

Title: Live Ammo
Text: Matthew 10.5-15
Theme: Following Jesus means obedience
Series: Matthew #58
Prop Stmtnt: We are called to fulfill our role in God's strategy to build the Kingdom for His Son.

There are certain things that cannot be learned from the internet, a book, a magazine article or a video. Just because you can identify all of the parts of a bicycle does not mean that you know how to ride it. Imagine that you are getting ready for knee replacement surgery and you ask the doctor how many of these he has done before and he says, none, but he watched a YouTube video on it last week, no worries! This is particularly true for soldiers. The chaos on a battlefield is so overwhelming that it is critical to prepare soldiers as much as you can with realistic situations so that when they are in the real deal that they do not freak out and hurt themselves or fellow soldiers. Jim Fields who served in the army said that as part of his training the Army does a live fire exercise where they are firing over your head about 2 feet while you low crawl through a nice muddy field. They also set off artillery simulators next to you as crawl as well. So by the time you are finished you are muddy and deaf. The benefit is that you have experience with live ammo. This is no game.

Matthew chapter 10 is the live ammo training for the disciples. Jesus is sending his twelve disciples out on a short-term missions trip. He gives them instructions on where to go and where not to go, what to say, what to do, what to take and what not to take, what to expect and how to respond. This is a unique situation. Therefore, some of the instructions that Jesus gives to his disciples are unique. They are specific to this situation and should not be treated as if they are timeless. However, there is a reason why Jesus gave these specific instructions at this point, and I want us to make certain that we understand that. So, here is how I am presenting this sermon: Since this text is all about Jesus helping the disciples apply what they have been learning, I want to back-load this sermon with some extra application. But, I want you to understand the text well so that the application not only makes sense, but also so that it is compelling.

In the introduction we are going to look at 1) What did Jesus say? We will then focus the rest of our time on what we must grasp about being a disciple of Christ.

1) What did Jesus say?

The instructions that Jesus gave fall into three categories: A) Where to go, B) What to do and C) How to respond.

- *Where to go (5-6)*

On this short-term trip, the disciples were to only go to the Jews. There are probably a few reasons for it, though Matthew does not elaborate because Jesus probably did not give a detailed explanation for limiting the trip to the Jews. But there are a couple of

obvious reasons. One, it was a short-term trip. You can't do everything in one little trip, so you have to focus on what you can do and do it well. Secondly, the area that Jesus was sending them (around the Sea of Galilee had already had a decent amount of exposure to the message and ministry of Jesus. The ground was prepared to some degree. Thirdly, the Jews are the foundational element of the Covenant people of God. We are part of the New Covenant people of God. We stand on the shoulders of the Jews. It is right to remember that and it is right to realize that the new covenant people (the church) made up of people from every tribe, language and nation supplements and builds on the old covenant people. We always acknowledge the priority of Israel in the history of redemption. We understand the doctrine of election. God chose Israel to be his covenant people. He did not choose Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, yet. As Gentiles, this does not threaten us in the least. Certainly at this point in the history of God's acts of redemption, the emphasis has not yet been placed on the Gentiles, but it is about to be. In a matter of months, these same disciples are going to be charged to take the message of Christ from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the world. Right now, they are getting live ammo practice in Galilee.

- *What to do (7-10)*

Announce that the Kingdom of heaven is near (at hand). This is the same thing that John the Baptist and Jesus preached. Both of them challenged the people who heard them to repent of their sin and to accept by faith this announcement. I am assuming that the disciples were saying the same thing.

And, similar to the ministry of Christ, the disciples were given authority to heal sick people they encountered, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons. They have been watching Jesus do these miracles and now they are called to do the same.

Jesus then gives some specific instructions about some practical matters from the end of v.8 through v.10. We could get a bit lost with some of the detail here, but the gist of it is this. Jesus is telling them NOT to make this about money and do NOT make this complicated. You are not to go into any of these towns and villages and expect people to give you money because we are not in it for this. Jesus says very important thing in relationship to that. 1) "You received without paying; give without pay." That is such a needful reminder, isn't it? The message of Jesus Christ is so clear. Are you ready?

