

Like Sheep Without a Shepherd

By Pastor Dan Schiel

Sermon Series, Sermon: The Sermon on Mission, Sermon 1

Bible Text: Matthew 9:35-10:4

Preached on: Sunday, May 15, 2011

Christ Church of Conroe, Texas

10087 League Line Rd.

Conroe, Texas 77304

Website: www.ChristChurchConroe.org

SermonAudio.com page: www.sermonaudio.com/christchurchtx

Mission for us is, first of all, living where we are. It's not going to a foreign place. It's living in the present place as a witness for Jesus Christ, as salt and light as one with a message to share with the people who are hassled by everything.

I want you to turn with me, if you have your Bibles to Matthew chapter 9, and Matthew Chapter 10. Before Easter Sunday we were looking at a series of thoughts, ideas, and sermons on the subject of discipleship ... following Jesus as his disciples. I was thinking about one more message in that on the subject of traveling light, because I'd caught this text in chapter 10 where Jesus first sent out his twelve. And he sent them out to a specific people. And he prepared them with specific words of preparation. What they were to take, the attitude they were to have as they went out. It was a pretty stripped down Ministry team, the twelve weren't going to take anything extra. We'll get to that in chapter 10 but not today. I just wanted you to be aware that that is where I landed. And then when I started backing up, I landed farther back. And I began to think in this text about the subject of mission, as a good follow-up to those messages on being his disciples. That is the subject of our reaching others around us and touching people and getting the gospel to them. What we used to always call evangelism.

The work of evangelism is the work of bearing the good news of the gospel to people, endeavoring to share Jesus with them. To call them to repent of their sin and trust in Jesus Christ to save. And I think we, once in awhile, have to be reminded that when we leave this place on Sunday and when we go out to our homes in our neighborhoods and our workplaces, that nothing has really changed about who we represent. Nothing has really changed about what our mission is out there. We live as salt and light in a world of darkness. We have been redeemed, washed by the blood of the Lamb and we have been given something as a gift, life in Jesus Christ. And we live among people all week long dead without hope in the world, hassled by the circumstances of life who need to him as desperately as we did when he found us. And, many of them if, you measured your life against their lives, you'd recognize that they need him even more desperately it seems. Although, I don't know if that's a good way to compare things. Since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and all because of that sin are under the wrath of God. I'm not sure who's in worse shape, or how you can measure the worst against the better. I'm not sure you can.

But I read through the gospel of Mark while I was away, and the gospel of Matthew. I was just feeding on these gospels for a while because that's where all the messages basically came from on the idea of discipleship. Just following Jesus around, seeing how he did things, what he was doing, what happened there. How potent those events were. And so when I got to Matthew 10 looking at the verses about Jesus preparing his twelve to go out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, then I began to back up all the way through the sermon on the Mount. Going backward through Chapter 5.

And I found something I want to point out before I read my text. Let me read, and if you want to turn there that's fine. It's the fourth chapter of Matthew, verse 23. And I want you to listen to this and then I am going to start 9:35. That's going to be my text. Matthew nine, verse 35. That's where it starts. Listen to this bit of Scripture in chapter 4 of Matthew, verse 23:

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

(Matthew 4:23 ESV)

And he talks about his fame, going out, and the multitudes gathering in following him around. And then Matthew goes to the sermon on the Mount. And, the sermon on the Mount, we can simply say is the teachings of Jesus, and I've said this to you before. When you look at the sermon on the mount closely, in the teachings of Jesus you get the character of the disciples of the Kingdom, and the way kingdom life is lived. That's what you get. And there are a lot of ideas about when the application of this takes place. There are a lot of people who don't believe that this is for us right now. And they don't believe it is because you can't live up to this standard fully. And that, I believe, is probably true. I've not lived up to the Sermon on the Mount yet. Turning the other cheek is hard enough. I don't mind slapping them and turning my cheek after that, but, turning the other cheek first that's more difficult. We slap first, but that's not the way he says it.

