

Sent Ones: The Calling

From the Series, “The King and I – Matthew Tells Us About the King of the Universe”

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Introduction

Have you ever had to send something to another person, that was really important? Maybe a payment that was just a little bit late? Maybe it was a present to someone who was important to you? At one time, romantic couples sent love letters.

Today of course, we have the Internet. We can send emails in a flash. We can make payments online, very quickly.

It wasn't that long ago that we had the mail service. Of course, we still have it - some affectionately refer to it as “snail mail.” In olden days, it was the postal service. The postal service was made up of people who were said to be very dedicated. Most people recall their motto:



“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.”

That's dedication!

It's interesting: The idea of a postal service isn't new. We can find records of postal services as far back as ancient Persia. The motto for today's Post Office actually comes from a statement made by an ancient Greek historian:

It is said that as many days as there are in the whole journey, so many are the men and horses that stand along the road, each horse and man at the interval of a day's journey; and these are stayed neither by snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness from accomplishing their appointed course with all speed.

- Herodotus, Histories

As we can see, over 2,000 years ago, in Persia they had a kind of “Pony Express”. So, all through history, there's been an idea of sending important things safely. When you send something, especially something important, you want dependable, dedicated, and hopefully experienced people.

We're back in our series, "The King and I – Matthew Tells us About the King of the Universe." We're working our way systematically through the book of Matthew. It turns out, there came a time when Jesus had something important that he wanted to send to others: The gospel. So, when he had something very special and very important to send, he chose a very special and very important group to do it. Much of what those people went through applies to us today.

These were the "sent ones." Today, we're starting a new series to look at these men.

The reason I mentioned the postal service of ancient Persia, is that Jesus probably knew all about how to send important things through the mail. He knew that the world around him chose special people to handle their important parcels. Did he apply the same standards when he chose his special group?

We'll start the series by asking two questions: First, how did Jesus go about choosing these men? Next, we'll ask, who were they? For our first article in this series, we'll focus on the first question: How did Jesus go about choosing them?

We're calling this message: The calling. Let's read about it:

1 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. 2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. (Matthew 10:1-4)

The word in verse 2 is "Apostles". That's from a Greek word that means, "Sent ones." Jesus chose these men to be the sent ones - the ones who would take his gospel to the world. What went into this?

I. Prayer.

One of the most important factors in this decision was heavy-duty prayer. Let's look at the way Matthew closed the last chapter:

37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.
38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:37-38)

Jesus commanded his disciples to pray that workers be sent into the harvest. It looks like the people whom Jesus commanded to pray were in fact going to be the ones who were sent.

Like many of the stories in Matthew, this one also appears in the other gospels. Each of the gospels was written for a different audience, so each says the same things, only with different details and different perspectives.

Here's what Luke says:

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles. (Luke 6:12-13)

Imagine that! This was a very important decision. So, Jesus went someplace where he could be alone. If he stayed where he was, he would have been surrounded by distractions. He chose a deserted mountainside and there, he began to pray. He prayed so long, that it becomes dark. Luke says Jesus went on from there to spend the whole night praying. Then, only after long intense prayer, did Jesus choose the people who would be sent out with his gospel.

That's a lot of prayer! There's a very obvious application here: When we have an important decision to make, do we pray? This kind of prayer, intense and effective prayer, the kind that we just saw in our Lord, comes from two things: First, it comes from the intense belief that prayer works. Second it comes from intense caring.

Sometimes, we need to ask ourselves: Do we believe that prayer works? Next, we need to ask ourselves, is there something that we care deeply about? If so, do we ask for God's help? Do we pray about it? The more we care, the more intensely we pray.

Jesus cared deeply about his gospel. He cared deeply about the world that needed it. So, his prayer was intense and long. I think we can all grow in these areas. Let's ask God to grant us his Holy Spirit, so we can become more like our Lord Jesus.

So, prayer was a vital part of the choice that Jesus made.

II. Preparation

The next thing we'll see is that this calling required preparation. Our last series in the book of Matthew was called, "What Kind of Man Is This?" Jesus called a number of people to follow him. That was a sort of introduction stage, or novice stage. That group saw Jesus do amazing things. They saw him heal people with terrible maladies: Blindness, leprosy, paralysis, and more. They even saw Jesus raise a young girl from the dead.

