

**Sunday 20-February-22**

**The King's Ambassador's Part 1**

### **Jeremiah 50:6**

<sup>6</sup> "My people have been lost sheep;  
 their shepherds have led them astray  
 and caused them to roam on the mountains.  
 They wandered over mountain and hill  
 and forgot their own resting place.

### **Isaiah 53:6**

<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
 each of us has turned to our own way;  
 and the LORD has laid on him  
 the iniquity of us all.

### **Matthew 10:1-23**

#### **Jesus Sends Out the Twelve**

**10** Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

<sup>2</sup> 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; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup> Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

<sup>9</sup> “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— <sup>10</sup> no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. <sup>11</sup> Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. <sup>12</sup> As you enter the home, give it your greeting. <sup>13</sup> If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup> If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

<sup>16</sup> “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup> Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. <sup>18</sup> On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time, you will be given what to say, <sup>20</sup> for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

<sup>21</sup> “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>22</sup> You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup> When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

### Sermon: King’s Ambassador’s – Part 1

It would be good to have your **Bibles opened** up at **Matthew 10** – starting at **verse 1** – we’re going through to **verse 23**.

Let me pray for God’s guidance and understanding

Let’s pray...

## Intro (Ambassadors)

As we heard in our **children's talk** – in our Bible passage this morning – **Jesus sends out His ambassadors**

And the **definition** of **ambassador** is:

[PowerPoint 1-Ambassador]

*a person who represents or promotes a particular activity*

*a person who acts as a representative for a person or country*

And it kind of **implies** that the **ambassador** is a **good representative** who **brings honour** to the person or country they represent – and **not dishonour!**

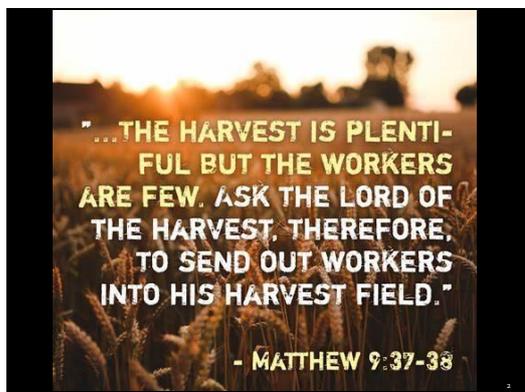
You may have heard in the news in the last few weeks – about **Prince Andrew** – and it sounds like **he hasn't been** a **good representative** for the Queen, the Royal Family or **even** his country.

## Context (Matthew 9:37-38)

**Before** we look at our **Bible passage** this morning though – we need to get the **context**.

So, if we look back to the end of the last chapter – **Matthew 9:37-38** – we get the context.

[PowerPoint 2-Matthew 7:37-38]



Jesus looks at the **people of Israel** and sees they are **lost from God**

And they are **like** a **huge harvest** field full of **lost people**

That's nothing new

In **Jeremiah's** day – 600BC – in our OT reading from **Jeremiah 50:6** – God describes the people of **Israel as lost sheep** – because the **religious leaders** of the time – which God describes as **shepherds** – have **led the people astray** and the people (like sheep) had **roamed away from God** and got **lost**.

And we find it's the **same in Isaiah's day** – 700BC – in our OT reading from **Isaiah 53:6** – God says pretty much the same thing – the **people are like sheep that have gone astray** – they have **gone their own way** – instead of **God's way**

So – if there are **many people lost from God** – in this huge harvest field

**Jesus' point** is – they **need workers** to **plough** the **harvest** field – and **bring the lost people back to God**

And **Jesus says** – pray and **ask the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers**

And so, we hit **chapter 10** – and that's what **Jesus** is going to do – **send out workers**

These workers are His **ambassadors**

This morning we're going to explore **what it means** to be an **ambassador for King Jesus**

[PowerPoint 3-Heading]

**First**, Jesus' ambassadors are **ordinary people who can do extraordinary things** – that's in verses 1 to 4.

[PowerPoint 3a-Ordinary people...]