These Roman soldiers could come, and they are under occupation, into the little village or the town and demand that one of the residents of the town carry whatever they needed carrying for a mile. Oh, that galls you! Occupiers forcing me to do something. But Jesus said that's what you're supposed to do. In fact, he says if they do that carry it another mile. I don't do that. If I do that on the outside, I'm not doing it on the inside. When you talk about this kingdom you understand this. When you talk about the kingdom that Jesus established, it has everything to do with the inside. It has everything to do with the inside! And it has everything to do with being a creature.

When Jesus is teaching his disciples in the sermon on the Mount while he stands on the earth he hasn't accomplished redemption yet that makes possible the transformation of a heart. So, I've got to be careful that I don't excuse myself based on thinking I'm like they were exactly. So, we have a new heart, a new resurrected spirit. "We had been made a new creation," Paul said, motivating us.

Five, six, and seven, (of Matthew) and I read that and when I got through Chapter 7 you know, if you can stand up, you stand up and you try to get going again as you do with the Sermon on the Mount. And then you get to chapter 8 and, don't do this now but do it later, if you read chapters 8 and 9 what you get is Jesus at work. There are 10 exactly 10 miracles in those two chapters together. Most of them are healing, but he calms the sea, and he casts out demons a couple of times, like, the men of Gadara is there. So, there are exactly 10 miraculous events recorded in chapters 8 and 9. So, in chapters 5, 6, and 7 you get the teaching of Jesus. In eight and nine you get the working of Jesus, so the teaching and touching let's say of Jesus. Or, the word and the work of Jesus. Whatever word you like best.

It all follows this word about Jesus going about in Galilee and teaching in the synagogues preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every manner of disease in that day. Keep the setting. Okay? And then when I get to the end of chapter 9 here's my text, listen to verse 35:

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

(Matthew 9:35 ESV)

Where have we heard that before? We heard it at the end of chapter 4. Almost the exact words introduce the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and then the work of Jesus and here it is again and following that in chapter 10 this whole Sermon on Mission follows again the same kind of verbiage, the same kind of word. If you're studying rhetoric there is an inclusion here. The last part of chapter 4 introduces the teaching of Jesus followed by the works of Jesus, and enclosing that particular teaching and works is another of the same statements about Jesus going about in Galilee or all the villages teaching, healing. It is exactly the same kind of work. That's what he does. There is, inside of those two statements the Sermon on the Mount and to 10 miracles the words of Jesus in the works of Jesus. And, here is what I want us to get today. And that's just to show you how the book of Matthew is put together to lead us to this.

I want to encourage you, if you have not been bringing your Bibles. I'm going to slow this down a little bit. I'm going to have you turn with me in your Bible. Because I am afraid we are not getting it. I'm afraid we sometimes don't even know where I'm reading it from. And we need to know where that is in the Bible and we need to be able to look at the words. How are you going to be able to check me out if you don't read it? So, bring it along. I love to see people carrying Bibles across the parking lot anyway. All through the years, I've thought about this while I was away a lot. We reached a lot of kids years ago with buses. And I loved it when a kid got off the bus and came by and I was the pastor and he'd come up and say, "I've got my Bible!" It might be an old tattered Bible that belonged to his mother way back, but "it's my Bible!" He can't read a lick because he's three years old or four years old, but it's my Bible! It's the word of God. We want our kids to know it's the word of God, don't we? And we want to know what's in it. And we want to know where to find it. And those sword drills we used to do following preachers, you know how we preachers are, the kind of sword drills we used to do following preachers. We run from here to there. We found out where the books are after a while. You get used to it. So bring them along.

Now, here's what the rest of my text says, and this is the focus text for today:

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he 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." 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.

