

Title: For My Name's Sake, pt.2  
Text: Matthew 10.16-31  
Theme: Being prepared for the cost of discipleship  
Series: Matthew #60  
Prop Stmtnt: Following Christ is gloriously serious.

Read Text:

When my dad was in his teens, he was in a boat on a lake with what he thought were some friends. They found out that he did not know how to swim, so they threw him overboard and rowed the boat back to shore, so that he would have to swim. Obviously, he did. In Matthew 10, Jesus is preparing his disciples for the time when they will be thrown into the deep end. They are about to be sent out on a short-term missions' trip. But, this short-term trip is not the goal. It is preparation for what they will be faced with after the ascension of Christ. So, while verses 5-15 help prepare them for the short-term trip that they are going to take, verses 16-42 prepare them for what life is going to be like as a follower of Christ.

Review: - Be prepared for persecution. Be prepared for betrayal. Be prepared for malignment.

I mentioned last week that how we live now will determine how well we are prepared for what is coming. So, what can we do now that will prepare us for persecution, betrayal, and malignment?

- 1) Identify the spirit of our age.
  - a. I am entitled to a pain-free and problem-free life.
  - b. The goal of life is comfort and ease. (one of the worst things that can happen to people is to have enough money that you do not have to work)
  - c. I deserve \_\_\_\_\_ (stuff, success, respect, being valued)
  - d. "There's a pill for that."
  - e. I can pay someone to do that for me.
  - f. When the going gets tough, quit.
  
- 2) Identify the idols of your heart.
  - a. I am tempted to think that I would be happy, if \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. I am tempted to quit.
  - c. I am tempted to be lazy.
  
- 3) Ask yourself tough questions.
  - a. What do I really believe?
  - b. Am I really willing to suffer for Christ?
  - c. What do I really live for?
  - d. What are the actual priorities of my life?
  - e. If I could change anything about my life, would the change make me be more like Jesus?

- f. Do I think of my true identity as a self-denying, cross-bearing, Jesus-embracing, gospel-believing disciple?
- 4) Do hard things.
- a. Practice self-denial and discipline. (10.38-39; 16.24-25)
  - b. Take the stairs, not the elevator (attitude)
  - c. Make a schedule and keep it.
  - d. Take on new challenges. (Are you the kind who runs from a challenge or runs to it?)
  - e. Make and keep commitments.
  - f. Do the difficult things first.
  - g. No accomplishment? No reward!

Arianna became captain of the girl's rugby team at her college. She inherited a team that had the philosophy that we just want everyone "to have fun." This, of course, was not how she was raised. Our attitude was, it's fun, when you win and if you don't play to win, don't play. She has been instilling a new attitude into the team which is: We have fun when we win.

- h. Muse, not amuse! (learn vs. entertainment)
- i. Learn to tell yourself, "No" (if you don't someone else will have to)
- j. Pray for and specifically serve others.
- k. (Btw – do not protect your children from tough times, from hard work, or from discipline.)

Now, I have explained on a more personal level of how we can be prepared to endure through adversity. There is much that I could address to us as a church on this as well. But, the most important thing that we can do is to constantly make certain that we are more concerned with being faithful to all of God's Word than we are with being liked.

So, Jesus tells us:

- I. Be prepared for persecution.
- II. Be prepared for betrayal.
- III. Be prepared for malignment.

But, the obvious question to all of this is, why? Why would you be willing to go through so much hardship, when it is not necessary? Why not, just change the message so that you do not have to face the disapproval of people? Why not just avoid the controversial statements that Jesus made? Why not just avoid the claims of exclusivity on the part of Christ and the gospel? Why would you intentionally believe something when you know that it is going to cost you?

- IV. **Persecution will not last but Jesus will.**

Here in the midst of these warnings about the risk that you are taking as a follower of Christ comes this reminder.

