

A Proper 6, 2026  
Saint Barnabas Church, Falmouth MA  
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Matthew 9: 35 – 10:8

You and I live in a culture that embraces job descriptions as a means to clarify complex deals

Within our first few years in the workforce, we either have lived by or we have created position descriptions for ourselves and those whose work we manage—some of us live and die by this effort in our professional lives

In the Episcopal Church, we have a website where one can pluck off sample job descriptions for every imaginable paid or volunteer ministry

If you have ever wondered about a biblical model for a job description, you can go to today's Gospel passage for the bottom line

In Matthew's Gospel, we find both Jesus' own job description and his creation of one for his disciples

At least for his earthly ministry—the events of Holy Week form a critically different vocational opportunity—Jesus goes about all the cities and villages to **teach, proclaim and cure**

Matthew gives us the task and attitude with which Jesus does his work: teach, proclaim and cure with compassion

Matthew gets even bolder when he states that Jesus teaches in synagogues, proclaims good news and cures **every** disease and **every** sickness

Jesus doesn't just show up and try hard, but he cures every disease and every sickness

So today's passage provides us with a watershed moment in Jesus' earthly ministry, a transition from Jesus' pursuing his own vocation to his mentoring the disciples to pursue their own

Now, every manager among us knows this is easier said than done

As leaders, we jump out of bed in the morning, ready to slay dragons and conquer adversity, empowering the troops to success and victory

Let's just say that Human Resources did not deal Jesus a great hand: in fact he got a pretty motley crew of workers: six fishermen with attitude issues whose work/life balance included dumping their father Zebedee on short notice; a skeptic and hard-core, high-maintenance doubter; a hated tax collector, an untrustworthy zealot and—best of all—a traitor who stabs him in the back

Like Sidney Portier in the classic movie, *To Sir With Love*, Jesus had to transform a rag tag group into an elite missionary force, yet the troops fell asleep on the boss and abandoned him in time of need, proving its mettle only after resurrection power infuses the group

Yet, Jesus never patronizes the team and rarely shows exasperation: in today's action-packed vignette, Jesus provides us with boldness and clarity in our vocational job description as disciples and apostles for the kingdom of heaven

Jesus provides a beautiful, one-page job description that would bring tears to the eyes of any HR professional:

Gain authority over unclean spirits, cast them out and cure every disease and every sickness

Proclaim the good news: the kingdom of heaven has come near

Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons

That, my friends, constitutes one of the boldest job descriptions you'll encounter—no counting paper clips on this job

By virtue of our baptism (not ordination, but baptism), we—like Jesus—are called to teach, proclaim and cure

There is nothing wimpy about God's expectation for us: cast out unclean spirits and proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is near

Jesus challenges us to move beyond the church's greatest sin of turning wine into water or quibbling over the equivalent of potholes in the parking lot

As a community and in our individual witness, we are called to get our hands dirty and take risks: there is nothing pretty or elegant about dragging unclean spirits out of hurting people

It's risky, intimate and sometimes harrowing work—yet fundamentally transforming to real lives—to cast out demons and call ourselves and others to the wholeness that God so wants for us

Notice there is nothing “meaningful” about our job description: no spiritual buzz here, just life-transforming work of calling people into wholeness

In modern language, we might say that casting out demons takes place by zip code

Matthew speaks to a Jewish audience and warns them to stay with their own before worrying about the Gentiles

Our target audience lives right in our backyard, and our primary mission field is not among the heathen of another continent but the spiritually hungry at our doorstep and within our zip code

In our own zip code, perhaps the biggest hurdle to ministry comes in a reticence to name the demons that beguile us and hold us down

So naming the demons is a big deal, and finding the intimacy and air time for them to be exposed becomes a real prelude to transformation

As a parish family, if we put all our communal energy into busy-ness for its own sake or surface conversation, we can become stuck at a breezy level of life that ignores the kicking and screaming of the soul

Said more hopefully, Christian community at its best assures us that heaven is drawing near, enabling us to live in ways that go deep and confront our demons and tame our dragons

Is Jesus being too rugged in his expectations, or is he empowering us to recognize the obvious realities of this earthly journey?

Today and in the later commissioning of the 70 (MT 28:18), Jesus invokes two identities for us: we are disciples and apostles

We throw these words around in ways that strip them of their power: disciples are pupils, ones who are striving toward deeper knowledge; apostles are sent—a very active verb—to change the world

Amid our varied interim discussions, we've discussed ways to deepen our parish culture beyond smiley-face optimism toward the deeper victories and challenges of soul work

We've attempted to move beyond civil religion toward the missionary model of discipleship that Jesus so bravely calls us in today's Gospel

So as we deepen our spirituality while preparing to call a new rector, I hope we'll move beyond smiles and concerns about the proverbial potholes in the parking lot

How can our teaching ministry help us grow as disciples, finding at least as much mystery as certainty in the Christian gospel?

As Anglicans at our best, how can we mend head and heart with keen intellectual curiosity matched only by compassionate hearts that so embodied Jesus' own ministry?

How can we move from consumers demanding our own way toward disciples who learn with humility toward apostles who rush forth proclaiming heaven's drawing near?

Today, Jesus provides us with a powerful message that the kingdom of heaven is drawing near

A week from Father's Day, let's embrace this message and celebrate the unique vocation of paternity in the formation of resilient children while simultaneously casting out the demons of toxic masculinity that

can demean women, foster free-floating aggression, or such rugged self-reliance that we lose any meaningful sense of community

Instead, let's look to Jesus, although celibate, as a model of agile masculinity that combines tough love when needed with compassionate concern for the broken or lost, a model of shepherding rather than chronic grievance or victimhood

In this spirit, Jesus gives us bold marching orders to cast our demons, while supplying us with the Good News that the kingdom of heaven is drawing near

To my fellow men of this parish, how do we celebrate agile masculinity while living as though God's kingdom of heaven is drawing near?

Such provides the challenge and compensation of our job descriptions as Jesus' disciples: hard, gutsy work of miraculous expectation, an action-packed agenda that witnesses to the world that God's kingdom is at hand, if not in hand

I'm happy to celebrate that such a spirit was on hand during an awesome Strawberry Festival, where hard work and teamwork went hand in hand, where I fell in love with Tiny, a 102-year-old woman who was tearing up the dance floor under the tent, inviting a 5-year-old girl unknown to her to celebrate a joyful life as long as we can.