(Matthew 9:36-10:1 ESV)

Now notice, and I'll talk about this a little later, next week. He's giving them authority to do exactly what he did. We're going to keep this in its setting because when he gives us a commission later on, he gives it to the apostles, called the disciples in Matthew all the way to the end of chapter 28 --- the great commission. And when he gives it he doesn't say it just like this. He gives it a little differently. And there are reasons for that. But, right here when they're going to the lost sheep of the house of Israel he is establishing the kingdom and these guys are going to extend the kingdom! They are going to preach while he's gone. He's going to establish their authority, their understanding as to who is doing the work, not only on the people's behalf but on their behalf. So he gives them, he says, authority over unclean spirits to cast them out into heal every disease and every affliction. And then he names them:

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 Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

(Matthew 10:2-10:4 ESV)

They are called the twelve quite a bit. Matthew doesn't call them apostles except once. And I just read that to you. The rest of the time they are the twelve, or the disciples all the way to the

commission, all the way to Matthew chapter 28. Now, what I want to do today in this, I want to focus on verse 36. But I want to, first of all, give you four things that are in these verses that I read because we are going to cover these things.

What is it that sources mission in the body of Christ? What is it that motivates the mission that we have in the world. That's what we're going to consider first and then we're going to look at the first mission. The twelve sent out to sheep without a shepherd. Here are the parts, and we're only going to talk about the first one today. Hopefully I can talk about all three of them next time, the last three of them next week. I don't want to get us buried here.

The first motivation for mission is the compassion of the heart of Jesus Christ himself.

Which reveals to us the heart of the Father. When I look at this text, the first thing I see is that all those crowds have been following him for a while. He's taught, he's done all kinds of things and he comes back to his disciples and he says, "they are like sheep without a shepherd, they are hassled and harassed." That's how he saw people. He came into his own, though they didn't receive him he comes to his own first. And he's going to send his disciples to his own, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And they are hassled under foreign rule, they are hassled by the leadership in the religious world that they grow in and live in. They have hassling from every side, secular and religious. And, he sees them as sheep without a shepherd, lost. And his heart breaks.

The second thing we'll notice is that a source for mission or motivation for mission is the prayer of disciples for workers. That's what he tells him to pray for. And that will be next week. Pray the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth workers. When have we done that lately? And who are the workers going to be at the beginning, at the base? You and me! Because the field is where we live. The field is where we begin our work, right here! Our Jerusalem. The place where we live and be, is the place where we do his work. But, we'll talk about that when we get to it. The prayer of the disciples for workers which is in verse number 37. And we'll have let you think about this. What does he mean, "the harvest is plentiful?" Who got the harvest ready? Next week we'll talk about it. I mean, who has plowed? And, who has planted? He sees a harvest ready.

And the third thing is that he gives gifts for Ministry. We're not all the same. Some of you have amazing gifts that I might covet, but I don't have them. Now I'm sinning. Thou shalt not covet. I'm amazed by the gifts that are in people who think they have none. Because, we tend to define a certain cluster of gifts found in Scripture and we forget about a bunch of others. The Holy Spirit is not limited to what he can bring to pass in human lives. You may say well, pastor I'm not gifted... but you are gifted. You may not be gifted to do certain things that you see others doing, but that's not what you're supposed to be doing anyway! So we'll talk about that.

The fourth source or motivation for Ministry is the fact that we are part of an apostolic Fellowship. And the first group he has is 12 men, and they are so different from each other. A zealot and a tax collector sitting at table together, all of them following Jesus. We have a mixture of people there. And that is the way the Church has always been. Built on that very foundation, Christ the cornerstone and all of those stones at the bottom, the foundation stone, those apostles of the Lamb, a unique apostleship who will establish the teaching of Jesus and the church as they begin their work. God doing it, but they established the teaching of it and we follow what? — the apostles doctrine. That's what they did early on. And that's what we continue to do. And we are living stones in that building. But we are part of an apostolic Fellowship. We're still part of this same church.

He's walking around in Galilee and he's going to the synagogues. That is the meeting place of the Jews, the normal meeting place for teaching and structure. If he were to walk around in our country today, or in any country of the world, where would the start? He would start in the church! He'd come walking up here and say things. And we would be under the chairs looking for a place to get right with The Holy One. Because he's glorified now and it would be pretty dynamic. But in that day they didn't recognize him for who he was. So, as a teacher coming and he just stirred

them up. They had never heard anybody speak like he spoke. And when he got in synagogues he said things that just stirred people up! And Paul would later follow the pattern, teaching in the synagogues and everywhere else he went proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom. The kingdom is here! Enter! And he healed, according to this text, every disease and every affliction. That is the power of the kingdom present. That's the power of the King, the Master.

