

NOTES FROM TOM WILDING'S SERMON 1st October 2023 am

TITLE: "The Best Life"

TEXT: Matthew 10 verses 1-15

Scripture references from the ESV

Matthew 10:1-15 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. ²The 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; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;^[a] ⁴Simon the Zealot,^[b] and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'^[c] ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,^[d] cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. ⁹Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics^[e] or sandals or a staff, for the labourer deserves his food. ¹¹And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴And 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. ¹⁵Truly, 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.

You only have one life so what is the best way of spending it? In the circle of life, all of us are born, then we grow up and then we die. It all happens in a flash, and we need to ask ourselves how we are going to use this time that is over so quickly. In today's world, we are bombarded with possibilities. The default position appears to be to get things:

- Money, which offers comfort and stability
- Stuff, to which we attach meaning
- Experiences such as holidays or going out for nice meals
- Health, whether it be simply to keep fit and look good, or for recovery from illness

- Intimacy, so that we are known by friends and maybe have a special someone in our life
- Community, so that we can feel we belong somewhere

It might be that you simply want a good reputation as a person who is kind and cares for others.

What does Jesus have to say about the best way to spend your life?

His answer is simple – become a disciple! A disciple is someone who has turned away from their former life and turned towards Jesus, trusting in him and believing his promises. Having repented and believed, that person now lets Jesus be in charge of their life, but what does being a disciple actually mean in practice?

At this stage in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus has been introduced as God’s King:

- As the Son of David, he has come to save people who have failed from their sin
- As the Son of Abraham, he has come to share God’s blessings as ruler of an eternal kingdom
- He has preached powerfully (read **Matthew chapters 5-7** in your Bible)
- He has served powerfully (**Matthew chapters 8-9**)

He demonstrates his unique authority over everything as he teaches and helps people, but now he is entering a new phase of his ministry. He called the original twelve disciples to him and shared his power with them, giving them authority over demons, disease and affliction (v1 above).

- Sharing your power and enabling others is the mark of a great leader.

Jesus sent the disciples to a particular place, telling them to stay in Galilee. He gave them a small mission to start with, but it is one that will prepare them for something much bigger. At the end of his time on earth, the risen Jesus will say: **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in^[b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** (Matt 28:18-20).

Having started small, Jesus expanded their mission to cover the whole earth, and that mission is ours too. However, in that small-scale mission, Jesus shows us how we go about the great commission, and how we are to spend our lives as disciple-makers.

1. **The best life is generous (v7-8).** What are disciples to do? They are to tell people what Jesus has told them.

We often over-complicate mission, working out strategies and programmes (and there is a place for that), but on a basic level, we are just called to play Chinese whispers about Jesus. It is the kindest thing we can do for anyone. Then we are to go on and actually help people in the way that Jesus did (v8).

Sometimes, Jesus enables disciples to do something spectacular, but more often, he gives them a little bit so that they can do a little bit.

- Is there something you can do for those around you?

There is a powerful reminder to the disciples of how they became disciples: **You received without paying; give without pay (v8).** Jesus simply invited them to that position. It was a free invitation. He was not trying to make money out of them, as other teachers and guides do. Instead, he said 'Follow me'.

- As the Son of David, he offers what only he can offer, even though it would cost him his life. In rising from the grave, he offers to save us from the things that we are ashamed of and feel guilty about. Though we are more lost and vulnerable than we can realise, he is the shepherd who will bring us to safety.
- As the Son of Abraham, he offers the blessing of God, and the radiance of his smile for all eternity. He offers community – a place where people are known and loved, and can really belong and be safe.

Jesus offers more than you have ever dared to dream of, so you can be generous with what you have in this earthly kingdom. Simply trust what Jesus is telling you.

You received without paying; give without pay

The best life is generous

2. **The best life is confident**

- a) **We can be confident that God will give us what we need (vv9-13 above).**

Jesus tells his disciples that they are not to take their savings or fundraise,

and not even to pack an overnight bag! When you are working for his kingdom, then the **labourer deserves his food**. When the disciples found a worthy house where someone believed the message and thus was willing to help the disciples, they should stay there and offer blessing. Rather like giving someone a cheque, the household would cash in the blessing because of their faith.

In sending out the disciples under-equipped, Jesus was teaching them (and us) to trust that God will give his people what they really need. This does not mean that we do not ever make any provision for the work God lays out for us, but rather that we can be confident that God will provide, not what we want or think we need, but what we **actually** need.

Sometimes we let an apparent lack of resources get in the way of advancing the good news, and we hold back rather than taking risks.

- As a church, or as an individual, are there things you want to do in the service of God where the only barrier is a lack of resources (human or financial)?

Maybe you should think about doing them anyway and trust God for the resources.

We can be confident that God will give us what we need

b) We can be confident that God gives us the truth (vv13b – 15)

Jesus is realistic about mission. He knows that there will be times when Plan A does not work (vv13 -14). Jesus warns them that there will be towns where there is no worthy home. What are the disciples to do then? It is tempting, in those types of circumstance to edit the gospel message to make it more palatable or more apparently relevant. We want to be accepted. However, Jesus tells the disciples to shake off the dust from under their feet, and we must do the same.

- Some people will hear the good news and not believe. That is not the fault of the messenger.

Matthew is clear that those who reject Jesus will have to answer to the Lord, just as Sodom and Gomorrah did. Those ancient cities were destroyed because they were so evil, as God meted out justice. We can be confident that we are speaking the truth,

even if the risk we have taken has backfired. Later in this chapter, Jesus tells his disciples that they will face criminal trial and execution for telling other people about him. In our lives, we might find ourselves cancelled by the others in our culture, but that does not mean that the Bible is less true.

We can be confident that God gives us the truth

The best life is confident that God will give us what we need, and that God gives us the truth

The default position for people today is to use their life to get, get, get

The Christian life is one of give, give, give, because we already have the things that matter the most.

Jesus has given us far more than we can possibly imagine.

- You heard the gospel because someone took a risk and gave confidently, telling you about Jesus.
- This church is here today because someone took a risk and planted a church, trusting in God's promises.

We are all called to take those same risks as we live out the best life and give generously and confidently.

The best life is that of a disciple

The best life is generous and confident

The best life stems from Jesus Christ – the one who gives to anyone who believes