

Quotations

1

God hold us to that which drew us first, when the Cross was the attraction, and we wanted nothing else.

God's missionary / Amy Carmichael. 1957

2

For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice.

David Livingstone, 1813–1873

Related topics

For further study:

Kingdom of God; mystery of the church; mission; evangelisation; discipleship; social teaching of the church; ministry of laity; Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

Compassionate God, your word calls labourers to the harvest. Send us who are blest with the gift of your kingdom to announce its coming with gladness and to manifest its healing power. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers, Ordinary Time 11, Year A³

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³ *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,*

4

Proper 6

(Sunday 12 to 18 June, if after Trinity Sunday)

Principal Service readings

Exodus 19.2-8a	to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation
Psalms 100	We are his people and the sheep of his pasture
Romans 5.1-8	justified by faith; Holy Spirit given to us
Matthew 9.35–10.8, [9-23]	crowds like sheep without a shepherd; Jesus gave authority to his disciples ... proclaim the kingdom of God has come near

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Jesus gives authority to his disciples

³⁵Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

¹Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town.

¹⁶See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²²and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.']

Matthew 9.35–10.8, [9-23] NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

The setting for Jesus' mission discourse acts as a bridge between Jesus' works of power (chapters 8-9), and his instructions to those sharing in his mission (chapter 10). Jesus sees the people around as 'like sheep without a shepherd', alluding to Numbers 27.17: 'that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep without a shepherd'. Jesus delegates both authority and power to his disciples (10.1). As Jesus was moved by the helplessness of the people so he sends his disciples out to this missionfield. The 'twelve' are symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve would figure again in Revelation 21.12-14.

Jesus mentions the place of his followers in the story of salvation: the harvest is approaching, the final judgement; Israel the flock needs leadership that only Jesus and his followers can provide. The restoration of Israel depends on them. The goal of the mission of Jesus and his

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

disciples, then, is a restored Israel How it is to come about is sketched in 10.5-42.

The instructions Jesus gives shows that the mission of the disciples is consonant with those of Jesus and of John the Baptist. They are to go to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (10.6), and they are to say what Jesus said: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near' (10.7 =4.17). They are to do what Jesus did: 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons' (10.8 =8.1-9.38). They are to continue the mission of Jesus.

In sending them out (10.9-14) Matthew emphasises the simple lifestyle demanded of the twelve: 'no gold, silver or copper' (10.9). The simple lifestyle is not so much about asceticism as about the priority of proclaiming the kingdom. Biblical models for Jesus' missionary discourse include Jacob's last testament in Genesis 49 and God's commissioning of Moses in Exodus 3-4. The basic assumption behind what Jesus says is that religious teaching is to be spread by travelling missionaries. The disciples learnt what to do through accompanying Jesus on his mission as he went around Galilee. The instructions in Matthew 10.7-15 provide a checklist against fraud, so that people could distinguish between genuine representatives of the Jesus movement and fraudulent ones:

Do they say and do what Jesus said and did? Do they demand a fee for the gospel? Do they cart around large supplies of food and clothing? Do they spend their energies in seeking out the best accommodations? How do they handle rejection?

Harrington (1991), p.142²

Working in an environment in contention with other Jewish groups in the late first century the missionaries of the Matthean community necessarily dealt with rejection. They are instructed not to react violently, but rather to write these people off ('shake the dust off your feet') and leave their fate to the justice of God, with reference to the end time.

² *The gospel of Matthew* / Daniel J. Harrington. – Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 1991. – 978-0-8146-5964-9