Do you know that all human pain or suffering or hurt is mission material? When people have needs they look for help. And help finally comes when they hear and believe the gospel that transforms their souls. And so we never go just doing social work. But don't diminish doing things for people who are hurting, feeding them, clothing them. Don't get too concerned about that. Every time we hear the word social gospel we get all nervous. But the issue is that there is some work of helping people that leads to gospel sharing. The problem with much of the social stuff is that we forget the gospel sharing! Once we are doing this we understand there is only one ... one ... exclusive savior. There aren't a bunch of routes to heaven, or to God.

Today I want to consider the first in this list of four motivations. And, that is this: the heart of Jesus for people. The heart of Jesus for people. This is a reflective year for me. I don't know why it's so reflective, why turning 65 in another month or two is such a big deal. But what it has done is given me an opportunity to reflect on this because when I was thinking about 65 when I was 25, I thought it was a lifetime or two away. And when I got my Medicare card the other day in the mail I realized, hey, I'm an old guy! What a great feeling! To be alive serving Jesus now is good! Isn't it?

Now Harmon is old enough to be my dad. So, Harmon is my dad in this place in those of you who climb anywhere up in the middle 80s, your dad or mom. And, it's a good family to be a part of. Young or old, it's a good family.

But, I thought about this and I realized that while I was away meditating and just thinking about it one day, I knew this. I discovered this several years ago. **His love for me is a lot more unconditional than I first thought it was.** You live long enough and mess up enough you know his love has been pretty unconditional. That wasn't based on your being good. If you haven't found that out yet let me just say it again. His love for you is a lot more unconditional than you first thought it was.

And the second thing is, prayer is hard work sometimes for me. Prayer is hard work. And because sometimes it's hard work, I mean when you seriously pray, I can say prayers at meals and prayers at meetings, those kinds of things. We can all do some of that. But to get before God and just stay there until he's through with you while you offer up your partitions and longings and heart, while you intercede for the Church of Jesus Christ and the place which are part of the people that are sick and dying among you, that's hard! But I also have noticed through the years that **when a church ceases to pray, a church ceases to act** in a lot of ways.

When we cease praying for souls we cease reaching souls. Do you understand? That's just an observation. Prayer meetings are important. Prayer time is so significant. God uses every single bit of it. And I've also learned that **to maintain any kind of fervency of spirit requires time in his presence with the Scriptures in his marvelous grace, feeding, learning, knowing. I can't maintain a fervent heart without his word and his spirit at work in me.** And you can't either. You get spurts, emotional ups at certain times and certain events, but to maintain a fervent heart requires something of us. And without the fire burning in the heart, fervency of spirit, we don't really notice people. Except when they almost run over us on the freeway. And then we don't intercede for their salvation, or they're trained heart when we pronounce their damnation more easily. Ha, Ha ... it happens to us. And we don't want to do that.

Now, I'm saying all this to get us to this point. And here it is, the heart of Jesus Christ. The father's heart revealed. Why is there mission in the first place? And I'm going to suggest that

it is because of the heart of Jesus. Because of what he came to do and did, and because of his love for his own. **The heart of Jesus for lost people motivates mission.** He stands at the door of the whole operation. He looks at the people who are of his own lineage, let's say. Jewish background, all those Jews, all those people suffering. And he stands at the head of that motivation for ministry and he said, "like sheep without a shepherd." And he said I want you to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I want you to go minister to them.

Now this text simply said that when he saw the crowds, verse 36, he had compassion for them. The word in the Greek is "splanchnizomai." Isn't that a great word? Here's what it means. It's to feel it in the "viscera." It's to feel it in the entrails. That's what it means, to feel it in the gut, deep down. So when we talk about him having compassion, we'll talk about him feeling it deep down inside of him, the lostness of his people! The lostness of all those people clamoring around him endeavoring to listen to what he had to say, but mostly wanting him to touch them, touch them! He had compassion. "Come with 'pascho,' to suffer. In other words, he suffers with them. That's how deeply he feels it. He feels, well I don't like this phrase anymore... he feels their pain. He does! That's where it's real! He feels it right down to the inside of him. They grab him deep down.

