

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Messengers Of The King - Part 2

Text: Matthew 10:1-4

INTRODUCTION: The plan of God is to use men to spread the news of the gospel. Only God's atoning blood and sacrifice are acceptable means to eternity. In a unique way, God uses those who have been redeemed to declare the message of the gospel.

Society routinely sets standards of qualifications. Employers have qualifications for certain jobs, the more responsibly the more the requirements. Ads for job require a certain minimum and often list such requirements as "self-motivated, ability to work under pressure, work experience and willing to travel." You even need to qualify for certain requirements to get a credit card, a mortgage or a loan.

Scripture is clear, God has standards for His people. This is true for those in leadership, cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-12 (elders, deacons), Titus 1:6-9. 2 Peter 3:14, **"Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless."** The standard for every believer is to be perfect, Matthew 5:48 **"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."** Yet, Scripture also makes it clear that no man, in and of himself, can meet the least of God's standards. The process of sanctification is a gift of God. He continues to make us more like Him. Even Paul confessed in Romans 7:18, **"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not."**

Application: We are commanded to be perfect, yet we can't be on our own nor will we ever achieve what's called (and wrongly) sinless perfection. We understand our shortcomings, our weaknesses, our own fallen nature. But we also acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit to teach us to be more in the image of Christ.

No matter our shortcomings, God chose us to be used for His glory. We all have a tendency to become discouraged when our spiritual life suffers because of our sin and failures. The council of 2 Corinthians 12:9 is invaluable, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."** Understanding our own weakness helps us to focus on His greatness. Think about this, God has always used imperfect and sinful men throughout history. After the flood Noah became drunk and acted indecently. Abraham doubted and lied about God, committed adultery with his maid. Isaac told a similar lie, Jacob extorted the blessing from Esau, Moses was a murderer, and in pride he struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God had commanded. Aaron led Israel to worship a golden calf. Joshua disobey God by making a treaty with the Gibeonites instead of destroying them. David committed adultery, murder and endured the death of his son because of his sin.

#1 - SIMON, WHO IS CALLED PETER

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Peter was by far the central figure in the three years of Jesus' earthly ministry and in the beginning of the NT church. Peter was constantly at the Lord's side. He was never far off, asking questions, giving advice, giving commands and he's mentioned only second to Jesus in the NT. No other disciple spoke or was spoke to nor was any other disciple rebuked more so than Peter. We find that some of Peter's questions were immature or superficial, but a leader who doesn't ask questions of what he doesn't understand lacks certain qualities to be a leader.

When Jesus was speaking of this in Matthew 15:10-12, "**After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, Hear and understand. *It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.***" Peter's response in vs. 15, "**Explain the parable to us.**" In Matthew 19:27 Peter asks a rather selfish question, "**Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?**" Our Lord's response in vs. 29-30, "**And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. But many *who are first will be last; and the last, first.***"

After many of the "followers" of Jesus left, Jesus asked the twelve if they would go away too. It was Peter who responded, "**Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life"** (John 6:66-68). As Christians today we should be asking this question too. Who shall we go too? Who else is there besides God?

Peter also was rebuked frequently. What danger lies in leadership is thinking too much of oneself, which opens the door to Satan's workings. It was God's design and will to send Jesus to die on the cross for our sin. Peter, no matter the intention, was out of line in trying to prevent that, even though he could not, cf. Matthew 16:21-23.

Application: What can we learn from Peter? Pride can cause issues. Peter said he would never deny the Lord, yet he did so three times. He took some things upon himself instead of waiting on the Lord. Peter would become a bold leader, preaching, teaching and proclaiming the gospel no matter the cost. He is a perfect example of a disciple learning from the master, as we should be doing.

