

Sermon preached at OCC, 14 June 2026

Your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path – help us understand your word and live by it – Amen.

Matthew 9:35–10:8

### ***From Compassion to Commission***

Do you remember what our catch phrase is to introduce our church? It is “We’re an open, inclusive Christian community - welcoming everyone, growing in faith together and putting the love of Jesus into everyday action.” Today, we’ll focus on “putting the love of Jesus into everyday action” in relation to the reading in Matthew. We also identified key steps to achieve this culture statement – sharing our story, welcoming new people, creating an all-age church, diversifying our worship style, modernising our space, investing in young people, and growing outreach. Among them, our urgent priority is on ‘growing outreach’ – in biblical terms, discipling, as the rest of the things are hanging on this key step. Through the reading in Matthew, we’ll learn that discipling consists of three aspects: being formed by Jesus, seeing with Jesus’ compassion, and being sent by Jesus’ authority.

#### **1. Formed by Jesus**

Although the title of the sermon is *From Compassion to Commission*, Jesus didn’t start his ministry simply out of compassion. Before he started his ministry, many things had happened already. For instance, there was his baptism conducted by John the Baptizer. He was not a little boy, but a young adult who came to John and asked to be baptised. Matthew 17 also records that ‘a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”’ His new identity as the Son of man/God had begun from his baptism. Then he called his disciples<sup>1</sup> as he began his ministry.<sup>2</sup> By the time he sent the disciples, he first spent time forming them. They had walked with him, listened to his teaching, watched his healings, and learned his way of life. Ministry began not with doing but with being shaped by Jesus. As such, teaching, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, and healing the sick became aspects that prepared the disciples to be immersed in the Kingdom life. Our first question to explore further is how we have been formed as Jesus’ disciples so far?

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 4:12-17

## **2. Seeing with Jesus' compassion**

In today's reading, Jesus saw the crowds like sheep without a shepherd, and, turning to his disciples, said that praying to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into this plentiful harvest. This is intriguing as it might change our usual concept of harvest, by which images such as a ripened golden field, or someone fully matured in their area may come to our mind. But here Jesus is talking about people who are apart from God while still living in their sin. They may/may not be ready to hear the Kingdom message. But from Jesus' perspective, they are God's plentiful harvest. Having seen people's sorry state like sheep without a shepherd, who were vulnerable in the field not knowing where to go, they can easily be preyed upon by predators. Jesus wants to be their shepherd as he loves them. As such, they are seen as God's plentiful harvest who will receive the abundant grace of God. At this point, we have to pause to ask another question. Is OCC seeing with Jesus' compassion – who are the sheep without a shepherd in our community? Who is lonely? Who is grieving? Who feels invisible? Who is searching for meaning?

Let's return to Jesus: the problem is the labourers are few. So Jesus says we pray to the Lord of the harvest. Interestingly, it is Jesus who identifies this plentiful harvest – people, not the disciples. Yet, he orders them to pray to the Lord of the harvest. What does it mean? Jesus wants the disciples to continue his kingdom ministry by seeing with the same compassion as his and praying to God. So before he sends out the disciples, they are taught to pray. That is, mission begins on our knees before it begins with our feet. If so, were the disciples ready to be commissioned then?

## **3. Sent by Jesus' authority**

In many ways, the disciples were not ready to be commissioned, similar to the people – God's plentiful harvest. As if many of these people might only need food, Jesus' healing power, or his comforting Kingdom message. Similarly, when Jesus sends out the disciples, he directs them to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel – namely the Jews only, not the Gentiles or Samaritans. It could be seen as exclusion. As Paul says, the gospel is delivered first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.<sup>3</sup> There can be the cultural context too: the disciples need to practice and solidify their understanding of the Kingdom in a familiar, culturally Jewish setting before being sent into the broader, unknown pagan world. As we see later, the full

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 1:16

commissioning is done by the risen Lord nearly at the end of Matthew – in verses 28:18-20. Our third question might be – are we ready to be sent out to deliver Jesus’ good news or are we reluctant because we are not ready yet?

Now let’s turn to OCC culture phrase and the identified key steps, and we may ask – is OCC doing in its mission aligned with what Jesus taught his disciples? What we summarise here are: being formed by Jesus, seeing with Jesus’ compassion, and being sent by Jesus’ authority. We have our questions too in each aspect: 1. How we are formed as Jesus disciples; 2. Is OCC seeing with Jesus’ compassion? 3. Are we ready to be sent out to deliver the good news or not ready yet?

If we briefly go back to the whole reading, the transition from chapter 9 and chapter 10 is remarkable: In chapter 9, we identify three aspects: Jesus teaches, Jesus proclaims, and Jesus heals. In chapter 10 – in the commissioning part, the disciples teach, the disciples proclaim, and the disciples heal. In other words, what Jesus has been doing, he now entrusts to his disciples. This may be the central discipling principle in Matthew because Jesus doesn’t merely teach information, but he shares his mission. OCC has been excellent when it comes to healing and comforting the community. What we don’t see often is teaching who Jesus is and proclaiming the kingdom of God with Jesus’ authority to those who haven’t heard anything about Jesus and God’s kingdom where the least becomes the greatest. <sup>4</sup>

Growing outreach is not another programme. It begins when we see our neighbours through the compassionate eyes of Jesus, pray for God's harvest, and take small steps of obedience wherever he sends us to teach, to proclaim and to heal. May God help us. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 18:4; Luke 9:46-48