

June 25, 2017  
Matthew 10:24-39

**GOSPEL: MATTHEW 10:24-39**

*Jesus warns his disciples that their ministry in his name will meet with opposition, requiring absolute trust in God and an unswerving commitment to their Lord.*

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the twelve:] <sup>24</sup>“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; <sup>25</sup>it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul (that is Satan), how much more will they malign those of his household!

<sup>26</sup>“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. <sup>27</sup>What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. <sup>28</sup>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. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the hairs of your head are all counted. <sup>31</sup>So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup>“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; <sup>33</sup>but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. <sup>34</sup>“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; <sup>36</sup>and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. <sup>37</sup>Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup>and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

The gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

Jesus says so much in today's gospel passage. Much of it I found very challenging to comprehend upon an initial reading and even then after I read it, reread it, and read it again and again even in multiple translations did I still struggle with it. Plain and simple it's a tough passage just as so many are. Difficult words. Things we don't really want to hear about being a disciple of Christ. After many readings I came back to a sign hanging in my office that I often turn to and direct others to. It states:

*God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, nor sun without rain, but he did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears and light for the way.*

In so many ways, this is what Jesus is getting out in our passage. This is his message to those first disciples that he just sent out, gave authority to, and commissioned in our passage last week. Partners in the same mission of their teacher. This is the message Matthew is speaking to his own community some 30-40 years following Jesus' death and resurrection. A community enduring persecution by the Roman authorities for believing and claiming Jesus' teaching for their community. Teaching that upset the apple cart in so many ways.

Teaching that led to pledging allegiance solely to God and not the Emperor.

Creating a Christ-centered community that in the words of Sarah Dylan held to the belief “God was calling every person – male and female, slave and free, of every nation – led them to build a community in which women and slaves were received as human beings with agency to make their own decisions and gifts to offer the community – and they didn’t ask anyone’s husband, father, or owner permission to do so.” (Sarah Dylan, [www.sarahlaughed.net](http://www.sarahlaughed.net)) And when you build a community like this, what happens? When you challenge the patriarchal system of the day, what happens? You encounter resistance and division so much that even family and friends will turn on you. Even to the point of handing them over to local authorities to be flogged, beaten or worse. To encounter the same fate as their teacher. Because this was exactly what Matthew’s community was experiencing. Those first disciples, these in Matthew’s community, and surely all to come would undoubtedly experience pain, sorrow and dark, dreary, and rainy days but into the midst of all this Jesus does speak words of grace. Promises that would provide strength for the day, comfort for the tears, and light for the way.

That promise is to not be afraid. That God knows all they are enduring for the sake of the gospel which proclaims Christ as Savior and Lord of all. Which proclaims reconciliation and peace in the face of adversity, hostility, and hatred.

Which proclaims life is found in the weakness of the cross rather than in the power of military might and powerful regimes that rule through fear, domination, and a heavy hand that marginalizes and oppresses so many. Jesus speaks to them words of grace that God sees and cares desperately for them. Just as two sparrows sold in the local market at the time for next to nothing have great value to God; they are to find strength, comfort and light for the way in the promise that as God's faithful people their value is so very much more to their Creator. This will see them through all that will come their way. This is the message they are to proclaim to those whom are down trodden, outcast, sick, imprisoned, oppressed, bound by sin, and in the eyes of the ruling powers of the day have little to no value.

The proclamation of love for all people, even our enemies, will undoubtedly be met with resistance. The call to proclaim equality and justice for all will most certainly be met with opposition. The ministry of standing with the marginalized will not be easy. Living into the cruciform life of our Savior will bring about suffering and sorrow. But that is the mission we are called to. It's not always comfortable and easy. It's not always well received; even by those near and dear to us. It's not the way of the world. But it brings life because Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. In many ways, this passage and the call to acknowledge Jesus

Christ, be his disciple or follower, proclaim the gospel, and grow into a cruciform life reminds me of those famous words from the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Truly words of Jesus. Truly words the world continually needs to hear as division, hatred, hostility, and dark evil forces seemingly continue to take center stage.

Those words are:

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear. Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others? The time is always right to do what is right. We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.*

What are we willing to take the first step for? Love. Justice. Reconciliation.

Forgiveness. Healing. Life. To get to know our neighbor. To acknowledge Jesus is Lord and Savior of the world. Those steps may indeed lead to pain, sorrow, and rainy days but through it all the one who ultimately takes the first step for us and for the world will see us through and give us the strength, comfort and light for the way.