I always like to look at compassion as the white-hot center of agape, of love. We can say, "we love you." That's pretty broad isn't it? But to feel it and to want to do something about helping the person that you see comes from the white-hot center of that love called compassion. The working of spirit down on the inside. Because Jesus suffers with people, in this case his own in Israel and Galilee etc. he forms a mission for them. He establishes an outreach to them through his disciples. He will! It's coming up in chapter 10. Because he's moved on the inside for them. They're like sheep without a shepherd.

Mission is motivated, not by the disgust of Jesus with their sins, but by Jesus' compassion for them as harassed and lost sheep. Now I don't know about you. I just know about me. Sometimes I don't know about me. But it's easy to look at people and say, whoa those people are bad! They're sinners. Look at what they do. They're horrible! And we church folk have done that quite a bit. They're just sinners, now here we are Saints, and they are sinners. We're saved, they are lost. And that's true, when you read Scripture. That's true. But that should motivate us to reach out to them and their hunger and in their need. Should we be simply motivated to tell them that they are sinners? Or should we go because we love them enough to want to see them freed from what harasses them? Should we just go to them loving them with graciousness taking the gospel with us — of course! And I preached this quite a bit and I believe it with all my heart. **If you don't understand you're sinner, then you don't look at Christ as a Savior.**

But, I think sometimes it doesn't happen exactly in the order we'd like for it to work out. Because, I think when you start loving somebody, or I start loving somebody with enough passion for them that I'm going to help them in their struggle, walk for them, do for them what ever they need. And you keep standing with them and staying with them. Do you know what's going to happen? The grace of God is going to work through you in that. And in the grace of God you're going to finally be able to share the gospel. But they're going to learn in the gracious working of God that they are not up to par. They're going to learn that they don't deserve any of it. They're going to learn that it's a gift, a pure gift! And you're going to be able to tell them why! And point them to the one who can redeem them.

But, we have to somehow realize that Jesus gives us a way here. That our job as the disciples of Jesus Christ is not to go out and censor the world, we do that well, in order to shape it up by telling it how bad it is. But our task is to go out with compassion and help needy people find some hope! To go out bringing and representing the good news of Jesus Christ. You don't have to have a perfect plan of sharing the plan of salvation. You just have to go loving. And they'll want to know why you're doing this. Jesus! He saved me and I'm interested. He set me free. He set me free. He took the load off my life, touched my life, my sin is gone. And he'll do the same for you.

I don't know how I lose that. But through the years, that's been my best time with people. Not hammering away at them, but just loving them. You know, you give a little help to one who claims to be an atheist. I had a guy test me like that one time. He came in my study. He was needing some gas money or something. He said, "I'm an atheist!" He was just going to see what I was going to do, that's all. And so I did what he didn't think I was going to do. I helped him do what he needed. And he didn't have anything else to say about that. I got a chance to share the gospel with him. Now whether he accepts it or not, he didn't that day. My job is done. It cost me \$100. But it's worth that, you know if you've got it. Just getting a seed there. Now if you don't have it, don't give it. And don't borrow it from the cash register or whatever else, just do it.

When sin is overly stressed in our mission, there is a focus for it, getting people to turn from sin to Christ then compassion is smothered rather than enhanced, I think. We want to live compassionately like Jesus. You follow Jesus around in these gospels and see how he did it. He didn't demand anything of most people. Oh, he'd heal them and tell him not to tell anybody. And they, of course told people. But the only reason he was telling them that is because once they told people the crowds increased. There was no way to function normally in the place. And they were people like us.

Will they learn that they are sinners in need of a Savior? Oh, yes they will. God's amazing gifts. Do you know how I learned I was the sinner? God's gift of grace to me. It overwhelmed me. My response was to that grace. And I knew that I was the worst sinner in the room. Not because I was told I was a sinner, because I wasn't that night. I was told he loved me and would save my soul if I would commit my life to him and come forward and repent. He did! He did!