#2 - ANDREW HIS BROTHER

He is mentioned 12 times in the Scripture, some are the same account from different writers. Andrew was Peter's brother and his name means "manly." Andrew was a disciple of John, and began to follow Jesus, cf. John 1:35-41. It was in Matthew 4:18-19 where Jesus said to them who were fishing, "**come follow me.**"

Andrew was involved in the feeding of the 5,000, cf. John 6:5-9. Andrew's response was simple, he brought the lads lunch as if he believed God could do a miracle, but he also said, as we do, what are

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they worth with such a crowd. In other words, we believe but then we look at our circumstances. John 12:20-22 it seems Andrew was bringing men to Jesus.

It appears Andrew was very humble. He was always in the shadow of Peter, James and John. Yet, he didn't seem to mind. That's the kind of men leaders need, even in a circle of leadership. He was content with being in the shadows. He was content simply serving Jesus. Many small churches all across the world are served by pastors with no podcasts, no twitter accounts, no instagram pages, but they faithfully teach and preach each week. This is the analogy of Andrew.

#3 - JAMES THE SON OF ZEBEDEE

In the gospel accounts James never appears apart from his brother John. It is said of James and his brother in Mark 3:17, “**and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, Sons of Thunder.**” From this description we can assume some character like traits of passionate, zealous, fervent and aggressive. The disciples suffered from religious and racial animosity towards the Samaritans. Here's an account of this imperfection and our Lord's response, cf. Luke 9:51-56. The fact is they had a hateful and vengeful attitude. James had much zeal but little sensitivity.

James may have been commended for his zeal for those who reject Jesus, however, his response was one of vengefulness. I am afraid if we had such power there wouldn't be many around us. It is commendable to be zealous for God and for those those who defame or for those who reject Him as was the case in Luke, Psalms 69:9, “**For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.**” The response for vengeance isn't what our Lord taught, cf. Matthew 5:38-42.

James became the first apostolic martyr, Acts 12:1-2, “**Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.**” He wasn't a watcher from a distance, he must have been out in the forefront for Herod to seek him out. His zeal was good, but the danger of zeal without love is a receipt for disaster. It was both James and John that had put their mother to ask Jesus, cf. Matthew 20:20-23. James would drink of this cup as we seen in Acts, and so would John, although much later. Jesus kindly taught James to bridle his zeal into fruitful ministry. An ancient Roman coin pictures an ox facing an altar and a plow with the inscription “ready for either.” So as we should be.

#4 - JOHN

He is one of the most prominent apostles we know. He wrote his own gospel, three epistles and the book of Revelation. We see John likely had the same zeal as James his brother, but we also see over time the mild manuring of John into a grandfather like figure. We see this pastoral type care in the

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book of 1, 2, 3 John. It is clear that throughout John's life he maintained standards of doctrine and morality, and his position to maintain these standards is clear. In Paul's letter to the Romans 16:17-18 is a firm stance for all of us to hold too, **"Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting."** John would not have been a good fit for modern day evangelism. He preached love, but not a love that overlooks disobedience and sin.

His love for truth and doctrine are never more apparent than in his three epistles he wrote. Love does not overlook doctrinal error, but exposes it. John would not fit well in today's woke, seeker sensitive culture. John would tell the truth, but with love.

The lives of these four men are vastly different in character, but single minded in purpose. Peter, outspoken, speaks before he thinks, zealous, a bit prideful and yet a faithful servant. Andrew, a humble, quiet man, not dynamic but sharing the truth of Jesus. James also was a bold leader, dynamic and out in front, but a purveyor of truth. John, a sound doctrinal man, humble, quiet and loving.

It is said that Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross. He is said to have proclaimed Christ as people passed by as he suffered in agony. James was beheaded. The Roman soldier with James was supposedly converted. He was beheaded along with James. Of course John was banished to an island where God used this to pen the book of Revelation. It was Peter, where tradition reports he died a cruel death. It is said before he was crucified he was forced to witness the crucifixion of his wife. Peter was crucified upside down as tradition states.

CONCLUSION

Ordinary men, ordinary strengths and ordinary weaknesses. Men with flare ups with pride, anger, misunderstandings. Seems like we know someone like that today, ourselves. Whether an obscure pastors, missionary or teacher, educated or uneducated, God will use you to share the gospel.