

## MARVELOUS AUTHORITY

Matthew 9:35-10:8 Text: vs. 10:1 *“Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”*

The Bible never tells you there's a difference between ordained and un-ordained. It assumes every Christian is a minister. God has given each one of us different gifts and abilities. A preacher is expected to preach. A teacher is expected to teach. An evangelist is expected to evangelize. And when all God's different gifts and abilities are used, the world can be changed, as only God can change it. The Gospel Message in our lesson today is when the disciples had been sent to tell the entire world about Jesus. They were sent to heal, as well as to preach the Gospel. Those men had been empowered by Jesus to heal when they laid their hands on people. And when they did, they received power from the Holy Spirit to do some amazing things. They used those powers to prove that the message they were preaching was true. Now, there are some people who have been given extraordinary gifts by God. Doctors. Nurses. Scientists. They have made it their life work to heal people. But they're powerless to heal in the same way the disciples were able to heal.

And you may not be able to heal in the same way they did. But you are gifted, none-the-less. Because you *can* bring healing to a person. A person who is hurting. Hurting from sin. Hurting from loneliness. Hurting from hopelessness. Hurting from despair. However, when you tell people the Source of their healing has more for them than just healing their body, you must realize you're showing them Christ can heal them *for eternity*.

Remember, in last week's sermon I suggested our Church should be like a Clinic right here on the Circle in Everglades City. A *Spiritual Health Clinic!* A place where *Walk-ins are welcome*. There's a sign over the door as you leave church that says, *You are now entering the mission field*. We should have one on the other side of the door, *on the outside*, which says, *Walk-ins are welcome*. And last week I asked if you have ever told anyone this church is a *spiritual healing clinic* that's open to all who will come to the Great Physician for spiritual healing? Jesus wants you to tell everyone to *“Come with me to the Clinic on the Circle in Everglades City. I want you to meet the Great Physician there. He healed me. He will heal you, too.”*

Have you ever had any *“on the job training?”* OJT. You know, you learn how to do the job while you're doing it? There are some really dangerous jobs out there. Nitroglycerin transportation. Underwater submarine repair. Radioactive material disposal. Or a truck driver in Philadelphia going under a bridge on I-95 last week. It's one of our busiest highways. He hit the overpass causing his petroleum filled truck to burst into flames under the bridge. The heat was so great the bridge collapsed and took out four lanes of traffic above him. Apparently, he needed more OJT.

And Jesus decided to use OJT here in chapter 10. He'd spent some time with those men who were His students called disciples. He was their rabbi. Their teacher. They'd seen Him work. They had heard Him preach and teach. They'd gotten an idea of what the *“Kingdom of God”* was all about. And now, Jesus was sending them out saying, *“The kingdom of heaven has come near”* as He gave them *“authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”* In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

And as a follower of Jesus Christ, you have been given that same authority. And when God gives you authority, He gives you the ability to fulfill His authority. Many have been in positions where they had the "authority", or the title, but had little, or no actual power to do anything about it. They were told to do something. But since they were never given the power to do anything about it, nothing was done! And when asked why it wasn't done, the answer was hard to come by.

Now, Jesus told the disciples the Message they were to tell was *“the kingdom of heaven is near.”* And what does that mean? That the long-awaited kingdom of God was being ushered in by Messiah. It was coming! The Messiah would, in a spiritual kingdom, soon bring salvation to His people. They would find fulfillment in both heaven and on earth. And Jesus "backed it up" by signs and miracles. Those disciples healed the sick. They raised the dead. They cleansed the people with leprosy. Drove out demons. They performed miracles of healing while preaching the Gospel and demonstrating the power of faith. Acts 3 describes the first example of healing. The disciples, and the first believers in Jesus attended the Temple in Jerusalem to worship at the hour of prayer. Peter and John performed a miracle there on a man who had been crippled from his birth. *“In the name of Jesus of Nazareth,”* Peter told the man, *“get up and walk.”* And he did!

Acts 5 says signs and wonders were done again and again among the people by the disciples on Solomon's Porch at the Temple. In Acts 8, Philip was in the city of Samaria preaching, when unclean spirits cried out with a loud voice and came out of many people who were paralyzed, or lame. And those people were healed! In Acts 9, Ananias laid his hands on Saul, who later would become the Apostle Paul. Ananias said, *“Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to*

*you on the road to Damascus, by which you just came, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."* Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes. He regained his sight. He rose and was baptized.

Again, in Acts 9, Peter found a man named Aeneas in Lydda. He was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. Peter said to him, "*Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and make your bed.*" And he did. Immediately! All the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw it and turned to the Lord. It goes on like that through Acts to Chapter 28. And even though you're not one of the apostles listed in Matthew and the Book of Acts, you too, have been given the Good News. And you are to give it to others, trusting God to help you do it.

God doesn't care who you are. God doesn't care where you came from. God wants to do His work through *your* life. Paul said it, exactly right, in Galatians 2:20: "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" God doesn't have a checklist of conditions you have to meet to do His work. If God had done that, David never would have killed Goliath. Abraham never would have been the Father of the Jews. Jonah would have never entered the whale. God took whoever was willing, regardless of age, experience, and skills. He took twelve various men to become part of His inner circle: Peter, Andrew, James, John were fishermen. And last week we learned about Matthew, a tax collector. They were all just normal people. Yet, Jesus gave them the power and the authority to do wonderful things in His Name. He wanted normal people to perform *abnormal* miracles as they gave the message of the Gospel.

And that job is not over! It started when Jesus sent out twelve disciples. And His job continues right up to today, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. We have a job to keep on doing what they started two thousand years ago. Jesus said, "*pray for workers for the harvest.*" Are you willing to pray that prayer? Are you willing to be used by God? The harvest is ready right here in Everglades City. The census of 2000 three years ago showed, that right here in Everglades City before Hurricane Ian there were 479 people. 154 families residing in 345 houses. In 2010 that population dropped down to 400. We didn't grow. And now people are moving away. Dying. Spending more time away than before.

Yet, we still have our ministry right here *on the circle in Everglades City*. A ministry not just for the Preacher. It's for all of you. Working together. Our church is a twelve-month church! Not seasonal! It doesn't close for six months during the Summer! We must emphasize this! Our work goes on 365 days a year! And we need folks who are willing to help us 'year-round' by their attendance. By their giving. By their prayers. Their willingness to get involved. Folks who will say, "*Here I am! You can on me to take a leadership role. I don't care what it is. I can be trained.*"

Our Nominating Committee will soon be faced with filling a lot of vacant places occurring in our church this coming year. We need everyone who is willing to help us take this church forward. There are great things ahead for us! We all have different gifts and abilities. Let's put them together and see what happens. The disciples did it through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's, also, do some amazing things here in Everglades City through the marvelous power and authority of the Holy Spirit. It takes determination. And God will help us do it if you're willing. Don't wait to be asked. All you have to do is step up and say to me, or Virginia Kanning, or Millie Wallace, *Here I Am. I'm ready to go to work.*" AMEN