

Instructions to Missionaries

Intro. The pandemic we are struggling with continues to change how we do many things in our lives. One more startling example is that Mormon missionaries are giving up their long tradition of knocking on doors to talk about their faith. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints brought more than twenty-six thousand young people back to their home countries [B. McCombs/M. Fam, Associated Press, T-U, 6/16/20]. They are now re-organized and sent out to evangelize, not by knocking on doors, but by using social media to continue their commitment to evangelization. Their mission department made a historic adjustment and issued new instructions to its missionaries. All our churches must do the same.

I. In this chapter of Matthew's gospel, the Lord gave instructions to *his* missionaries. First he gave them *authority* to heal and the *power* to preach the Kingdom. They are told to travel light; no rolling bags. They were warned about being sheep sent among wolves; to be clever but gentle. Suffering will be part of the work, but they are not to fear because the Lord is with them always. This is timely for us as the Lord's missionaries today. There is a lot of fear in our world. Fear of getting sick; fear of one another; fear of not enough to eat; fear of losing or not finding a job. Fear debilitates us, saps our energy and our will and keeps from fully preaching the Good News of our Lord. To encourage his disciples, the Lord told them he is aware of all things even the small birds. To counteract fear we hear that God who takes care of even the smallest bird will

certainly take care of us too. We are “worth more than *many* sparrows.”

Concl. As throughout our history as a country and a church, it is time to make adjustments yet again or lose focus on our mission and lose members. There is much discussion in our church about a shift in the way we evangelize, proclaim the Kingdom in these times. We must have the courage to make the necessary changes. It’s already happened. Thanks to our religious education department, the vacation bible school was all on line last week. Our religious education leaders are planning for a very different way to safely organize our classes this Fall. *Bishops and priests* must look at the larger picture of not doing things the way we have always done them. The marching orders the Lord gave to the apostles then is the same he gives us today: preach the

Kingdom of God and heal the broken-hearted. We face many of the same challenges the first disciples did. We are not to let ourselves get distracted by collecting stuff that only slows us down. That could be physical possessions or attitudes of greed and prejudice. We know there is evil in the world that tries to tempt us from our mission so we have to be smart and clever in dealing with this world. We are reminded daily that suffering is part of life; some our own fault, some not. The Lord gives us the same encouragement as the original apostles and disciples: *fear no one*. In this hard time, someone came up with succinct exhortation – Faith not Fear. Simple and encouraging and the same thing the Lord told his first missionaries.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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