
Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE
Read Matthew 9:32-38

1. As we begin today, Jesus continued his healing ministry by healing a mute "demoniac" who then began to speak. Compare the different reactions of the crowds and the Pharisees to this miracle from verses 32-34.

NOTE: This passage reflects the ancient belief that disability and illness were caused by demon possession. *Commentary*

2. Jesus continued to proclaim the gospel and cure disease and illness (verse 35). Describe what he saw and his reaction in verse 36?

NOTE: The Second Vatican Council uses this passage when teaching about the message of Christian charity which the Church should always be spreading. "As Christ went about all the towns and villages healing every sickness, as a sign that the Kingdom of God had come, so the church, through its children, joins itself with men of every condition, but especially with the poor and afflicted and willingly spends herself for them." *Navarre Bible*

3. This incident demonstrates the compassionate heart of Jesus. Look up a definition of *compassion* and using that definition, share a brief story of a compassionate act you witnessed recently.

4. Jesus then told his disciples to pray because, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few" (verses 37-38). This speaks to us today as the number of religious leaders serving various roles in our faith communities decreases. What are some ways we can support and promote vocations?

5. CONNECTION: Today we read that when Jesus healed the man who could not speak, the crowds were amazed but the Pharisees accused him of acting on behalf of the "prince of demons." The Pharisees were the religious and political leaders of the Jewish people who devoted their lives to study the holy word of God. Yet, they failed to recognize what the people saw and denied that Jesus was the Messiah. Have you ever known others who were rigid and unyielding in their beliefs and opinions, like the Pharisees? What are some ways to respond to them in a helpful way?

Read and record Ephesians 4:2-3. Write a prayer today for the grace to always respond to others with kindness and humility.

DAY TWO

Read Matthew 10:1-4

NOTE: Unlike Mark (MK 3:13-14) and Luke (Lk 6:12-16), Matthew has no story of Jesus' choosing the Twelve; he assumes that the group is known to the reader. The number is meant to recall the twelve tribes of Israel and implies Jesus' authority to call all Israel into the kingdom. *NABRE*

6. Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and illness. See the Commentary, pages 59-60, and comment on the difference between apostles and disciples.

7. Notice that the twelve apostles are listed in pairs. Why do you think that is and what might be the significance of who is first and last on this list?

8. The twelve apostles hold a great place in our faith as our foremost human leaders who were hand selected by Jesus and knew him personally. Look up a few Scripture verses below about one or two of the apostles.

Simon called Peter; Mk 1:16; Luke 22:31-34; Acts 9:32-34

and his brother Andrew; John 1:40-42; Mk 13:3;

James, the son of Zebedee (James the Greater): Mk 1:19-20; 10:35-38; Acts 12:1-3

and his brother John: John 13:21-23; 19:25-27; Acts 4:13

Philip: John:1:43-48; 6:5-9;12:20-23;14:8-9

and Bartholomew: Mark 3:16-19; (as Nathaniel) John 1:45-47; 21:1-2

Thomas: John 14:5; 20:24-28; Acts 1:13

and Matthew the tax collector: Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13

James, the son of Alphaeus: Mark 3:18; 15:40; Acts 1:13

and Thaddeus (also known as Judas son of James): Mark 3:18; Luke 6:16; John 14:22

Simon, the Cananean (Canaanite): Mark 3:18; Luke 6:13-15; Acts 1:13

and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him: Mark 14:10-11; John 12:4-6; Acts 1:16-19

9. Share something that you learned about the apostles that you did not know before.

10. CONNECTION: Have you ever wondered about the ordinary men who were called by Jesus to accompany him on his earthly journey? What do you think Jesus was looking for in their selection? If you had to select a group to help you with something important, what qualifications or attributes would you look for?

Read and record John 12:26. In your prayer time today, pray to become a missionary disciple of Jesus and share his love and gift of salvation with everyone you meet.

DAY THREE

Read Matthew 10:5-15

NOTE: The Mission Discourse can be read from two different perspectives: (1) as part of the unfolding story of Jesus' ministry and his relationship with his disciples; (2) and an instruction for the post-Easter church. In the new age, when the gospel must be proclaimed to all the world, Jesus' words apply to the universal mission of the church. *NABRE*

11. Jesus "sent" out the twelve instructing them not to go into pagan or Samaritan territory but to begin by proclaiming the kingdom of heaven with the "lost sheep" of Israel by curing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers and driving out demons (verses 5-8). What are some ways that you have seen our Church continue to fulfill these directives today?

12. The twelve were instructed not to take money, provisions or unnecessary clothing on their mission (verses 9-10). Have you or another ever experienced a sudden loss of money, clothes or supplies while on a trip? Briefly share how the help or support of others sustained you.

13. He gave instructions to the apostles that as they entered a town, to look for and stay with a worthy person. When they entered a "worthy" house, they were to wish it peace (verses 11-13). Record what they were to do when treated unkindly by those in "unworthy" houses (second part of verse 13 and verses 14-15).

