

October 6, 2024

Matthew 10:16-33 ESV

16 “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. 19 When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, 22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. 26 “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

Scriptures for further study:

Matthew 7:15

“Wicked men are like wolves, in whose nature it is to devour and destroy.”

-Matthew Henry

“The local opposition which the twelve apostles can expect in Galilee is only a foreshadowing of the more serious and official hostility which Jesus’ followers will meet in the wider world.”

-R.T. France

“We no longer live in a society generally supportive of Christians.”

-George Yancey



Following Jesus: Kingdom Mission and Endurance **Matthew 10:16-33**

BIG IDEA: Fearless endurance in world full of opposition is rooted in the Son who sends us out to proclaim the will of the Father by the Spirit.

OUTLINE

1. Our World of Opposition
2. The Cause of Opposition
3. The Call to Kingdom Mission
4. The Call to Kingdom Endurance

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These "Sermon Discussion Questions" are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Think about the Big Idea. When you were a teenager, how did you approach talking with your parents about a new opportunity or responsibility that was important to you? What gave you the courage to ask?
2. Refer to verses 16 - 19. How will the disciples be received as they go where Jesus is sending them? Have you experienced the world in the way that Jesus describes?
3. Read verses 18 - 25. What is the reason for the opposition the disciples can expect to face? How can the reason the disciples will be persecuted serve to encourage them?
4. From verses 16, 18, 19 - 20. What were the disciples sent to do (verse 18)? What posture are the disciples to have as they do what Jesus asks them to do (verse 16)? In your world, what does it look like for you to be a "sheep in the midst of wolves," "wise as serpents, and innocent as doves?"
5. Refer to verses 19 - 33. With what encouragement and confidence did Jesus assure the disciples? How can the encouragement that Jesus gave to the disciples give you what you need to face opposition in your efforts to proclaim Jesus?

"A persistent feature of these verses is the repeated assertion that persecution arises not out of sociological factors but 'because of me'...the conclusion of Matthew's story already casts its shadow over this phase of its development with the assumption that the name of Jesus will provoke opposition and a violent response from the world at large."

-R.T. France

"It's simply impossible to preach the Gospel without words. The Gospel is inherently verbal, and preaching the Gospel is inherently verbal behavior."

-Duane Litfin

"Proclaiming God's truth is not like a club that beats upon the will but like a sword that cuts to the heart."

-Tim Keller

Praise to Jesus. Spend time this week praising Jesus. He faced and conquered the wolves of the world who intended to destroy Him so that you can step into the wolves' den like a sheep with wisdom and words from the Holy Spirit to live for Jesus and share the hope of the gospel. Praise Jesus that you are never alone, that He is inside of you, and that He will give you the words you need when you need them!

Repentance through Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in a time of confession and repentance. Confess the times when you let fear from the opposition overcome you, causing you to retreat rather than engage to share the hope and help that comes from Jesus.

Consecration for Jesus. Because Jesus faced a world of opposition with fearless endurance, you, too rooted in the Son, can proclaim the will of the Father and the Spirit. Go, meek like a sheep, wise like a snake, learn from Jesus, and face the wolves in the part of His Kingdom where he has placed you.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Jesus commissioned his disciples to help him in his work. This work was motivated by "compassion" for the "harassed and helpless" (9:36). It was to be done without any cost to those who benefited from it, just as the disciples' relationship with Jesus came to them without any cost (10:8). The disciples' ministry, then, was to imitate Jesus' ministry and to communicate the life-giving, redemptive, utterly free grace of God so clearly displayed in Jesus' ministry. Like Jesus, the disciples would encounter rejection (10:14) and opposition (10:24–25), even from their own families (10:21–22, 35–37).

Jesus' disciples today are called to live and minister this way. The character of their lives and the practical methods they use in ministering to others in the name of Jesus should always bear the stamp of God's joyful, gracious, and utterly free forgiveness and restoration of his creatures. At the same time, no matter how good the news, how honest their methods, and how winsome their appeal, the message of the gospel will sometimes meet with harsh, even violent, rejection—as was true for Jesus himself.

–Adapted from the ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. How do you handle a difficult task or homework assignment? What would comfort you as you go through this difficult task? Would you rather know ahead of time that it will be difficult, or would you rather not know ahead of time?

Scriptures for further study:

Matthew 28:18-20

2. This passage is about the apostles being sent out. In verse 16, who is sending the apostles? Why would this be important to know? (Jesus is the One sending the apostles out. This is important because we will see that Jesus warns the apostles that His mission will not be easy. But Jesus wanted the apostles to be at peace since this is a mission that Jesus called them to do.)

John 16:33

John 14:15-21

3. What kinds of warnings or how does Jesus describe the difficulties that the apostles will face? (In verse 16, he describes it as sending them out “as sheep among wolves.” You may need to explain that imagery to your children, depending on their age. In verses 17-19, He told them that they would be taken before “governors and kings.” In verse 21, Jesus described how family members would turn in family members to be arrested. Verse 22, we read that the apostles would be hated.)

4. How does Jesus comfort them for this mission? (In verses 19-20, Jesus said that they would not have to worry about what they would have to say because the “Spirit of the Father” (God the Holy Spirit) would speak through them. In verse 24, He alluded to how anything they go through will be experiences that Jesus would go through as well. In verses 26-33, He tells them not to fear other humans since God our Father watches over and protects us, and we are His prized possession from His Creation. We are more valuable than sparrows, and He knows every detail of our lives, even the number of hairs on our heads. He also told them in verse 28 that we should only fear Him since He is the only One who can punish our bodies and our souls, unlike human leaders who can only harm our bodies.)

