

## INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Matthew chapter 9. Matthew 9. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Matthew 9. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, Matthew 9 will be on page **814**.

## INTRODUCTION: ON YOUR LEFT

So, for the last couple years, I've gotten into running. 5k's, 10k's...that kind of stuff.

And running during COVID has been an interesting thing. So, let me just put my cards on the table...

- I never wore my facemask while running. Ok?
  - Don't be mad at me...
  - that's why I ran outside!

Running outside is by its very nature, "socially distanced!"

- When you run past someone
- you're withing 6 feet for, what, like 2 seconds?!?
  - So, I would literally have to spit into their face
  - in that moment
  - to share my germs with them.

So, if I came up on someone else,

- I would move onto the grass, or dirt, or even the street...
- to give them plenty more than 6-feet...
- and then I would yell the universal code for passing...
- *“On your left!”*
- That’s what you yell, *“On your left!”*

So, I didn’t wear a mask while running outside...like a sane person!

But I’ll tell you what...

- I seriously ticked off some of the people out on the trail.
- I mean, you would’ve thought
- I was throwing smallpox blankets
- on some of the people I passed while running.

BTW:

- if you ran outside,
- by yourself,
- with a mask on...
- we need to talk...
- I need you to explain that to me. Ok?

## TRANSITION

I’m calling this sermon **SLIDE ON YOUR LEFT!**

- You see, as we come out of this COVID season,
- one of the questions that I’m hearing from church leaders is:
  - how are we going to re-grow our churches?

Almost all churches are significantly smaller than they were pre-COVID.

And so, the question is: what do we do?

- Do we try to chase down those who haven't come back?
- Do we try to reinvent ourselves so that we can attract more people?
- Do we just settle with the fact that we're smaller and stay as we are?

## EVANGELISM

I want to offer what I think is a biblical option.

- The biblical option is mission.
- It's evangelism!

Our plan for how we want to grow this church

- isn't to hunt down and beg and convince people to come back!

Our plan for how we want to grow this church

- isn't to make it cooler than other churches around here!

Our plan isn't to just throw our arms up in frustration claiming futility!

NO! Our plan is to join on God's mission to seek and save the lost.

It's evangelism!

It's what we said at the beginning of 2021, our vision for this year is to

**SLIDE DIG DEEP & REACH WIDE.**

And now hear me...

- our plan for how to do this...
- our plan evangelism...
- our plan for reaching our neighbors...
- our plan for seeing people who don't know Jesus
  - come to know Jesus is simply this:

YOU!

## **SLIDE YOU ARE THE PLAN**

- Our strategy is YOU getting to know your neighbors.
- Our strategy is YOU investing in your co-worker.
- Our strategy is YOU inviting your friends.
- Our strategy is YOU sharing Christ's love with people.

There are people all around you:

- where you live,
- where you work,
- where you play...
- and instead of passing them by, "*On your left!*"

I want to call you to join God's mission.

And this is straight from the text. Let's look at this Matthew 9:35

## **BLANK SLIDE**

### **MATTHEW 9:35–38**

[35] And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. [36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for 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 laborers are few; [38] therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

## EXPLAIN: CONTEXT

So, we are now turning a corner in Matthew's gospel.

- We started this section of Matthew back in chapter 8,
- and we've seen Jesus' authority on repeat:
  - there were three healing miracles,
    - and then Jesus taught on the demands of discipleship.
  - Then there were three miracles showing his authority,
    - and another teaching on discipleship.
  - And last we saw miracles showing Jesus' compassion.

But now Matthew is turning a corner.

- I'm not sure if you've noticed,
- but thus far,
- Jesus has conducted his mission virtually singlehandedly,
- and his disciples have remained in the background.

He's been teaching and healing and demonstrating his authority.

- But in verse 36 he sees **the crowds**,
- and **he had COMPASSION for them**,
- because they were **like sheep without a shepherd**.

The idea of **"sheep without a shepherd"** is frequent in the Old Testament, always concerning the failure of Israel's leaders.

