

Giving & Receiving the Lord's Ministry

Matthew 10:8-15

Halifax: 10 April 2005

Introduction

Over the last several weeks,

- I have shown you how the Lord Jesus expanded His ministry.
- At first, He laboured alone—
 - preaching the word and working miracles of mercy among the people—
 - declaring to all that the kingdom of God was at hand.
- But as He went about all the cities and villages of Galilee,
 - He was impressed by the tremendous needs that He saw all around Him.
 - He saw how the ministers of Israel were ignorant and corrupt,
 - and did not attend to the needs of the people or give them God's word.
 - And at the end of chapter 9,
 - we are told that when He saw this,
 - He was moved with compassion and exhorted His disciples to pray that the Lord would send forth labourers to assist Him.
- Immediately, chapter 10 opens with Jesus sending out the twelve to minister in His name.
 - By raising up labourers from among His disciples, His ministry is expanded and multiplied and extended into the future.
 - Here He had come to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness by giving Himself for our sins,
 - He was offering this great and precious sacrifice...
 - It was the sacrifice by which we are reconciled to God...
 - And it could not be that there was no one to declare and carry the good news to the nations!
 - And so it is that Jesus has,
 - from the day He appointed the apostles until the present day,
 - gifted and raised up men to declare the gospel into all the world.
 - These are the ministers of the word or the ministers of the gospel.
- Several Sunday evenings ago,

- We saw from Ephesians 4 that ministers of the word—
 - be they apostles, prophets, evangelists, or ordinary pastor-teachers—
 - are His gifts to the church, given to do the work of the ministry, until we all come to maturity in the faith.
 - Ephesians 4:8 says:
 - Eph 4:8: Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”
 - And verse 11 tells us what those gifts were that He gave:
 - Eph 4:11-12: He Himself gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

This is what our Lord Jesus has done because of His great compassion for us.

- He will not have one of His beloved sheep,
 - chosen from before the foundation of the world,
 - to be a stranger to the gospel.
- Through the agency of the ministers of His word, He extends His call to them all.
 - These ministers are not to carry out their own ministry,
 - but His ministry according to the principles He has established....
 - And His people are to receive their ministry with appropriate gratitude and zeal as that which comes from the Lord.

In Matthew 10:8-15, we are given principles about how the Lord’s ministry is to be both given and received.

- something about how ministers ought to minister,
- and something about how everyone is supposed to receive their ministry.

The first principle is given at the end of verse 8.

- The Lord says:
 - v. 8: “Freely you have received, freely give.”
- Here you are told that:

I. The Lord’s ministry is to be given freely.

A. To put this in the plainest language,

- A minister is not to charge a fee for his labours among God's people.
1. Jesus' disciples could have gotten rich if they had!
 - a. They had been given the ability to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons!
 - Can you imagine how much people would have been willing to pay for such services?
 - The twelve could have become the richest men in the world by making a trade of such work!
 - b. But Jesus strictly forbade it!
 - 1) He said,
 - v. 8: "Freely you have received, freely give."
 - a) Now these words could be taken to mean that they were to give liberally...
 - But in fact they mean "without charge."
 - b) The disciples had spent nothing to acquire their office or their gifts...
 - They did not have to purchase the ability to heal,
 - nor did they have to spend years training as a physician does...
 - Jesus had simply conferred on them the ability to do these things, and they were to give them freely to others.
 - 2) You will perhaps remember Simon Magnus, the Sorcerer, who lived in Samaria.
 - a) When he saw the apostles laying hands on people and giving them the ability to heal and do other miracles,
 - He wanted to purchase this ability from them...
 - He was prepared to pay for it because he saw that there was money to be made in this way!
 - b) But the apostles responded to Simon, reflecting the mind of their Lord to him:
 - Acts 8:20-23: "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