14. If a disciple experienced rejection of God's Word, they were cautioned not to react violently but rather to "shake the dust" from their feet. How has this directive been helpful or necessary in your mission to help spread the word of God or in other circumstances?

15. CONNECTION: Our houses have a way of revealing what is important to us. Is yours a worthy or unworthy house? Is your faith displayed there? How would a stranger know of your faith if he entered there?

Every time we prepare to receive Holy Communion, we pray, "Lord, I am not worthy..." Reflect today in your prayer time how you prepare to welcome the body and blood of Jesus into your "worthy" heart.

DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 10:16-33

16. In our lesson today, Jesus warns his disciples about the betrayal and obstacles they might face as they go out into the world warning that they will be "like sheep in the midst of wolves" (verses 16-18). Can you share an example of what it means to be both shrewd as serpents and simple as doves?

NOTE: The Book of Acts records some of the injustice and violence the disciples and apostles face in their obedience to spread the gospel. See Acts 4:1-18; 5:17-18; 22:19; 24:1-27. *Agape*

17. Jesus told his apostles not to worry about what to say when confronted by enemies. They would be "given" the words they needed, "For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (verses 19-20). Recall a time when the Spirit gave you the words you needed when speaking of or defending your faith.

18. Jesus urged the apostles to have courage even when family members hate and betray them or when they face hatred and persecution by outsiders (verses 21-23). He told them not to be afraid three times as he offered words of comfort in verses 26-28. These words of Jesus are comforting to us too when we are challenged by others about our beliefs. Record a verse or two from this passage that offers you comfort or instruction and explain why.

NOTE: Jesus uses the two proverbs in verses 24-25 to hint at the future that awaits his disciples; their greatest glory will consist in imitating the Master, being identified with him, even if this means being despised and persecuted as he was before them. Beelzebul was the name of a Philistine idol. The Jews later used the word to describe the devil and their hatred of Jesus led them to the extreme of applying it to him. *Navarre*

19. The persecution of Christians has happened in every time and in every culture including our own. Look up one of the following Scripture verses that provides comfort to those facing persecution.

John 15:18

Romans 8:35

1 Peter 4:12-14

NOTE: Jewish persecution of early Christians should not be exaggerated. By no means does it equal Christianity's record in persecuting Jews over the centuries. Moreover, the "persecution" alluded to in this passage pitted Jew against Jew; it took place within Judaism and was not the action of one religion against another. *Sacra Pagina*

20. CONNECTION: We read today that Jesus repeatedly told his disciples not to be afraid because God would protect them just as he protects the smallest sparrow. God *knows* us, even "all the hairs on your head are counted." He is aware of the big issues of our lives, our victories and failures, blessings and grief, but also the seemingly insignificant parts of our lives. What does it mean to you that God cares about the smallest details of your life? In what ways does the goodness and love of such a caring God, relieve your fears and cause you to be thankful?

Read Psalm 139:1-4 and record a verse to use in your prayer today to the Inescapable God.

DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 10:34-42

21. Jesus again warned his apostles not to put family loyalties ahead of their mission (verses 34-37), saying that he has come "to bring not peace but the sword." Record a verse or two from one of the following passages that reflects this thought.

Ephesians 6:13-17

Hebrews 4:12

22. In verse 38 Jesus warned, "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me." Our Commentary, page 63, states that the directives in the passages we read today "apply more widely to all disciples." How does this this verse apply to your life today?

NOTE: Verse 38 is the first mention of the cross in Matthew, explicitly that of the disciples, but implicitly that of Jesus (and follow after me). Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment used by the Romans for offenders who were not Roman citizens. *NABRE*

23. In verses 39-40, Jesus encourages the apostles in their mission by stating the rewards of discipleship. Select one of the following verses and explain how it encourages you in your mission as a disciple of Jesus.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man's reward.

24. Jesus made a promise to those who perform even a small act of kindness for one of his disciples. Record this promise in verse 42 (Good memory verse).

NOTE: One of the peculiarities of Matthew's mission discourse is that, after his long speech, we hear nothing about the mission itself or its outcome in Matthew 11. Some maintain that deliberately left open the mission to the disciples of Israel, thus suggesting that the mission itself continues and the instructions directed at the twelve apostles have meaning for all those who take up the missionary task. *Sacra Pagina*

25. CONNECTION: To offer someone a drink is a small act of kindness and hospitality, and to give a drink to the thirsty is one of the works of mercy. Along with feeding the hungry, these simple acts are thoughtful expressions of love. We also read today that Jesus tells us, "Whoever receives you receives me." When we give a drink to someone, we give a drink to Jesus himself and when we love our neighbor, we love Jesus. Describe a time when you saw the face of Jesus in performing an act of love or ministry.

Read and record Isaiah 49:10. Consider the suffering of so many from thirst in our world today and write a prayer for their relief.

FINAL QUESTION of the WEEK

What passage from this week's study has stuck with you? Take one idea, verse or word from this passage and comment on how you will apply it to your life.

Read pages 58-63 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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