



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Living Hope."
(Easter, 2026)

"Hope and Fear." Text(s): *Matthew 10.16, 24-33*; Various Texts.

**☐ Day #1—Monday, May 4th. Read: Psalm 23.1-2; 34.4; 55.1-8, 16-19, 22-23. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—
What do you Hear and/or See?**

As we continue our series, "Living Hope," this week we examine a very common emotion—*fear*. In 1933, FDR said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." That sounds nice but it is just not true. There are many things we ought to be afraid of besides fear itself. A study was conducted a few years ago of 500 people and found 7000 different fears, which averaged 14 fears per person. Apparently, there are many things to be afraid of!

The Bible has a lot to say about fear. For example, *Psalm 34.4*: "I prayed to the Lord and He answered me; He freed me from all my fears." God says we can break free from your fears.

In last week's Compass, we studied the first few words of Psalm 23.1, "The Lord as our shepherd..." Today, let us again consider this powerful Psalm. King David, who wrote this Psalm, knew that with God, he had no want or lack. What Psalm 23 and Psalm 34 reminds us of is that, while we may fear that we will lack something that we absolutely need, God will always provide because He loves us. King David knew:

His needs were met by his shepherd. Although he most certainly did not have everything he could desire, he had everything he needed. And God's people of every generation do not lack....This has to do with finding rest in the Word of God...All God's people have been given rest from the guilt of sin and the fear of condemnation through the redeeming work of Christ...They do not lack direction and guidance because they are led in paths of righteousness...It is important to notice that the Lord always leads his people...The fact that the Lord leads his people "For his name's sake" means that he guides them according to all that his name represents. His guidance is, then, in keeping with his holiness, his love, his faithfulness, his wisdom and all that he has revealed himself to be.¹

Consider/Reflect: (Commenting on Psalm 55) "Each of the OT names for God is seen in this psalm: *Jehovah-Jireh*, "The Lord will provide" (Gen. 22:13-14); *Jehovah-Rapha*, "The Lord will heal or restore" (Ex. 15:26); *Jehovah-Shalom*, "The Lord our peace" (Jud. 6:24); *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, "The Lord our righteousness," (Jer. 23:6); *Jehovah-Shammah*, "The Lord is there," (Ezek. 48:35); *Jehovah-Nissi*, "The Lord our banner" (Ex. 17:8-15); and *Jehovah-Raab*, "The Lord my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1). In other words, Jesus Christ is to His sheep all that they ever need. As the little child said when misquoting this psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd—what more shall I want?"²

☐ Day #2—Tuesday, May 5th. Read: Matthew 10.16. —Examine: The Text and its Message.

We want to follow Jesus, but sometimes wonder where He will lead us. What are the blessings that come from following Jesus? Is it being a better person? Is it life in Heaven after we die? Is it a pain-free life? If we follow Jesus, we *will* be a better person. If we follow Him, we *will* go to Heaven. If we follow him, we *will not* have a pain-free life. However, that is okay because Jesus offers much more—a faith so strong it frees us from fear!

In our text for this week, Jesus is (as always) very honest and direct: He is sending the disciples (us) out into an often hostile

¹ R. Ellsworth. *Opening up Psalms* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006).
² W.W. Wiersbe. *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1996).

world with many temptations to hide our faith, or even give up our faith altogether. Jesus' warning here reflects His earlier reference to the people being harassed like sheep without a shepherd (9.36). Consequently, Jesus tells His disciples that their opponents will seek to attack the flock.

With incisive, proverbial language, Jesus calls the Twelve to exhibit great acumen without sinful compromise. "Innocent" literally means *unmixed* and refers to purity of intention. Shrewdness and integrity form a crucial combination not often found in the Christian church. In fact, we more often invert the two, proving to be as guilty as serpents and as stupid as doves! High Christology appears in Jesus' claim that one's eternal destiny is based on one's response to him and his emissaries.³

Biblical scholar Don Hagner comments that "sheep" in Matthew "usually refers to those who are lost (e.g., 9:36; 10:6; 15:24; 18:12), here and in 26:31 it refers to the disciples (cf. 25:32–33). In both places, but especially here, the word is used to refer to the danger that threatens the disciples."⁴ Jesus will get more specific as He instructs the disciples about the dangers they will face. Here, however, Jesus gives His disciples two instructions. Hagner explicates the nature of these instructions:

In the face of the danger the disciples will encounter, they are instructed to be *φρόνιμοι ὡς οἱ ὄφεις*, "crafty as serpents," and *ἀκέραιοι ὡς αἱ περιστέραι*, "innocent as doves." This may well reflect a popular proverb. The idea of the wisdom or craftiness of the serpent goes back to Gen 3:1 where the same word, *φρόνιμος*, is used (cf. 2 Cor 11:3). The dove, believed by the ancients to be without guile, readily symbolized a variety of virtues... The instructions are both practical (cf. the command to flee persecution, v 23) and in keeping with the ethical tone of the teaching of Jesus... Thus when in danger and in persecution, the disciples need practical discernment and at the same time the sort of guilelessness that characterized Jesus.⁵

Consider/Reflect: Think about a time when you felt close to God. Were your circumstances good or bad? How did those circumstances influence your relationship with God?