- c) It is very offensive to the Lord for His ministers to exercise their ministries with an eye to acquiring riches.
 - There is no doubt that Simon wanted to purchase this gift that he might sell his services to others!
 - He would not have offered to buy it unless he had been looking at it as a commodity to sell!
 - This was totally unacceptable and utterly appalling to those who knew the freeness of the Lord's grace!
 - They would have nothing to do with this man.
 - And so in the history of the church,
 - wherever wicked men have sought to buy and sell church offices and use them for sordid gain,
 - the practice has been branded as Simony in the memory of the wretched man.
2. Our Lord is very zealous for this because it is His will that the **ministry** of the gospel should reflect the **character** of the gospel.
- a. The gospel is God's free gift that cannot be purchased...
 - 1) It is insulting to even try to purchase it.
 - The one who tries to do so shows that he hasn't a clue about the value of the gift.
 - What's more, he shows that he thinks the Lord has done it in order to get something from us—
 - as if He is motivated by some gain to be had rather than by His own free grace!
 - 2) Perhaps you have had the irritation of someone who is always try to "square up with you."
 - You know, a person who is always keeping accounts...
 - This person does something nice for you and then says:
 - "There, now we are even. You helped me last week, so I came to help you this week."
 - That sort of attitude stinks...
 - Not that a person may not say, "I wanted to help you because you have been so kind to me..."
 - But the one that says, "There, now we are even."
 - What a way to devalue your service to them!

- How much more is the gospel devalued by those who imagine that it can be some how purchased!
- b. The Lord Jesus wants us to understand that the gospel is His gift of free grace.
- Therefore, His rule for those who minister in His name is:
 - “Freely you have received, freely give.”
- B. But oh how often this principle has been ignored by pastors and churches!
1. Perhaps the most heinous example that comes to mind is that of the purchase of indulgences.
 - In order to build St. Peter’s in Rome and to enrich himself,
 - the Pope began to sell indulgences in the name of Jesus Christ!
 - People were actually told that they could purchase the forgiveness of sins for their dead relatives by purchasing a pardon for them with money!
 - And they were even told that they could purchase the forgiveness of a sin they were planning to commit in the future by paying money for papal pardon!
 2. But the pope is by no means the only offender in this.
 - a. Need I do more than to merely mention the word “tele-evangelist?”
 - There is one giving false promises to those who support his ministry...
 - There is another having people receive spiritual gifts by laying hands on the television set.
 - b. Then there are those who ordinary pastors who go into the ministry with an eye for gain...
 - They look at the gospel as a product to be marketed.
 - They try to package it in such a way that it will attract certain segments of the population which they call their target group.
 - They are more interested in fleecing the flock than in feeding them.
 - They have several distinctive characteristics:
 - If there is more money to be made in another congregation, they are off in a flash.
 - If a rich man comes, they will make sure their sermons never offend him.
 - If a doctrine is unpopular, they will avoid it because people might leave...
 - Such men do not minister in the spirit that our Lord here enjoins.

- c. Then there are those ministries which try to cull money out of unbelievers...
 - They leave unbelievers with the impression that the church is always looking for their money.
 - 1) They put on a dinner and charge a fee to raise money... like a political party might do...
 - 2) Or they have bake sales, rummage sales, dances, concerts, and sorts of other things to raise money...
 - 3) Some will even go so far as to set up bingo halls right in their own churches!
 - But brethren, we are the servants of Jesus Christ!
 - We are not here to get, but to give!
 - Have we forgotten who we are?
 - Freely you have received, freely give!

TRANS> But there also a much more subtle violation of this principle...

- 3. This is found among those ministers who are forever grumbling and complaining about how little they are appreciated and about how much they have sacrificed!
 - a. Talk about distorting the freeness of God's grace!
 - When you consider what the Lord has done them, this is a most disgusting attitude!
 - What proper thanks has he received from you Mr. Minister, for all that He has done for your soul?
 - Have you done more than He has done?
 - Are you better than He is?
 - b. The attitude of the apostle Paul was much better:
 - He displayed the attitude of one who had been given so much that he could hardly stand it!
 - He felt that he received so much from the Lord that he was a debtor to all men!
 - He was so filled with gratitude that he could never do enough for his Lord,
 - And not only that, but he fully recognised that doing for the Lord meant serving His people!
 - Far from whining and complaining, Paul rejoiced to suffer for the name of Jesus.