In the presence of his grace people become aware of their sinfulness. In the presence of the holy, the dark shows up. But in that holiness there is great redemption. Jesus Christ is moved by the depression, the oppression, the suppression of the people that he saw around him. He sees them confused and helpless. He also sees them perishing, yes. In verse six chapter 10 we'll see that. But he doesn't start with the fact that they're perishing because of their sin. He starts with the fact that they are hassled and helpless and in need of a shepherd. People need nothing so much today as they need a good Shepherd for their soul. They need Jesus whether they believe it or not. That's what everybody needs.

These people are oppressed and pushed down because of the lies of their secular life and the oppression of the Roman empire and the struggle of just getting by from week to week. And, they are oppressed because of the religious leaders who asked so much more from them than they ever gave to them. They would look for someone to make a convert of him, Jesus said in Matthew 23, and you make him even more a child of hell than he was before because of the way you do it. He's talking to the Pharisees. You grab these people and tell them you can swear by the gold on the altar or whatever else, but you can't swear on the altar! You can't make an oath on the altar, but you can make an oath by the gold on the altar. They were so confused and beaten by religious stuff. Oh, we've got a lot of that sometimes. All that stuff we had to live up to in order to be good acceptable religious people. Because that's what we become. Or, we become hassled sheep beaten down without much hope. Or, they taught them how to tithe. Now if you're going to tithe, you tithe everything. A 10th of everything. If you got a weed growing in the backyard you've got a 10th of the weed seeds. And you present that one weed seed out of 10. And you don't pay attention to justice. And there is no mercy.

It took us a long time to learn about tithing in the church years ago. I remember when I first became a pastor, and believe it or not we pastors sometimes counted the offerings back then. Of course, they weren't big. And people would write their checks, \$26.31. Let's see, \$263.10, this week, that's what they were tithing on. To the penny, all the time. Several people. But, we outgrew that and I hope we started rounding it up instead of it down. We never worried too much about it. God always met the need. But, we learned. It's all his! And that's a little bit of that legalistic thing you were taught. You've got to tithe to the penny. One penny out of 10!

Just get on your face where you're going to get blessed, where God hears you when you pray. And pray in private in your closet and say Lord I give it all to you. So, whatever part of it you want of it given away to whatever, I'm here to do it. Then it's not yours to worry about anymore. You just write the checks. And God is so faithful when he does that in the condition of the people in Galilee. And the Scripture tells us he had followers from Decapolis, or the 10 towns on the other side of the lake on the east side, he had followers from Judea, he had followers from Samaria. He had followers all the way down by Samaria, the Jerusalem area and all that area. They were running to where Jesus was in that year of great popularity! And he was telling them truth! And they had to learn.

So, let me just say this one more time. **It is the heart of Jesus for people that should be the primary motive for the mission of His people who have been made His in heart.** If his spirit dwells in you, will there be any contradiction between how Jesus sees people and how the spirit conveys his seeing people? So, while I was away I said Lord you have to do some work in this old heart to bring again that renewed love for lost people, for hassled people. It doesn't matter who they are, where they come from, what they have, what color they are. It doesn't matter. Now, we've said that for a long time, but we have to get to that folks.

Mission for us is, first of all, living where we are. It's not going to a foreign place. It's living in the present place as a witness for Jesus Christ, as salt and light as one with a message to share with the people who are hassled by everything. And a lot of people are hassled today I can tell you. They're hassled economically. And a lot of other ways people are in a hurt position. There are physical things and other things. So, when we as disciples think mission, we ought to think first of all the overwhelming need of people for Jesus. I know that sounds simple. But, it's Jesus in all of his challenging demands and blessings. I think people want to know what he wants in church so we can follow him. I don't think it's a matter of, "it doesn't matter as you grow up and what you do, enjoy yourself! Enjoy yourself!" No, it does matter! We want to follow him. Which means not just doing his work but believing what he teaches and letting his word shape us so that we can suffer with people in our hearts and reach out to them in love.

People in Israel and Galilee needed all kinds of help from Jesus on the grace side because they had plenty of demands. I'm not sure if we, the church in this country, have held onto the demands very well — that we have somehow forgotten the commands of Jesus as being a part of discipleship. And everything is just okay. Okay.

