



## Sermon Transcript

### October 22, 2017

## Living Sent Lives

### The Pattern of the Cross

Matthew 10:1-42

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on October 22, 2017 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio copy of the sermon on CD is available by request at (860) 563-8286. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com).

## **Sermon Text: Matthew 10:1-42**

**1** 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.

**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.

**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 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.

26 “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

34 “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36 And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

40 “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. 41 The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

## Introduction

Whenever I read this passage, I wonder what it must have been like to receive these marching orders from Jesus. In this passage, we find Jesus sending his disciples out on a mission trip. On the one hand, as Jesus describes what they will experience, it sounds rather thrilling. They will be given “*authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction.*” It sounds like a trip destined for success and filled with excitement. In fact, Luke tells us that later Jesus sends out another group with a similar mission, this time instead of a team of twelve, he sent a team of seventy-two. When they returned from their trip, as one can imagine, Luke says, “*The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!’*” To which Jesus tempers their enthusiasm by saying, “*Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that*

*the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*” But we do, appropriately so, get excited when the kingdom of God makes advances over darkness and people are forgiven of their sin through the precious blood of Jesus and set free from the tyranny of the devil, as the catechism puts it. Sign me up!

But as we listen further to the training and the preparation Jesus gives to the twelve, I can’t help but see the lump in the throat beginning to form as Jesus tells them what to expect. They are being sent *“to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* Last week we heard Jesus refer to this group at the end of Matthew 9 to be *“harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”* And, according to Jesus, there is a good chance the disciples won’t be received well by their own people. In fact, in verse 16 he says, *“I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.”* He talks about things like being flogged and *“dragged before governors and kings.”* There is a stark difference between being invited to the Governor’s ball and being dragged before the rulers of the land. And then when Jesus says to them in verse 28, *“And do not fear those who kill the body . . .”* one wonders what kind of trip they were being signed up for in the first place. So I wonder what was going through their minds when they received their marching orders from Jesus.

What is going through your mind as you read these marching orders from Jesus? What does this passage have to say to us as we consider what it means to live as a sent people? So far we have seen that living as a sent people is birthed out of a passion for God. Jesus said in John 4, *“my food is to do the will of him who sent me.”* We saw last week that when Jesus saw the crowds he was moved to compassion. So it is compassion for people and their need for Jesus that moves us to live as ones who are sent. This morning we are going to discover that it is the cross that shapes us as a people and it is the cross that helps us understand what it looks like to live as a people who are sent. This long passage comes to a conclusion and a climax when Jesus says to the twelve disciples in verse 38, *“Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”* While our circumstances may vary, it is the cross that transcends our circumstances.

When we think of the cross, we think of the message we proclaim. Actually, the cross draws our attention to Jesus. With great love and gratitude, we like to talk about the pierced hands and feet of Jesus because they remind us what Jesus has done for us on the cross. But the cross is more than just the message we proclaim. Ross Hastings suggests that the pierced hands and feet of Jesus don’t just tell us about the redemption we have in Jesus, but *“they suggest the nature of the King and the kingdom. They reflect a Christ who is a servant, giving his life for the world. They set a pattern for his disciples as to how they can expect to minister—as servants who give their lives for the world, who can*

expect to suffer in applying reconciliation and redemption to the world in mission.”<sup>1</sup> The cross sets the tone and the pattern of our witness. I want to make sure, as we consider what it is to live as a people who are sent, that we do so in the shadow of the cross. What is the pattern of life that is formed in us through the cross?

## People of the Cross

Our passage begins by listing for us the names of the “*twelve apostles*.” We meet them in verses 2-4, “*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; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*” Notice, they are listed in pairs, perhaps identifying each team of two that was sent. This is the only place in the Gospel of Matthew where the word *apostle* is used to refer to the Twelve and Matthew is the only Gospel writer who uses the title, “*the Twelve apostles*.”

