

## Jesus Sends

### 1. Introduction

- Academic and sociologist Rodney Stark has written numerous books on religion including - *The Rise of Christianity* and *Discovering God*
- He's not a Christian so writes objectively about Christianity
- In these books he writes about the huge growth of Christianity in the first four centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus ... where the number of Christians rose from 1,000 AD40 to 31.7mil AD350
  - Which meant that 55% of the Roman Empire were professing Christians
- How did this extraordinary growth happen?
- Stark says one of the main reasons was because of the visible way Christian church showed genuine, love care and compassion to those in need
  
- Others will say that it was Constantine forced Christianity on the people
  - Some scholars will insist that it because Constantine became a Christian, the rest of the people were either forced or obliged to follow suit
- But Stark insists it was actually the other way around
  - That the numbers of Christians in the Roman Empire had become so vast and Christianity had become such a massive movement ... that Constantine converted out of political expediency
  - Because he realised that 55% of the population were already Christian, the thought it was rather a good idea to become a Christian himself
  
- How did Christianity grow to become such a movement?
  - Was it political expediency?
  - Was it Christians showering their fellow pagans with love?
  - Or was it something else?
  
- It all started with what we're going to see here in Matthew 10
  - Jesus mission and his people
  - Jesus mission and his message
  - Jesus mission and his warning

### 2. Jesus mission and his people

- We've been looking at Matt 8-10 this term
- What we are consistently seeing is that Jesus is the King of God's kingdom who has come with power and authority has ushered in the kingdom of heaven

- During his first coming, he made it clear that his mission was to seek and save sinners for this eternal kingdom
- And it's at Jesus second coming that he'll destroy all the brokenness and evil of this world and his new creation will begin
- And Jesus wants us to understand the times we are in
  - For until he returns, now is a time for forgiveness of sins and the summoning of sinners from across the world to be part of Jesus eternal kingdom
  
- And as Jesus goes about this mission ... he sees people who are like lost sheep without a shepherd
- He sees a harvest that is plentiful
  - He urges his disciples to pray to the Lord to raise up more workers for the harvest
  
- Now in Ch 10, Jesus commissions his disciples to help him in that harvest
- And in v1-6 ... we see Jesus commissioning and sending out 12 disciples to do just that
- The way Jesus does that is
  - he calls them
  - he gives them authority and
  - he sends them out to preach
- The authority and the message he gives them are very same things that Jesus has been doing
  - Preaching about the KOH;
  - Healing people of every disease and sickness<sup>1</sup>
- All the things Jesus been doing in his ministry ... he delegates to the apostles
  
- There's a couple of things to notice here
- Firstly, notice how Jesus chooses to use people in helping him carry out his mission
- Now it doesn't have to be this way
- God could do it all himself without them
- Maybe that would've be more effective ... after all it's not like these guys are an all star cast ... there's
  - a few fishermen > certainly not thought leaders of their time
  - Matthew – a tax collector > hated by his fellow Jews

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<sup>1</sup> Refer Matthew 9:35

- Some guy who would later betray him
- Others like Bartholomew, James and Thaddeus we know hardly anything about
- And think about how they performed ... at times they were hopeless
  - There times when they were timid
  - Many times they were slow to understand
  - Other times they think they knew better than Jesus and tried to correct him
  - Times when they sought greatness over each other despite the fact that Jesus had just been teaching them about humility and service
  - Other times they show fear instead of faith
- Not an all star cast at all ... in fact they were pretty ordinary
- And yet, God in his goodness and grace chooses to use these clumsy, unskilled, weak men to be the ones to carry on his mission
- **Application**
- If you're a Christian here this morning ... then no doubt you have friends and family you love and would love to know the Lord Jesus
  - And for some of you ... the idea of praying for them and for an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with, can just seem so daunting
  - It' seems like a mountain that's too high to climb
  - Other people maybe ... but not us
  - We feel so clumsy and unskilled
- If that's you ... don't be discouraged
  - Because God has been using clumsy, unskilled people for 2000 years to carry on his mission to seek and save the lost
- Notice also in v5-6 that the mission Jesus sends them out on is very limited
  - They're not to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans
  - Rather they're only to go to the lost sheep of Israel
- The reason for this is not because Jesus mission excluded the Gentiles
  - Not the case
  - Jesus mission is world wide ... he's come to save sinners from every nation, tribe and tongue
  - But his mission was to start with the Jews before going out to the Gentiles
- So for now, the 12 were to focus on the going out Israel only

