

*Matthew 9:35 – 10:8(CEB)*

<sup>35</sup>Jesus traveled among all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup>Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, “The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. <sup>38</sup>Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest.”

He called his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to throw them out and to heal every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup>Here are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, who is called Peter; and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee; and John his brother; <sup>3</sup>Philip; and Bartholomew; Thomas; and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon the Cananaean; and Judas, who betrayed Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>Jesus sent these twelve out and commanded them, “Don’t go among the Gentiles or into a Samaritan city. <sup>6</sup>Go instead to the lost sheep, the people of Israel. <sup>7</sup>As you go, make this announcement: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, and throw out demons. You received without having to pay. Therefore, give without demanding payment.

*Matthew 28:19-20 (NRSV)*

<sup>19</sup>Go therefore 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 that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

*Matthew 25:34-40 (NRSV)*

<sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

*What do you mean when you say “mission”?*

Why do I give? Why do you give? I’m surely on safe ground assuming that some part of our reasons for giving is focused on others. We want to help those in need. And we want to help others hear the Good News and experience God’s love for themselves. Indeed, we see in today’s Scripture passages two concepts of what we mean by mission. Regrettably, we often treat these two concepts as an “or.” Say the word “mission” to some Christians and they immediately think of making disciples, the so-called Great Commission of Matthew 28:19. Others, however, will take “mission” to mean feeding the hungry, providing for the poor, and so on.

We have to guard against our tendency to chop up our concept of mission. If we concern ourselves only with disciple-making and neglect those who lack even the basics of life, then how are we truly emulating Christ? But if we provide food and

clothing, yet do not tell the person of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ, we are ignoring what matters most. We are to proclaim and to feed. We are to teach and to clothe. Both, together, constitute living the mission. As we go from Judea to Samaria and to the ends of the earth, we go with a Bible in one hand and a hammer in the other.

### *Living the Great Commission*

We are so used to hearing Jesus' Great Commission, that we can be blinded to what is actually on the page. Jesus doesn't say, "Go and save souls," or "Go and make believers." Jesus knows that soul-saving and believer-making is God's work, not ours. But Jesus does tell his disciples to make more disciples, across the globe.

The word "disciple" has a specific meaning. It doesn't mean those who love Jesus. You can love Jesus and not be a disciple. Rather, a disciple of Jesus or of anyone else is someone who is learning to be like the master. More so than "student" or "learner," the word "apprentice" gets us closest to the true meaning of "disciple." Apprentices, in any vocation, are those who are consciously striving, learning, and practicing to be like the master to whom they are apprenticed. This apprenticeship encompasses every part of the apprentice's being: her head, her heart, and her hands.

Certainly, disciples of Jesus love their Master and have faith in their Master, but they also share the desire to be Christlike. Making the decision to believe in Jesus, as we often put it, is not the same as making a decision to emulate Jesus. Every disciple of Jesus has not only made the first decision but the second as well.

Pews in churches across America, large and small, of all denominations or no denomination at all, are filled with people who have experienced the first decision, but have not made the second. They are hardly even aware that there is a second decision to be made. To reiterate, accepting Jesus as one's savior is not the same as making a conscious decision to begin the path of discipleship, what Dallas Willard has aptly called, the "curriculum of Christlikeness." Willard writes:

"A mind cluttered by excuses may make a mystery of discipleship, or it may see it as something to be dreaded. But there is no mystery about desiring and intending to be like someone—that is a very common thing. And if we really do intend to be like Christ, that will be obvious to every thoughtful person around us, as well as to ourselves. Of course, attitudes that define the disciple cannot be realized today by leaving family and business to accompany Jesus on his travels about the countryside. But discipleship can be made concrete by actively learning how to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, walk the second mile with an oppressor—in general, living out the gracious inward transformations of faith, hope, and love. Such acts—carried out by the disciplined person with manifest grace, peace, and joy—make discipleship no less tangible and shocking today than were those desertions of long ago."