You and I were created by God for his pleasure, but we rebelled. Our rebellion is called sin and because God is perfectly righteous He has to punish our sin. Our sin is so serious that the judgment for our sin is death. But, instead of judging us, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to become one of us so that he, the God/man could live on this earth, the life that we were supposed to live. He lived a perfectly righteous life. Then Christ died on the cross. His death was in place of ours. He died as our substitute. He died as a perfectly complete substitute because he offered up his perfectly righteous life in place of our unrighteous, polluted and condemned life. When you believe that and trust in Christ, your sin is credited to him (that he paid for) and his righteousness is credited to you. You get credit for a perfectly righteous life that you did not live, that you did not earn, that you

did not pay for or work for. It is yours by GRACE alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone. You received without paying; give without pay. When a child is asked to do something and they reply with, “Whatta ya gonna pay me, this is my answer. “You still owe me \$8000 for your diapers, \$12,000 for your braces, \$30,000 for room and board, \$15,000 for vacations, \$25,000 for all the tutoring I’ve done for you, and according to Sam Bernstein, \$18.5 million for emotional duress!

Wow! Do you see what Jesus is doing here? He is helping these disciples learn not to depend on their own resources and he does not want them to think in terms of, “what’s in it for me?” “What’s in it for me” ruins so much otherwise good ministry. Now, does this mean that missionaries and people going out on short-term trips should never take any money? No, remember that this was a unique situation. After all, the disciples did carry money. Judas was the treasurer and the keeper of the money, remember? The point that Jesus was making for them was don’t worry about the money. You will be fine. While they needed money on which to live, in this case, they needed to learn to trust in Christ for these few days and to see how God would provide for them in unexpected ways. Let me give you a couple of examples:

This summer we are serving our community through Vacation Bible School. We offer this to the children in our community free of charge. The ministry is not free. The materials and the food cost a lot of money. But, we do not want a child to have to pay to come and hear the gospel. The gospel is free. When you charge people to hear the gospel it usually muddies the gospel. How are we able to do that? We can only do that to the extent that we are generous to give to the ministry of our church.

Today Stella Cox is with us. Stella has been serving in Japan as a missionary for 62 years. Her husband Ralph died a few years ago and she just came home for a few weeks because, as I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, her son Galen, who lives in the area died unexpectedly. Stella has lived in Japan and has been free to share Christ with the people there. She and Ralph have seen many people come to faith in Christ and many churches established. Imagine if Stella, after sharing with a person about salvation through Christ, then said, “by the way, can you spare some money for me so I can eat?” You know how that would come out, don’t you? I am telling you about Jesus, so now, you need to pay me for it. That would muddy the gospel. So, how is Stella able to serve in Japan. She can only do that to the extent that we are generous to give to the ministry of our church. As disciples of Christ, we are not to live with the attitude of, “what’s in it for me?”

Then Jesus tells them not to make this complicated. Some of you have moms like this. Before you leave the house, she wants to make sure that you have your name, telephone and address on a piece of paper in your pocket. She wants you to have an extra pair of shoes, socks, shirt and underwear, as well as some food and drink that could feed a small army. And this is for going across the street to play with a neighbor. This morning we are going to pray for our short-term missions teams going out this summer. For some of you, your mom has already gone to Costco and Sam’s Club 6 times. She is driving you crazy asking you about all of the things that she thinks you will need and you are driving her crazy because you refuse to talk about it. You are terrified that once on the trip you will

open your luggage and it will look like a Walmart Warehouse aisle. Listen, Jesus is telling these guys, what you have right now is fine. Don't go out and get another set of clothes, etc. Don't worry about it. You will be taken care of.