FOR STUDENTS

1. In the passage we read this morning, Jesus is sending out His disciples into the world and is telling them a variety of things to do and things to expect (Read Matthew 10:5-15 for context). He tells them that He is sending them out “as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” What do you think this means?
2. Jesus begins to tell His disciples that they will face a variety of persecutions for the sake of following and proclaiming Jesus, and even goes as far as saying that they will be “hated by all for My name’s sake” (vs.22). He makes it clear that there is a cost to being His disciple. Do you think it costs anything for us to follow Jesus in 2024?
3. After Jesus tells them all the things that will happen to them, He tells them that they should “have no fear of them.” How is it that the disciples (and us, by extension) are able to face persecution without fear? How does that affect the way that we share the Gospel of Jesus?
4. Read Matthew 10:32-33. This passage might be hard for some to handle, but what do you think it says about what our posture should be toward our faith in Jesus?

FOR SEEKERS AND NEW BELIEVERS

1. This passage addresses, among other things, the topic of fear.

Question: What/Who, according to Jesus, is the only thing we should ever ultimately fear, and why? (see verse 28)

Question: But what does Jesus say we must do in order to make sure we are in right standing with God and be received by Him? (see verse 32)

2. There is always a cost—sometimes a heavy cost—to identifying yourself with Jesus. “Like Master like servant” (verse 24). Persecution at the hands of religion (verse 17), government (verse 18), and even family (verse 21) is inevitable for the Christian. It is not “if” we will be persecuted, but “to what extent” and in “what form” we will experience it.

Question: What is it about Christianity that elicits so much opposition?

Question: In what ways does Jesus help us to better prepare ourselves in attitude, speech, and mindset?

3. As with all of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, living with this Jesus commands that what He teaches us in private we will proclaim openly and in public, even if it is costly.

Question: Can you think of a time when speaking out about your faith cost you something? What are some of the fears that often keep us from being more bold in our faith and witness?

Question: What promise does Jesus make to us about how He will help us when the time comes to stand strong in our witness? (see verses 19-20)

4. Doing to others what we would have them do to us is a brilliant and wise way Jesus also encouraged His disciples that when they faced persecution, they should move on to other cities and places.

Question: Read Acts 8:1-4. In what ways did God actually use persecution to cause the further spread of the gospel? What does this say about God’s sovereignty and control of even the most difficult or even painful events?

Following Jesus: Finding Fulfillment and Faith in the One Who is Greater



*Raphael, School of Athens, 1509-1511, fresco
(Stanza della Segnatura, Palazzi Pontifici, Vatican)*

About the artwork.

What is the connection between an eighteen-by-twenty-five-foot wall decoration of ancient men in robes and the Gospel of Matthew?

Raphael, the rock star of the Renaissance, organized his painting of fifty-three of the most outstanding scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, poets, and artists of all time thematically into five groups. Each group contains a leader(s) and those following him/them. Matthew tells the good news of Jesus in a way that highlights the theme and invitation from Jesus to “follow me.” In addition, Matthew organizes his Gospel around five sermons: Kingdom Law, Kingdom Mission, Kingdom Nature, Kingdom Authority, and Kingdom Judgement.

Front and center in Raphael’s painting are the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. Raphael placed Plato and Aristotle in the center to show that they represent the pinnacle of human philosophy. They were the “prophets” of their day. Plato pointing up and Aristotle pointing down. Matthew shows us that Jesus is the true and greater prophet who unites knowledge of heaven, truths known and experienced only through him, with earthly ephemeral realities that can be experienced and described empirically but understood through him.

Raphael chose a forum from ancient Rome as the setting. The architecture in the painting represents well the Roman arch, which was a symbol of victory. Matthew is known and loved by millions, though his life’s ambition was to follow Jesus. He told the good news that in Jesus Christ, we have victory and kingship because he is the greater son of David, the Messiah.

Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew.

Before he met Jesus, a Jewish man named Levi, who lived in Capernaum, worked in a booth collecting taxes for the Roman Empire. Because of his profession, Levi was the most hated man in town until Jesus walked by and said to him, "Follow me." About thirty years after Jesus was crucified and resurrected, Levi, whom Jesus renamed Matthew, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down his version of Jesus's life, the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew presents Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, King, Prophet, Son of David, and Son of God. Jesus ushers in and establishes the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the rule and reign of God here on earth. Jesus calls his citizens to embrace Him as king through faith, teaches them about this "new world order" as a prophet, and then calls them to follow Him as the redeemer by going out into the world to tell the nations. Because Jesus is King, he has all authority; as Prophet, what he says is true, and as Savior, only he can offer redemption.

Read or listen to Matthew's gospel. Look for King Jesus exerting his authority over the natural world through healing and the supernatural by casting out demons. Pay attention to what the crowds say about him. Listen to Prophet Jesus as he teaches, rebukes, and tells about who he is. See him as Savior life and the way to the coming Kingdom.

Each of the four gospels uniquely depicts the story of Jesus. The story is so vast that it takes four Holy Spirit-inspired men to attempt to capture it. Matthew organized his story around five of Jesus' discourses, teachings, and sermons. The sermon series walks through the discourses.

1st Matthew 5-7 Kingdom Law

2nd Matthew 10 Kingdom Mission

3rd Matthew 13 Kingdom Nature

4th Matthew 18 Kingdom Authority

5th Matthew 23-25 Kingdom Judgement

According to Pastor Bill, the big idea of Matthew's gospel is, "Come to Jesus and learn about the kingdom of God, then go into the world to advance His kingdom by following Him in faith." May you, like Matthew and countless others, come to Jesus, follow Him in faith, experience heart transformation, and advance His Kingdom in your home, work, neighborhood, and the world!