## EXPLAIN: FISHERS OF MEN

And so, he says to his disciples,

**“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”**

- Essentially, *“Hey, there’s a race to run here!*
- *There are lost people who need to hear*
  - *about the love and hope that the gospel offers.*
- *But we need laborers!*
- *We need runners!”*

Now, back in Matthew 4,

- As Jesus started gathering followers
- he called two fishermen:
- Peter and his brother Andrew.

And in 4:19 he said this to them:

**“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”**

- Jesus promise to the disciples
- was that he would make them **fishers of men,**
- but up to this they’ve been on the sidelines watching...

But all that is going to change.

Look at chapter 10, verse 1.

## MATTHEW 10:1

**[1] And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.**

## EXPLAIN: THE TWELVE

Jesus has just told the disciples...

- to pray for God to send more laborers for the harvest...
- and now those disciples become the very laborers
  - they have prayed for God to send.

They have been passive observers but now are to be active participants!

Now, the choice of the number 12 is highly symbolic.

- Remember, Jesus mourned that the crowds
- were like sheep without a shepherd,
  - taking that language from the Old Testament
  - talking about the Israelites.

Well, now he calls the Twelve disciples

- to represent the twelve patriarchs
- and the twelve tribes of Israel.

But these Twelve are the initiators of the new kingdom community.

## POINT 1: AUTHORITY

And it says that he gave them authority.

- Remember, the primary theme of chapters 8-9
- was Jesus' authority over every infirmity and calamity,
- and now he passes that on to the Twelve.

This is actually shocking!

- Jesus goes WAY beyond other rabbis of his day,
- by involving the disciples in his ministry
- before they had been fully trained!

Normally you wouldn't DO ministry until you were fully trained!

And it's here I want to make my first point about running...it's this:

### **SLIDE RUN WITH AUTHORITY.**

- Christian, you have been given the authority of Jesus
- to be used for his mission!

He has given you authority ON PURPOSE!

- Because he has a mission for you...
- a race for you to run...
- people all around you...
- ON YOUR LEFT, as it were.

And I just love that he gives out his authority before we even know how to wield it!

**He doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called!**

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### **ILLUSTRATION: LEADING TO CHRIST**

This is how it worked for me:

- I wasn't raised in church.
- I got saved when I was a junior in high school,
- and started as a church staff member in youth ministry
- right when I graduated.

So, I'm 18...and I had no idea what I was doing!



Like, I'll never forget the first youth camp that I was a leader for.

- It was a winter camp up in the mountains,
- and on that Saturday night we had our worship night,
- with the band leading,
- and the speaker sharing the gospel.
- So, he calls for kids to accept Christ.

And one kid in my cabin named Pete pulled me aside, and wanted to talk.

- So, he and I went out of the main room,
- and he shared some stuff going on in his life,
- and that the message really spoke to him,
- and that he wanted to become a Christian.

Now, this was like my third month of ministry,

- and now I was in the place of getting to lead a kid to Christ.
- And I had no idea what to do!

So, I was like,

- "Ok man...um...let's get on our knees."
  - Cause I guess you gotta be on your knees for it to count?

So, we got on our knees. And then I was like,

- "Um, are you sure you want to do this?"
  - Dumb dumb dumb...don't give him a way out!

But he said, "yeah, I'm in!"

- So, I was like, "Alright, let's pray!"
  - 'Lord, I think Pete wants to follow you.
  - And...so,' Pete, tell God you want to follow him.

And so, Pete prayed it.

- And he became a follower of Christ.
- And I had no idea what I was doing!
- But I was called to run with authority.
- And he was the first kid I ever led Christ.

## TRANSITION

Church, we are called to RUN WITH AUTHORITY!

- You have no idea what you're doing?
- You'd make a great disciple!

But there's more, verse 2:

## MATTHEW 10:2-4

[2] The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; [3] Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; [4] Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

## EXPLAIN: NAMES

Now, Matthew calls the Twelve "apostles",

- which meant "sent one",
- and will be the term for the Twelve in the New Testament

These Twelve apostles are listed in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and in Acts 1

- and the names vary slightly,
  - which we'll address,
- and the order as well.

Now, let's just run through the list with some comments along the way.