The word “*apostle*” has both a narrow and a broad meaning in Scripture. In a narrow sense, it is a title used to refer to a special group of people who were chosen by Jesus to play a foundational role in the establishment of the church. Judas aside, the men on this list, and later the Apostle Paul who was added to this list, were used of God to establish the church. When Paul talks about the church in Ephesians 2, he uses the image of a temple and he says that while Jesus is the cornerstone to this “human structure” the apostles, along with the prophets, form the foundation. At the same time, the word *apostle* can be used in a broad sense and it comes from the verb that is translated, “*I send*.” And so, it is a word that can refer to someone who is sent out, much like a missionary. In our passage this morning, I think both ideas are present. Clearly, the title, *the twelve apostles*, points to this special group of disciples who formed the foundation of the church. And yet, not unlike many throughout church history, it says in verse 5, “*These twelve Jesus sent out*.”

When you see this list of “*twelve apostles*” it is not just a list of twelve individuals. Granted, they were individuals and they each had their story that would emerge in time. All but one of these men were martyred for their faith. So much of what we read about in Matthew 10 came true in their own lives. John was the only one who was not martyred, but we know from the book of Revelation he wasn’t without his trials. He had been exiled to the island of Patmos. But the number “twelve” is not accidental. It provides a continuity with the Old Testament and the twelve tribes of Israel, who in the Old Testament constituted the people of God. But now a new covenant is being formed

through Jesus and these apostles are also to be seen as a collective whole, representing the people of God, the church. So just like Jesus was extending his reach into Israel through the *twelve apostles* he extends his reach into this world through his church.

It is interesting to take note of what they were called to do as they were sent. They were to do what Jesus did. In verses 7-8, Jesus presents to them the nature of their ministry. He says, “*And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.*” If you remember from last Sunday, we were in the chapter before this, Matthew 9. In verse 35 we were presented with the summary of the ministry of Jesus where it says, “*Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.*” So just like Jesus, the disciples were sent to proclaim the message and to accompany the message with the work of healing.

It is helpful for us to look at the collective whole of the disciples and to see the image of the church in their collective whole. By that, I mean that when we talk about being sent, it is not simply us as individuals being sent to wherever we go week to week in our daily lives. We as a church are sent to this community and to this region. Collectively, together, we represent Jesus to this community. In this sense we are a people of the cross. Hastings puts it this way, “A church which exists only for itself, its members and its own enlargement is a contradiction of the gospel, because the church does not exist for itself . . . As such the church cannot give faithful witness to the kingdom of God if it is indifferent to the situation of the hungry, the sick, the victims of human inhumanity.”<sup>2</sup> Notice that the disciples were sent into a broken world to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper and cast out the demon. Like Jesus, we are to step into a suffering world and remaining aloof to the suffering around us is not an option. Together, we must be the presence of Jesus in this world.

This morning we gather under the shadow of the cross. We are people of the cross. It is the cross that takes all of these individuals who are gathered here this morning in our three services and unites us into one collective witness to this community that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The cross becomes that great equalizer among us because there is no one here who can stand before God on their own. And so, it humbles us and forms within us a love for one another and as a church we become a foretaste of the kingdom of God in this hurting and broken world. Like the *twelve apostles* in our passage, we are sent together as the body of Christ into this broken world and we are held together under the shadow of the cross.

## Proclaim the Cross

As a people of the cross, Jesus sends us into this world to proclaim the message of the cross. That was part of the charge Jesus gave to the disciples. He says to them in verse 7, *“And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”*

Can you pick up from this passage that there is a very real spiritual battle taking place all around us. It is a battle for the hearts and souls of people. Now I know that in the ears of our secular culture this sounds to be absurd. Carl Sagan made popular the phrase, *“The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be.”* In other words, the natural world is all there is and there is no sense of a spiritual world. He was offering up an alternative to what Christians confess in the Gloria Patri. Here we say, *“Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end. Amen, Amen.”* In other words, there is a spiritual reality in this world and God is the eternal constant in the universe that he has made. And so he even says to his disciples who are being sent out to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”* In the coming of Jesus, God’s rescue plan for this fallen world includes overcoming the evil that is in this world and restoring God’s good rule in the hearts of people. He does this through the cross.