A. **Endure.** (22b)

Jesus says that “*the one who endures to the end will be saved.*”

Is Jesus talking about enduring to the end of the persecution, the end of life, the end of the age? I think it is really a combination of all three. This statement by Christ is just one of many encouragements, admonitions, even warning statements about persevering. Later in this discourse Jesus says (vs. 32-33) “*So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.*”

Paul, Peter, John (epistles and Revelation) and the author of Hebrews all say similar things and are admonishing believers against falling away. This is both a warning and an encouragement. The warning is like a road sign for a driver not to drive close to the edge of the road because of the precipice that is just beyond the shoulder of the road. But, this statement by Christ is also an encouragement. The one who endures will be saved, and that is a glorious promise. The one who endures to the end will experience the blessings of salvation for eternity! What is the ultimate blessing of salvation? It is Christ! It is being with Christ because that means that you and I are with the One who loves us, who died for us, who is committed to us, who will not and cannot fail us, who keeps us and who delights in us. Imagine this! Christ cannot wait for you to be with him a thousand times more than you long to be with him. Your longing to be with Christ is, at times, distracted by lesser things. His longing for you to be with Him, never wanes. Allow this promise of a satisfied life, filled by Christ, enveloped by grace, surrounded by not only being loved, but able to love back freely and perfectly motivate you to persevere. The glory that awaits us, the delight that is in store, the joy that is before us, is so worth our enduring now. Persecution won't last, but Jesus will. Endure.

What does it mean to endure? Endure means to be faithful to the finish line. I've talked with you before about the Boston Marathon which is considered to be the most elite and prestigious marathon in the world outside of the Olympics. This marathon has been run since 1897. Participants have to qualify in order to get in. That means that you have to run a certified marathon fast enough for your gender and age group in order to qualify to attempt to register for Boston. It is the holy grail for marathoners and therefore qualifying for Boston has been the quest of many runners. Such was the case for Dennis Raine who in 1978 was so focused on running the Grand Valley Marathon fast enough to qualify for Boston that he ignored a feeling of discomfort in his head that he experienced at Mile 10. 16 miles later after he finished the marathon, it was discovered that he had been shot and that .22 caliber bullet was lodged in his head. That's endurance!

The glory of the Boston Marathon is fleeting. The glory of Christ will only expand. Whatever trial, whatever persecution, whatever betrayal, whatever malignment we receive will fade into the distance as the glory of Christ and the love of Christ will

overshadow it all. The agony of labor pains are overruled by the ecstasy of your newborn placed into your arms. Remember this. Memorize this. Preach this to yourself and to one another. Persecution will not last, Jesus will. (repeat)

By the way, Jesus is not demanding perfection, but he is demanding perseverance. That means that when we stumble, even fall, that by His grace, we don't quit, but with humility, we press on.

### **B. Move on, if necessary. (23)**

Jesus said, *“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.”*

I pointed out last week that in this discourse to the disciples, Jesus focused on their short-term missions trip in vs. 5-15. But, beginning in v.16, he used the occasion of this short-term preaching trip to talk to them about their future and what it will be like for them as followers of Christ. I say that for several reasons, but one of the obvious ones is because Jesus talks to them about the times when they will be taken before governors, kings and courts of the Gentiles. Back in v.5 he told them that on this particular trip that they were only to go to the towns in Israel. So, it is clear that in his talk, Jesus is widening the lens and letting them know about the future.

So, what exactly does this mean? Jesus is saying that when you are persecuted in one town, you may need to move on. But don't worry, there are plenty of towns for you to visit and bring the gospel to. You will never run out of towns, even in Israel to bring the gospel to, before the Son of Man comes (which I take as his return). Again, Jesus has already set the mark and is now calling the disciples to keep the pace. Do you remember that back in chapter 8 Jesus went into the area near the Sea of Galilee known as the Gadarenes? Even though he demonstrated his power of demons there, the people pleaded with him to leave. They did not want to hear what he had to say. So, he left. Later on there will be attempts made to arrest Christ or to kill Christ and he will elude them. But, then, there comes a time when he sets his face to go to Jerusalem and he tells his disciples that when he gets there that he will be arrested and will die.

