

Lesson 6

Proper 6

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 9:35–10:20

In the second year of His ministry, called the “Year of Popularity,” Jesus focused on Galilee. He went out from Capernaum to the towns and villages. The Galileans were a mixed bag of people and included many Gentiles, so much so that Galilee was sometimes called “Galilee of the Nations.” Galilee was far enough away from Jerusalem that the Jewish communities did not feel the controlling presence of the Council (Sanhedrin) as strongly as those in Judea did. Large crowds came to Jesus, bringing the sick, the infirm, and the troubled to be blessed with healing. During this second year, Jesus called the Twelve to follow Him. The instruction of the Twelve occupied much of Jesus’ time and attention, and on several occasions He took them out of Galilee, away from the crowds, for that purpose.

82. What elements made up the ministry of Jesus? What motivated Jesus in His hands-on ministry to people in need?

The ancient world thought of the viscera as the seat of the emotions because that’s where we usually feel strong emotions such as compassion. The Greek word also referred to this and might best be rendered “His heart was stirred.” Hearing of Jesus’ deep compassion is indeed comforting.

83. What does “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” say about Jesus’ main concern for the crowds of people? How is this a good description also of many people in our crowded modern world? Why does supplying workers for the harvest begin with prayer to the Lord of the harvest?

A principle in teaching little children says, “If it’s not in the hand, it’s not in the head.” It says that they do not learn by having concepts or procedures explained to them, but by actively being involved in doing the concepts or procedures. To an extent, this is true of adults too, so Jesus gave the Twelve opportunities to learn by doing “fieldwork.” He sent them out to minister in His name. The Greek *apostello*, “sent out,” comes across in our English *apostle*.

84. Why were the apostles at this point still restricted to working among Jews? What message were they to announce? (See Matthew 3:1–2; 4:17.)

85. What was Jesus encouraging with His “You received without paying; give without pay”? How were their personal needs to be supplied? Why would their preaching result in such a strong either/or responsibility on the part of their hearers?

86. Jesus gives the same authority and responsibility to the Church today in our apostolic mission. How has the assignment changed? How is the message different? How are both shrewdness and innocence still important in today’s mission?

87. How do you reconcile Jesus’ “give without pay” with the Church of today having professional, paid clergy? (See 1 Corinthians 9:3–18.) What advantages and what dangers are there in having professional clergy who are paid by those whom they serve?

The Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 19:2–8

Israel had witnessed the mighty deeds of the Lord as He called them out of Egypt to go to the Promised Land as His chosen people—death of the firstborn had struck every home in Egypt except those where the first Passover was being eaten and where the blood of the lamb was on doorpost and lintel; the waters of the Red Sea had parted to allow their crossing on dry land and then had returned to drown the pursuing Egyptians; they had been sustained in the wilderness by the Lord’s provision of manna in the morning and quail in the evening and water from the rock; the attacking Amalekites were defeated as Moses held his hands up in blessing over the battlefield. And now Israel was camped at the base of the mountain that had been their immediate destination (Exodus 3:10–12).

Mount Sinai, which means “desert,” is in the southeast region of the Sinai Peninsula. It rises to some seven thousand feet in elevation. This “mountain of God” (Exodus 18:5) was the site of Yahweh’s appearance to Moses in the burning bush. When Moses later led his newly freed people to the mountain, he became the mediator of the covenant that Yahweh established with Israel as a nation—the covenant He had initiated with their ancestor Abraham six hundred years earlier. (See Genesis 12:1–4.) God interacted with Israel through Moses. Through Moses, He gave the Moral Law, the Ten Commandments; the ceremonial laws that governed their religious practices under the covenant of grace; and a system of civil laws aimed especially at their years as nomads on their way to their homeland. Israel revered Moses as the greatest of the prophets, the Lawgiver, the one who met with the Lord “face to face” (Exodus 33:11).

88. In establishing the covenant, how did the Lord again show that He is the initiator of His relationship with His people? (See Deuteronomy 7:6–9; John 15:16.) What was to be Israel’s response to His initiative? What assurance would be theirs as they kept the covenant?

89. How did the elders respond on behalf of the people? How faithful were the Israelites in keeping their promise? (See Exodus 32:1–4.) Why did the Lord never give up His love for Israel? (See Isaiah 54:5–10.)

90. How has God extended His covenant of grace to us? When have we responded to His initiative in the covenant?

91. How does this Old Testament Lesson tie in with today’s Holy Gospel?

The Epistle for the Day: Romans 5:6–15

No words emphasize the gracious nature of salvation more clearly than “while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” and “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Salvation is not something we work at; it is the work of God for us and in us.

92. We are justified and reconciled to God by the blood, by the death, of His Son. That’s an accomplished fact. How then are we saved even more by His life?