**Ordinary people who can do extraordinary things (vv1-4)**

To begin with Jesus **sends out 12 disciples** and gives them His **authority** to **drive out impure spirits** and **heal** every **disease** and **sickness**.

Why does Jesus do that?

Because He has compassion for those who are broken in spirit and broken in their bodies as we said last week

And because people are lost from God

The disciples are given the power to do these miracles

Because it will show people who Jesus is – He is God!

It will show that the disciples are fair-dinkum

And it will help people to have faith in Jesus

The disciples were basically mirroring the work of the person they are representing – Jesus!

Notice in **verse 1** they are called disciples – which means they follow Jesus' teaching

But in **verse 2** they are called **Apostles**

Apostle means – *one who is called or sent out* – directly by Jesus

An **Apostle** must have been an **eye-witness to Jesus** (Acts 1:21-22) – and **learnt from Jesus** – and **seen Him** when He rose from the dead (1 Cor 9:1)

And notice there are twelve apostles

Why? Because just as the **12 tribes of Israel represented God's people** – now these **12 apostles will represent God's people** – and bring in a **new era** – by laying the **foundation** of Jesus' Christian **Church** – which will **include all people** – **Jews and non-Jews** (aka Gentiles)

Application: We are not **Apostles** – but we are **disciples** – and as such we too are called to be **ambassadors for Jesus**.

Application: Did you know that **amongst** those **twelve apostles** – none of them were **religious leaders**, none were **rich**, most of them **uneducated**. There were **fishermen**, a **tax collector**, a **zealot** (a rebel). They were **ordinary people like us**. But **they did extraordinary things for Jesus** – because **Jesus called** them, **sent** them – and **amazing things happened in Jesus' name**

Application: It's the **same for us** – God can do extraordinary things with ordinary people like us – we just need to **accept His call** and **turn up when sent** – **God will do the rest.**

Isn't that what the Apostle Paul meant when He said in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29:

*But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

You see **as ambassadors of Jesus** – it's never **about us** – it's always **about Jesus** and what He wants us to do...

Which brings us to the second point

***Jesus' ambassadors have a specific mission to do*** – that's verses 5 to 8.

[PowerPoint 3b-Specific...]

### Have a specific mission to do (vv5-8)

They were to initially **NOT** to go to **non-Jewish towns** (like the Gentiles and Samaritans) Instead, they were to go only to the “**lost sheep**” of **Israel**.

The twelve apostles' **mission** was limited to begin with – a bit like a **prototype mission** – or a **training mission** – they were to stick to Jewish towns first

Their **mission** was – v7 – to **tell people the Kingdom of God has come near**

Their mission was to **follow on** from where John the Baptist left off

**John** – told **people to come back to God** – and repent – because **King Jesus** – the Messiah was **coming**

Now that Jesus has come – the **apostles' mission** – is to say – **Jesus is now here** – come and **follow Him and have faith in Him**

And to help in their mission – Jesus says – in v8 – **you're going to heal sick people, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and drive out demons**

Application: By the time we get to the **end of Matthew's Gospel – Matt 28** – that **mission** has **opened up** – to be – not only to the Jews – but **to all nations**. And that **mission applies** to us. We are to be **Jesus' ambassadors** – and **tell people that the Kingdom of Jesus is near** – and tell people that Jesus gives **forgiveness of sins** – and gives **eternal life** – and it's all free – it just requires people to **repent** – say they are sorry for their sin and rebellion against God – and **believe** in Jesus.

Can we heal people? Can we raise people from the dead?

We can pray anything in the name of Jesus?

**Miracles** happen all the time? **God is in miracle business!**

**Miracles help** people to **believe**.

Some people **believe** without **miracles!**

Application: As Jesus ambassadors we're part of His **worldwide church**. Jesus left the church as the **vehicle to bring the Gospel to the lost sheep** – those lost from God – and to **help those who are broken** – the sick, the diseased, the disabled, the poor, the orphans, the widowed. All of us are **ambassadors** – all of us are part of this worldwide **church** – all of us should be involved in some way in this specific mission.