### *Disciples who serve*

Our third passage from Matthew is one of the most challenging of all Jesus' parables. Simply put, all peoples are divided into two groups – those who provide for people in need, and those who don't. It is door #1 or door #2. A or B. One door leads to God's kingdom. The other to oblivion. There is nothing comforting and consoling in this parable. It is a challenge laid down before all those who call themselves disciples of Jesus.

From the time of Moses and Pharaoh, God has expected his people to care for the neediest among them. The Israelites were not to pick their fields clean so that the "the poor and the alien" could gather the remnants of the harvest (Leviticus 19:9). The Israelites were to love their neighbor (Lev. 19:18). God told them that he is the one "who executes justice for the widow and orphan and who loves the strangers. You shall also love the stranger . . ." (Deuteronomy 10:18-19).

Jesus could not have drawn a more stark contrast for us. Do we provide for “the least of these” or do we not? Close to home and far away? This love for neighbor, this sacrificial love grounded in action, is every bit as much a part of becoming Christlike as Bible study, prayer, or any of the other spiritual disciplines.

#### *An empowered heart*

Blessedly, we are not alone in this, and we have more than one another. We have been given the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of God. Jesus not only gives his disciples a mandate, he gives them the power to accomplish it. As Jesus had promised them on the eve of his crucifixion, the Spirit, the Comforter and Advocate, would come to Jesus’ disciples weeks later at Pentecost. The Spirit would be God’s empowering presence in their lives and work. And the world would be forever changed.

God’s Holy Spirit dwells in all those who have faith in Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit who reshapes our hearts and minds. It is the Spirit who convicts us when we turn inward to the exclusion of others. It is the Spirit who works with us to foster an ever-growing desire in our hearts to proclaim Christ and to serve others.

The UMC Book of Discipline states that “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the good news of God’s grace and thus seeking the fulfillment of God’s reign and realm in the world. . . . This mission is our grace-filled response to the Reign of God in the world announced by Jesus.” The Reign of God is one of justice and mercy. And so we go out, a Bible in one hand and a hammer in the other.

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection

What are some ways that we, as the believing community called St. Andrew, help? You might make a list and see how long it grows. You’ll find that some ways come to mind quickly but others are not so obvious. Building a new house for a family without one is a dramatic and hard-to-miss way to help. How about the quiet person who comes into the sanctuary alone, sits alone, and leaves alone? Or the acquaintance who lost a loved one? Or the parent who feels overwhelmed by child rearing? Or the one without a job and without even a prospect of a new one? Or the friend who feels trapped by the life they’ve chosen and doesn’t know how to get out? When we contemplate such a list, Jesus’ words become more concrete. This is what it means to love and in this, God’s Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, provides energy, determination, and discipline to do more, to love as we never thought we could.

## Daily Bible Readings

*More on being the people of God*

**Monday, Isaiah 42:5-6 & 49:6** Israel (the people of God) is to be the light to the world.

**Tuesday, Matthew 20:20-28** Service as greatness

**Wednesday, John 13:1-20** Jesus washes the feet of the disciples at the last supper.

**Thursday, Acts 10** The conversion of Cornelius, a Roman Centurion; God, through Peter, has reached out to the Gentiles, bringing them into the family of God

**Friday, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15** Paul encourages the Corinthian believers to be generous.

**Saturday, 2 Corinthians 9** Paul’s collection for the believers in Jerusalem.

## Scott Engle’s Bible Classes

### **Monday Evening Class**

We are studying the book of Acts.

Meets from 7:00 to 8:15 in Piro Hall

### **Tuesday Lunchtime Class**

We are studying the book of Kings (1&2).

Meets from 11:45 to 1:00 in Piro Hall

*About the weekday classes:*

Join us whenever you can. Each week's lesson stands on its own. This is very "drop-in." Bring something to eat if you like. Bring a study Bible.

On occasion Scott must cancel class, so if you are coming for the first time, you can check [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org) to make sure the class is meeting.

**Scott's 10:50 Sunday Class in Smith Worship Center**

This is a large, lecture-oriented class open to all ages.

Current series: *The Virtues*