

“Embracing Jesus’ Call to Discipleship”

Matthew 10:32-42

Sermon Theme:

“To embrace the cost of discipleship means to embrace dying to oneself”

Read Text: Mt. 10:32-42

Introduction Story: (From: New York Post)

On June 19 of this year, President Obama awarded retired Marine Corporal William “Kyle” Carpenter with the Medal of Honor. Twenty four year old Carpenter was on a roof guarding a patrol base in a small Afghanistan village on Nov. 21, 2010 when insurgents lobbed three grenades from across the street. One grenade injured an Afghan Army soldier, another grenade did not detonate, but the third landed right between Carpenter and good friend Lance Corporal Nicholas Eufrazio. Carpenter, who had only been in Afghanistan for five months, moved himself between the grenade and his fellow Marine in an act of selfless heroism. Carpenter sustained the brunt of the grenade blast, while Eufrazio sustained a head injury from just one piece of shrapnel. Carpenter’s injuries included: A depressed skull, collapsed right lung, multiple facial fractures, loss of a third of his lower jaw and fragment injuries to his arms and legs. On top of all of this, Carpenter needed brain surgery directly following the blast, and also lost his right eye. If this wasn’t bad enough, Carpenter actually flat lined twice. As he was being evacuated from the battle, he was considered dead on arrival at a field hospital. Later, while recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Carpenter nearly lost his life again. Thus far, in the span of two and a half years, Carpenter has endured more than 40 surgeries all over his body and as a result was medically retired from the Marine Corp. Carpenter is the eighth living veteran of U.S. combat in Iraq and Afghanistan to receive the Medal of Honor, the highest recognition of bravery.

Why do stories such as Carpenter’s have such a great effect on us? For one, I think we are impacted by the brutality of it all. The extent of his injuries, and long road to recovery, are all shocking realities of war. However, I believe the *primary reason* why stories such as Carpenter’s affect us so much is that we are amazed at the level of self-sacrifice that these brave men and women demonstrate in life and death situations. What would compel a soldier to throw himself on a live grenade so that his partner might have a chance to make it out alive? I think there is at least one thing that happened in that perhaps *I second* that Carpenter had to decide whether or not to jump on that grenade: **He chose to die to self.** He determined that his life was not more

valuable than his partner's. He determined that his life was not more valuable than the cause that he was fighting for. How do we know this? If he was worried about self-preservation, he would have jumped opposite of the grenade. But he didn't! Imagine what would have happened if he hadn't of jumped on the grenade? It's very possible that both he and his partner would both be dead now. This marine *counted the cost* of his mission, and *embraced the cost* to its fullest extent in offering his life. As we finish this section in Matthew's gospel on the C.O.D., we are going to be confronted (as we have been in pervious sermons) with a decision: Am I going to value my comfort, desires and safety more than I value my obedience to my Savior? Or, am I this day going to resolve in my heart and my mind to follow Jesus, no matter what, embracing the cost of discipleship?

For the *true Christian*, there is only one option...

This morning, in Mt. 10:32-42, we will see four characteristics of those who are obedient in embracing Jesus' call to cross-bearing discipleship:

Those who embrace the cost of discipleship will...

I. Acknowledge Jesus publicly. (vv. 32-33)

As we have seen from the immediate context, we have no reason to fear as we share the gospel in a hostile world. Jesus says "So"...(32) in light of the fact that we have nothing to fear, *acknowledge me before men!* This is a call to preach the gospel publicly. To acknowledge Jesus means to profess, or proclaim him to a lost and dying world unashamedly. Jesus originally speaks these words to the 12 Apostles he is sending out, but by using the word 'everyone', he gives a broad application for all believers everywhere to profess him. **Also, we must not miss in these verses the eternal implications of our evangelism:** When we think of evangelism we often think and speak in terms of the salvation of those who don't know Christ. This is biblical, this is right, and this is true. We have been commissioned to take the gospel to lost sinners. However, have you ever considered the fact that the extent to which you share/don't share your faith speaks to your own standing before the Lord? This is a sobering text! If Christ's followers are called upon to confirm our faith and allegiance to Jesus publicly, in the face of persecution, and yet deny/disown him, he will in turn deny/disown us before his Father in heaven. However, if we acknowledge him before men, he will acknowledge us before his Father in heaven. Notice that the acknowledgment/denial occurs *in heaven*. Jesus is looking forward to the great Day of

Judgment, and those who are unwilling to share the gospel during their lives on earth will not be recognized by Christ. *Let me be clear here*, we should see this as a *habitual* pattern of refusing to proclaim Christ over the course of life, not one isolated incident; even Peter denied Christ 3 times and was restored.