Third, **Jesus' ambassadors rely on God to provide** – that's verses 9 to 15.

[PowerPoint 3c-God provides...]

### Rely on God's provision (vv9-15)

Jesus sent out His **disciples** without any **money** (v9) – without any **luggage** or **spare clothes** (v10) – in other words they were to **travel light**.

They were to **rely on the hospitality** of the towns they went to – as Jesus puts it – the **worker is worth his keep**.

As they went into each town – they were to **find someone who is welcoming and accepts their message** from Jesus and stay there – until they moved to the next town. **Sometimes** they will come to **towns** who won't welcome them and won't listen to the message from Jesus – they were to **simply dust their shoes off** – and **move on**.

They weren't to **argue** the toss with those who won't listen.

They were to **leave any judgment** on those people **to God**.

As Jesus says – Sodom and Gomorrah – were judged severely for their wickedness.

**Judgement** on those who reject Jesus will be worse than Sodom and Gomorrah – because they have heard the message of Jesus and **rejected the message** and **rejected the messengers**.

Application: As ambassadors for Jesus – **we are to simply deliver the message** – **God will provide all we need** in whatever ministry we are involved in. Yes – **we must plan and prepare** – but then **God does the rest**. Our job is to **stick to the mission** – that is **bring the lost sheep to Jesus** – and care for the broken.

Application: When people don't want to listen to our message about Jesus' forgiveness and offer of eternal life. We're not to **get angry and say "fine, you're going to hell"** – we're not to **bash them with verse after verse from the Bible** – until they submit. We simply deliver the message in love and gentleness – and let God do the rest. What we say about Jesus – **sows a seed in people** – whether they realize it or not!

And that leads us on to the fourth point

***Jesus' ambassadors can expect opposition*** – that's in verses 16 to 23

[PowerPoint 3d-Opposition...]

Jesus is not a false recruiter.

When He gives someone a job – **He clearly defines the job description**

And in these verses – 16 to 23 – He **speaks** of what it will be like for His disciples in the future.

Not necessarily in the specific mission to the towns of Israel but **later on when their mission goes further** – and **goes to the Gentile** (non-Jewish) **towns**

We can say that because v18 – talks about what will happen when they stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.

Jesus clearly tells **His disciples they will face opposition.**

V16 – they will be like **sheep amongst wolves.** Wolves attack a flock of sheep. So, Jesus is saying **they will be going into danger.** People will attack them **physically and verbally.**

V16 – So they need to be very **shrewd like snakes** – snakes don't go looking for trouble – and if they sense trouble – they slither away. His disciples are to be sensible – not go charging into danger. And they are to be **innocent like doves** – gentle and loving – not looking for a fight.

V17 – Jesus warns that they will face **opposition even from their own people** and even get **flogged in the synagogues.** Imagine us flogging people in church!

V18 – And because they are Jesus' ambassadors – on His account – **they will be arrested and have to face governors and kings** – we see this happen to Peter and Paul in the Book of Acts!

But **they are not to worry about this opposition** – **God is with them** – and v19 & v20 – when they are arrested – they are to know that the **Holy Spirit** – **will give them the words to say at the time it is needed.** That's a great comfort – isn't it?

The **opposition** to the disciples – will even come **from their family** – v21

And they will be **hated by everyone** – v22 – because they are ambassadors of Jesus

But **they are to stand firm until the end** – because they are **saved for Heavenly glory and eternal life!**

**Jesus is no false recruiter. He **couldn't make it any clearer** – they will face opposition and they will be persecuted.**

Application: For us – as ambassadors of Jesus – **we will face opposition**. Notice in v19 and v23 – it says “when” they arrest you – “when” you are persecuted. It's not “if” – it's “**when**”. Now we might not get arrested or flogged for being ambassadors for Jesus. We might not get physically harmed. But we might have someone in our family who doesn't talk to us because we're Christian or they disagree with our stance on what the Bible says. We may also get verbally abused because we're Christian – there are plenty of people in our nation who are anti-Christian. There's certainly plenty of stuff in the news – when a school or church stands up for Christian values or morals from the Bible! Depending on how religious freedom goes in our nation – it may get worse for us! But we can take comfort in knowing the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say – when we need them.

