

Chapter 10

Read 9:24-10:4 where we encounter two more miraculous exchanges: the two blind men and the demon-oppressed man who was unable to speak.

Sometimes Jesus heals because people ask and believe he can, but in other cases, he does business with the demons and drives them out without the “host” asking. It’s possible to be so turned over to darkness that only God’s mercy can intervene to save us.

In the case of the two blind men, we see another moment where Jesus heals and urges them to stay silent. He’s aware the attention may lead to problems.

When the mute man speaks, the crowds are baffled. They realize nothing like this has ever happened before. Searching for an explanation, besides the obvious (that Jesus is who he says he is), they determine Jesus must be wrangling demonic force with demonic force. We’ll hear this again in 12:29, and Jesus will point out the obvious failure of reason here: If he were in cahoots with the devil, why would he sabotage his own team?

At the end of these nine healings (chs. 8–9), the whole region is abuzz. Jesus is fully engaged in his mission to heal the sick and proclaim the good news that the kingdom is now. I love to picture Jesus in 9:36, where Matthew writes, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them...”

He has compassion and describes the people as sheep without a shepherd. They are without protection and care and direction. So he looks at his disciples and says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

They don’t yet know that *they* are the answer to that prayer. As are we.

Questions:

- Have you ever been so absorbed in darkness that you didn’t have the ability to call out for help? How did God break through to you?
- Why do you think the Pharisees were so quick to assume Jesus was casting out demons with demonic force?

- Have you ever overlooked God's hand at work, maybe even for similar reasons? Why?

Read verses 5 – 15. At this point in Matthew, the author has introduced us to Jesus as the Messiah, given us a hearty dose of his teaching, and showed us the authority Jesus carried to heal the sick and raise the dead. The kingdom has been incubated, and it's time to hatch. (My metaphor, not Matthew's.) Jesus rallies his 12 disciples—the number 12 is important. Israel (also known as Jacob) had 12 sons. There were 12 tribes or branches of the original family. By appointing 12 disciples, it would have been obvious to the early Jewish audience that Jesus was on a mission to *restore* the people of God, all 12 tribes of them. (If you're interested in learning more about who the 12 were and what they did, [check out this overview online](#). It's pretty interesting!)

He gathers them and sends them out to do some pretty unbelievable things: heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. In other words, “Do what I have done.”

Here's how Eugene Peterson paraphrases the passage in *The Message*: *“Don't begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don't try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously.”*

“Don't think you have to put on a fund-raising campaign before you start. You don't need a lot of equipment. You are the equipment, and all you need to keep that going is three meals a day. Travel light.”

“When you enter a town or village, don't insist on staying in a luxury inn. Get a modest place with some modest people, and be content there until you leave.”

“When you knock on a door, be courteous in your greeting. If they welcome you, be gentle in your conversation. If they don't welcome you, quietly withdraw. Don't make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and be on your way. You can be sure that on Judgment Day they'll be mighty sorry—but it's no concern of yours now.”

For us, the job of bringing in the harvest is local. It's right where you are—on your block, at your cubicle, in your lunchroom, or carpool. It's the way we occupy our everyday space as kingdom-bringers.

Questions:

- What does it look like in your everyday space to bring in the harvest?
- Why do you think Jesus urges his disciples to start within the Jewish community before reaching outside of it (which he, and they, will eventually do)?

Read verses 16-32 where Matthew turns up the heat.

Jesus is sending out his disciples, but not before warning them of the conflict and pain they will encounter as they live out their mission. It's a pretty intense pep talk.

We like to please people, so the idea of walking around and saying things we *know* will ruffle feathers is uncomfortable and scary. Maybe we've withdrawn to the corners of the kingdom that are already sort of "won over" rather than moving out into territory and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom among people who will boldly (and aggressively) disagree.

Take comfort in this line: "Do not be anxious about how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you...the one who endures to the end will be saved."

Question:

- Do you feel like a sheep in the midst of wolves? Why or why not?
- What does it look like for you to practice being wise as serpents and innocent as doves?
- What scares you about "bearing witness" to your experience of God?
- Around *who* do you avoid speaking about your faith because of the opposition you may encounter?

Expecting intense words, read verses 34-42: *Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.*

It sounds like Jesus is inciting civil war! But, all of this, especially the business about people being set against one another and family members being enemies, must be read alongside the rest of his teaching. How are we to treat our enemies? Remember? We're to love them, to turn the other cheek, to forgive and walk the extra mile, and to pray for those who persecute us. *We* are not the ones who pick up our swords. We are the ones who take up our cross.

And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Jesus is alluding to the death he will face. The message to us is that following Jesus requires us to be all in. It's not cheap grace, to follow him may actually cost us something, and for those listening, it would cost many of them their very lives.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

This line stands in direct conflict with the zeitgeist of our day: Be Yourself! Billions of dollars are poured into media, advertising, and entertainment that lead us to believe that self-actualization is the highest end of humanity. To criticize self or suggest humans may benefit from humility or correction is tantamount to blasphemy. How do *you* see this teaching stand in contrast to the way of our world?

In our closing paragraph, Jesus talks about reward. It's strange to hear him speak of rewards when most of what we talk about is unearned grace because of his finished work on the cross. What do you hear him saying about rewards?

"The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward." The one who *receives* actually receives the reward of the one who he receives, whether or not the receiver is the prophet or righteous person. Does that make sense? That carries to what we receive when we receive Jesus; we receive *his* reward. Just because we receive him. That's wild!

So what is it? What is Jesus' reward?

Questions:

- All this business about swords and conflict, fear and rewards can be unsettling. How are you making sense of it at the end of the day?

- How does the message of Jesus contradict the messages of our culture?
- What is Jesus' reward?