My friend, Ron Palermo told me he picked up a rider. And this guy was telling them what he was and all of that. He said, I'm a this and I'm a that. And Ron said I was born that. I was born a sinner! Well, that's a good place to get it started! And Ron has a few of those ways of getting things started. He doesn't start with anything produced by the family or anything else. You start as a sinner so that everybody needs a savior. And in order to be saved we have to trust in Jesus, don't we?

In our journey along the way, and let me close with this, the heart of Jesus, that's the motivation number one for mission. In our journey along the way I have observed, looking back and reflecting this last couple of weeks that we, when we are living in a certain point we have a certain understandings and we have certain available things to use. **We live what we know, where we are, to the glory of God.** Now, we may want to go back 20 years later and wish we could do that differently. But you can't think like that because you're thinking differently now, you're still growing, you see things better. You understand things in a different way. So, you're not where you were 20 years ago. Sure, you would do differently. But you weren't there. When you are there, you were different. Ha ha Ha...

So, in looking back at that I thought, you know Lord sometimes were so critical of means and methods and ways. I've heard so many people complain about their past in church. And I've made statements about mine that were different from what they are now. But, the Lord kind of worked on me this last couple of weeks. And I realized that my early days growing up on the farm

and my early days in the church and in my pastoral days early on in the church, those were good days, that I was taught well. Because I was taught to seek Jesus above everything else. And I didn't know anything else. What else could they have taught me? They said read your Bible and see what it says. I read my bible. I understood some of it, not most of it. When I started preaching I got a Thompson chain Bible. I did topical sermons and if I needed a good topic and I couldn't find scriptures fast, I could find the topics in the back of the Thompson chain and just work down the text. And, the only difference was when the Holy Spirit helped and anointed you, you just took off on those texts and it was beyond anything you can imagine. I didn't have anything to study. I prayed and read Scripture. No books to read, and I preached! 30 or 40 minutes at a time. They told me longer but I think only 30 minutes. And I was just carried. Those were good days. They were not bad days. They were where I was at the time. And God was shaping this green as a gourd servant of his into what he wanted. That's what he did with you, all along. You who've been in church a long time, listen. Don't forget that what you've been through is good for where you are. You got something to share. You got a message to give to those around you who don't know him. You got to pay attention to the needs and love the sinner because he's hurting. Because he needs your love.

I'm going to try to do that better. By the grace of God, I want to see people who are like sheep without a shepherd, people without Jesus. We can hold them accountable for their sin all we want to, but that's not the big issue because they answer to God for all of that. When we hold them accountable, we just miss it. We love them where they are. Lord help us do that.

Amen!

Next week it will be a short sermon I'll give you the rest of the three, hopefully. And there is not a lot of stuff I want to hang on it. But I want us to see the four together. This is the motivation that matters most, the heart of Jesus... he loves the lost sheep out there. Now I could go ahead and talk to you about what I think he means by sheep in that sense. But in Israel, and I've got to keep it in the setting right now, he's talking about the lost sheep among those Jews and he wants that message carried, the message of the kingdom come to them. They're going to go to them and minister it to them. Amen!

Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you for this place, this people. Thank you for the faithfulness of men and women in this place to do their committed work around here with such joy. And it looks and is such a good thing for the body of Christ. And I thank you Lord for those who know you not, that you're working on right now.

And I thank you Lord that you're going to give us eyes to see what you saw when the crowds were milling around you. That they were like lost sheep. No one to call them and lead them out. No one to feed them. No one to care for them when they were cast down and set them back on their feet. No one to tend to their wounds. No one to watch over them in the place of danger. No one to sustain their going.

Oh lord! Help us to see the people out and around us not as just people in trouble, or people who just don't know anything or people that are mean, or this or that. Help us to see with your eyes this week as we live. Thank you for that. That will start us, Lord. That will start us if you do that in us. Start in me and let us become the people who have a desire to reach lost people with the gospel afresh and anew. Spreading out to wherever you put us to the glory of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

— ### —