

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 16TH-17TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

## MORE THAN SPARROWS (MATTHEW 10:23-33)

In Matt. 5-9, Jesus demonstrates authority through teaching (ch. 5-7) and miracles (ch. 8-9).

- Now Jesus delegates authority to a group of His 12 apostles ("legal representatives") to do exactly the same kinds of ministry He'd been doing.
- After painting a picture for them of the urgency and specifics of the mission at hand, Jesus gave them a warning of the kinds of persecution they could expect (vs. 16-23).

As these young men were being sent out as "sheep in the midst of wolves" (vs. 16) to be betrayed, hated, and persecuted- their default response to this reality was probably fear.

- Fear is the biggest obstacle we all must overcome in following Jesus, living out our faith, and sharing our faith.
- We can either be paralyzed by fear, or have faith in God and courage in spite of fear.

Satan operates in the currency of fear- he knows that if he can continue to lie to us and keep us afraid, he can keep us immobile and ineffective.

- But, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but power, love, and sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).
- God intends for us to be bold, full of faith, and confident in His provision, protection, and purposes in us as we move in obedience to His Word.
- Jesus gave His disciples 5 reasons for why they didn't have to be afraid to openly confess Christ.

## REASON #1-SUFFERING IDENTIFIES US WITH JESUS (VS. 24-25)

- Jesus states that if the greater (a teacher) is mistreated, how can the lesser (a disciple) expect better treatment?
- If they called Jesus "Beelzebul" ("lord of the flies"), how much worse will they call us?
- This is actually an encouragement (Acts 5:41), because this kind of mistreatment implies close association Jesus- we get to also share His resurrection, throne and reign!

## REASON #2-GOD WILL BRING EVERYTHING TO LIGHT (VS. 26-27)

- Part of the fear of persecution is that the truth of injustice may never become known, and justice will never be served.
- But Jesus tells these men that all concealed truth will ultimately break into the open.
- Therefore, we're not to worry or be afraid of what the world may say about us- we're to simply proclaim God's truth boldly and publicly.

## REASON #3-WE FEAR GOD ALONE (VS. 28)

- The biggest fear anyone has related to persecution is that of bodily harm and death.
- But Jesus tells these men, "all anyone can do is kill your body, and if they do, your soul goes to be with God. But God is able to destroy both body and soul in hell!"
- The person who fears God alone never needs to fear any person- the fear of God is the fear that cancels all other fear.

## REASON #4-GOD CARES FOR HIS OWN (VS. 29-31)

- It only cost "a penny" to purchase two sparrows in the market, and yet God knows when one of them falls to the ground and He's there.
- How much more than will God care for His own who are serving Him?
- God is concerned with the details of our lives- even the hairs of our head are numbered! We're not to be afraid because God knows us and loves us.

## REASON #5-CHRIST HONORS THOSE WHO CONFESS HIM (VS. 32-33)

- "Acknowledging" Christ means more than just to make a statement with our lips- we have to back it up with our lives.
- And when we boldly and publicly acknowledge Christ before people with our words and lives, Jesus will acknowledge us before the Father in heaven.
- But denial of Him before people means denial of us before the Father.

## NOT PEACE, BUT A SWORD (MATTHEW 10:34-39)

In 5:9, Jesus pronounced the "peacemakers" as blessed, but here He says that His mission on earth would not cause peace, but hostility (a "sword")- even between the closest of family members (vs. 34).

- Jesus wasn't saying that He'd come to intentionally divide families or bring violence, only that loyalty to Him would cause some of His followers to be hated by their families.

To further explain this prediction of family hostility, Jesus quotes Micah 7:6 in vs. 35-36.

- This passage in Micah was commonly understood in Jewish interpretation to refer to the coming woes of the messianic age and Kingdom.

- This was a prophecy that stated that some members of families would pledge their allegiance to Messiah, which would cause those who didn't to be violent and hateful towards them.

This is a reality that many Jesus followers experience today- some of this rejection from family is violent and hostile, and other times it comes in the form of mocking, teasing, and just being misunderstood.

- However it's experienced, it doesn't feel good.
- We have a choice in the face of rejection from our families to continue to live boldly for Jesus or to deny or downplay our allegiance to Him in order to be accepted.

But Jesus tells us that the only ones worthy of Him are those who will love Him more than anyone else- even their own parents or children (vs. 37).

- We're to still love, pray for, and honor our unbelieving family members.
- Our allegiance and loyalty is to be first and foremost to the commands and commission of King Jesus- not the culture, mindsets, or the priorities of our family system.

The follower of Jesus will endure the mocking & suffering involved in following Him (vs. 38).

- Jesus talks about "taking up a cross"- a criminal condemned to die on a cross had to carry a crossbeam through an angry mob to the site of the execution.
- It was public, shameful, and excruciatingly painful- and Jesus says, "those who want to follow me have to be willing to do endure those things."

A worthy follower of Jesus must also be willing to "lose their life for my sake" in order to find eternal life (vs. 39).

- That means a true disciple will give up all individual rights, possessions, passions, pastimes, or people that that might distract them from following Christ.
- In losing these things, we find true worth- God's purpose, joy, and eternal rewards.

## REWARDS (MATTHEW 10:40-42)

Not everyone would reject the witness of these 12 who were sent out (and not everyone will reject our witness).

- Those who welcome and receive ambassadors of the Kingdom will receive a blessing.
- When someone receives and listens to a follower of Jesus, it's Jesus they're receiving and listening to, and moreover it's the Father who sent Jesus that they're receiving (vs. 40).

In the OT, a person who accepted a prophet or righteous person accepted God's will (vs. 41).

- Those who received and provided for prophets were rewarded like the prophets.
- In the same way, to receive a disciple for Christ's sake would mean sharing in their reward for faithfulness. Even a cup of cold water brings its own reward!

The commission of Jesus is not a summons to doom, gloom, and misery; it's actually an invitation to joy, satisfaction, and great reward.

- In contrast to what the world believes, we don't find our lives rewarding when we indulge in the pleasures, stuff, safety, and security of the world.
- That's actually the recipe for losing our lives.
- We find our lives by sacrificing things for the rewards, pleasure, and joy we find in Christ!

When we live this way, the reward isn't just for us.

- We do find joy, peace, and life as we live in and with Christ for the spread of the gospel- but the rewards are also for those who hear our proclamation of the message of Jesus!
- When they receive the message we bring, they also get to experience eternal reward!
- Our lives become INFINITELY more rewarding when they become about this pursuit.

Making your life all about yourself, pleasure, entertainment, comfort, selfish ambition, money, and the things of the world is a fast track and fool proof path to complete and utter misery.

- According to Jesus, this way of "finding" our own life- making up what's important to us as we go along- leads us to losing eternal life (vs. 39).
- There's a way in which we can miss the infinite value of the Kingdom because we're so consumed by the things of this world.

But it's the disciples who "lose their life for my sake"- those who are willing to give all the pursuits of the world up for the sake of Christ- who find eternal life.

- This is the ultimate risk- to abandon everything the world values and choose the path of sacrifice, persecution, self-denial, and death in order to come after Christ and receive His ultimate and superior rewards.

## What keeps us from going "all in"? Fear. What motivates us to go "all in"? Faith.

- Fighting the war(s) within.
- Fear vs. Faith. Selfishness vs. Sacrifice.
- Temporary Pleasures vs. Ultimate Satisfaction. Self-Centeredness vs. Others-Centeredness.
- The Kingdoms of Earth vs. The Kingdom of Heaven.