**Simon, Andrew, James, & John** were the first four called in Matthew chapter 4, and they are all fishermen.

Simon Peter is here labeled "first",

- and most scholars define this as "first among equals"
- as he will be a de facto leader in this group.
- Also, he is always listed first.

Then **Philip, Bartholomew, and Thomas**...that is, doubting Thomas, if you remember from John 20.

And then **Matthew** identifies himself as a "tax collector", reflecting his story of Jesus calling him back in chapter 9.

- And I really love that he calls himself the tax collector.
- He seems to have no shame in who we used to be.
- **He isn't that same man anymore!**

And he is one of only two apostles who are identified by their occupations.

Then comes the second **James**, and **Thaddeus**.

- Now, in Luke's Gospel Thaddeus is missing,
- and in his place is a man called "**Judas son of James.**"
  - This is probably the same person,
  - just referring to a different name,
    - like Simon Peter.
- And what a bummer to be the other Judas on the team...
  - *"no, I'm not THAT Judas! Just call me Thaddeus!"*

Then **Simon the Zealot**.

Now, this is Matthew's only other mention of a vocation.

- Zealots were nationalists and insurrectionists
- who fought against the Romans...
  - they were violent,
  - and often assassinated Romans
  - to try to overthrow their oppressors.
- They were more extreme than most Jews at their time.

And I think Matthew points out his former occupation, and Simon's because to have a zealot and a tax collector on the same team was astounding!

- In any other capacity
- Simon would have likely tried to kill Matthew...
- and I'm not exaggerating.

And then last is **Judas Iscariot**.

- He is mentioned in every list,
- and is last in every list,
- just as Peter is first in every list.

Interestingly, it is unknown what Iscariot means,

- many think it is linked to a Greek origin *sikarios*
- which means “assassin.”

Others suggest Iscariot means

- “false one,”
- “man of Jericho,”
- “man from Sychar,”
- “bag carrier,”
- or “redhead.”
  - So, sorry to our redheads in the church! Just like Judas...

## **POINT 2: CREW**

Now, why all these details? Well, it’s my second point about running.

We need to **SLIDE RUN WITH A CREW**. This isn’t a solo effort!

- Man, this is one of the reasons
  - why being meaningfully connected to a church
  - is of the utmost importance.
- Yes, you should come to church on Sunday,
- but more than that...
- you need a crew to run with.

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## ILLUSTRATION: CREW

I'm currently reading a book called *The Boys in the Boat*.

Anyone read this? Do y'all read? Ok...

- It's about the nine American college students
- who rowed crew in the 1936 Berlin Olympics,
- right during Nazi Germany.

Really good read, I'm having fun with this one.

- But in the middle of the book
- there is some teaching on rowing crew...
  - that's what it's called...
- and it inspired me, so here's a quote.

*"[T]he greatest paradox of the sport has to do with the psychological makeup of the people who pull the oars... Great crews may have men or women of exceptional talent or strength... but they have no stars. The team effort—the perfectly synchronized flow of muscle, oars, boat, and water; the single, whole, unified, and beautiful symphony that a crew in motion becomes—is all that matters. Not the individual, not the self.*

*The psychology is complex. Even as rowers must subsume their often fierce sense of independence and self-reliance, at the same time they must hold true to their individuality, their unique capabilities... Even if they could, few rowing coaches would simply clone their biggest, strongest, smartest, and most capable rowers. Crew races are not won by clones. They are won by crews, and great crews are carefully balanced blends of both physical abilities and personality types."*

## TRANSITION

You've gotta RUN WITH A CREW. Zealots, tax collectors, and fishermen.

- If we want to stand a fighting chance
- at joining on God's mission
- to reach those ON OUR LEFT,
- we need to run together...

Now, one last point as we finish up. Look at verse 5:

## MATTHEW 10:5-6

[5] These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, [6] but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

## EXPLAIN

Now, we have to do a little work here.

- Did Jesus really just say, "*Don't go preach to the Gentiles?*"
- That doesn't sound very Jesus-y of you, Jesus!

Well, yes he did. But, let me explain what's happening here.

- On the surface this seems to contradict the Great Commission,
  - go make disciples of ALL nations.
- Why restrict their ministry to the Jewish people?

