

THE EARLY MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

July 4, 2016

10. Jesus Heals the Blind and the Mute

Matthew 9:27-34

Tomorrow America observes its 240th Independence Day! Happy Fourth of July to everyone!! Now imagine you can't see the fireworks or the excitement of the celebrations of this Day or express such in speech. How will you feel? This should make you understand the predicament and later the excitement of the blind and the mute whom Jesus healed in our discussion of today when could see and spoke, respectively. The fourth of July is celebrated as a reminder of the Freedom to practice our religious beliefs as we choose. As such we have the freedom of speech to speak on what we belief as well as on the injustice, oppression and suppression we see in our society. Good sight as well as the ability to use the give of speech appropriately prepares you and others for some eternal destiny. Paul admonished Christians to let their speech be season with salt. As we see another Fourth of July tomorrow, let us express our joy of freedom but let our speech be season with salt!

Sight and speech are very essential abilities that God gave mankind for the purpose of good navigation in this world in preparation for our eternal destiny. Proper use of sight and speech prepares you for heaven. What you see and how you use it determines your eternal destiny. Also, what you speak and how you speak to others will determine your eternal destiny. Lacking any or both abilities of sight and speech can hamper the ability to navigate the way in this pilgrim's journey in this world on our way to heaven.

Now let us focus on the blind and mute that Jesus healed during His early Ministry in Capernaum of Galilee. Jesus had just healed the woman with the issue of blood and raised Jairus' daughter from the dead in the same city of Capernaum. To me this spelled freedom from sickness and death that Jesus offers those who have faith in Him. Immediately afterward the blind and the mute that needed freedom of sight and speech came into scene seeking help from Jesus.

Therefore our text of the day reads, "As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" 28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. 29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you"; 30 and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." 31 But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region. 32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. 33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." 34 But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons"" (Matthew 9:27-34).

In these verses, Matthew demonstrates that faith in Jesus helps us see and recognize things from God's perspective. In a striking contrast to the Jewish leaders, the blind men recognized Jesus and confess their faith by calling Him the Son of David. They recognized Jesus as the Messiah. You have to see things from God's perspective to recognize Jesus as the Messiah to be lead to your eternal destiny. Although the blind men lacked physical sight yet because they had faith

and spiritual sight to recognize Jesus as the Messiah to ask Him to have mercy on them, they received their physical sight. Our text for today states that when He had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and He asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied, implying that they believed Jesus could do it for them. These blind men not only demonstrated great faith, but they acknowledge Him as Lord, something that the Jewish leaders refused to do. Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”; and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.” Why did Jesus warn them this way? Jesus was afraid that the crowd would acclaim Him Messiah for the wrong reason. In other words, He did not want the Jews to enthrone Him as their king because His kingdom was and is not of this world. All the same His warning proved to be an impossible task because pretty soon the news of this healing spread throughout the regions.

In his unique style of writing, Matthew made reference to two blind men. This is significant in the Jewish context because two witnesses were required for any testimony to be believed to be true. Quickly without much fanfare Matthew records that Jesus also has power to cast out demons, for a demoniac is healed. And our text of the day continued, “While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.” But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons”. The crowds marveled and observed that nothing like what Jesus did has been seen in Israel. In contrast to the two blind men, the demoniac and the crowds, the Pharisees refused to believe in Jesus but charged that Jesus cast out the demons by Satan, the prince of demons. This is impossible for a house divided against itself cannot stand. So how can Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan?

The take home message is that Matthew desires that we understand that your faith as a follower or believer (Christian) always affects your sight and speech. Faith in Jesus helps us to see things from God’s perspective and season our speech with salt to speak things that bring glory to God. This is the word of God for the people God; let God’s people say, Amen!!

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The early Ministry of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee after the Sermon on the Mount reflected the following:

- The Healing of a Leper – a miracle occurring and the process involves request, response, resolution, and restriction and/or responsibility.
- The Healings at Capernaum – Showing Christ is interested in our complete deliverance - sin, sickness and death so that we can serve Him and others.
- There is a price tag in following Jesus that you cannot afford to be impulsive or reluctant but dedicated in your commitment to follow Jesus.
- The storms are calmed at the word of His command and peace is restored!
- Two demon-possessed men were restored!
- The forgiving and healing of a paralytic man
- The call of Matthew, the disciple
- Jesus questioned about fasting
- The raising of Jairus daughter and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood.
- The healing of the blind and the mute to reflect how faith affects our sight and speech.
- And let the church say, “Amen!”

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you through cleansing and/or healing to be accepted by the society of believers? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

**Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor**

THE EARLY MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

July 10, 2016

11. The Workers Are Few

Matthew 9:35-38

What we have seen and heard this week alone, especially the gun violence involving the killings by policemen and the killings of policemen has influenced many people, affecting their eternal destiny. These events are ludicrous and my heart is heavy and sick to the stomach with the images I have seen and the rhetoric I have heard. It make me recall that just on last Sunday we alluded on the importance of the abilities of sight and speech when we discussed the healings of the two blind men and demoniac possessed mute man. We said, sight and speech were very essential abilities that God gave mankind for the purpose of good navigation in this world in preparation for our eternal destiny. Proper use of sight and speech prepares you for heaven. What you see and how you use it determines your eternal destiny. Also, what you speak and how you speak to others and about others will determine your eternal destiny. Lacking any or both abilities of sight and speech can hamper the ability to navigate the way in this pilgrim's journey in this world on our way to heaven. We all have the freedom of speech to speak on what we belief as well as on the injustice, oppression and suppression we see in our society. So cannot be silent and hold our peace on these vices that see. Good sight as well as the ability to use the give of speech appropriately prepares you and others for your eternal destiny. The events of this week alone that we have seen and the speeches and debates we have heard should remind us that we are in the last days and indeed the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. This should be our motivation for evangelism.