No doubt, these instructions to proclaim the message of the kingdom of heaven are given to the disciples before Jesus goes to the cross. But we know that this message of the coming kingdom of heaven is accomplished through the suffering of Jesus on the cross. In Colossians 1:13-14 it is said of Jesus that *“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”* God conquers the evil powers of this world and restores a people unto himself in the most unlikely way. He does so through the suffering of the cross. To the Jew, this is a stumbling block because they expected a Messiah who would bring this kingdom of God through conquering the enemy and through strength. To the Greek, this is foolishness. It is foolish to think that God’s strength is on display in the weakness of the cross. But to those who being saved, it is the power of God!

That is our message to the world. Our message is that God has defeated the powers of evil and the curse of sin and death through the cross of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead verifies for us that the bondage we are all born into has been broken. So when you leave behind any sense of self-accomplishment and come and bow at the foot

of the cross in repentance of your sin you are set free from your sin. Don't lose sight of the fact that at the very core of our message to the world we find a suffering and a dying Savior, Jesus. It is through the cross, through death that Jesus has brought life to this world. There is a great saying that comes from a Church Father by the name of Cyril of Jerusalem. In the fourth century, he said, "God stretched out his hands on the cross, that he might embrace the ends of the world."<sup>3</sup>

So take note of this from our passage in Matthew 10. When this message is embraced by the church and proclaimed by the church, don't be surprised if there is a spiritual battle that begins to surface. In Matthew 10, Jesus basically assures us that as we proclaim the cross to our world that there will be spiritual warfare. As we embark on church planting, we want to establish more churches in the Central Connecticut River Valley. New England and Connecticut are far from being regions of the country that are saturated with gospel witnesses established in our communities. I think we should anticipate a spiritual battle as we seek to plant churches because what we are saying is that we are not content to keep this gospel witness contained within these four walls. I think this is why Jesus ends Matthew 9 with the call to pray earnestly that laborers would be sent into the harvest. Why? It is because this is very much a spiritual exercise as we seek to proclaim the message of Jesus and the cross through the local church.

### **The Pattern of the Cross**

This brings us to our final thought from this passage. If it is through the suffering of the cross that Jesus brings the kingdom of God to the heart of man then that should tell us something of the pattern by which God uses us to advance his kingdom. The cross forms the pattern we are called to embrace. When we are told to take up our cross and follow Jesus, it is an invitation to suffering.

Now in this passage, it seems that the suffering is in the form of persecution. We have enough history under our belt by now to be able to look over time and to see how in the most unlikely spots, where persecution seems to keep the church suppressed and undercover, to our surprise it is where it is often growing the fastest. Why is that? It is because the persecuted church understands the pattern of the cross. They understand that it is in our weakness and through our suffering that God advances his kingdom. When they see the nail scars in the hands and the feet of Jesus, they don't just see redemption applied to their lives through Jesus. Rather, they also see the pattern that we are invited into as we seek to proclaim Jesus to this broken world. They see the cost that is laid out for us in Matthew 10.



Paul says something in Colossians 1:24 that I have always struggled with, but now through this message I think I understand. He talks about his own sufferings that he has experienced because of the gospel. Of course, Paul's sufferings are well chronicled for us in his letters and we know that his life ends with his own beheading. But as he describes his sufferings for the sake of the gospel he says, "*I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.*" I have always wondered, what was lacking in Christ's afflictions. Surely, the suffering of Jesus was fully sufficient to deliver us from our sin. But what I think Paul is saying here is that cross is not just the message we proclaim—victory over sin and death through the suffering of Jesus—but it is also the pattern by which the gospel advances. It advances through our suffering and picking up our cross and following Jesus.

Jesus says in verse 22 that "*you will be hated for my name's sake.*" In 2 Timothy 3:13 he says that those who live a godly life will be persecuted. Kevin DeYoung says that even though many of us don't face the prospect of martyrdom "persecution is the normal experience of every Christian everywhere. From stiff fines, to family shame, to being kicked off college campuses, to laws against sharing our faith, to unjust trials, to public mockery and scorn, to arrest and brutality, if we faithfully follow Jesus in this world we all will face persecution at some point in our Christian discipleship. Even American Christians--if they are really Christians--will have crosses to carry."<sup>4</sup> But that is alright. It is the pattern of the cross.