93. Most religions encourage people to serve God. How does our Christian faith lead us to enjoy God?

Paul contrasted Adam and Jesus and the effect they and their actions had on all of humanity. It is the contrast between sin and righteousness, between death and life, between judgment and grace. Through the willful disobedience of one man, Adam, spiritual death, innate sinfulness that inevitably expresses itself in sinning, came to all. In contrast, God acted in one man, the Second Adam, His own Son born of woman as Jesus the Christ, to win righteousness and renewal of spiritual life for all, which is effectuated as His free gift of grace to all whom the Holy Spirit leads to believe in Jesus Christ and live in that faith.

Paul’s opening words in verse 12 are a “seat of doctrine” for what is called original sin. Paul’s sweeping words reach out to include every human being and place all of humanity under the reign of sin and death. The first page of *The New England Primer*, the first book printed in America, an alphabet book, reflected this as it taught: “In Adam’s Fall, we sin-ned all.” Paul began his thought here with “just as,” but having stated his premise, he digressed, eager to give the argument that backs up his sweeping statement. At the end of the chapter, he picked up his premise again to state also the other side: “so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

94. Paul wrote, “Sin is not counted where there is no law,” but how did he then show that sin was present and did indeed have its effect also on people who lived and sinned without awareness of God’s Law?

95. The Law instructs people in the true way of life, but coming as it does to people who are already sinners, what is always its first effect? (See Romans 3:19–20; 5:20; 7:7–13.)

96. In what sense was Adam “a type of the one who was to come”?

97. In what significant way is “the free gift” radically different from “the trespass”?

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*Almighty, eternal God, in the Word of Your apostles and prophets
You have proclaimed to us Your saving will. Grant us faith to believe
Your promises that we may receive eternal salvation; through Jesus
Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.*

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 9:35–10:20

82. The elements that made up Jesus' ministry were teaching, preaching, and healing. Together they displayed God's loving concern in His kingdom for people, body and soul. Preaching and teaching are two sides of the same effort to bring God's Word to people. Preaching is proclamation, announcing truth, and calling for a proper reaction. Teaching is explaining the truth, aiding understanding, and application. Jesus was motivated in His hands-on ministry to those in need by deep feelings of compassion. *Compassion* means "to suffer with."

83. The Greek words for "harassed" and "helpless" are descriptive of sheep that have been torn and scratched by thorns and rocks in their aimless wanderings and are so exhausted that they finally just lie there. Jesus' concern was to be the Shepherd through whom the people would enjoy true guidance and find real meaning in life. Millions of economic and political refugees combine with the needy and oppressed to fit the picture of the "harassed and helpless." Also, in our affluent society, many have poor relationships with those with whom they should be closest, and this is exacerbated by their busy attempts to get ahead or just to keep up by pursuing things that have no lasting value. Anxiety, depression, stress, and so on abound as people seem to have everything but don't have the hope and confidence of life in God's kingdom.

It is appropriate to ask the Lord of the harvest for workers because it is His harvest. He is really the one who sows the seed that produces the grain, and He is the one who calls and motivates and enables workers to bring in the harvest that belongs to Him.

84. A ministry that focused on the lost sheep of Israel was appropriate at that time, for Jesus had come as the promised Messiah. It was fitting that the announcement of the kingdom of heaven being near be carried first to those who were the children of the covenant. Jesus, too, dealt primarily with His own people and only occasionally and incidentally with Gentiles. It was after He had completed His saving work that the commission became "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). The message of the apostles was to be the very same as that of John the Baptist and of Jesus Himself: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

85. With His "You received without paying; give without pay," Jesus was underscoring the grace, the undeserved love, that is the basis of life in the Kingdom. New life in Christ is God's free gift; it is to be offered on that basis to others. No true apostle will "merchandise" the Gospel for personal material gain. We, the Church of today, are apostolic only when we see that we have been sent and are in fact proclaiming the Gospel we have been sent to proclaim. Their personal needs, their "keep," was to be supplied by those who received and hosted them. Preaching and teaching God's message of salvation always confronts the hearer with an either/or responsibility to decide. We are free to say "No," but it is God's Spirit who calls us to and enables our "Yes."

86. Our assignment today is different from that of the apostles in this Holy Gospel in that it extends to all peoples. The message is different in that it proclaims a completed work of salvation through Jesus' death and

resurrection. Being shrewd or clever may help you gain a hearing for the message; being innocent leads you to trust the power of the message and not try to trick people into a response that is not from God's work within them.

87. Paul's words support the propriety of the Church providing a living for those it wants to work full time in Gospel ministry, which is offered freely to all. Advantages: a theologically educated and trained clergy with time for ministering to people. Dangers: a laity that lets the "hired hand" do the ministering; a clergy that does a job instead of carrying out a calling, that may become authoritarian, and that is not above bargaining for more money.

The Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 19:2–8

88. In calling Abraham, Yahweh was clearly the initiator of the covenant—and here He reminds Israel of "what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." Throughout Israel's history, the exodus was pointed to as the pivotal act by which the Lord made Israel His own. The unilateral covenant had to become a bilateral covenant through Israel's faith and obedience if it was going to be meaningful to them. Israel's response was to be a commitment to obey the Lord fully and keep His covenant. As they kept the covenant, they were assured that they were Yahweh's chosen people, His treasured possession out of all the nations. Their being "a kingdom of priests" implies that each one of them would be consecrated to the Lord's service in personal faith and devotion; their being "a holy nation" says they would be set apart from, different from, other nations.

89. Speaking for their people, the elders said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." The people's enthusiasm was short-lived. With Moses on the mountain interacting with the Lord, the people defected and wanted more "manageable," less threatening gods to worship. Their history is the story of repeated defections, God punishing them to bring them to their senses, their repentance, and the Lord accepting them again in forgiving love. We easily see ourselves in them. God's determination to act in love to rescue His people from the sin that hurts them and their relationship with Him does not waver. He is true to Himself, so He is always true to His promise. He yearns for His people when they wander from Him and is always ready to receive them when they return.

90. God has extended His covenant of grace to us through the Good News of Jesus and has personalized that Good News through the interactions of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We have responded as we grew in appreciation of His grace and love and committed ourselves to love and serve Him. The rite of confirmation focuses us on the gift of understanding and commitment. His gift of rebirth by water and the Spirit commits us to new lives. (See Romans 6:1–14.) Like Israel, we often fail to live up to our side of this covenant with the Lord Jesus. But we may continually come to our Lord to hear Him confirm and reconfirm His covenant of grace with us. We may renew it continually in personal ways throughout life, but in this process it is always vital to remember that He is the initiator and our responses are built on the assurance of His gracious love. (See 1 Peter 2:9–12.)

91. God became Israel's loving Shepherd in the covenant at Sinai; Jesus' sending of His apostles with the Good News of the Kingdom initiated the new covenant with the new Israel—which would include people from all nations.

The Epistle for the Day: Romans 5:6–15

92. Justification—our being declared right with God through Jesus' atoning death—is the base on which we are to grow in a living relationship with God as our loving, heavenly Father. *Salvation* has as its root meaning in the "healing" of our relationship with Him. Thus healed, we are motivated and enabled by His grace to learn to love and serve Him and those around us happily. That Jesus is alive, ruling all things, and sending the Holy Spirit to us enables that continuing process in us. If He were dead, we might still think His death had won forgiveness for us, but the dynamic of His presence with us would be missing. We would be on our own in the matter of learning to live in relation to Him.

93. The word *reconciliation* describes a two-sided relationship. God looks at us in love through Jesus; we rejoice and enjoy our relationship with Him through Jesus. Religion makes people fear God. Christian faith, hope, and love take us beyond fear to enjoy living as children of a heavenly Father, brothers and sisters of His Son, Jesus (1 John 4:7–21).

We all know about sins. We see them in our lives and in the lives of others every day. But understanding sin as original sin, humanity separated from God by self-will and self-determination—man making himself his god—is not as easy for us.

Adam, in his position as the man created in God’s image, has been described as “the federal head of mankind.” As federal head, his act of rebellion and disobedience thus has affected and infected all who follow him. Jesus, the “Second Adam,” became the new “federal head of mankind.” His righteous human life, His carrying humanity’s sin in His body and vicariously suffering the deadly consequences, and His rising from the dead as “the firstfruits of those who sleep” have obtained new life with God for all—and effectuate that new life with God in those who are led by the power of the Holy Spirit to believe.

94. The people between Adam, who disobeyed God’s direct command, and Moses, through whom God provided His people with the Ten Commandments, were without a specific Law from God. They developed their own law codes, of course—political and religious. As Paul explained earlier, they were “a law to themselves,” evidencing that God had “written on their hearts” the basic principles of right and wrong (Romans 2:14–15). Here Paul stated that those who had not received God’s specific commands did experience the effect of sin in the fact that they died—“death reigned from Adam to Moses.”

95. One purpose achieved in God’s giving the Law in specific commands—and the Law’s continuing first effect—is that sinners become conscious of their sin and its consequences. This does not stop sinners from sinning. Paul even suggests that the commands stimulate the sinful nature to rebel all the more. (See Romans 7:7–11.) But the Law does force sinners to deal with sin as sin and thus makes them look for the solution to the problem of sin and death outside the Law and outside themselves, for they are sinners and Law breakers. Thus it prepares people for the grace of God in Christ.

96. Adam was a pattern or type (*tupos*) of Christ in that he was confronted with sin while fully in the image of God, just as Jesus was. Adam entertained the devil’s temptations and willfully disobeyed his Creator. Jesus was confronted by Satan’s temptations and rejected them in willing obedience to His Father.

97. The significant difference between the contribution of Adam, “the trespass,” and the contribution of Jesus Christ, “the free gift,” is that Adam’s trespass led to condemnation and death for all and Jesus’ gift led to justification and life for all. That surely is the significant difference for us who suffer under Adam’s legacy of original sin but have been redeemed and rescued through Jesus’ free gift of forgiveness and eternal life.