- He gave freely because he realised how freely the Lord had given to him.
4. But alas, this not only applies to ministers!
- a. It applies to every Christian.
 - “Freely you have received, freely give.”
 - You must learn to live in this gracious attitude!
 - You are all ministers on some level or another—
 - as parents you minister to your children,
 - and as children you minister to your parents.
 - b. You parents do not give freely when you are exasperated with your children and you say,
 - “I have given and given and given to you, and what thanks do I get for it?”
 - “Here I am slaving away and you won’t lift a finger.”
 - I don’t mean that your children should never be corrected for their ingratitude and indolence...
 - They absolutely should and must!
 - But they are not to be corrected in such a way that you exhibit the very same attitude about service you are condemning in them!
 - No wonder they don’t want to serve if they see you doing your service with such an attitude at that!
 - What happened to service being a privilege and a delight?
 - “Freely you have received, freely give...”
 - That is the principle!
 - That is what Jesus wants for His ministers.
 - That is what He wants for all His people.

TRANS> Not for gain, but in gratitude.

- That is the first principle.
- The second is closely related...
 - It is this:

II. Ministers are not to provide for themselves.

A. You say, “closely related, that sounds more like a contradiction!”

- But it is true...
1. Jesus just finished telling them not to charge for their ministry...
 - Now He tells them not to provide for it either!
 - a. His words are unmistakably clear:
 - Look at verse 9-10:
 - “Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for *your* journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.”
 - b. Jesus is not telling them they may not possess any of these things as some fanatics have mistakenly understood it.
 - He is simply telling them not to **provide** these things for their journey.
 - Ordinarily, if you are going on a journey, you take along the things you will need...
 - Money for food and lodging,
 - a bag to carry your clothes—
 - And in those days,
 - you would likely carry an extra tunic to be used for sleeping
 - and an extra pair or two of sandals in case your first pair wore out from all the walking.
 - and you might even take an extra staff in case you broke the first one defending yourself from wild animals or something.
 - But Jesus tells his disciples not to provide such things for their journey.
2. But if they are not to provide for themselves,
 - doesn't this mean that someone else will have to provide for them?
 - a. If they have no money, they will have to be given food and lodging...
 - If they have only one pair of sandals, someone will have to give them new ones when the first ones wear out.
 - If they break their staff, where will they get another?
 - b. By prescribing this, Jesus had two lessons He wanted to teach...
 - One to his disciples, and one to the people.

1) The lesson for the disciples was that God would take of them.

- Later on, Jesus asks them:
 - Luke 22:35: “When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?” So they said, “Nothing.”
- He wanted them to learn that God has marvellous ways of providing for His servants who go forth to do His work.
 - I have been amazed all my life to see how God provides.
 - One of my children used to get worried sometimes when we were wondering how we were going to get by, but she told me recently that she doesn’t worry any more because God always provides.
 - That is what Jesus wanted His disciples to learn.

TRANS> Now you might think He was going to provide for them as He provided for Israel in the wilderness...

- by sending manna from heaven and by causing their sandals to never wear out...
- but this does not seem to be what He had in mind because...

2) He also has a lesson for the people to whom they ministered.

- He wanted the recipients of their ministry to learn to express their gratitude to the Lord by providing for His servants.
 - They would show the Lord their appreciation for His ministry, exercised by His apostles, by providing for all their needs in a cheerful manner.
 - By this they express to the Lord, to His servants, and to the watching world the value they place on the ministry of the word.
- They would also learn the principle of the Old Testament that Paul expresses so clearly in 1 Cor. 9:13-14:
 - 1 Cor 9:13-14: Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings* of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”
 - As Matthew Henry puts it:
 - “Though they who *serve at the altar* may not expect to grow rich by the altar, yet they may expect to live, and to live comfortably upon it. It is fit they should have their maintenance from their work.”
 - Clearly, they are to be provided for by the people.

