>>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 26 <<<<<<<

1) From 9:35 through 10:42, Matthew records what is basically another series of teachings.
2) This time the teachings are focusing on the mission on which he is sending his disciples.
   a) These also reach out into the future, which the disciples really have no idea of at this point.
   b) And, as we will see, the overarching lessons he is teaching reach even down to us.

Matthew 9:35–38 (ESV)
The Harvest Is Plentiful, the Laborers Few

35 And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. **36** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **37** Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; **38** therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

3) As we begin to look at this and consider all that has transpired since the Sermon on the Mount, what we basically see are the actions of Jesus.
4) We really don't know the time period over which his teaching in the cities and villages takes place, estimates range from 6 to 12 months.
5) It had to be enough time for the disciples to have absorbed a major portion of his teachings.
6) In verse 36 he sees the crowds as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."
7) I think here Jesus is really feeling the plight of the average Jewish citizen under current religious and political rulers.
   a) There were Roman client rulers, Herod Antipas, and his brother Philip, governing with Roman approval.
   b) The religious ruling elite included the Sadducees, closely associated with the Temple and high-priestly families, who often cooperated with Roman authority.
      i) The general opinion of the Jews was that they were at least somewhat corrupt.
   c) The high priest Caiaphas was appointed by the Roman prefect Valerius Gratus and retained under Pontius Pilate after his brother-in-law Annus was deposed by Rome.
      i) This obviously kept the office under Roman control.
   d) Above all stood the Romans themselves, exercising authority through military power, taxation, and judicial control.
   e) And of course, we have the Pharisees and scribes whose interpretive traditions shaped daily Jewish life and were perceived as demanding.
   f) Nowhere in this group do you find a "shepherd."
8) Jesus lets the disciples know how he feels and asks them to step out in prayer for the situation.

So, here's the question. Are we looking at a similar situation in our city and our country today – obviously not under the same religious situation but …?

Discuss.

If we are, do we feel the same need for laborers and prayers for them? Are we?

1) Jesus then continues by calling the original twelve disciples together with a mission for them.
   a) Here in these next verses, he lays out the primary ground rules for their mission.

Matthew 10:1–4 (ESV)
The Twelve Apostles

10 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. [2] The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; [3] Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; [4] Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

2) Here in Verse 1-4, Matthew lays out what is going to happen and gives us a list of all the twelve that will go on this mission.
3) As Matthew began writing this, I feel sure he was probably recalling the feelings, fears, and perhaps even the unbelief that he and the others must have experienced as Jesus tells them about what they are going to do.
4) As we read these next verses, try to imagine yourself as one of the disciples.
   a) Try to think of how you would react to all these things that Jesus is telling you.
   b) Think about and pickout as a disciple:
      i) what **surprises you.**
      ii) what **you are relieved** to hear.
      iii) and what **you can hardly believe.**

Matthew 10:5–15 (ESV)
Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

[5] These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, [6] but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [7] And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' [8] Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. [9] Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, [10] no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. [11] And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. [12] As you enter the house, greet it. [13] And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. [14] And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. [15] Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Ok, so as disciples listening to this…

What are those things that were "a surprise to you?"

a) Heal the sick, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.

b) Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts yet work without pay.

5) Normally a person going on such a journey would carry a bag for the journey to carry supplies – an extra tunic, extra sandals to protect feet, etc.

a) They would also carry a staff for help in walking.

b) But Jesus forbade them to take along any of these things.

i) No bag for your journey.

ii) One tunic, one set of sandals, and no staff.

c) And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.

What are some things that you were "relieved to hear?"

a) Don't have to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans,

b) Get to preach to our own people, Israel.

What are things that you find "hard to believe?"

a) Raising the dead.

6) Perhaps not all, but a lot of what he just told them they might also find perplexing.

a) Except for the statement, "proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

b) We might assume that Jesus is requiring these disciples to do things that they have not been taught.

c) The requirement is to step out in faith and depend on God to provide.

7) As I thought about all these things thus far, if I were sitting there among the twelve, I think I would have been petrified.

a) First, I would have realized the faith I would have to have and be asking myself, "do I have it?"

b) Second, I would know in my heart that if I fail, I will be letting Jesus down.