Jesus had followed the healings of sight and speech we discussed on last Sunday with a motivational discussion for evangelism from what He saw and what He spoke. Therefore our text of the day reads, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" (Matthew 9:35-38).

In these verses, Matthew indicates that Jesus continued to preach and teach the gospel of the kingdom in synagogues, performing great messianic deeds. Matthew emphasizes that Jesus had compassion on the crowds because they are harassed and without a shepherd. The Jewish leaders (scribes and Pharisees) should have been providing this leadership but were not; just like our leaders today (Republicans and Democrats all alike in Congress and other leaders from religious arena) are all about political rhetoric. From what Jesus saw, he observed that the harvest is plentiful, meaning that there are many people who will believe in the gospel of the kingdom if only someone will present it to them. The scribes and the Pharisees should have been laboring in the kingdom, proclaiming the good news, but were more interested in religious positions just like most leaders and followers in our communities and churches are all about today! Jesus' instruction to His disciples (then and now) is to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the ministry of the kingdom.

Today, I could have ended the message right here but I am going to use this same passage to focus on our motivation for sharing Christ with others. To have the motivation to be effective channels for the good news, we need to ask God to give us the heart that Jesus had for lost people. We can have that kind of heart as we observe and see from Christ perspective and then speak the word of God with compassion. Our vision as a church, Mt Traveler, states that we are a caring church with passion for the word of God in ministry and compassion for the people we are ministering to. This implies we have to use the heart of Jesus. We see Jesus' heart in Matthew 9:36, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus goes on to say that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few; thus (in v. 38) the disciples should pray for the Lord to send workers into the harvest. It was C. H. Spurgeon who said that verse 38 weighed on his heart more than any other text in the Bible! He said that it haunted him perpetually (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit [Pilgrim Publications], 19:466). So I pray that this simple message will haunt us because we need to see as Jesus saw and feel as Jesus felt so that we will do as Jesus did.

Verse 35 gives us a summary of Jesus' ministry at that time (almost identical with Matt. 4:23). He was going through all of the villages, teaching, proclaiming the gospel, and healing every kind of disease and sickness. Then, verses 36-38 report a specific incident on one of those occasions, when Jesus saw the crowds, perhaps as they approached Him, felt compassion for them, and then gave this charge to His disciples about praying so the Lord of the Harvest can send more workers into the harvest field. Therefore we need to see as Jesus saw; feel like He felt and do as He did.

1. We need to see as Jesus saw.

Jesus and the disciples saw the same scene: the approaching crowd of people. But Jesus saw them with different eyes than the disciples did.

A. Jesus saw the great need of lost people (9:36).

There was nothing unusual about the crowd that approached Jesus and the disciples that day. There may have been a few more sick and disabled people than in a normal crowd, but no more than there had been on previous days. But the disciples probably just thought as they did on another occasion when the needs were overwhelming (Matt. 14:15), "Send them away!" But Jesus saw them differently and He felt compassion for them. As you have observed the reports the events of this past week alone, the gun violence, the killings in Louisiana, Minnesota, and Dallas in Texas, and saw the crowds and heard the rhetoric, how many people do you think are

seeing these event as Jesus would have seen and spoken as Jesus would have? Jesus saw lost people as distressed and we his followers must see the same. The word means “troubled” or “vexed.” It points to the load of problems that people apart from Christ bear. Do you ever look carefully into people’s faces when you’re in public? If you do, you’ll see a lot of distressed, troubled people. Jesus saw the crowds were harassed and helpless, a lost people like sheep without a shepherd, dispirited, “downcast” or “thrown down.” It points to the utterly helpless and forsaken condition of people who are lost in sin without the Savior. Philip Keller, in *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* [Zondervan], describes how sheep can get turned over on their backs and not be able to get up by themselves again. Such sheep are called “cast” or “cast down” sheep. These sheep flail at the air with their legs, but they can’t get back on their feet without the aid of the shepherd. Left in this condition, helpless and vulnerable to their enemies, they will die after a few hours or days as wolves would have them for dinner. What a picture of sinners apart from the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ! Outwardly, they may look calm and comfortable. They may be successful in worldly terms. But Jesus sees their hearts before God. They are on their backs, “legs up,” unable to extricate themselves from their sin. They are downcast or dispirited. They may look normal outwardly, but inwardly they are, as Paul describes them (Eph. 2:12), without “hope and without God in the world.” Jesus saw lost people as sheep without a shepherd. The Jewish religious leaders should have been shepherding these people, pointing them to God. But instead they were self-righteous and self-seeking, looking down on the common people as sinners (John 9:24-34). They were fleecing the flock, not shepherding them with compassion (Ezekiel 34; Matthew 23). They viewed the people as a bother. But Jesus viewed them as sheep needing a shepherd. How have you observed the unraveling events of this past week? How did you hear or perceive these events? When we hear heart-breaking stories like that as believers shouldn’t we respond with compassion to the hurting! And we would—if we have seen their needs as Jesus would. But, hurting people do not wear neon or reflecting signs blinking, “Love me! I’m hurting!” We probably have hurting people here at church every time the doors of the church are opened. Do we step over them and overlook them on our way to talk with our friends? Or, do we see them as Jesus saw these people, as distressed, dispirited, and as sheep without a shepherd?

