

The Gospel of

MATTHEW

CHAPTERS 10-12

SECTION 1:

DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO JESUS

Throughout the book of Matthew so far, Jesus has brought the Kingdom through his words and his actions, teaching and bringing restoration to the lowly and the broken. Now, in chapter 10, he turns to his disciples and calls them to do the same, proclaiming the Kingdom in word and deed as an extension of his mission. Jesus anticipates that they will face various responses, but one thing he makes clear to his disciples is that they will face rejection.

Jesus isn't done with his own ministry work. He continues to teach and preach as he faces more and more resistance. In chapters 11-12, Matthew documents various responses to Jesus' ministry. Some people respond to Jesus with repentance, but others cause us to think, what are they doing? I would never say that to Jesus! These stories should compel us to think about and evaluate how we respond to Jesus, and if our own responses are mirrored in the characters. When Jesus offends you, how do you respond? When Jesus fails to meet your expectations, how do you respond?

SECTION 2:
PERSECUTION AND PERSEVERANCE

“...and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 10:22)

The instructions Jesus gave were given to a specific group of people in a specific time to bring the good news to Israel, but they would prepare the disciples for a worldwide mission that would define the rest of their lives. Through this teaching, Jesus assures his followers that, even in the midst of persecution and trials, he will be with them in that very moment, giving them the strength to persevere.

Persecution	Perseverance
Matthew 10:17-18	Matthew 8:28-34
Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues...	Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?... Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

SECTION 3:
ANSWERED PRAYER

Many of us are quick to use prayer as our way to “let go and let God” — asking God to get someone else to help that homeless person or for someone else to share the gospel with our friends, instead of doing it ourselves. That way it seems to be out of our hands. While those are good things to pray for, are you willing to be the answer to your prayers?

At the end of chapter 9, Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Right after that, Jesus called the twelve and sent them out. They are now going to be the laborers that they just prayed for. Jesus made them the answer to their own prayers.

When you pray, are you hoping God will send someone else? Consider this: God may use you as an answer to your own prayer. Don't just pray. Pray and humbly expect God to use you.

SECTION 4:

ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY TASK

A select few of Jesus' disciples were chosen to be his apostles—a special group that had encountered Jesus, was given authority, and was sent out to perform signs and share about Jesus. They came from different cities, held conflicting political views, worked different jobs, and had clashing personalities—quite a diverse group. Though they didn't have much in common, there is something the apostles all shared: They were ordinary people whom God set apart for an extraordinary task.

You and I may not seem like people that can impact the world, but “consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor 1:26-27). The apostles and the church in Corinth started off just as ordinary as you and me. No matter where we come from, God can and will use us. He will mold and equip us for the work we are called to do—to go and make disciples.

SECTION 5:

THE IDOLATRY OF FAMILY

Jesus' words in Matthew 10 can seem harsh and confusing to modern readers, maybe even especially so for Christians. In verse 37, Jesus claims that,

“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.”

In Luke 14:26, Jesus makes a similar claim saying, “whoever does not hate father and mother...cannot be my disciple.” How can this be? Is Jesus saying that we should not love our family, but should hate them instead? Most of us will never be persecuted in the same way that Jesus' earliest disciples were; most of us will never be kicked out of our homes, or face violence for choosing faith over family—but Jesus' calling still stands. In the little things each day, when it comes down to your spouse or Jesus, which allegiance will be stronger? When your faith pits you against your children, who will you choose to follow? When your friends and family call you “fool,” will you call him “Lord”? Jesus calls for our full allegiance. Will you rise to that calling?

SECTION 6:

JOHN THE BAPTIST

How do we respond when Jesus doesn't meet our expectations? Or as Matthew puts it in chapter 11, when Jesus doesn't dance to your music (16-19)?

“Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” (Matt 11:3)

This was a surprising question coming from John the Baptist—after all, he had previously said of Jesus “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). And when Jesus came to John to be baptized, John tried to prevent him, saying “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” (Matt 3:14). John was the one who prepared the way for Jesus, but now he is experiencing some serious doubts.

John had high expectations of the messiah. Matthew 3:1-12 documents his harsh response to the religious leaders, showing that John was expecting a triumphant messiah who would bring blessings to those who repented and judgement on those who didn't. But John was in prison, Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners, and the Romans still ruled. Jesus was not meeting John's expectations.

Notice how Jesus responds to John. He doesn't criticize him or tell him to just have faith. Instead, he corrects John with a carefully thought out response. He quotes the book of Isaiah, referencing the prophetic promises about the time of salvation:

“The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” (Matt 11:5-6)

Jesus wanted to direct John's attention to his deeds, sufficient proof that he is indeed the messiah and that the prophesied time of salvation had come. In essence, Jesus was saying, “You're not wrong, John. This really is happening. I'm just not doing it how you expected.” John doubted, but he brought his doubts to Jesus with hope. The story of John the Baptist directs us to put our hope in Jesus, not in how we think our lives will turn out once we follow Jesus, but actually in Jesus. It forces us to be open to Jesus doing things in our lives that are unexpected or not how we would have planned them. Even when Jesus hasn't fixed all of our problems, we can live in a state of peace and trust in our savior because our lives are in the hands of the one who loves us and is willing to lay down his life for us.

SECTION 7:

THE PHARISEES

In chapter 12, Matthew shows us an ugly picture of the Pharisees. They condemned Jesus when he healed a leper on the Sabbath (12:9-14) and spoke against him when he healed a demon-oppressed man (12:22-24), yet only moments later they demanded that he show them a sign if he really was from God. Jesus just can't win with these guys! No matter what he does, the Pharisees aren't satisfied. We read this and we wonder, how could they *not* see who Jesus was? How could they be so blind after witnessing his power so many times?

When you read this story, who do you relate to the most? For most people, when we read the Bible, we tend to relate to the "good guys" in the story. We imagine ourselves as David, rather than Goliath; we are Peter, but never Judas; we are the disciples, never the Pharisees.

But when we look at the Pharisees' desires, they're not so different from our own. They wanted the messiah to come, but only when they were ready for him. They wanted him to heal their people, but no one else. They wanted a savior that they could control and use to maintain their positions of power. When Jesus didn't fit their expectations, they responded with unbelief and resentment.

This story invites us to examine where our own expectations for Jesus don't line up with the Bible, and how we respond when he doesn't meet them. It should cause us to remember the many ways that God has worked in our lives so far, to learn who he is from his Word, and to respond in praise.

SECTION 8:

JESUS' TRUE FAMILY

Matthew ends by showing us what a faithful response to Jesus looks like:

"And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'" (Matt 12:49-50)

The disciples' response to Jesus' calling was to walk with him and to obey his commands. This, Jesus said, made them his true family. This is Jesus' calling for us today, to follow and obey. As the Church, we have the opportunity to respond to Jesus every day, either with doubt and defiance, or in faith and obedience.