

**Christ Presbyterian Church
Edina, Minnesota
January 14 & 15, 2012
John Crosby
Vision Series: Live Missionally
Matthew 10: 1-42**

It's only 15 days into it but it seems like the new year is already flying by...or grinding on if you look out and see the brown. It seems to me that New Year's resolutions are already in the rear view mirror and we still have a whole year to go, so if this year is going to be any different from last year, it won't be because I do a better job of making a list. Starting a new year in an organization is a lot the same way. You have a chance to say, "What did we miss? What did we do? What do we need to do this next year?" And usually the way that the executive tries to get people excited is to talk about something new, the next big thing or program that will change everything, a building that will lead us to a new place. I've done that in years past, sometimes it's good, sometimes it flops. It seemed to us this year that instead of talking about the next big thing, what would help us is being clearer about why we come into this building at all, why you politely shuffle in, sit down, listen to good music, recite again creeds and prayers, and go out. What is this supposed to lead toward?

It seems to me that it is not a big program, it is this. You might know better where you are going if your vision were better, so we thought we would spend the first three weeks of the year talking about our vision. (*Slide shown.*) This eye chart may be a little hard to follow when you just glance at it, but it starts with the most important thing. The big letters spell out *follow Jesus*. In other words, the start of our vision is that we are following Jesus, *inspiring all generations to follow Jesus*. We talked about that last week, saying that is what faith is, not just beliefs about some invisible God, but trusting that there *is* a God and that you can get to know that God by *following Jesus*, getting as close as you can. We talked about Rabbi Jesus and how the ancient students of the law would get as close to the rabbi as they could so they would become like the rabbi. We said that what would make your life different would be if you could get the dust of the Rabbi on you because you were following Him so closely in the paths of life.

Today we would together like to take the next step in this vision, to *live missionally*. If you are *following Jesus*, where does He want you to go? Let me ask you to take out your Bibles. There are Bibles in each of the pews in front of you. Please take them out and turn to Matthew, chapter 10. That is the first book in the New Testament. It is around page 1,450. Matthew, chapter 10. That is right in the middle of the story of Jesus, but if you are starting to tell the story, you don't start right in the middle. You don't just open to page such and such and start reading. You need to know what is happening in the story, so right before Matthew 10, this is what happens. It says,

³⁵ 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.”

That sets the stage for this part of the story in Matthew 10. Followers of Jesus are Jesus’ workers in the field. If we follow Jesus we are supposed to be the agents for a hurting world, for people harassed and helpless, and Matthew 10 is where He gives them instructions. But He doesn’t do it in a church service. He does it in a way that shakes them up, I hope. Maybe He would take them to Starbucks, but then I thought, what if Jesus were to give in to signs like *Mission Impossible*? Anybody see any of the old TV series or any of the movies of *Mission Impossible*? You’ve seen them. I love those films. Remember how the instructions are given for the next thing? It always comes in some very ingenious way and it says, “Here is this impossible thing for you to do” and you know, of course, that if you fail, then you are on your own, “See you later.” “This message is going to self-destruct in 15 seconds.” I love that in *Mission Impossible* but if Jesus did it, He would say, “This mission *is* possible. It is being given to you by the God who made everything and knows you. This message will *not* self-destruct in 15 seconds. It will still be there.”

I would ask you to underline it in your Bibles because for 2,000 years the message has been the same and in the same way, if you fail or if you are captured by the enemy, you will not be abandoned on this mission. The one who gave you the mission will come and get you and say, “Let’s try again.” What we like to do in this church is underline parts of the Bible so that people who come after you can say, “They try to take this seriously,” and so grab a pen or a pencil, if you would please, and underline some parts of Matthew, chapter 10. These are Jesus’ instructions to His *Mission Impossible* team. First one,

¹ Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

If it is not already underlined, underline these words, Jesus called. Jesus doesn’t just sit on the page. He calls to you, and it says, “gave them authority.” So you are doing what you are supposed to be doing because you have the authority of God. Then Jesus names all the disciples and in verse 5 it says,

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:”

These are not options. These are instructions. If you believe in Jesus and you follow Jesus, these are your instructions. This is for them. The principles are for *us*.

“Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans.⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.

So on this mission, they were supposed to stay close to home. The time for going to the ends of the earth would come, but it wasn’t yet, that is Round Two. Verse 7,

⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’

Then just to show that it is not talk (everybody can talk) He wants His followers to be a life-changing blessing - proclaim the message. And then,

⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

That is God. He knows us so He has a word about motives. "Watch your motives," Jesus says.

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 workers are worth their keep. ¹¹ Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at that person's 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.

Then He has a whole long section in the instructions, verses 14 through 38, where He says, "Expect opposition. This mission is hard because you will be opposed." Now if you are following Jesus into the world, you will be opposed. If I were reading this in India or Africa or Indonesia or parts of Latin America, they would understand and shake their heads, "Yes." You are going, "I guess this part is not for us, right? We are in America." One of the scholars I read says, "It is interesting how little opposition we face here but we shouldn't say, 'Not so much. Isn't it a shame the rest of the world isn't as tolerant as we are?' We should ask ourselves, 'Is this a sign that Christianity in the West has somehow been so compromised by the culture, that there is nothing to oppose anymore, that we are just invisible? We are just like everybody else.'" Opposition,

¹⁴ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. ¹⁶ "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.

They are after the master. They will be after you. Then verse 38. Underline verse 38.

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.

If you think of nothing else the rest of the day, what does that mean? "Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it." I love the way Jesus has this in His instructions. Then He says this,

⁴⁰ "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

We are sent people. We are sent out into the world. This is Jesus' first description of our mission statement, *following Jesus, loving others, living missionally*. People who are sent out, who don't

stay in church, are *living missionally*. The church in here, according to Jesus, must bring the Kingdom out there. Proclaim the message. The Kingdom of heaven is here. The need is great. The workers are few. This talk of the Kingdom of heaven comes from the King. I love that line of Abraham Kuyper, “There is not one square foot on Planet Earth where King Jesus does not walk over and say, ‘This is mine!’ and He wants us to come with Him to reclaim the territory.” Jesus walks with His followers, *following Jesus*. He sends us out and He debriefs us when the mission is over.

By the way, that is another reason to come here for worship. We are supposed to review the week. We are supposed to see where we messed up and where we succeeded, where God showed up in ways you didn’t expect, and we are supposed to get new instructions. Instead of having church be a place where ministry happens, it is supposed to be a locker room. Church is supposed to be a locker room where you come in at half-time all dinged up, and you get bandaged. You get refreshed. You get new instructions to go out and play again. People are supposed to go out. *Missionally* means you take what has been proclaimed to you, what you have received, and share it with others. You proclaim it to others. Sometimes you are supposed to go *way* out, like the GO! Trips on that bulletin. You go some place you have never been, but usually Jesus’ instructions are for some place nearby, not to the ends of the earth. “Start right here,” He said. It is *now* like Laura showed the kids.

Live as if God were sending you out. I got this fairly early. I came back to following Christ at the end of high school, beginning of college and, really, the main way that I came back was I found a group of young men and women who had something that I wanted badly. They felt loved, and they loved each other. They didn’t have to impress each other, and they were healthy enough to be able to tell when they messed up. I became best friends with Bill Jackson. Jax played football. He was a co-captain of the team. He had the kind of life that I wanted, and so I hung around him a lot. Bill lived in what I would assume is a very modest home now. It is in Park Ridge, about two blocks from Hillary Rodham Clinton’s house. If I would drive by today, I would probably say, “What a small house.” Yet that house was special to me. He had a single mom. She was much older. She looked like his grandma rather than his mom.