B. Jesus saw the great harvest of lost people (9:37).

He said, “The harvest is plentiful.” This was an important concept that Jesus wanted His disciples to grasp. On another occasion, after speaking with the Samaritan woman by the well, He told the disciples (John 4:35), “lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.” He repeated it again as He sent out the seventy for ministry (Luke 10:2). And He told the fearful apostle Paul to go on preaching in Corinth, explaining (Acts 18:10), “for I have many people in this city.” There was a harvest waiting to be reaped. The harvest doesn’t depend on our techniques, but on God’s sovereign purpose. He has planned a harvest and He calls us to get involved as reapers. We practically deny the truth of Jesus’ words whenever we think “such person(s) wouldn’t want to hear about Christ!” “They would be offended if I talked to them about spiritual things!” How do you know that? Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful. It is God’s job to open hearts to the gospel (Acts 16:14) and our job is to go into the harvest field and seek to reap a crop. Jesus saw the great need of lost people and so also the great harvest of lost people but the workers are few.

C. Jesus saw the great need for workers for the harvest (9:37b).

Jesus changed metaphors here. First, He used the metaphor of sheep. But, now, it’s a harvest. These two metaphors show two sides of the matter: The sheep and the shepherd show man’s need

met by God. The good shepherd seeks out lost sheep and ministers to them. The harvest and the workers show God's "need" met by man: God uses saved people to save other people. Jesus' viewpoint is that of a farmer who has a great crop ready for harvest, but he doesn't have enough reapers. It's an interesting picture, isn't it? On the one hand, the Lord will accomplish all of His purpose, which includes the salvation of His elect (Eph. 1:3-11). And yet, at the same time, He has chosen to save lost people through those whom He has already saved. He could have used angels, who probably would have been more competent than we are because they are ministering spirits. But He chose to use us! And so the harvest is plentiful means that there is a need for more workers. The implication is that if you are one of Jesus' sheep, He wants you to see yourself as a worker in His harvest. It is not by accident that the very next thing in Matthew's gospel (Chapter 10) is for Jesus to summon the twelve and appoint them to ministry. Up to this point, Jesus has done the entire ministry while the disciples have watched. But now He gets the disciples involved. And if you're thinking, "But I'm not called into full-time ministry," you don't understand. The workers in the Lord's harvest are not just those in so-called "full-time" ministry. Rather, they are those who have tasted of God's salvation telling others of what He has done for their soul. Or, as it has often been said, it is one beggar telling another beggar where he can find bread. Jesus wants you to open your eyes and see the great harvest around you so that you will be a worker reaping souls who need the Good Shepherd. So to be like our Savior, we need to see as Jesus saw: the great need of lost people; the great harvest of lost people; and, the great need for more workers in the harvest of lost people. Seeing as Jesus saw will lead us to the second step:

2. We need to feel as Jesus felt.

Note the link in verse 36, "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them...." The Greek verb translated, "felt compassion," is used frequently of Jesus in the Gospels. It is related to a noun meaning, "inward parts," or, as we might say in the vernacular, "guts or gut feelings." Deep down inside, Jesus felt for these people. He didn't angrily blame them for the mess that they were in, although He could have done so. Rather, He felt compassion for them. Do we just angrily blamed those engaged in the brutal gun violence and killings that occur this past week or do we have compassion towards them as lost sinners that would go to hell if they do not repent? Do we feel compassion for sinners, or do we shrug and think, "It's their own fault"? The Reader's Digest [May, 1979, p. 127] reported about a bold pastor who began his sermon, "I'd like to make three points today. First, there are millions of people around the world who are going to go to hell. Second, most of us sitting here today don't give a damn about that." After a long pause, he continued, "My third point is that you are more concerned that I, your pastor, said the word 'damn' than you are about the millions going to hell." That was a tricky way of showing how we get so worked up about the trivial and are indifferent about the significant. We should feel as Jesus felt about lost people because people can sense whether you care about them or not. If they feel your love, they will be more inclined to listen to your message. We need to see needy people as Jesus saw them. And we need to feel compassion for them as Jesus felt. This leads us to the third and final step: we need to do as Jesus did.

3. We need to do as Jesus did.

What did Jesus do? He ministered to people's needs and He prayed for more workers.

A. Jesus ministered to people's spiritual and physical needs.

Ministry is not a "stained-glass" word that applies only to those called into "professional" Christian work. "Ministry" means "service." Every Christian is called to serve Christ. He has given you unique gifts and opportunities. You are to take what He has given you and use it to

serve those with whom He has put you in contact. Matthew summarizes Jesus' ministry by three things (9:35): He was teaching, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness. Not everyone is gifted to teach publicly, but in private conversation you should be able to teach others what God has taught you from His Word. If your friend makes a comment about God or Jesus or eternal life that is contrary to Scripture, you can use the opportunity to say, "Why do you think that? Would you mind if I shared what God's Word says about that subject?" So you serve by teaching. True enough, not everyone is called to preach the gospel publicly, but every believer should be ready when the opportunity presents itself to tell others how they can have their sins forgiven and go to heaven (1 Pet. 3:15). We can all share the message of the gospel as: We all have sinned against the holy God and we deserve His punishment. No amount of good works can pay our debt. But in love, God sent His Son Jesus to bear the penalty that we deserved. We must turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our sin-bearer. God gives eternal life as a free gift to all who trust in Jesus. And if you can learn some verses and some illustrations to go with each of these points, you can minister to everyone's greatest need, to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus also healed the sick, authenticating His claim to be the promised Messiah (Matt. 11:2-6). While no one can heal today at the same level with Jesus or the apostles, we can pray for the sick and know that sometimes God will heal them. We can minister to people's physical needs in practical ways prescribed Matt. 25:34-40. If we do as Jesus did, we will minister to people's spiritual and physical needs.