- How to respond (11-14)

But then Jesus talks about how they are going to be received. There are going to be some people who will listen to you. This is amazing, isn't it? There are going to be people that are ready to hear what you have to say. You need to look for them. They are there. They will invite you to stay with them. Do it. Let your peace come upon the house. I take that to mean, pray for God to bless this home and all who are in it. There may be a case when they turn on you and reject what you say. If that happens, withhold your blessing. In fact, if that happens, then shake the dust of that house or that town off your feet when you leave. It will be a sign of judgment. They have rejected the Word of the Lord, therefore the Word is leaving them.

What should we take away from this? Well, here is what we must know about discipleship:

I. **God expects you to apply what you learn.**

The truth is, you have not really learned it until you have experienced it.

Adam knew his wife Eve – what does that mean? “Oh yea, I met her once.” Does it mean that he was able to pick her out of a line-up of all the other creatures that God made? No. It means that Adam experienced his wife Eve in a personal and holistic manner. That helps you understand that discipleship is not primarily academic.

I was in seminary with a guy who was the type of guy who could give an aspirin a headache. He was a self-appointed critic of everyone, including the teachers. Somehow his church had allowed him to teach an adult Bible class and he was treating the class as if he was a seminary professor and they were his pupils, instead of treating them as brothers and sisters. Anyway, after he taught for a few weeks, he gave his class a test on what he had been teaching. And he graded it! I ran into his pastor at the seminary one day who was beside himself. He told me, “I've got 85 year old ladies coming into my office crying because they got an F on their test and they are saying to me, ‘Pastor, I failed Sunday School.’”

Do you see my point? We tend to put way too much emphasis upon a degree as if a Bible college degree or seminary degree is equivalent to some spiritual status. Discipleship is not information; it is your whole being. Learning as a follower of Christ is best done in the context of and the life of the local church. A classroom can supplement that to some degree but it cannot replace it. If you are not experiencing life together in the local church, you are clueless about leadership and ministry. Anybody can sit alone and post pithy sayings on a blog. But can you minister to someone who is dying, or hurting, or afraid, or broken, or desperate? Can you come alongside of one who is going in the

wrong direction and compassionately plead with him to trust Christ? Ministry is leading through serving. If there is no serving, there is no leadership.

So, if you claim to be a follower of Christ, then how are you applying what you have learned? How is the gospel a priority in your life? If the gospel is a priority in my life, then the church is going to be a priority in my life because the church is ground zero of God's plan to expand his kingdom on this earth. So, how is the gospel, how is the church a priority on your life? Finish this sentence: My area of ministry in the church is _____. I am talking about the gospel to _____. Do you give generously and regularly to the ministry of the church? That is like potty-training for a believer because we only put our treasure where our heart is. You know why I have to challenge you with this don't you? I have to prepare you to die. I have to prepare you to meet God. I want you look like Jesus. I want you serve the church because Jesus did. He served her so much he died for her. I want you to talk to people about Jesus because Jesus did. Jesus did because he knew that there was no way anyone could have eternal life except through him. I want you to give like Jesus because I know that you are not ready to die sacrificially for Jesus if you are not willing to give sacrificially to Jesus. You won't give your life if you won't part with your money. God expects you to apply what you learn because...

II. **God will push you into deeper levels of commitment.**

This short-term trip was just the beginning. The disciples, who ministered in Galilee, eventually went to Jerusalem where Jesus died. At his ascension Jesus sent them on a life-long missions trip. Your entire life is a mission. They started in Jerusalem and were to go to Judea, then to Samaria and then to the rest of the world. They started with the Jerusalem part and things seemed to go rather well, pretty quickly. In fact, things seemed to go so well, that the disciples appeared to be getting too comfortable there, so God brought in some persecution that forced them to get out into Judea, Samaria and eventually into other parts of the world. This little trip in Galilee was just the beginning.

Several years ago, we prayed for a group of our students who were going on a short-term missions trip to Jamaica. Earlier this year, we prayed for and commissioned one of those students, Katie Dodd, along with her husband Andrew. They and their three girls are now in South Africa.