I have told you about my parents, great people but alcoholics. Shortly after I became a follower of Christ, I would find myself, not all the time but once in a while, sneaking out of my house at night and going over to the Jackson’s house. I would open the window, climb into Bill’s bedroom, and sleep on the couch. He would wake up in the morning and go, “What are you doing here?” Half the time that I went over I would sneak out before Ma Jax would catch us. The other half of the time I would sleep in, and she would throw a pillow at Bill and hit me. I distinctly remember one morning she said, “John! John! Get up. Hey, have breakfast with us.” I loved breakfast at Ma Jackson’s house. They ate in this tiny little kitchen. My family had much more money, and they had this tiny little kitchen, but it was just safe.

We are having breakfast and she is saying, “So how’re you doing?” “I’m going away to college.” “What do you expect will be different?” I had the night before brought a date home finally, and don’t say ‘finally’ like I couldn’t get a date, all right? That is not where this story is going. I had a date. I finally brought this girl I had been seeing for several weeks home to meet my mother, and she was passed out, and the cigarette had burned the couch. I was so embarrassed. My mother was brilliant and loving and great—and broken. So I snuck out and slept at Jackson’s house, and now she is asking, “How’re you doing?” I found myself saying, “Well, it’s.... Ma Jax,

it sucks at home.” I didn’t know how to talk like a preacher back then. “My mom, she’s not like you, my mom, she just....” I don’t even know how much I said, but I couldn’t get much out and Ma Jax, a grandma type, stops me and goes, “Now, John...John. Your mom is trying her best, and she loves you. You need to go home today, and you need to find things that you respect about your mom, and tell her because that is what God-honoring sons do.” I will never forget that advice. “That is what God-honoring sons do.” This woman was *living missionally* without even leaving her kitchen. She was proclaiming what God-honoring sons do and modeling it for me. Forty years later I am telling you.

Living missionally is proclaiming the difference that Jesus makes and modeling how Jesus blesses other people. The greatest privilege of my entire life has been spending the last 20-plus years with you. Laura and I have seen in this community images of people *living missionally*, often right here in the building. Like my first year, second year here. We are still worshipping in the old sanctuary and I don’t have to preach that day, so I am walking around, seeing the Sunday Schools. I hear that a kid in the nursery has swallowed a toy, so I run over there, and by the time.... Hey, folks, if you ever want to have a heart attack, have it right here. If you get sick, get sick here - more nurses and doctors per square foot right here. By the time I get there, there are two doctors standing over this young boy and, much better, three nurses right around the boy. The toy is out of this little boy’s throat, and they have him breathing. Mom is off of the rug. The little boy gets down, and he is fine. She is fine. Everybody is going to be okay. It was just neat to stand at the door and watch. Twenty-plus years ago. I won’t forget because that little boy is here. One of the doctors turned to the other and in a totally matter-of-fact way said, “Okay. I’ll take him to the hospital, and you take my kids to the club for lunch, and I’ll meet you there.” I was just like, that is not a doctor. Doctors are medical professionals. This isn’t a doctor. These were two healers who modeled the love of Jesus Christ, who blessed other people in ways that were better because they were matter-of-fact.

Then this week I see *living missionally* all around us. We had a worship service here this last week, and Rich was telling me a story of one of the things that happened. He had come up to one of the teachers and said, “Hi.” Then he turned to this teacher and said, “Hey, did you hear that little so-and-so’s grandpa died and he is having a hard time with it?” Then Rich said he walked into the room and saw this teacher with his arms around the boy’s shoulder talking to him about his grandpa. The kid came up to Rich and said, “You know, he told me about how my grandpa is in heaven.” *Living missionally* right here. At Tuesday morning Bible study, a businessman hears about one of his friends losing a job. Tells me afterward, “We had coffee, and I gave him all the contact information. I gave him a card and said, “Here are four people you should talk to.” Then he said, “I feel like I can’t do anything else, but I will pray for you.” He said, “John, I walked away from there feeling stupid, like I had given him this little I’ll-pray-for-you cliché.” I said, “That was the most important thing you did. That was what he really needs to hear, that somebody is putting him into the hands of the God of heaven and earth. That is better than any good advice.” *Living missionally*.