B. Jesus prayed for more workers.

You might be thinking, "Wait a minute! The text does not say that Jesus prayed for more workers. It says that He commanded the disciples to pray for workers." True! My bad! But Jesus didn't command the disciples to do something which He Himself had not done. Luke (6:12-13) tells us that before Jesus called the twelve apostles, He spent the entire night in prayer. Surely, in part He was asking the Father for workers for the harvest. But whether He prayed for more workers or not, you cannot dispute that He commands us to pray for more workers. Do you do that? Do you pray that the Lord would raise up and send out workers from this church to maybe serve in the ministries of this local church here or maybe God will send them to another culture or country with the gospel? I do not fully understand it but I know that God somehow works mysteriously through our prayers. If we all prayed for more workers, maybe we would have more people wanting to serve than we had openings for service! That would be a unique problem, wouldn't it! But let me warn you that praying for workers for the harvest is dangerous business as God may tap you on the shoulder and ask, "What about you? Will you be a worker in My harvest?"

Conclusion

The take home message is what is our motive for getting or not getting involved in evangelism? Your motive should be the great love of our Savior, who came to this sinful world, who saw the great needs of lost people, who felt compassion for them, and who served them with the good news of salvation. If you have experienced that salvation, then you're one of His workers in His harvest. He wants you to see as He saw, to feel as He felt, and to do as He did. Love lost people for Jesus' sake.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The early Ministry of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee after the Sermon on the Mount reflected the following:

- The Healing of a Leper – a miracle occurring and the process involves request, response,

resolution, and restriction and/or responsibility.

- The Healings at Capernaum – Showing Christ is interested in our complete deliverance - sin, sickness and death so that we can serve Him and others.
- There is a price tag in following Jesus that you cannot afford to be impulsive or reluctant but dedicated in your commitment to follow Jesus.
- The storms are calmed at the word of His command and peace is restored!
- Two demon-possessed men were restored!
- The forgiving and healing of a paralytic man
- The call of Matthew, the disciple
- Jesus questioned about fasting
- The raising of Jairus daughter and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood.
- The healing of the blind and the mute to reflect how faith affects our sight and speech.
- The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.
- And let the church say, “Amen!”

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you through cleansing and/or healing to be accepted by the society of believers? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God’s kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don’t you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE EARLY MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

July 17, 2016

12. Jesus Sends Out the Twelve to the Lost Matthew 10:1-15

Prior to sending anyone with an errand you would have gained trust and confidence in them first, especially when you are sending them on a mission. And when you send someone on an errand or mission you do so providing them specific instructions. You don’t leave the messenger guess working or even guess thinking because you desire that the mission be accomplished. Similarly, to fulfill His mission Jesus commissioned twelve men, known as disciples, to go only to the lost sheep of Israel at this point of His ministry. Before this time in history, Jesus had been laboring in the field of God’s kingdom all this while by Himself although at the same time He was preaching, teaching and healing, He was training them about kingdom building. Then in our last week’s sermon discourse, He made the pronouncement that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So in today’s sermon discussion He increases the manpower to work in the harvest field by commissioning the twelve disciples with authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness; and gave them specific instructions for the mission He desired accomplished among the lost sheep of Israel.

Therefore our text of the day reads, “Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. 2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. 5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, [The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin] drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. 9 “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— 10 no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. 11 Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town” (Matthew 10:1-15).

In these verses, Matthew presents the commissioning of the disciples (vv. 1-4) and the mission of the apostles (vv.5-15). In verse 1, Matthew refers to Jesus closest followers as the twelve disciples but in the second verse he calls them twelve apostles. The term apostle means “one sent out” or a person commissioned to go. When Jesus called the twelve disciples, he commissioned them granting the power to be protégées of Him to do the work of the kingdom He had been all alone so far. Therefore He granted them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. Afterwards He sent with specific instructions as follows: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, [The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin] drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. 9 “Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— 10 no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. 11 Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town”.

Please note that the names of the twelve disciples differ here as listed by Matthew from some traditions or accounts. In John 1:45, Nathaniel is listed rather than Bartholomew. In some manuscripts, Thaddaeus is known as Labbaeus, and in Luke 6:15, Simon the Cananaean (Aramaic for the “Zealous One” is called Simon the Zealot. These were the other names of the same person, in another language or a descriptive title of the same name. Also, notice that Matthew groups the apostles in groups of two: Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. In similar fashion, In Luke 10:1, Dr. Luke records Jesus sending the

70 disciples out in groups of two. This is significant in the Jewish culture where two witnesses are required to affirm any truthful testimony.

After His resurrection, Jesus again would commission the apostles (Acts 1:6-8), when He charged them to witness first in Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria and finally to the end of the earth. The kingdom of God began with Israel but it is not to be limited to Israel alone. As such on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) Peter preached to the Jews in Jerusalem; in Acts 8 Philip preached to the Samaritans; later in Acts 10 Peter preached to Gentiles (Cornelius and his household). The content of the gospel preached by the apostles in the limited commission to the lost sheep of Israel is the same that was preached by Jesus: “the kingdom of heaven is near (Matthew 4:17, NIV). This must be the same content of our preaching today! Along with this preaching of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven, the apostles were also to perform the messianic deeds of healing, in so doing identifying their message with that of the Messiah. They became representatives of the Messiah at work in the harvest field. We too must identify ourselves with Jesus to be effective in harvesting souls.

The instructions of Jesus to the apostles not take provision on the journey and to stay with those who welcome them is within the tradition of the itinerant rabbis or teachers in both the Jewish and Gentile cultures. Itinerant teachers and philosophers were common in the Jewish world during the time of Christ and it was expectant of any good Jewish community to welcome and care for such itinerant rabbis (Romans 15:19-24; 1 Thessalonians 2; 2 John; and 3 John). Then in Mathew 10:15, Jesus added a sense of finality on those who rejected the apostles and the message they preached comparing them to Sodom and Gomorrah. This implies there is grave danger for rejecting God’s messengers and message concerning the nearness of His kingdom that comes through repentance from sin.