**And we must stand firm** – because we have Heaven as our reward.

Application: Remember also we are the sheep – not the wolves – so we don't savage people like wolves with the Bible – we are to **be gentle and loving**.

Application: How are we to understand the last verse in our passage this morning? V23 – where Jesus says: *“truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man [Jesus] comes”*?

This is one of the **hardest-to-understand statements of Jesus in Matthew**. Could Jesus really mean that He would return to this earth before the disciples would make it through all the cities of Israel? If so, this would make Jesus plainly wrong in this prediction.

There are a **few explanations**:

- a. It could mean when **Jesus comes in judgment** – and He certainly came in **judgment in AD70** – when **Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman Army** – a judgment perhaps worse than Sodom and Gomorrah.
- b. It could mean when **Jesus came to His disciples in triumph** after His resurrection and **gave** them the **great commission** *to go and make disciples in His name in all nations* (Matthew 28:18-20)
- c. Or it could mean when **Jesus ascended to Heaven** and **came to His father**.

But I think there's another point here.

Whether we look at the **Early Church in the New Testament (NT)** – or the **letters to the churches in the NT** – we get the sense that everyone thought **Jesus was coming back in their day**.

I'm sure **people in WWI or WW2** thought Jesus was coming back in their day – and **many people today** – as we face nations in turmoil all over the world – as we face this pandemic – many people today – **think Jesus is coming back in their life-time!**

So – the point is being an ambassador for Jesus is **our life-time's work** – it's **never-ending** – and it's **done with the thought in our mind** – *that before we've taken the Gospel of Jesus to all the people in our towns in our community – Jesus will have come back.*

### Challenge

To finish up then – I want to offer us a **challenge**

As ambassadors for Jesus

[PowerPoint 4-Challenge]

It's **worth asking ourselves the question:**

*Are we fulfilling our calling to go to the lost sheep – those lost from God? Are we fully committed to the task of being workers in the Lord's harvest field?*

One **observation** I'd make in **our current climate here in Australia**

I see and hear of **people protesting against the government** and **against COVID rules** and **against vaccinations** and **saying they have rights**. Some of those people protesting **are Christians**. They **may well have valid points** that they are protesting about. I even **share some of their valid points**.

But it's all very well **talking about** our **rights** – but what about our **responsibility as ambassadors of Jesus?**

Maybe we need to ask ourselves – as ambassador for Jesus

Is joining in a protest for a weekend or a day – is sticking up for our rights – what Jesus really wants from us?

Didn't Jesus say – render to Caesar what is Caesar's?

Didn't Jesus say – His Kingdom is not of this World?

Didn't Jesus say – store up treasures in Heaven?

And I'm not just picking on protesting – it can be anything **we are investing a great deal of time into** – that's taking away from our job as ambassadors for Jesus?

So instead of **spending time on whatever hobby horse we might have** [and we can still protest online or through our Church advocating and lobbying the government] - would we be better investing time – **speaking to people who are lost from God – teaching scripture in our schools – praying for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers – helping those who are broken?**

Jesus will return like a thief in the night – and what if someone misses out on Heaven – because we were too preoccupied and we weren't really being ambassadors for Jesus?

Just a thought.

Let's pray...

*Heavenly Father,*

*Thank you that we are ambassadors for Jesus*

*Help us to have compassion for those who are lost from you and for those who are broken.*

*Help us to rely on your provision.*

*Help us to expect and endure opposition.*

*Help us to be worthy ambassadors for Jesus. In His name, we pray. Amen.*

**Benediction (Hebrews 12:1-3)**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. AMEN.