Well, back to 9:36...

- the "lost sheep" were all the Jewish people,
- and Jesus saw them as "sheep without a shepherd".

Now, Jesus says this

- because salvation is,
  - as Paul says in Romans 1,
- to the Jew first
- and also to the Greek

This is a deliberate charge for his 12 Apostles

- to minister to the Jewish people first,
- to prepare them for their later universal mission.

Jesus isn't anti-Gentile!

- We've already seen Jesus minister to Gentiles
- and even go to Gentile regions.

This is just an instruction for the Twelve on their first missionary journey:

- to start where they are,
- with their people,
- and eventually,
- they would go to the gentiles.

### **POINT 3: WHERE YOU ARE**

But I think there's something here we can apply as well, and it's my final point: **SLIDE RUN WHERE YOU ARE.**

- How many of you are not native to Colorado?
- You've come from somewhere else?

Most of us! People are moving here in droves. You are some of them.

- How many of you are new to this city in the last 3 years?
- You're part of the traffic problem!



And I'll tell you, most of you moved here...

- for work,
- or to play in the mountains,
- or to drink craft beer...alright?
- Many have moved here for these reasons.

But here's the truth...if you are a Christian,

- You didn't move here!
- You were sent here...
  - to the Denver/Metro area for a purpose...
  - to be on mission with God.

You may say,

- *"I came here for work."*
  - And to be a missionary.
- *"I came here to ski."*
  - And to be a missionary.
- *"I came here because I love good beer."*
  - Well, we may need to talk about moderation...
  - but you are also here because God has a plan for you.

You have been sent and called to be a part of this amazing city.

- And God has put you here.
- He's given you neighbors and friends and jobs.
- And you have them for a reason.
  - He's put you here
  - so that the whole of your life
  - would point others to Jesus.

There are people in this city God wants to reach,  
and he put you here to get 'em!

- Denver is a great city.
- Littleton is a great city.
- Centennial is a great city.
- Highlands Ranch is a great city.
- Englewood is a great city.
- Lakewood is a great city.
- Aurora...is a city.

There are many in this city who just need to hear about him.

- And that's why you are here!
- You are God's plan to reach the people around you!
- RUN WHERE YOU ARE!

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## CONCLUSION

Now, the rest of this text is contextual to this first mission trip for the Twelve Apostles.

But here's what I want to leave us with.

- Listen, as the pastor of this church,
- I want Fathom to grow.

Not is some weird mega-church delusion of grandeur!

But in this post-COVID season I want this church to grow...

but here's how I want Fathom to grow:

- I want it to grow with new people moving to this area...
  - onto your blocks...
  - into your sphere of influence.
- I want it to grow with people who don't have church homes...
  - who have never fully given themselves over
  - to this kind of Gospel mission.
- And I want it to grow with people
  - who have never heard the Gospel before.

But here's the truth.

- Better sermons,
- or better music,
- or better programs for your families
- are not the plan for that to happen!

We'll work on those things, ok!

But that's not the plan for how we'll grow!

- You are the plan!
- You are how God is relentless
- in his pursuit of those who he loves.

## APPLICATIONS

So, let me give you two practical applications: **SLIDE INVEST & INVITE.**

- Who's the neighbor that you need to get to know?
- Who's the friend you need to connect with?
- Who's the co-worker you need to invest in?

We start by investing in those around us who do not have a church home.

- Investing in their lives.
- Investing in your friendships.
- Investing deeply in the people God puts in your path.

And then...

- who's the person you need to invite to your home?
- Who's that person you need to start praying for?
- Who's that person you need to invite to church with you?

Who do you need to INVEST & INVITE?

- And not just pass them,
- yelling out, "*ON YOUR LEFT!*"

RUN WITH AUTHORITY

RUN WITH A CREW

And RUN WHERE YOU ARE

Let me leave us with the scripture read over us this morning as an encouragement:

**SLIDE HEBREWS 12:1b-3**

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[3] Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## **RESOURCES USED:**

- Brown, Daniel James. The Boys in the Boat.
- Carson, D.A. Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary.
- Osborne, Grant R. Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.