Conclusion: If you have not been called and commissioned, you cannot bear witness for the Kingdom of God and your testimony cannot be reaffirm by another. Moreover, you will not be obedient to the commission of the mission to preach that the Kingdom of God is near.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The early Ministry of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee after the Sermon on the Mount reflected the following:

- The Healing of a Leper – a miracle occurring and the process involves request, response, resolution, and restriction and/or responsibility.**
- The Healings at Capernaum – Showing Christ is interested in our complete deliverance - sin, sickness and death so that we can serve Him and others.**
- There is a price tag in following Jesus that you cannot afford to be impulsive or reluctant but dedicated in your commitment to follow Jesus.**
- The storms are calmed at the word of His command and peace is restored!**
- Two demon-possessed men were restored!**
- The forgiving and healing of a paralytic man**
- The call of Matthew, the disciple**
- Jesus questioned about fasting**
- The raising of Jairus daughter and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood.**
- The healing of the blind and the mute to reflect how faith affects our sight and speech.**
- The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few**
- How He commissioned the disciples and sent the apostles on a mission**

- And let the church say, “Amen!”

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you through cleansing and/or healing to be accepted by the society of believers? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God’s kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don’t you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopses of Sermons Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

PREACHED AT SUMMER REVIVAL, PLEASANT RIDGE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, DADEVILLE, ALABAMA, Rev. Michael Heard, Pastor

Theme: Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me (Psalm 51:10).

July 18, 2016

Revival: An Issue of The Heart Proverbs 4:23; Psalms 51:10

1. Pray / Acknowledge

A. God, Pastor/Ministers, Wife/Pastor’s & Ministers’ Wives, Family/Friends

2. Introduction:

- Let me begin by commending Pastor Marbury and the Pleasant Ridge planning committee for selecting a beautiful theme for this revival. The theme you have selected for this revival is “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me”. If any revival is to occur in any church or community it has to begin with the status of the hearts of individuals. The crux of the matter about revival is the matter of the heart. A messed up heart needs to be transformed by the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus and the right spirit renewed within it. A good heart needs to be guarded because the heart is the wellspring of life.
- Where I grew up in Plateau State of Nigeria, most rural communities rely on springs for clean supply of water. Those springs are the lifeline for the communities. If any of these springs are clogged up at any point in time the livelihood of people in that community is in danger. Similarly if any of these springs was to be polluted by germs or toxicant, the livelihood of the community is jeopardy. In either case, the pollutant has to be cleaned up or whatever clogged the spring has to be removed for the spring to bring life to community.
- Likewise the human physical heart is a vital organ that pumps blood to every part of the body to supply nutrients and oxygen to nourish every cell for vitality of the individual. If

the heart is clogged up it will fail to pump the blood and life is endangered. And if it poisoned with toxicants or germs, these pollutants will be carried by the blood to every cell, destroying them and eventually causing death.

- Spiritually, your heart is the most important attribute that you have for spiritual vitality. The spiritual heart is the seat of emotions; positive emotions that connect you with God and negative emotions that separates you from God. A polluted heart needs to be cleansed and a right spirit renewed in it for spiritual life to thrive. Once a heart is cleansed, then it needed to be guarded. Revival comes when a dirty or polluted heart is cleansed and a clean heard is guarded.

3. **Text:** “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalms 51:10; KJV). Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23; NIV). (Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life).

The heart both physical and spiritually is the most vital element of human life. As the heart goes, so does the entire being of the individual. A healthy and sound heart creates vitality and life in a man; not so with an unhealthy heart. The spiritual heart gets polluted by what we see and what we hear. If we do not filter what we see and what we hear, we take everything into our hearts and when we are full of pollution we speak out pollution that poison others in our communities and defile them.

Jesus once said “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? 18 But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them” (Matthew 15:17-20).

Jeremiah, the lamenting prophet once lamented, “The heart is deceitful above all things and (desperately wicked) beyond cure. Who can understand it? 10 “I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve (Jeremiah 17:9-10). If you are not careful and guarding your heart and filtering the pollutions that creep in little at a time, your heart will be polluted that you lose the consciousness of righteousness and begin to practice and speak pollution, which is sin.

Another rhetorical question asked the psalmist, how can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. 10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. 11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you (Psalms 119:9-11). This process brings about revival in a community as men turn from being deceivers at heart and become righteous and loving because they begin to see and do things from God’s perspective and according to His will and purpose. This is what David yearned for after confessing and repenting from the sin with Uriah’s wife and against Uriah and most important against God. He cried out for revival saying, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me”.

Once your heart has been cleansed through confess of and repentance from sin, it is imperative to guard your heart. “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is

not in us” (John 1:8-10). Christians must therefore be diligent to guard their hearts. King Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived said it best: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23). It is not your experience, knowledge, or skills that matter because the crux of the matter is the matter of the heart! Your heart is the most important element to vitality. It is your heart that builds agape relationships with God and man. That was why Jesus asked Peter three times after he had repented of denying Him, do you love Me? If your heart is unhealthy, it threatens everything else—family, friends, career—everything!