We see another example of this in the life of Paul. Shortly after he comes to Christ, there is an attempt made on his life and he escapes the city of Damascus by being let down over the city wall in a basket. Yet, later on, Paul decides to go back to Jerusalem, knowing full well that he is going to be arrested and imprisoned. His friends plead and cry over this and beg him not to go and he tells them to relax, he's going anyway. Why? Why does Paul escape from Damascus and leave Lystra because of persecution, yet knowingly walk into it in Jerusalem? Here is my conclusion on this. 1) I believe that we must be willing to suffer persecution and even death for the sake of the gospel. 2) With that willingness, we must ask the Lord to give us direction if we need to stay in the situation or move on. (Acts 20.22-23)

### **C. Do Not Fear. (26-31)**

Your adversaries are not in charge. All they have is intimidation and threats and temporal persecution. But, even their persecution won't last, but Jesus will. Suffering won't last, but Jesus will. Sicknes won't last but Jesus will. Press on! Discouragement won't last, but Jesus will. Press on! Failure won't last, but Jesus will. Press on! Brokenness won't last, but Jesus will. Press on! Sorrow won't last, but Jesus will. Press on! Trials won't last, but Jesus will. Press on! Temptation won't last, but Jesus will. Press on! Death won't last, but Jesus will. Press on! And press on, without fear. Endure without fear. We do not take these things lightly. They are real. Our hearts grieve in the midst of them, but, persecution, suffering, sickness, discouragement, failure, brokenness, sorrow, trials and temptations do not own us, control us, define us, nor determine us. Jesus does! And that is why even though we are called to go through these things, we do not live under them. We live with them, but they are, like us, under Christ.

So, Jesus says, do not fear because...

### 1. **The truth will come out.** (26)

When you align yourself with Christ, you can expect your words to be twisted and your intentions to be distorted. Your reputation and honor will be questioned and you will be accused of things that are not true. This happened to Christ (vs. 24-25) and we should expect that it will happen to us. But, even in this, we do not need to fear because the day will come when the truth will come out. That day may not come during in our life or in man's courts. But that day will come in God's court. The truth about how you are treated will come out. Your accusers, your persecutors will not get away.

Nigeria's Islamist group Boko Haram is causing havoc in that country. The kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls and another report of kidnapping an additional 91 children this past week, is grievous. No one seems willing or able to bring these men to justice. Do not allow the temporary injustices of this world be the occasion for bitterness and venom in your soul. Do not fear. The truth will come out.

### 2. **Speak boldly.** (27)

Whatever I have told you privately, you are to proclaim publicly. Do not be afraid to speak the truth. Speak the truth with compassion. Speak the truth with clarity. But speak the truth. Will it cause a problem? Will it get you into trouble? Probably. Again, remember that Jesus was not executed because he healed the sick and fed the hungry. He was executed because he spoke truth. He did not ask you to pick up your membership card to a relief organization. He called you to take up your cross. But know this...

### 3. **Your soul is more important than your body.** (28)

The person who can only kill your body has no ultimate power over you. Jesus is saying, do not fear the guy who can only kill your body. Your body is going to die anyway. Think of it. Let's say that you have an incurable disease and you are told that you going

to die a rather uncomfortable death when someone threatens to kill you, unless you renounce your faith in Christ. What do you say? You say, "Do me a favor and pull the trigger!" right? You need to fear the one (God) who has ultimate power over you and that is God. God and God alone, has the authority to destroy both soul and body in hell. The body, they may kill, God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever. Your soul, the gospel, the truth is more important than your body. You are going to get a new body, but you cannot get a new soul.

It is as if Jesus is making a little play on words. Do not fear the one who only has the ability to kill your body. The one you need to fear is God, but do you really need to fear him, in the sense that you need to be afraid that he is going to destroy you? NO! Because-

#### 4. **You are known by God.** (29-30)

Two sparrows do not cost much. But, just because they are worth about a penny, does not mean that they are not important. Sparrows may not be important to us, but God knows every one of them and you are worth infinitely more than a sparrow. He knows. He knows your fears. He knows your circumstances. He knows your weaknesses. He knows your insecurities. He knows your vulnerabilities. He knows. He knows your name. He knows your threats. He knows your enemies. He knows your needs. He knows your desires. He knows your heart. He knows. You are known by the One who knows you better than you know yourself. You are known by the One who knows what will thrill you and satisfy you and overwhelm you with joy and is going to do that for you. You are known by the One who knows all things and governs all things. You are known by the One who is going to make all things right. Do not fear.

#### 5. **You are loved by God.** (31)

There is no greater promise and no greater honor. You are loved by God and he loves you as much as he loves his Son. Do not fear.