They saw Jesus in the midst of a terrible storm. The storm was so bad, they were afraid the boat was going to sink. Jesus made the wind and the waves become still with a simple command.

They saw Jesus cast out terrible demons - Demons that entered men and gave them supernatural strength. Those possessed men could break iron chains. But those same spirits, too strong for any mortal, cowered in fear before Jesus. He sent them away with a word.

So, the disciples saw great power. But they also saw great character. Jesus healed people because he cared about them. He spoke kindly to them. He touched people who were untouchable. He went out of his way to help people.

At one point, he left a rare feast to visit the home of a man who lost his daughter. The girl was dead. Jesus could have gone at any time. He could have said, "Hey, hang around until after dessert – then we'll get to your kid." But no! Jesus left immediately when he saw a father grieving for his lost child. And then, as we said, he raised her from the dead by simply taking her hand and telling her to get up.

So, Jesus prepared these men. They saw his power. They saw his character. For those things to happen, he had to spend time with them. And we'll see through the rest of Matthew's book that Jesus didn't stop there. Those men followed Jesus for a long time. They watched him teach. They watched him show more power. They watched him show more compassion and love.

From this we see two applications: First, do we prepare people? There's a story I tell every now and then. It's about my first attempt at teaching a group of kids in church. It was way back in 19...something or other. Let's just say it was a long time ago. I was a brand-new Christian. So, I went to the pastor and asked if there was some way I could help in church. He told me that when parents met at the weekly prayer meeting, they sent their kids to the basement for a Bible class. I could teach that class.

So, he handed me a lesson. Then, he sent me down to the room. Prior to that time, I had never worked with children. I was alone with this group. And I found that this was not just any group of kids. One of the kids, a little boy named Mikey, had some developmental issues. He was hyper-active. After a short while, little Mikey started acting up. I had no idea what to do, so this got worse - And worse.

After about an hour the pastor came back. He found me attempting to wrestle little Mikey to the floor. How did the pastor respond? Did he say, "Oh, maybe it was a bad idea to leave a total beginner alone with a group of kids that included a hyper-active kid"? No. He gave me a very disappointed look, shook his head, and shook his finger at me. So, not only did he fail to take responsibility for his mistake, he then blamed me and insulted me.

Now, I'm an idealist. So, I went back and volunteered in other areas of the church. But I know people who would never have volunteered again. In fact, I know people who would have never returned to church.

So, we need to do a better job preparing people for the jobs we ask of them.

Next, Jesus called people to follow him. That meant leaving everything and spending time following him around. So, we have to ask: Do we spend time with Jesus? The way that Jesus prepared these men for a vitally important mission was to spend time with them.

He invited. Some followed. Others did not.

From this, we see a very simple formula:

*The more time you spend with Jesus, the more you learn about him.
The more of yourself you give to him, the more of him you receive.*

I appreciate all the people who faithfully attend church. However, for many, it stops there. If we would spend more time with Jesus, we would see a lot more of him. That's time in prayer – time in reading the Scriptures – time reading devotional books - Time spent fellowshiping with other believers. My concern for a long time is that people spend 60 minutes of their week in church. They then spend 60 hours watching TV, videos, movies, cruising the Internet, playing video games, and who knows what else.

Let me repeat: The more time you spend with Jesus, the more you learn about him. The more of yourself you give to him, the more of him you receive.

So, preparation was important.

III. Passion

Next, Jesus called these men with **passion**.

“Jesus called his twelve disciples to him...” (Matthew 10:1)

That word, “called”, is special - It's intense. In the original language, this word indicated passion, a sense of importance. It's not like the way we normally call people. We say, “Dinner's ready - Everybody come.” People who prepare dinners for others all know how this works: People may respond by coming or they may not.

Jesus issued a call to twelve men. That call indicated strength, and passion. It indicated something really important: Something Jesus cared about deeply. This was not a call to dinner. This was not a call to volunteer for a onetime task. This was a call to a special level of dedication for these men. This was something Jesus was **passionate** about.

In churches, we call to people in different ways. There are those times when we have simple tasks. For example, sometimes, we have a cleaning day. That's one level of call. Some people come, and we appreciate it when they do. It can be fun. Sometimes though, people have truly important reasons for doing something else. We understand that.