Therefore let me suggest at least three reasons why you should guard your heart:

1. Your heart is extremely valuable. We don’t guard worthless things. Each Sunday night I take my garbage to the street because it is picked up on Monday mornings. It sits on the sidewalk all night, completely unguarded. Why? Because it is worthless. Not so with your heart. It is the essence of who you are. It is your authentic self—the *core* of your being. It is where all your dreams, your desires, and your passions live. It is that part of you that connects with God and other people. Just like your physical body, if your heart—your spiritual heart—dies, your ability to relate godly dies. This is why Solomon says, “Above all else.” He doesn’t say, “If you get around to it” or “It would be nice if.” No, he says; *make it your top priority because it keeps revival ongoing.*
2. Your heart is the source of everything you do. King Solomon says it is the “wellspring of life.” In other words, it is the source of everything else in your life. Your heart overflows into thoughts, words, and actions. If you plug up the spring, you stop the flow of water. If you poison the water, the flow becomes toxic. In either situation, you threaten life downstream. Everything depends on the condition of the spring. Likewise, if your heart is unhealthy, it has an impact on everything else. It threatens your family, your friends, your ministry, your career, and, indeed, your legacy. It is, therefore, imperative that you guard it.
3. Your heart is under constant attack. You are in a spiritual warfare and you need to take the whole armor of God. Be careful about what you see and what you hear that pollutes your heart from seeing things from God’s perspective and speaking as the oracle of God. When Solomon says to guard your heart, he implies that you are living in a combat zone—one in which there are casualties. Many of us are oblivious to the reality of this war. We have an enemy who is bent on our destruction. He not only opposes God, but he opposes everything that is aligned with Him—including us. The Enemy uses all kinds of weapons to attack the Christians heart. For me, these attacks often come in the form of some circumstance that leads to disappointment, discouragement, or even disillusionment. In these situations, I am tempted to quit—to walk off and surrender from doing ministry but I continue to guard my heart. What about you?

This is the word of God for the people of God. And let the church say, “Amen”

And if you are reading this on the Internet and desire to understand how to guard your heart, first be revived by confessing and repenting of your sin. Then ask God to create in you a clean heart, placing a new spirit within you as you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior. If you just did that, write and tell us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org?

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE EARLY MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

July 24, 2016

13. Jesus Sends Out the Twelve like sheep among wolves Matthew 10:16-42

The mission that Jesus sends his disciples on is a dangerous mission. Yet they are provided with all the necessary armor required for protection to carry out the mission. The mission has been likened to sending sheep among wolves. Wolves are carnivores and their main prey is the sheep. How can a sheep then be sent among wolves? Usually a sheep among wolves is dead; and meat for supper. Yet Jesus sends His disciples as sheep among wolves! Why? He has made all the provisions to keep them protected until the mission is accomplished! Jesus was sending the disciples to the lost sheep of Israel yet He described the mission as sending them as sheep among wolves. Lost sheep are wild and dangerous, and can behave as wolves. Therefore Jesus prepared the disciples mindset to deal with the lost sheep, that did not they were lost but were atypical in behavior as wolves. As I was preparing this message the Spirit of the Lord spoke to me saying, this message is prophetic and don't take it literally and let him who has ears to hear let him hear what the Spirit says. Have you ever wondered why pastors and ministers have been treated with disrespect and as dirt by the congregations they are faithfully caring for and shepherding? It is because those congregation members that disrespect their shepherd did not quite understand the prophetic message of this passage in Matthew 10:16-42. Mt Traveler, do you understand what the text of today is saying? Otherwise you could find yourself fulfilling the prophetic message therein unawares. It is therefore imperative that you be on your guard and be wise as serpent but harmless or innocent as doves so that you do not behave as wolves in sheep clothing. Rather, be the sheep that the Lord sends than the wolves into which the sheep are sent.

Thus our text of the day reads, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24 "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! 26 "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. [Or will; or knowledge] 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many

sparrows. 32 “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. 34 “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn “‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— 36 a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ [Micah 7:6 – “For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man’s enemies are the members of his own household”] 37 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. 40 “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward” (Matthew 10:16-42).

In this discourse, Matthew presents Jesus’ warnings to the disciples of the serious opposition and persecution that will result from them preaching the kingdom message. Again, the kingdom message is the “Kingdom of God is near” or the “Kingdom of God is here”. And if the kingdom of God is here, are you in it or not? Jesus told Nicodemus that unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God and unless you are born of the water and the spirit you cannot enter the kingdom of God. The warnings concerning preaching the kingdom message can be discussed in the following four paragraphs: The disciples and persecution (Mat. 10:19-23); the disciple and his followers (Mat. 10:24-33); the disciple and the cross (Mat. 10:34-39); and the disciples’ message and reward (Mat. 10:40-42).

1. The Disciples and Persecution (Mat. 10:19-23)

In this section, note that for the sake of their testimony, the disciples will be hated and face death. However, the apostles were not to be overly concerned as to how to respond in such circumstances because the Holy Spirit will provide the right words for the response. As you study this text, you can hear Jesus’ concern for his disciples as well as Matthews concern for his community as the disciples testify of their faith in a hostile Jewish and Gentile context because persecution is sure to arise and threaten.

Jesus then used a puzzling expression, “you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes”. This expression could refer to:

- A. The Transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 16:28 and 17:1-2)
- B. The destruction of Jerusalem itself (Matthew 24:30)
- C. Some other unusual event like the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)
- D. The coming of Jesus at any time as a demonstration of His final judgment (Revelation 1:7, 2:16; 22:7,12)
- E. Jesus’ second coming at the end of the world (Matthew 24:28)

Recall Jesus spoke these original words before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem whereas Matthew’s Gospel was probably written afterwards. As such Jesus original listeners and Matthews later readers encounter these ideas from different perspectives. If this is the case, Matthew’s purpose for writing was probably to challenge his Jewish

church community to move on to Jesus' greater commission to disciple the Gentiles, and not to limit themselves just to the Jews. Jesus clearly had a vision for a later Gentile mission beyond the cities of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem but at the time He spoke to the twelve disciples, His focus was on the apostles and their early Jewish (lost sheep of Israel) mission.