Yesterday, well, day before yesterday now, I got an email from a woman in our church who is probably somewhere in her forties, single, dating again. She sent me this email saying, “I met this guy, and I like him. We like each other, but I’m not going to do this again. He doesn’t believe in God. But I like him and he likes me, so would you tell me some good books I could use to tell him about God because he will read the books because he likes me.” That is *living missionally*. She said, “I am not going to do that again, but I want to have this God that I know make a

difference in our lives together, or there won't be a life together.”

You know what *missional living* is? It is following the King wherever you go. My mentors, probably, are Gordon and Gail McDonald. Gordon has been the pastor of big churches, member of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, president and all that kind of stuff, but for a season of his life where he had screwed up, he was the pastor of a small church in New York City. He would take the bus in and out of the city every day from his apartment, and because they took the same bus, Gordon and Gail got to know some of the bus drivers. One day before work they had four of the bus drivers over to their apartment for breakfast. Some of them, not all of them, but some of them were Christ-followers. One of the bus drivers said, “Hey, this is really nice, you know? It must be cool to be a pastor, go all over the world, tell people stuff.” He said, “My job is boring, and it is filled with stress. People yell at you all day. I just drive a bus.” And Gordon in one of those little spirit-led moments said, “All right, think about it this way. What if tomorrow morning while the buses are warming up,” you know, you have to warm up the engines, “What if tomorrow morning, you got up, walked down the aisle and said, ‘Lord, this is going to be a portable sanctuary today. You have made this a sanctuary, and I want this to be a place where Christ’s love will touch somebody through me.’ What if you did that? What if, instead of driving a bus around the city, you drove a sanctuary around the city?” Four of them are there, and one of them muttered, he said, “Well, I suppose we *could* try that.”

In the weeks that followed, the MacDonald’s would occasionally get on a bus operated by one of the four drivers, and as they were paying their fare, they would quietly say, hoping that nobody else would hear, “Well, what are you doing? Are you driving a sanctuary or a bus?” The bus drivers got to the place where they would go, “Sanctuary, man. Sanctuary.” Sometimes when one of the drivers saw the MacDonald’s getting on the bus, he would say, “Welcome to my sanctuary.” A few months later the driver who had not said, “Let’s give this a try,” came to Gordon and said, “You know, this sanctuary thing? Yesterday a guy got on the bus, and he started to curse me when I wouldn’t stop the bus because I couldn’t stop in the middle of the block. You know something? That was a day when I would have stopped the bus and gotten off and said to this guy, ‘Right here. Let’s do it.’ But I kept driving to where it was legal to stop, and I opened the door and I said, ‘Sir, have a nice day. I’m really glad that you were aboard.’” Gordon said, “I wanted to affirm this guy for his faith, but the driver said, ‘Oh, ain’t no big deal. Not that difficult when you are driving a sanctuary instead of a bus.’” It had started to sink in.

Could your office ever be a sanctuary even for five minutes? Could you drive a sanctuary that looks like a mini-van with kids in it? *There* is the test. How about your kitchen table? Could it be a sanctuary? Can Jesus send you out to build sanctuaries that bring life and health, where people want to come in to have hope? Jesus gives specific instructions because it is hard. To live like this is hard. It is not religious. It is hard because we mess up and because the world resists all the time, but you are not being called to be Tim Tebow. Tim is, I think, a delightful follower of Jesus. We will talk about that in a couple of weeks, but that is not your call. You have a different call. Are you going to do that this afternoon and tomorrow, or are you just going to go to church? Jesus calls us and He says, “Follow Me. Pick up that cross over there.” I would like to end with a couple of pictures of what *following Me* looks like 2,000 years later but before we do that, I’d like to pray that one of them or both of them will open the eyes of your heart.

Lord Jesus, I thank You that You have not given us *Mission Impossible*, that the instructions don’t blow up and You don’t run away when we blow it again, and You keep

calling us to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven and bring little pieces of it to earth. I pray that my friends here in retirement homes will create sanctuaries and the kids, who go to school, will be Your ambassadors. I pray that these stories will open the eyes of our hearts. In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.