But, I really do not want to focus exclusively on missions as a "career." The point is, God calls you to trust him with simple acts of obedience because he has more challenging things in store for you. He does this for the glory of his name and for the sake of your joy. Do you realize that you cannot separate the fame of God from your joy? When you commit yourself to spreading abroad the fame of God by trusting Him, serving Him, and obeying Him, he expands your heart. He expands your heart so that you might hold more joy. Later on in Matthew we are going to hear Jesus say that if you want to keep your life, lose it, but if you want to lose your life, try to keep it. If you gain the whole world and lose your soul you lose and you lose it all.

So, I want you to realize that when God calls you to be like Christ, and drives you to look more and more like Christ and challenges you and chastens you it is because he is committed to your joy. God is challenging you with opportunities to trust Him in order to prepare you for greater opportunities and challenges. People who risk much for God have a deep love for God. Those who love deep, laugh loud. People who love big have a big capacity for joy.

III. God wants your heart to be tender. (15)

There are times when I am talking with someone (or even a couple) who is going in the wrong direction and is about to blow up their life or marriage and in an effort to try to help them see what the consequences of their decisions I will ask them, “Do you realize that what you are doing is generational?” There are deep, long-term consequences that you are bringing upon you, your children and even your grandchildren. Are you sure that this is what you want to do?

In a similar way, Jesus is revealing to his disciples that they are part of something that is not simply generational, it is eternal. This is a serious issue. Look at v.15. Jesus is telling his disciples that those who reject their message are bringing a judgment upon themselves that will be more serious than the judgment that God visited upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Wow! By saying this, Jesus is making it clear that there are degrees of punishment in hell based on how much exposure one has had to the message of Christ. The sister cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had no church and had no Bible. They were exposed to the power of God demonstrated through the life of Abraham who rescued them once from captivity, but it did not result in any repentance on their part from their immorality and rebellion against God. To the Jews living in Galilee, not all that far from the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah it would be easy to think of yourself as being morally superior to them. Jesus is saying that if the Jews reject his message delivered by his disciples it will be worse for them than for Sodom and Gomorrah. More revelation equals more accountability.

And while all of that is true, I think that the main reason that Jesus told his disciples this is so their hearts will be tender and full of compassion, even to those who reject them. Again, I think that 9.36 casts a shadowing influence over this entire section. Christ is compassionate and he wants his disciples to be compassionate, even to those who reject him. Several months from now, Jesus will present himself as King to the nation, on what we call Palm Sunday. But that evening, he will look over the city and will weep because he knows that they are going to reject him.

Do you see this now? When the disciples were to shake the dust off their feet and thereby pronounce repudiation upon that town, they were not to do this with any sense of vindictiveness or a feeling of moral superiority. Rather, they were to have their hearts broken over what they saw was a terrible decision that was made by these people to reject the King and his Kingdom.

(invite missions teams to come forward)

Some of you have raised considerable funds to go on these trips. You have worked hard to prepare yourselves. You have taken vacation time. You have made sacrifices. You have good intentions and you desire that lives are changed because of the investment that you are making for the gospel. Those of you who have worked in any type of ministry can share the same sentiment. You sacrifice a great deal of convenience to serve in the Connect Ministry, or in VBS or in MCREST. Your work is not always appreciated, nor is your affection returned back to you. In fact, one of the most difficult aspects of ministry is to pour yourself out upon a person who completely rejects you or stabs you in the back. It is easy to get bitter. It is easy to say that I will never do that again. I will never expose myself or extend myself again. And Jesus is saying, what? It is not about you. You are just the mailman. You are just delivering the message. Recognize that their rejection does not mean that you have failed. It means that they are bringing a judgment upon themselves that you would not want to happen to your worst enemy. Be compassionate.

You will be tempted to be bitter, unless you realize what they are facing. Let the reality of God's judgment drive your heart to be tender. Self-pity is always crushed by genuine compassion for the lost.