Further Jesus explained that if the apostles did not feel welcome, and the rejection was severe, the apostles were to dust their feet against the city or place. The implication is that because of the urgency of the kingdom message, the apostles were to go for the receptive and responsive audience. As for the rejecting audience of the apostles, they were to dust off their feet as judgment awaits such an audience. So Christians be careful the way you treat men of God that have been sent your way to minister to you. You cannot afford to disrespect or maltreat any minister otherwise you will be inviting judgment on yourself. And I, as your shepherd, if I fail to tell you the truth and explain to you the implications of your actions, I too, I am piling judgment on myself.

2. The Disciple and His Followers (Mat. 10:24-33)

Jesus warned His disciples not to expect anything better than what He their teacher had received from the Jewish leaders as He was even called "Beelzebub" – a Hebrew term for Satan or the devil (Matthew 9:27-34). If Jesus was mistreated and called all kinds of names, certainly these same Jewish leaders will malign the disciples too. Jesus then warned the apostles not to fear those who could, and would, kill them, but rather fear the One (i.e. God Himself) who had the power to destroy both the body and soul in hell. Hell is real and it is the Hebrew term, Gehenna meaning the valley of Hinnom, or the place of destruction. It is a euphemism for the Christian concept of hell (a different concept than hades, the place of the dead). Here Jesus encouraged the apostles not to fear persecution because God knows them and will ultimately protect them; not that they will not have to die, but simply means they are not to fear the destruction in hell because Jesus will acknowledge before God all who faithfully testify of Him to the world that He is the Messiah.

3. The Disciple and The Cross (Mat. 10:34-39)

Here Jesus was saying to His disciples that His coming will bring suffering for those who believe in Him and/or the kingdom message. In fact, parents as well as family members will turn against the disciple because of Him. Therefore the radical nature of discipleship is that the disciples must choose Jesus and the kingdom message before all kinds of family allegiance. Those who fail to choose Jesus over all others are not worthy being His disciples. As such true and worthy disciples of the kingdom must first deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow Him; the same thought that Jesus will expressed again in Matthew 16:24-28. Taking one's cross is a picture of being willing to die for Jesus – meaning far more than just accepting one's responsibilities. Those who faithfully preached the gospel in the first century of Christianity had to make that decision because to follow Jesus was a life and death decision. What about us in this twenty-first century? The same is required of us.

4. The Disciples' Message and Reward (Mat. 10:40-42)

In this section, Jesus assured the disciples that whoever received them receives both the Son and the Father. This assurance was quickly followed with a proverbial saying about

the righteous receiving their just reward. Then Jesus' final statement in this section sets a stage for a discussion which Matthew picked up in Matthew 18, namely concerning taking care of the little ones or the least of these ones. The first thought that one might have is to say Jesus was referring to taking care of children, but Jesus later describes these little ones as those who believe in Him (Mat. 18:6). When any one is in Christ, he is a new creation! This implies they have been born again, into the kingdom of God and are children or babes in the kingdom. In Matthew 11:25, Jesus commented that kingdom matters have been revealed to the babes by the Father, implying that the babes who have received the Father's revelation are those who have received the kingdom message and are followers of Jesus or disciples. But why call the disciples babes or little ones? This is because disciples, like babes or little ones are vulnerable to abuse. Disciples are abused and persecuted according to the context of Matthew 10 because they have believed the kingdom message and are proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah. But ultimately they will receive their just reward because they have been justified by Christ the Righteous judge.

Conclusion: If you have believed and received the kingdom message, and are now proclaiming the message, you will be persecuted, slandered, denounced and denied by relatives but you will receive a just reward by the Righteous judge who has justified you through your faith in His grace. Finally remember once you belong to the kingdom you have been sent to proclaim the kingdom message as sheep among wolves!

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The early Ministry of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee after the Sermon on the Mount reflected the following:

- The Healing of a Leper – a miracle occurring and the process involves request, response, resolution, and restriction and/or responsibility.
- The Healings at Capernaum – Showing Christ is interested in our complete deliverance - sin, sickness and death so that we can serve Him and others.
- There is a price tag in following Jesus that you cannot afford to be impulsive or reluctant but dedicated in your commitment to follow Jesus.
- The storms are calmed at the word of His command and peace is restored!
- Two demon-possessed men were restored!
- The forgiving and healing of a paralytic man
- The call of Matthew, the disciple
- Jesus questioned about fasting
- The raising of Jairus daughter and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood.
- The healing of the blind and the mute to reflect how faith affects our sight and speech.
- The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few
- How He commissioned the disciples and sent the apostles on a mission
- How He sent them as sheep among wolves.
- And let the church say, "Amen!"

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you through cleansing and/or healing to be accepted by the society of believers? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of

God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE EARLY MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

July 31, 2016

14. Jesus Explains Who He is to John the Baptist **Matthew 11:1-19**

We are a missionary Baptist Church because we have a mission. This is because we have a charge to keep and a calling to fulfill. As such, the mission of the disciple (or follower of Jesus) is very dangerous as it is has been likened to sending sheep among wolves. Under such circumstances, the wolves will cause intimations that lead to anxiety, fear and doubts about the success of the mission. Fear and doubts are the greatest enemies of faith and progress, and both can halt you from the charge to keep and a calling to fulfill. Fear can paralyze and cripple anyone who entertains it and make such person cease functioning. Doubts can cause anxiety and ultimately fear that brews distrust and dishonesty. The cause of fear is intimidation from the enemy to make us doubt the very core of who we are.