☐ **Day #3—Wednesday, May 6th. Read: Matthew 10.24-25. –Explore: The background to this text(s).**

In this text, we see Jesus being very clear about His and the disciple's relationship (disciple/teacher, servant master) and their respective responsibilities. Jesus is including His disciples in His mission—to bring in the Kingdom of God and set the world to rights! Again, Jesus is very candid with His disciples. What Jesus experienced, they will experience. In fact, Jesus is not asking the disciples to do something that He Himself had not already experienced (and will experience!!)

Teacher and disciple, master and servant, stand together because of their respective responsibility and allegiance. Jesus and his chosen disciples stand preeminently together. In the present discourse Jesus is instructing them to extend his ministry to Israel with the same words and deeds that characterized his own ministry, that is, with the good news of the fulfillment and the dawning of the kingdom. But if Jesus suffers hostility and rejection, so must his disciples be prepared for the same. Thus, almost by definition, with discipleship to Jesus and the witness of the gospel comes an unavoidable suffering... Nevertheless, though these words are ominous, the disciples can be comforted that Jesus will have preceded them in the experience of suffering and rejection and in turn can sustain them in the midst of it. This has been the testimony of the Church throughout the ages.⁶

To illustrate His point, Jesus reminds the disciples that when He had cast a demon out of a man, the religious leaders accused Jesus of working by the "prince of demons" (See Matthew 9.34), Beelzebul. "Beelzebub (the Greek has *Beezeboul*) was a name for Satan, the prince of the demons, perhaps derived from Baal-Zebub, god of the Philistine city of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2). "Beelzebub" means "lord of the flies," and "Beezeboul" or "Beelzeboul" means "lord of the high place."⁷ If the enemies of Jesus would say this about Jesus (the Master), surely the disciples were in for the same treatment (those of His household).

Consider/Reflect: "Jesus warns His disciples to expect persecution as they carry out their mission of being His witnesses. This opposition to the Gospel is evidence of sin's grip on the human heart. When we experience abuse because of our loyalty to Jesus, we have His assurance that the Holy Spirit will help us to speak the right words. He will use our Gospel testimony to soften the hard hearts of unbelievers. [Pray]: Holy Spirit, help me to stand firm to the end and faithfully witness to Christ in word and deed. Amen."⁸

3 C. Blomberg, *Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992).

4 D.A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*: (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993).

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

8 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

□ **Day #4--Thursday, May 7th. Read: Matthew 10.26-27.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Consider how the disciples (maybe you?) were feeling at this point? While honest, Jesus' words do give one pause to reflect. Yet, Jesus also assures the disciples that they have no reason to fear! God is in control and nothing is outside His knowledge—no matter what it *seems* or *feels* like.

If Christians had to look forward only to a life of suffering and persecution, they might well despair or, more likely, abandon all Christian commitment...But the future holds much more for the believer. Judgment Day is coming when God will eternally compensate his people for their suffering and punish their enemies forever. Then the injustices of this world will disappear before the grandeur and glory of life in God's presence (Rom 8:18). So Jesus can confidently encourage his followers, "Do not be afraid."

Jesus assures His disciples (us) that in this future judgment, all the secrets of individuals' lives will be disclosed. The actions and sins of those who oppose God's truth, and do so with seeming impunity (v.26), will have those actions revealed before the judgment seat of Christ! "Indeed, the disciples will help out (v. 27) as they judge all unbelievers (1 Cor 6:2). Either or both of vv. 26–27 may also refer to the universal public declaration of the gospel, which will have previously received only a partial hearing."¹⁰

In view of the impending end-time vindication...Jesus' followers should preach boldly, fearing no shame from their peers in this world (10:26–27). What is now "covered" (hidden, 13:44) will then be revealed; and if God will reveal everything in the end anyway...there is no reason to withhold any proclamations now. What Jesus speaks "in darkness" (i.e., in secret)... Jesus' messengers (Luke 12:3) should reveal publicly. Because the flat housetops above the streets provided easier hearing than the streets themselves, "shouting from the housetops" (10:27) hyperbolically underlines the boldness with which the disciples must make God's message known. A persecuted disciple should not fear...because one would share Christ's sufferings, because God could destroy far more than the persecutors could (10:28), and because one would face nothing without one's caring Father permitting it (10:31).¹¹

Consider/Reflect: The end game of following Jesus is *fearless faith*—faith that overwhelms fear. What would you do if you were confident God was with you? That is how Jesus lived. That is how those who follow Jesus live. *Fearless*. The opposite of faith is fear.