- B. But how does this square with the first principle about ministering for free?
- If the recipients of their ministry must provide for them, how can they be said to conduct their ministry for free?
1. It is in this...
 - The disciples were not to charge fees for their ministry the way a carpenter or a dentist does.
 - They were to minister to all who came to them without price.
 - But when it was time to eat, somebody was expected to feed them;
 - and when it was time to sleep, somebody was expected to lodge them;
 - and when their sandals wore out, somebody was expected to replace them.
 2. It is important to realise that they were ministering to God's covenant people...
 - a. Remember, Jesus had told them in verse 5 to go only to the house of Israel—not to the Gentiles or even the Samaritans.
 - They were ministers of the Lord, and so they were to be provided for by the people of the Lord.
 - If they had been going to the Gentiles,
 - things would have been different.
 - Then they would have taken provisions because they would not have expected those outside the covenant to provide for them.
 - In 3 John, John commends Gaius because he provided for travelling missionaries, supplying with provisions for their journey so that they did not have to depend on the Gentiles.
 - 3 John 5-7: Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If* you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.
 - b. It is wrong for the church to be extending their hand to the world for financial support!
 - We are to take care of our own ministers, but we are not to ask unbelievers to do so!
 - Also, if we send missionaries, we should provide for them and not expect the people to whom they minister to provide for them...

- But the goal of the missionaries should be to plant churches that can elect men from their own people to minister—
 - and then to support them.
- c. Paul, as a minister to the Gentiles, went out of his way to ensure that he was not a burden to the Gentiles to whom he ministered.
- As an unmarried man, he took up the trade of tent-making and provided for himself whenever it was necessary.
 - This was so important to his ministry!
 - He did not want anybody to charge him with ministering to the gentiles for gain.
 - But it is very clear that although Paul took nothing from the congregations he planted...
 - he clearly ordered them to support their own pastors.
 - I have already shown you where he says that those who minister the gospel should live by the gospel...
 - He also says that those who labour faithfully are worthy of double honour.
 - It is even the case that in later years, he gladly received support from some of the churches he had planted in former days.
3. And you see that the principles the Lord enjoins are not to be applied in a wooden manner.
- a. They are to be applied with wisdom according to the circumstances...
- Nevertheless, this does not mean the principles should be trampled upon whenever we wish either!
 - They are not to be ignored, but applied with wisdom.
- b. In short, these things should generally be observed:
- Ministers should not charge fees to anyone for particular acts of ministry.
 - Ministers should be given a comfortable provision by the Lord's people.
 - Ministers should not be provided for by those outside the church, nor should the church look to the world for support.
 - This is the basic pattern that is given to us in the New Testament.

TRANS> And this leads us to the third principle:

III. Jesus shows that you will be judged according to the way you treat the ministers of the Lord.

- In verses 12-15, Jesus shows very clearly that this is so,
 - but because this principle has been abused so often in the church by wicked ministers,
 - I feel I would be remiss if I did not say a few words pertaining to these abuses.
- On the one hand,
 - I don't want you to think that the ministers of the word are to be treated as men who are infallible or anything other than mere men of clay...
 - On the other hand, I don't want you to fall into the reactionary tendency to ignore that they are indeed the representatives of Christ and so are to be treated as such.
- The focus of this passage is on the second of these—that you are treat ministers as the representatives of Christ.
 - But because there has been so much abuse in the history of the church about elevating them beyond what is proper, I want to begin by giving a brief warning about that...
 - You must always realise that ministers of Christ are not to be esteemed if they depart from the truth of the gospel.
 - Just because they have the name of a minister does not mean are to be provided for.
- While Jesus make it clear that you are to provide for those who are faithful,
 - the Bible also makes it clear that you are likewise to despise and reject those who do not bring the gospel of Christ.
 - There are thousands of churchmen who have gone to sleep under a ministry that has led them away from Christ.
 - Witness all those in those communions today that deny Christ as the only way of salvation
 - or who wink at abortion and condone sexual immorality!
 - The Bible says you have a duty to reject them:
 - 2 John 9-11 declares:
 - Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