But there is another way that we embrace the pattern of the cross. Like Jesus, we enter into the suffering of others and bring the hope of Jesus. Orlando Costas reflects on what it says of Jesus in Hebrews 13:11-14. Here it says that when Jesus died he "*suffered outside the city gate.*" In fact, the passage then says, "*Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.*" And so Costas argues that the pattern of the cross finds us moving to the periphery, to those "outside the gate" and entering into community with the marginalized.<sup>5</sup> Do you know what he is really talking about here? He is talking about extending hospitality to the ones in need. That is the pattern of the cross. Hastings boldly suggests that churches should be "riskily hospitable and should use their homes for risky hospitality for this is clearly the biblical way of the triune God of the gospel."<sup>6</sup>

Think about it. If the proclamation of the gospel that sets us free is centered on the cross of Jesus, then it makes perfect sense that the pattern by which that message is most effectively delivered is not through slick programs but by moving to the margins and by caring for those around you. Lets be honest, suffering is as close to us as the door next to

our door or the cubicle next to our cubicle or the city next to our town. May we be marked with the pattern of the cross.

### **B.L.E.S.S.**

I want to close with a simple and practical step we can all take this week as we seek to practice the pattern of the cross. And I hope you hear in this practical step that the pattern of the cross does not automatically imply persecution. What it does imply, however, is humility and moving towards those around you. I am going to use the word “BLESS” to help you embrace the pattern of the cross.

B—Begin with prayer. Pray for God to lay a name on your heart or to help you be aware of the opportunities God brings across your path during the day.

L—Listen. Listen to the whisper of the Spirit when he places a person on your heart and listen to the people you are engaged with on a regular basis. What are their needs.

E—Eat. There is something powerful that happens when you take the time to eat with people. Invite them to your home for a meal. Eat with people at work.

S—Serve. Look for ways to serve and to meet a need.

S—Share. As a door opens for you to share, share your story and how the story of Jesus has intersected with your story.

We are people of the cross. We proclaim the cross. We embrace the pattern of the cross. May the shadow of the cross mark us as a church. May we take up our cross and follow Jesus!

---

<sup>1</sup>Ross Hastings *Missional God, Missional Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012) Kindle Location 2546

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Kindle Location 2573

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 2607

<sup>4</sup>Kevin DeYoung “Four Thoughts on Persecution in America” [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org) March 29, 2017

<sup>5</sup>Hastings Kindle Location 2593

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Kindle Location 2640

**Sermon Title:** The Pattern of the Cross

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 10:1-42

**Sermon Date:** October 22, 2017

## COMMUNITY GROUPS



### Getting To Know Me Questions

1. This week marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Discuss as a group what you know about the Reformation and why do you think it is important. (This Wednesday, be on the look out for the weekly E-newsletter, *The Pulse*, and the blog “Trick or Treat? Its Martin Luther” to learn more about the Reformation.)
2. Where did you see God at work in your life this week?
3. What encouragement did you take from the sermon this week?



### Diving Into The Word

4. Read Matthew 10:1-8. What do you find encouraging and inspiring about the assignment given to the twelve apostles by Jesus?
5. Read Matthew 10:16-33. What do you find in this passage to be instructive and how do you see these words being true to life?
6. Read Matthew 10:34-39 and consider what it means to take up your cross and follow Jesus. What does it mean when we say that the cross is not just the message we proclaim but it is also the pattern by which we live?
7. Read Colossians 1:24 and Hebrews 13:12-14. How are these verses helpful in embracing the pattern of the cross in your own life? What might that look like for you?



### Taking It Home

8. Review the acronym B.L.E.S.S. Where might you be able to use this in your life and which of the five points stand out the most to you and why?
9. What is one thing you are taking from your discussion?