Human beings are very interesting in that when we are hopeless and helpless and filled with anxiety and fears, we often call or look on God for a renewed hope by sending us a shepherd or deliverer. When God initially sends us hope through a prophet, minister, shepherd and/or "Messiah" we receive such with excitement. Not too soon afterwards, we allow the enemy to begin to sow a seed of discord and distrust in the very hope that God has sent us. Then we begin to question the authenticity of God's messenger of hope and help. This was the case with John the Baptist too, who spoke with conviction and enthusiasm about the Messiah and the kingdom message (announcing loud and clear: The kingdom of God is here!). But when the enemy attacked him and derailed him of his faith in Christ while he was imprisoned, he allowed doubt and fear to set in his mind, and he began to question the authenticity of Jesus Christ. Even great people like John the Baptist are tempted to doubt the messiahship of Jesus Christ due to the despairing circumstances they find themselves.

Thus our text of the day reads, "After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee [Greek: in their towns]. 2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" 4 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy [The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me." 7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness

to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." [Mal. 3:1]. 11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, [Or been forcefully advancing] and violent people have been raiding it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. 15 Whoever has ears, let them hear. 16 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 17 "We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds" (Matthew 11:1-19).

In this discourse, Matthew presents the despair of John the Baptist and how he was now questioning the authenticity of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to know exactly what was going on in the mind of John the Baptist while he was in that isolated prison cell. Matthew has already informed his readers that John the Baptist had been arrested (Matthew 4:12). He provides the record of his death in chapter 14. Currently in chapter 11, we are faced with the apparent troubling doubt of John concerning the messiahship of Jesus. But we may have another possibility of looking at John's question.

Recall at this point in time John has been incarcerated in the fortress of Machaerus in the wilderness east of the Dead Sea. His future was totally bleak and certainly discouraging. He must have been emotionally drained and was at a low point in his life. Why? Because the kingdom he had embraced and preached as imminent had not materialized. In such a circumstance, it is natural for one to be plague with questions and doubts. This could be what was going on in John's mind. An alternative view is that John was turning his disciples away from himself to Jesus so he was asking questions for their benefit.

But Jesus' response to John's question draws attention to His messianic ministry. He had been doing what was prophesied that the Messiah would do (Isaiah 61:1-3; 35:5-6; Luke 4:16-19) i.e. healing the sick, blind, lame and deaf, and taking care of the poor. Jesus' messianic ministry should have been all the witness John and his disciples needed. And so in your despair when you are tempted due to your circumstances, never doubt what the man of God, whom He has sent to help you, is doing. Rather check the scriptures to see whether he is fulfilling the mandates that God has given him through the scriptures.

Jesus then continued the discourse by asking John the Baptist what kind of person the Jews had set out to see when they went out to the Jordan River to witness John's baptisms. The language He used here reflected that they had not gone out to see a weak person, but a bold prophet. Jesus then quotes from Malachi 3:1 (I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me) in support of John's ministry of preparing the way for the Messiah. Then Jesus paid John a great compliment – there was and there is no one born of a woman greater than John! In his circumstance of isolated imprisonment, Jesus paid John this great compliment: "Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist"; the

added “yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”. Because John heralded the kingdom message he was counted to be greater than any born of women. However, the least of those in the kingdom of God is greater than John. This could sound contradictory but Jesus as well as Matthew the writer here was laying a foundation for kingdom business. John is great, yet in the kingdom, it is the humble servant that is the greatest. Jesus would later on instruct His disciples that anyone desiring to be the greatest in the kingdom of God let him be the servant of all. This is because the kingdom of Jesus is different from all earthly kingdoms, and Jesus and John’s disciples needed to know this; and so do we.

Jesus conclude his teaching in this section indicating that God at that time did not intend to establish or inaugurate His kingdom until it is fully realized through the death of the Messiah. This lesson was for the zealous Jews (known as the Zealots) who could not accept it, and the disciples had trouble understanding it (Matthew 16:21-23). Finally Jesus attested to the fact that John the Baptist was the expected Elijah who was to come and testify to God’s messianic plans. However, the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day were like children – fickle and easily swayed. They accepted John the Baptist but rejected the Messiah he proclaimed. What a shame! And when things got tough, John refrained from eating and drinking and they said John had a demon. And Jesus came eating and drinking, and they called Him a glutton and only a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Finally I want to challenge you by asking you some rhetorical questions: how do you perceive the messenger God has sent to you to shepherd and restore you from your? Or Do you want to remain in helplessness and hopelessness as a sheep without a shepherd? Do you accept the messenger and the message or do you reject such? Do you perceive him as a greedy, controlling individual freak or as a shepherd trying to set things in order?

Conclusion: Blessed are they who have believed and received the kingdom message and its messengers, and are now in turn proclaiming the message to the rest of the world that the kingdom of God is now here. This because Jesus has died and resurrected, thereby inaugurating His kingdom. Finally remember once you belong to the kingdom you have been sent to proclaim the kingdom message as sheep among wolves and it is needless for you to doubt the authenticity of the Messiah nor his messengers or message they carry!

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The early Ministry of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee after the Sermon on the Mount reflected the following:

- The Healing of a Leper – a miracle occurring and the process involves request, response, resolution, and restriction and/or responsibility.
- The Healings at Capernaum – Showing Christ is interested in our complete deliverance - sin, sickness and death so that we can serve Him and others.
- There is a price tag in following Jesus that you cannot afford to be impulsive or reluctant but dedicated in your commitment to follow Jesus.
- The storms are calmed at the word of His command and peace is restored!
- Two demon-possessed men were restored!
- The forgiving and healing of a paralytic man
- The call of Matthew, the disciple
- Jesus questioned about fasting
- The raising of Jairus daughter and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood.
- The healing of the blind and the mute to reflect how faith affects our sight and speech.

- The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few
- How He commissioned the disciples and sent the apostles on a mission
- How He sent them as sheep among wolves.
- And let the church say, “Amen!”

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you through cleansing and/or healing to be accepted by the society of believers? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God’s kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don’t you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.