Sometimes, Jesus calls to us with a level of importance that we don't always understand. For example, Jesus calls us to be saved from our sins. That is important beyond belief. This is the point where we remind people. All of us have a problem of sin. We have turned away from God. Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins. He calls to you - With passion. He loves you. Listen to his call. If you have never accepted the free gift of God's love and salvation, contact us (There is some important information at the end of this article).

After that, Jesus calls us all to be his disciples. He doesn't call everyone to the level of the twelve apostles. He doesn't require everyone to leave their homes and their jobs to follow him. For many people, following Jesus and becoming a disciple only requires you to leave behind distracting things in of your life.

If you would like to be a disciple, or if you are one and you'd like to become a better one, again, contact us.

Here's where we ask another question: Are you passionate about Jesus? He's passionate about you!

If you aren't passionate about Jesus, the answer isn't to beat yourself up. The answer isn't to tighten every muscle in your body and shake until something happens. The answer is to pray and ask for God's help.

In our prayer meeting this week, we discussed a prayer made by the apostle Paul. Here it is:

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19)

Do you want to understand the power of God? Do you want to understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge? Pray! Pray for yourself. Pray for your family. Pray for your church. Pray for everyone you know.

Jesus called twelve men to follow him. He called them with passion.

IV. Power

Next, Jesus equipped his 12 apostles with authority and power.

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and *gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.* (Matthew 10:1, emphasis mine)

Jesus had authority. He had the power to do amazing things. He shared that authority and power with his special group of sent ones.

We said earlier that much of what happened with these men applies to us today. Some, however, does not. These men were being called to do something very unique and very rare. They had seen the Son of God walking on the earth. And they were being sent out to proclaim his message. This was before there was the officially approved collection of writings that we call the Bible. Nothing exactly like this was ever heard before. And these men would eventually travel to far corners of the known world of their day. So, Jesus had to give them resources unique to their special mission.

Today, we don't have authority and power on that level. There is some discussion about what we would do if we were faced with a demon-possessed person. Perhaps any of us could pray to Jesus and ask him to drive out the evil spirit. Certainly, if someone is sick, we can pray to Jesus and ask for healing. But supernatural healing simply doesn't occur on the scale that it did in the days of Jesus and the following age of the early church.

How about proclaiming the Word of God? That's certainly something that we are authorized to do. Today, we have the completed Bible. Let's share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world.

So, this calling of sent ones involved authority and power.

IV. Perfection (not)

We just talked about things that went into the calling of the twelve apostles. Let's talk about something that was NOT part of that call: Perfection These were not perfect men. Let's see why.

Slow

For a start, these men were often a little slow to understand what Jesus was teaching. For example, Jesus often taught in parables. Here's how the apostles reacted after one of them:

15 Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." 16 "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. (Matthew 15:15-16)

These guys weren't the brightest bulbs in the pack. It took them a while to catch the teaching style Jesus used.

Prideful

Next, Jesus valued humility. These men were often just the opposite. They were pompous and prideful.

33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” 34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. (Mark 9:33-34)

Among followers of Jesus, the question is not, who is the greatest. Jesus is the greatest. Jesus had to explain to these men that the question is, who is the least. In other words, who is most willing to serve others.

The list goes on. These men often failed at the challenges that were placed before them.

Again, we mentioned that ancient people had postal services - And Jesus likely knew all about those things. Earthly postal services involve dedicated, competent people. Why did Jesus call twelve men who were often times much less? Here’s why:

***Jesus doesn’t call people based on their earthly gifts and accomplishments.
Jesus calls people based on what they can become if they will give themselves over to him.***

Let’s pull this all together.

Conclusion

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ had something very important to share with the world: His gospel. When the world chooses people to send things, they often choose highly gifted and dedicated people. Jesus didn’t do this. He chose 12 very imperfect men. He prepared them. He spent time with them. He showed them his power, his character, and his passion. And they became his apostles: his sent ones.

In the end, these men were changed into people equipped to share the most important message the world has ever known: The gospel of Jesus Christ. Today, God doesn’t give people the same level of power and authority that he gave the disciples, the sent one. But he still calls to us. He invites us to follow him. He doesn’t call based on any good thing we have done. He doesn’t call based on any earthly gift we think we possess. He calls based on what he can do with people when they’re willing to give themselves over to him.

Friends, God calls to you. Follow him. Let him change you into a sent one.

Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church
www.TrinityTeaneck.org

Phil's Site
PhilBrainerd.com

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's site:
PeaceWithGod.net