- Just because a man calls himself a minister of Christ does not mean he is to be received as such.
 - There is a time when it is your duty to reject.
 - Not for every little deviation, but as soon as it becomes clear that a man has put aside God’s word and is following the dictates of his own heart,
 - It is your duty to reject that man as your minister—first through the Presbytery, and that failing, by personal withdrawal.
 - That said,
 - let us now turn to the passage before us and see what it says about receiving those who do bring the doctrine of Christ...

A. First, Jesus shows that when you receive His ministers, you obtain a great blessing.

1. In verse 12 & 13, He says:

- Matthew 10:12-13: “And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.”
- a. When the Jews greeted, their customary greeting was “Peace to you,” or something along those lines.
 - The Hebrew word we translate **peace** is **Shalom**,
 - which refers not only to absence of conflict,
 - but also to well-being and blessedness in all of life.
- b. In the mouths of the apostles,
 - this “greeting” was much more than a mere wish.
 - 1) Their message was a message of peace from the Lord—
 - It was the message that the Lord had visited His people from heaven to bring them shalom—
 - to bless them and make all things new.
 - As His representatives, they were announcing this glorious peace to God’s people.
 - 2) This is the key to understanding what the Lord is getting at here...
 - When they greeted a household, they were offering the Lord’s blessing of peace upon them.

- a) And, when the household heard them and believed them as the messengers of the Lord,
 - That household actually obtained this peace.
 - That is what Jesus means when He says,
 - v. 13: “If they household is worthy, let your peace come upon it.”
 - That household would be blessed with the blessing of the Lord—
 - Salvation would come to them through faith in the messenger’s message which would direct them Christ.
- b) Isn’t that a wonderful thing?
 - 1) This is the peace that comes through Jesus Christ!
 - God, who was angry with us on account of our sin, is reconciled!
 - He proclaims peace to all who come to His Son!
 - 2) You are brought into His favour and are given His Spirit.
 - You are promised an eternal inheritance in heaven.
 - You are promised a world of perfect love and righteousness...
 - You are promised an end to all war, sorrow, death, misery, and corruption of every kind.
 - You are promised an eternity to behold the glory of God and to explore the wonders of His creation.
- 2. But what you need to understand is that the only ones who can legitimately claim to have received the message are those who receive the messengers that carry it.
 - a. Those who received the apostles, who were the Lord’s messengers, also received the Lord.
 - 1) And today, those who receive the ones who preach the true word of God also receive the Lord.
 - Jesus always calls upon His elect to receive his faithful messengers who live in their own day!
 - How you receive the Lord’s ministers who are alive in your day is the best indication of how you receive the Lord.
 - 2) You see, hypocrites **always** claim to receive the faithful messengers who lived long ago,

- but the real test comes from what they do with the messengers who are alive today.
 - The ones they have to deal with personally—even with all their flaws and imperfections.
 - It was easy for the Jews to tell Jesus that they were following Moses and Abraham because they didn't have to deal with Moses and Abraham...
 - So it is easy today for people to say that they follow Jesus when Jesus is not here in the flesh for them to deal with...
 - But you see, in a way He is here in the flesh...
 - He is here in those who faithfully minister His word.
 - Not in those who, like the Pharisees, claim to represent Him but who do not obey Him or preach His gospel...
 - but in those who do preach the gospel.
 - Not that they are perfect in any way,
 - But that they are true representatives sent by Him—indeed!
- b. In our modern world, there are many people who try to divorce the Lord from His messengers.
- They claim that they trust the Lord and receive His word,
 - but they will have nothing to do with His representatives on earth.
 - They either remain aligned with a church that does not bear witness to the truth...
 - or they completely withdraw from the church altogether and claim to have a personal relationship with the Lord.
- c. Well now, I suppose you can say whatever you want...
- but it is really quite bogus to reject Christ's own messengers and claim to accept Him.
 - I tell you that He will not have it!
 - This is why it is so important for people to understand that they are living in blatant rebellion against the Lord...
 - not only when they **persecute** the messengers of Christ...
 - but also when they **do not receive** them as His messengers.