8) One interesting statement that Jesus makes here we might want to look at more closely. In verse 12 ff, Jesus says:

12 As you enter the house, greet it. **13** And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.

9) At this time, people believed that blessings could be given as well as taken back.

a) The disciples would bless the household upon entering.

b) If the household is worthy (that is, had accepted them and their message), then the blessing of peace would remain upon that house.

c) But if the household is not worthy (that is, did not accept their message), then the blessing of peace would return to the disciples, who would then leave that house.

d) The peace returning from that house also indicated judgment to come (10:15). The words of blessing that the disciples had given would not be fulfilled there.[28]

10) Then, in verse 14 he says:

14 And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.

11) There are two aspects of this we should consider.

12) First, this is indicative of total rejection – not receiving and/or even listening to what they had to say.

a) In this case, just as they and Jesus were rejected by the people of the Decapolis, so these men should be prepared for total rejection.

13) Second, when you consider the mission on which Jesus is sending these men, it is obvious that there must be limits on how long they will attempt to get folks to listen to their message.

a) As perhaps as cold as this statement may seem, I think this may be just that, a setting of limits.

14) As with the previous 2 verses, the rejection is also indicated in the judgement to come in verse 10:15.

15) To be sure, we are not going to be going to a town and be rejected by it – asked to leave.

a) However, there are circumstances that we might find ourselves in that would lead to our message being rejected.

So, what would that statement "shake off the dust from your feet" mean for us today in that situation?

b) Unlike the disciples, we may not have the ability of distancing ourselves completely from the person or group we are speaking to.

c) In that case we must continue in our contact with that person or persons and show love to them in hopes that they might at some point see Christ in us and rethink their rejection.

Comments / Questions on this section?

1) We now find ourselves making a shift, from the original instructions for the immediate mission to a much longer-term set of circumstances these men will face.

2) We will break these verses down into several sections beginning with verses 16 thru 24.

3) As we read this first section, let your mind see what he is saying in relation to the events that are portrayed in the book of Acts.

Matthew 10:16–25 (ESV)
Persecution Will Come

16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. **17** Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to

[28] Bruce B. Barton, *Matthew*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 204.

courts and flog you in their synagogues, [18] and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. [19] When they deliver you over, do not be anxious 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. [20] For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. [21] Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, [22] and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. [23] When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

[24] "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. [25] It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household."

4) Our first clue that we have made a major shift is in how Jesus changes the explanation of how he is sending them out.
   a) Prior to verses 5 and following, he is sending them out as shepherds to the lost sheep of Israel.
   b) He emphasizes the temporary nature of the mission and by his instructions he is forcing them to be dependent on God.
5) As we enter this section, we find a very disheartening statement to start off with – he is sending them out as sheep among wolves.
   a) He also indicates clearly that they would be witnesses to the Gentiles which in the previous section he had told them they were not to go to the Gentiles.
6) Jesus might have introduced this passage with a statement "So, you thought what I just told you was scary – well guess what – there's more!"
   a) But, he didn't – he just ripped off the bandage and kept going.
7) As we read this and continue to think about the events of the book of Acts, it is reasonably clear where we are in relation to the foundation of the Church, the apostles, Paul, and all that go along with it.
8) However, Jesus makes a statement in verse 23 that has been puzzling through the years to many commentators and scholars.

[23] When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

9) There are various views on this statement:
   a) Some see *"Son of Man coming"* as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70CE**.**
      i) There are arguments here tieing this to the Mount Olivet Discourse which we will study in a few weeks.
   b) Others see it as the final return of the Lord.
   c) Quarles puts forth that this is referring to Jesus' resurrection where he receives all authority.

10) In any of these cases, commentators note that the verse connects *mission with an extended timeline*, not just that first preaching trip.

11) Along with that I think we must consider the real point Jesus is trying to drive home to the disciples.

    a) That is that this is the first mission and as things come to pass, this will be the way they must proceed and these are the things they can expect.

12) We close this section with verses 24 and 25 which has a two-fold purpose.

    a) First to clearly state that he will be suffering in the same ways in which he is talking about here and…

    b) Conversely, they will be suffering as he will be only over a much longer period of time.

24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. **25** It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household."