- Clearly this then was a mission that was specific only to the 12 apostles in that time and place
  - Because by the end of the gospel ... after Jesus has died and risen from the grave
  - Jesus will commission the same group of men to take the gospel message to all the world
- In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus says
  - *Then Jesus came to them (the disciples) and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."<sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*
- This is the great climax that Matthew is heading towards
  - Same idea as Ch 10 ... Jesus giving authority and Jesus sending out
  - But the focus has changed
  - The mission of the 12 in Matt 10 has been superseded by this mission at the end of the gospel
- Now salvation is for people of all nations
  - And that mission is not just for that first generation of disciples because Jesus says
    - "Surely I will be with you always until the end of the age"
  - And so that mission is still here for God's people today
- **Application**
- If you're follower of Jesus ... part of the DNA of being a disciple means making and growing other disciples as well
  - Not in the same way the 12 were commissioned in Matt 10
  - But in that Jesus sends out his people to carry on his mission of seeking out the lost
  - And letting them know that now is the time for forgiveness of sins and the summoning of sinners from across the world to be part of Jesus eternal kingdom
- If you're a Christian ... you're part of God's plan for saving the world
  - You have a part to play!
  - Have you ever thought about that?
  - Can you see how you form part of that plan?

- Can you see the people God has put you amongst who need to hear that now is the time for forgiveness and coming to Jesus who saves sinners?
- Because God uses out weak, clumsy, unskilled people like you and I to be part of his mission

### 3. Jesus mission and his message

- Now what are the disciples to do as they are sent out in this mission?
- Jesus makes it very clear in v7
- They're to take the message he has been teaching ... and they're to go and preach that same message wherever they go
- And what is the message?
  - *'The kingdom of heaven is near.'*
- Clearly this is just a summary of the things they were to teach say
  - It's not like they were limited to just six words
  - That would be the shortest sermon ever!
- No ... they were to teach that the KOH is near because the king of God's kingdom has come
  - Jesus is God's promised Messiah who has come to usher in God's eternal kingdom has arrived
  - He's come save all who are lost and sick and in need of healing
  - And that now is a time for repentance and turning back to God and submit to the Lordship of Jesus
- As a person hears their message and obeys the command to repent and believe ... he or she finds forgiveness of sins
- And so the mission that Jesus sends his disciples on ... is centred around proclaiming his message
- **Application**
- While the mission and message was specific to the time ... the principle is the same for all disciples
- The time we're in calls for urgent prayer and urgent proclamation
- If you're a follower of Jesus ... then Jesus mission is your mission
- Because part of the DNA of being a disciple of Jesus is to be a disciple maker
- There may be some here this morning who are not yet a follower of Jesus
- Maybe you've had friends or family constantly
  - talking to you about Jesus

- sharing their faith with you
- inviting you to church
- And you keep thinking to yourself ...
  - "Why won't these people just give it a break and keep what they believe to themselves?"
- If that's you ... welcome ... we're really glad you came
  - And I want to encourage you to keep coming and listening and finding out more
- But hopefully a passage like this will help you to see why it is that your friend or family member wants to keep speaking to you and inviting you to church
  - It's because they know Jesus came to seek and save the lost
  - To bring in the KOH and restore the relationship between us and God
  - And provide forgiveness of sins
- Their deepest desire is that you would know this for yourself
  - That you too would come to know who Jesus is, why he come, and what it means to follow him
  - That you would come to understand why the message of the Bible is such good news for you and me and this world that is so lost and without hope
- If you're a Christian, this passage makes it clear that mission must involved proclamation
- Some say that Christian mission and outreach is best done without the proclamation of the gospel
  - They suggest the way to do that is to show God's love to everyone
  - The idea goes way back to a famous line by the Franciscan monk – Francis of Assisi who said
    - *"Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words."*
  - As long as Christians are showing love to others ... the work of proclaiming the gospel is done
- But what does Jesus say to his disciples?
  - *"As you go, **preach this message:** 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'"*
  - Clearly the assumption is that people will hear a verbal message!
- Christians can
  - Do food hampers and run soup kitchens
  - Put on homework clubs and playgroups