B. And that is why, although it is true that you who receive the ministers of the Lord will be blessed, it is equally true that you who reject them will be cursed.

1. At the end of verse 13, Jesus says of the household that is not worthy,

a. "Let your peace return to you."

- In other words, the unworthy house will not retain the blessing that was at first pronounced upon it...
- The substance of the blessing will be withdrawn.
- They will not obtain eternal life and the rich blessing that God has promised in His Son.
- It will be utterly withdrawn from them.

b. And Jesus goes on further to say (in verse 14)...

- v. 14: And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.

1) This was a way of testifying against them as those who have rejected Christ.

- By shaking off the dust, they were saying,
 - "We will have nothing to do with you!"
 - "We will not even have the dust of city to go with us."
- This was a gesture that the Jews well understood,
 - for many of them did this when they departed a Gentile city so as not to defile Israel with the dust of that city.
 - The disciples were regarding the city as Gentiles, outside the cleansed ones who are God's people.

2) But notice who it is that is rejected...

- It is those who would not receive the apostles whom Jesus had sent to them and would not hear their word.
- This is quite striking!
 - It is not for rejecting and persecuting them,
 - but for simply not receiving them and hearing their words!
 - Of course this includes persecutors,
 - but it also includes all those who were simply indifferent and cared nothing much about it.

3) We need to let people know that it is a dreadful thing...

- not only to **reject** the truth—
 - but also...
 - to **avoid** the truth,
 - to **not welcome** the truth,
 - to **not receive** the gospel.
 - We need to let them know that such behaviour is utterly abhorrent.
 - We need to do the equivalent of shaking the dust off of our feet against them!
 - In other words, we must make a clear, definite, outward testimony against them...
 - Not that we do this for those who don't come to our particular church—
 - but for those who will not have anything to do with any true branch of the church.
 - We must let them know that they are rejecting Christ by rejecting His messengers.
2. Hear what Jesus says of such persons in verse 15!
- Matthew 10:15: “Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!”
- a. This is a dreadful statement!
- Jesus is saying now that His gospel has come—
 - now that He Himself has been openly revealed as the Saviour of the world...
 - those who will not receive Him—
 - who will not receive His living messengers—
 - are **worse** than Sodom and Gomorrah!
 - You know about Sodom and Gomorrah, don't you?
 - These are the cities that were destroyed with fire from heaven because of their great wickedness.
 - They were guilty of sexual perversity and violence...
 - They were blasphemers of God.
 - But Jesus says it is even worse to not receive the gospel when it has been brought to you by the Lord's ministers.
- b. And no wonder!

- 1) What could be more contemptible than to have God, our Creator, graciously stoop to save us, wretched sinners that we are...
 - To have Him send His Son to be crucified...
 - all in order that He might redeem us...
 - And to have Him so filled with compassion send His messengers out to proclaim this glorious message...
 - And then for us to say,
 - “What is all that to me? I have no interest in these things. I have my life to live.”
- 2) I tell you, you can murder and lie and cheat and steal and commit adultery and incest and tell lies...
 - but the worst thing of all that you can do is to reject the gospel and those who bring it to you.
 - No crime is more offensive to God than the non-accepting of His offer of salvation.
 - If you want to be sure that you offend Him,
 - all you have to do is nothing when He has sent the gospel to you.

Conclusion:

- See our Lord Jesus, with all His great compassion,
 - sending out His messengers into the world!
 - carrying with them the greatest news for sinners,
 - reconciliation with God...
 - purchased at the tremendous price of His own blood!
- What will you do with this message?
 - Receive it, or not receive it?
 - These are the only two options...
 - Your future happiness—your shalom—depends entirely upon it.