

## **February 5**

**Scriptures:** Read Matthew 10

**Key Verse:** “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34)

### **Overview**

In this chapter, Jesus sends out His twelve disciples. It’s the first time He has invested them with a ministry responsibility and it’s not difficult to see that He recognizes their greenness, their newness at this huge task of world evangelization. This is nowhere more evident than in the very first thing He says to them, “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Rather, go to the lost sheep of Israel.” Jesus recognized that the challenge of the kingdom was to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. But I’m sure He was also very aware that His disciples were in no condition at this point, in terms of their spiritual maturity, to tackle the awesome challenge of ministering a Jewish message, indeed a Jewish messiah, to a Gentile. But I’m sure He was also very aware that His disciples were in no condition at this point, in terms of their spiritual maturity, to tackle the awesome challenge of ministering a Jewish message, indeed a Jewish messiah, to a Gentile people. There would be a communication gap to say the least.

So Jesus challenged them to preach the kingdom to the lost sheep of Israel. In that context they’re to heal, to raise the dead, cleanse the leper, drive out demons. And they’re to do it in a way that doesn’t expect any financial reward. As you read the chapter, you can see the tremendously high view that Jesus had of His disciples. You also get a remarkable insight into His own self-limitation.

You’ll remember on another occasion, recorded in Mark 13:32, Jesus says that no one including the angels and Himself, the Son, knows the time of the Day of the Lord. The only one who knows is the Father. This perhaps would help us to understand verse 23 where He says, “You will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” I think it’s entirely possible that Jesus, in His self-confessed ignorance, thought it was entirely possible that the culmination of history would occur very soon.

Nevertheless, He saw the commissioning of the disciples as the giving of a sword to His men. He recognized that they would, with their message, turn a man against his father, a mother against her daughter. In other words, divide families. And looking at them, He says, “If you love your father or mother or anything else or anyone else more than me, you’re not worthy to be my disciple.” He’s really impressing upon them the urgency of the hour and the message they are to bring.

### **Prayer**

Lord, may we feel the same commissioning the disciples were given and sense the urgency of the hour, giving us spiritual fervency.