try to specialize in one or the other. One says, “I will specialize in proclaiming the word of God. I will win people’s hearts and their minds. The ultimate goal is to get them to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and thereby enter the gates of heaven. That is my focus.” Another will look at what Jesus does and say, “I want to be like Jesus. I will serve those in need. I want to help the hungry and the homeless. I will reach out to the sick and the dying. I will speak for those without a voice and will fight for those who are being oppressed. I will show them how much Jesus cares for them – how committed Jesus is to them.” Some individuals can be very successful focusing on one or the other. I am not going to tell Billy Graham or Mother Theresa they messed up. But as a church, we are called to follow Jesus’ example to both proclaim the Good News and serve individuals’ needs. We are to share Jesus in word and deed. Either leaving out the message of salvation or leaving people in their suffering and injustice is heresy. Social justice is not optional. Proclaiming the word is not optional. From the very beginning, Jesus put them together. Together they are the Jesus way.

Like I said, Jesus is rolling. He just begins to “proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom” and “cure every disease and every sickness” in one town and is then driven to go to the next town because the need was so great. Everywhere He went, “He had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” In those days as in ours, there was a huge vacuum of leadership. Don’t get me wrong, there were people appointed to civil and religious leadership positions who exercised authority over the people. Rome’s leaders had conquered the known world and Jewish authorities had kept the people of God together for thousands of years. But they asked questions like, “Who am I in charge of? How can I make them serve the interest of the state and the temple?” For Jesus, that is not leadership. Instead, Jesus leaders ask, “Who can I help? Who can I help empower to the next level? Who needs to be shown love?” Those are real leadership questions. The state and religious institutions are supposed to serve the people, not the people serve them. Yet every town was as bad as the last. The needs of the people had been lost in the needs of the institutions. Jesus was getting overwhelmed with how much need there was and asked the disciples to pray. He said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest

to send out laborers into His harvest.” God, send people who can respond to the needs of the people. Send people who are able to rely on God’s provision, God’s strength, God’s sense of identity; because the job is not going to pay. Send people who are ready to carry forward the work of healing and restoration, evangelism and social justice. Jesus ends chapter 9 saying pray. Pray for God to send the workers we need. And they prayed. I know they prayed because chapter 10 begins with the answer to those prayers. Sometimes prayer is us lifting our praises, our thanksgiving, our confessions, our petitions and even our longings to God. We pray in order to affect God’s heart. And sometimes prayer is God using the same pipeline to shape us, mold us and help us hear God’s call – to affect our heart. To say it a different way, sometimes our prayers are an urgent petition for God to do what only God can do in the world. Other times, prayer is aligning our hearts with God’s will for us so we are ready to do what God asks of us. This time it was both. Chapter 10 begins with the disciples receiving authority over unclean spirits, disease and sickness (something only God can do); and then saying, “go, proclaim the good news... cure the sick; heal the leper; cast out demons” (the disciples going out – aligning themselves with God’s will.) Twelve ordinary people were called and empowered to fill the leadership void that the Roman Empire and the Jewish leadership left open – servant leadership – sharing the Good News of the Kingdom as they broke down barriers, healed bodies, and freed spirits. Reality: they had no idea what they were doing. They still knew nothing of resurrection and didn’t fully understand who Jesus was yet. There was more they didn’t know than they did. But they stepped out in faith, even Judas stepped out and became a gift to another. They didn’t know enough to be affective, but stepped out anyway, and changed the world forever.

They gave this change a name – the Kingdom of heaven. Verse 6 says, “As you go, tell them ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’” But what is this Kingdom of heaven? It is hard to grasp a kingdom that doesn’t show-up on a map with borders and visible markers. It is helpful to know when you have entered a new place. When you cross into Canada, things look different. Everything is in kilometers and the street signs all look different. You go to England and the whole traffic flow is reversed, driving on the left side of the road. That is what we think of when we think of a kingdom, and we don’t have a kingdom of heaven like that here, so we assume it is a future thing. But Dallas Willard insists God’s Kingdom is a real thing right now, or at least it can be. A king’s realm is the area where the king’s will is done – where the king’s authority is recognized and implemented. That means when we recognize and follow God’s laws above the law of the jungle or the law of the land and even our own selfish nature, we are living in God’s Kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is present wherever people pray the way Jesus taught us to pray. The kingdom of heaven is present wherever people manifest the fruits of the Spirit over the works of the flesh. The kingdom of heaven is present wherever people get up, get ready, and come to worship – whether it is a beautiful or a stormy Sunday. The kingdom of heaven is present wherever a person chooses to actively love their spouse –

even when their spouse is not acting very lovable. The kingdom of heaven is present wherever we refuse that drink, refuse to yield to temptation, refuse to return evil for evil. The kingdom of heaven is present wherever we bring in food to share with the needy, give up our time to teach children, and visit the lonely. The kingdom of heaven is present wherever the Bible is read in private, a kind word is shared in public, and an act of mercy is performed for one who does not deserve it. The kingdom of heaven is present wherever words are used to build up, tithes are shared, and leaders are servants. The kingdom of God is present wherever hope prevails. A king's realm is the area where the king's will is done – where the king's authority is recognized and implemented. When we let King Jesus call the shots and make what King Jesus wants to happen happen, God's Kingdom has come to earth. When we recognize and follow God's laws above the law of the jungle or the law of the land and even our own selfish nature, we are living in God's Kingdom.

Where are you in today's Scripture? Are you part of the lost, looking for a shepherd to follow who will serve you instead of consume you? Are you one of the disciples afraid to earnestly pray for fear God may use that pipeline to change you, or are you in the midst of being changed? Are you looking for the strength and the place to serve in word and deed? Are you living in the Kingdom of God, separated from the world's priorities and addictions, living by God's priorities, God's understanding of fair and right, embodying God's servant leadership style? For me, it depends on the day. Somedays I am a lost sheep and somedays I am a good shepherd. Somedays I am living in God's Kingdom and somedays I am consumed by and being consumed by this world. Some days I pray boldly and ask God to use me. Other days I am afraid to pray because God might answer my prayer with a call instead of a miracle. But no matter where I am that day, I am thankful Jesus came to find me thankful Jesus keeps moving from town to town until He catches up with me, thankful He is so driven, and thankful I can take another step toward being like Him, responding to the needs of those around me, living and sharing in His Kingdom on earth.

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