□ **Day #5— Friday, May 8th. Read: Matthew 10.28-29.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus continues to assure the disciples that, even in the midst of persecution and trouble, no one is more powerful than God! Moreover, that God is ever mindful of His people and what they are going through. And, again, an eternal future awaits God's people that will reverse all of the sin, pain, destruction, and brokenness of this world.

All that men can do is kill the body; and, if they do, the believer's soul goes home to be with the Lord. But God is able to destroy *both* body and soul in hell! Of course, God will never condemn one of His own children (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1). Martin Luther caught this truth when he wrote:

Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever.¹²

Jesus illustrates this point by comparing His people with the animal world. Sparrows (Greek: *strouthion*), were so plentiful, they were used for food for the common people. The cost for a sparrow, a penny, (Greek: *assarion*) "was a Roman copper coin worth one-sixteenth of a Roman silver denarius, a day's wage in Jesus' day, worth about eighteen cents; so the *assarion* was worth about one cent."¹³ Jesus' point being that we are more valuable to God than birds, and that we can trust God who even cares for the lowly sparrow! "If God cares for sparrows in such a marvelous way, will He not also care for His own who are serving Him? He certainly will! To God, we are of greater value than many sparrows."¹⁴

9 Blomberg, *Matthew*.

10 Ibid.

11 C.S. Keener. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2009).

12 W.W. Wiersbe. *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1996).

13 W.H. Mare. *New Testament Background Commentary: A New Dictionary of Words, Phrases and Situations in Bible Order* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2004).

14 Wiersbe. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*.

Consider/Reflect: Have you ever met someone who chose to trust God through difficult circumstances? What impressed you about that person? Can you imagine yourself having a faith like that? Why or why not? What circumstances do you face right now that you need to entrust to God? What worries are you struggling with that you need to entrust to God? What can your church do to support you?

□ **Day #6-Saturday, May 9th. Read: Matthew 10.30-33.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

The assurance of God's care and love, as well as our inherent value to our Lord, need not be doubted! God is concerned about every detail of our lives. Jesus now uses an image that reflects God's incredible providence and compassion—even the hairs of our head are numbered! Weirby notes that Jesus' image of one's hair being counted infers:

...not "counted" in a total, but numbered individually! God sees the sparrow fall to the ground, and God sees when a hair falls from the head of one of His children. When He protects His own, He protects them down to the individual hairs (Luke 21:18). There is no need for us to fear when God is exercising such wonderful care over us.¹⁵

Jesus now turns to the issue of identification and acknowledgement. Previously, Jesus had focused on the message of the Kingdom of God and the resistance and hostility to the Kingdom message. This will involve the disciples facing persecution and suffering—Just like their teacher and master, Jesus. Jesus now gets personal; for Jesus and His followers, there exist a "double recognition."

"Acknowledge" (*homologeō*) carries the sense of *confess* or *trust in*, i.e., to declare one's allegiance to Christ. In the context of persecution (recall vv. 17–25), such acknowledgment means remaining faithful to Jesus even if one must die for him. This kind of commitment is not likely to be faked. For all who so acknowledge him, Christ will in turn acknowledge them before God... "Disown" (*arneomai*) can also mean *deny* or *reject*. The word does not necessarily imply some previous kind of profession... In close parallelism with v. 32, v. 33 maintains that God will deny or reject those people who reject Jesus and that he will exclude them from eternal life. Striking and profound Christology emerges here, as often not found in the Gospels except in John.¹⁶

One of the many blessings that come from following Jesus is faith that is deeply rooted in our heavenly Father's love for us that fear will no longer be a driver in our lives. Fear is *replaced by faith!* Imagine not fearing or worrying about what may happen, because we truly believe God is in control and will give us the grace, strength, and peace we need!

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Consider/Reflect: "Enemies of the Gospel can persecute believers only within limits set by our heavenly Father. Because He is in charge of our lives, we need not be afraid of those who oppose us because we confess Christ. At the last judgment, our Lord will recognize faithful service and acknowledge us as His followers. We are confident of His love not because of what we have done but because He died and rose to redeem us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. [Pray]: Heavenly Father, through Word and Sacrament, assure me of Your loving care and drive fear from my heart. Amen."¹⁷

15 Ibid.

16 Blomberg, *Matthew*.

17 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.