- Run fetes and give out pancakes at train stations
- But if they never proclaim the gospel ... then people will never hear the good news and turn and follow Jesus
  
- How can you share the gospel? What can you say?
- Lots of ways ...
- I reckon the easiest way is just share John 3:16 with them
  - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him will never die but have eternal life"*
  - Then ask – "What does this mean to you?"
  - Listen to their answer
  - Then explain what it means
    - It tells the **good news**: God loves, God gave,
    - It lets us know a **response** is required: we believe
    - It tells us the **consequences**: we live and don't perish
  - In summary...
    - God loves
    - God gives
    - We believe
    - We live
- Simple! (repeat)
  
- You know another way ... just invite them to church
- There's a cafe I visit regularly
  - Every time I go in I'm intentionally seeking to build rapport with the barista there
  - We chat about life and church > what I do, what they does outside of work
- Christianity Explored was starting recently
  - Went in one day for a coffee and said
    - "Hey we're running this course at church called Christianity Explored"
    - "It looks at who Jesus is, why he came and what it means to follow him"
    - "It's a great way to find out more about what Christianity is all about ... or just brush up on the basics"
    - "I'd love it if you were able to come along"
  - They said they would love to but can't at the moment
- Wednesday ... coffee with Hannah (MTS worker)
  - Chatting with barista again

- Said "Hey Easter is coming up. We're running services on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Here's a flier ... it would be great if you could come and check it out"
- Said "Thanks ... would really like to come"
- Chatting with a mum up here on Friday night at youth group
  - She was sharing about her experience of youth group and church as a child
  - I asked her if she goes to church these days
  - She said "Not since her mother had died"
  - Why not come along to one of our Easter services and reconnect with God again
  - She seemed pretty positive ... I'm praying she will come
- Next term we are running the Alpha course
  - Alpha is course that helps people investigate Christianity
  - It's a course that's been done by millions of people around the world
  - It's really well known
  - Bear Grylls is an ambassador for Alpha ... which helps it to get some traction
- I want us to go all out on this next term
  - Letter box drop the suburb
  - Banner
  - Invite as many people as we can
  - Pray earnestly and urgently for people to come
- And I want to invite you to get involved
  - If you're someone who's checking out Christianity ... I'd encourage you to sign up and do the course with us
  - If you're a follower of Jesus, I want to encourage you to
    - Pray for Alpha
    - Pray for 5 of your friends to come
    - Pray for boldness to invite them
    - Consider being part of the team to run it
- Because the times we are in demand that we understand we're part of Jesus mission to seek and save the lost
  - Now is not the time for complacency and distraction



- It's the time for doing all we can to get on board with the mission Jesus gives his followers ... which requires urgent prayer and urgent gospel proclamation

#### 4. Jesus mission and his warning

- As Jesus sends out his disciples ... he also sends them out with instructions about what to do as they move about the region preaching the good news
- And we see in v11 ... that the disciples are told to settle into the house of a worthy person ...
  - In other words, Jesus is saying ...
  - "Don't just shop around for a place to stay that has a spa, beer fridge and a king size bed ... stay at the place of a worthy person"
- What is it that makes a person worthy?
  - It's NOT that they're morally upright, or super religious or particularly honourable ...
  - It's whether or not they accept the disciples and their message
- See this in v14
  - *If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.*
- According to Jesus ... a person is a worthy person ...
  - If they listen to and receive the words of the apostles about the coming kingdom and the need to repent
- And here's the warning ... for Jesus goes on to say ...
  - *I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town*
- Who or what are Sodom and Gomorrah
  - They were cities in time of Abraham known for sin and wickedness<sup>2</sup>
  - God judged the cities > rained down burning sulphur on them and reduced them to smoke and ash<sup>3</sup>
- Jesus point is that ... the house or town that rejects the disciples and their message is just as liable to judgment as the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah

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<sup>2</sup> Gen 18:20ff

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 19:24-28 24 Then the LORD rained down burning sulphur on Sodom and Gomorrah-- from the LORD out of the heavens ... 27 Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. 28 He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

- And it will be more bearable for those cities on day of judgment than those who reject the message of Jesus
  - Why? Because those who hear about Jesus and the KOH are better informed
  - They have even less excuse
- He's not saying Sodom and Gomorrah will be spared
  - But he's making it very clear ... that a person's eternal destiny depends on how they respond to the message about him
  
- **Application**
- You see ... Jesus message comes with a warning
- Not because he delights in it ... but because he loves us
- What would be truly scary and sadistic is if he **didn't** warn us!
  - If he didn't make it clear to us there were consequences for rejecting the gospel ... that would be far worse!
  
- **Illustration – Speeding Signs**
- You know when you're driving around NSW and you see those speed camera warning signs telling you there's a camera up the road
- We're warned in advance of the danger so we have a chance to respond and do the right thing
- And then just in case we missed the first one or we're a bit slow on the uptake or didn't really believe it ... there will be at least two more signs in a row before you actually get to camera itself!
  
- That's what Jesus is doing
- Because he is gracious, because he is patient, because he loves us ...
  - He tells us in advance
  - He gives us the chance to understand the danger that's looming so we can respond and do the right thing
  
- And his warning is that the person who rejects the good news about Jesus is facing this future
- And you know what ... you don't need to sin in obvious, public or wicked ways to face this future
- You only have to go on
  - hearing without believing
  - listening without repenting
  - going to church without going to Christ ...
    - And soon you'll find yourself in Hell

- If you're here this morning ... and you'd say you're not yet a Christian ... then friend ... I need to ask ...
  - What are you doing with the gospel message you're hearing?
  - Jesus calls on everyone, everywhere to hear the good news and repent and believe
  - And we need to take the invitation God gives us to repent seriously
  - Because there's a point where it'll be too late and God's patience will end
  
- **Story ...**
- There's a bloke I know who I'm pretty close to who I've been sharing the gospel with for a number of years
  - In the early days he would have called himself a Christian
  - He would even say he believes there's a God
  - But more recently when we get to talking about Jesus' message to repent and believe for the forgiveness of sin ... well he's become more and more resistant to that
  - He fobs me off or changes the subject
  
- Not that long ago ... he nearly died
  - And if God hadn't been so gracious and spared him ... then I know that would've died having rejected the message of the gospel and without trusting in Jesus
- And I'm praying this bloke sees the warning and God changes his heart before it's too late
  
- God gives us warnings
  - And if we don't pay attention to those warnings ... God will not hold back his judgment on those who reject his message of the gospel
- How many chances do you think God will give you to respond while you still have the chance?
  - Answer is ... you just don't know
  - We like think that it's going to be ages and we'll ready and willing sometime in the future when it suits us
  - But the truth is ... you just don't know
- Friend ... "If you hear God calling you today, then now is the time to respond, because you don't know if the offer will be held out to you again"
  
- And for those of you here this morning who are followers of Jesus ...

- Surely Jesus warning is all the incentive you and I need to share the gospel with others?
- Surely this ought to move us to put aside
  - Fears or awkwardness or complacency
  - Grab a bunch of these postcards and invite as many people to Easter or the Alpha course as possible

## **5. Conclusion**

- Here in Matt 8-10, Jesus is making it clear what it means to be a disciple in the times we are in
  - The time we're in calls for urgent prayer and urgent gospel proclamation
  - And if you're a follower of Jesus ... then Jesus mission is your mission
- He calls on his disciples ... to go out and proclaim his message
- For the message of the gospel ... when it is welcomed by others is a message of life, and salvation and forgiveness of sins and eternal life
- It's a message worth proclaiming
- It's a message worth receiving
- Wherever you are at today ... my prayer is that you would receive it ... and then proclaim it

## **PRAY**