The question becomes this: Is Jesus only speaking of those who are called to preach in the face of persecution, or does this text apply to Christians who live somewhat comfortable lives, yet are still negligent in their duties to share the gospel? I believe the sobering reality of this text is this: That if someone professes to be a follower of Christ *yet never shares the gospel publicly*, their actions are not compatible with their profession, and this calls into question that profession. Carson says: “*There is no Christian whom Jesus does not require to be a witness. In other words, it is impossible to forge an absolute disjunction between being a Christian and Christian witness. One cannot be the former without engaging in the latter.*” These are tough words from Carson, but I believe he is being faithful to the meaning of this text: To be a professing Christian who consistently refuses to share the gospel publicly, is to call into question your own standing before the Lord.

Please clear your heads for a moment: If you are here today and are a professing Christian, I want you to recall right now in your head the name of the last person you shared the gospel with. Many of you thought of a name, some of you didn’t. Some of you may be thinking ‘I’ve never shared my faith!’ or ‘I need to share more!’ Whether you’ve been a Christian for 2 months, 5 years, or 30 years, if you are neglecting to share the saving message of the gospel with the lost people you encounter, you are not only being *disobedient* in this area, you are living in *sin* in this area of your life. When we say we are a Christian, yet we never share the gospel we are saying that our *identity* is in Christ (we are redeemed, part of God’s family) yet we are unwilling and or afraid to *identify* with Christ publicly. This is a contradiction! **Jesus doesn’t identify with those who don’t identify with him.**

Brothers and sisters, I understand that these are tough words to hear this morning. I understand that sharing the gospel can be nerve-racking and difficult. If you are afraid to share the gospel this morning, I simply point you to Bob’s sermon last week. In the text Bob preached, Jesus said that he will give us the words to say (19) and we have no reason to fear! So, this means that we can make *no excuses* to not share our faith with others. But what this also means is that we can have *bold confidence* in sharing because He is with us! What’s left for us now is to do it! Be thinking even now of people you can go share the gospel with this week.

II. Value no earthly relationship over Jesus. (vv. 34-37)

Jesus begins this section by clarifying the disciple's thinking of why he came. (34) At first glance, some may think Jesus is contradicting Scripture here, after all, isn't Jesus the very definition of peace! Isaiah 9:6 tells us that the coming messiah (Jesus!) would be called the 'Prince of Peace'. What's going on here? What's going on here is Jesus is telling his disciples that their message is the most controversial message in history, because He is the Son of God, calling sinners to repentance. **Jesus is all about peace, just not the kind of peace the world holds dear.** Let me give you an example:

Let's consider Jesus' brand of peace:

Read: Colossians 1:19-20 – 'making *peace* by the blood of his cross' – How's this for a paradoxical statement? Our savior Jesus achieved peace with God on our behalf through the greatest conflict that ever occurred, that included being rejected by his own people, mocked and scorned, beaten, tortured, murdered, enduring his Father's wrath for our sin, disarming the principalities and powers of the air, Satan, demonic forces, the power of sin and death, **and yet we are afraid to speak the gospel in a few sentences to our co-workers and family members? Something that takes (in all honesty) little effort and little of our time, but that is of the most eternal significance?**

How dare we make an idol of our temporary 'peace' while neglecting to share the only message that can bring sinners *true, eternal peace with God?*

When Jesus says that he brings a *sword*, he means that the truth of his gospel will cause division between himself and the world, and his followers and the world. What does a sharp sword do? It cuts things up. It divides them. If we are faithful to embrace the cost of discipleship, we need to get over our idol worship of peace, comfort and safety. As you stand for Jesus in the public arena, as you share the gospel more and more, you'll notice that more walls will come up, more lines will be drawn. And it becomes really clear really fast who truly stands for Jesus Christ, and who doesn't.

An area of life this becomes very evident for believers, is in their family relationships. Many of you, when you came to Christ, were treated unfairly, even ridiculed by your family. I think of one family in our church right now who consistently submit prayer requests to the staff detailing the ways their family slanders and criticizes them for their faith in Christ. I am encouraged every time I pray for this family because the fact that they are so ridiculed means they are standing out for Christ! They aren't afraid of the temporary divisions that may come as a result of faithfulness to their lord.

What does Jesus mean when he says he's come to 'set a man against his father'? Doesn't God value marriages and families? Of course he does! Jesus isn't saying anything negative in regards to families, he's simply stating that those who die to themselves, and

embrace the cost of discipleship, will sometimes be at odds with their family members who do not believe. There's something I often point out to our college folks here at Cornerstone who are believers. When we gather together to worship in the college room, everyone in that room is closer with each other than we are with some of our blood family members. Why is this? Because we are united in Christ! We have the truth in common. We are with our eternal family! This should encourage us.

III: In the same breath, I am concerned for some of the families in our church. I have interacted with some of you who value your earthly family more than your spiritual family. **Some of you parents are more concerned with where your high school/college age young adult will go to school, or where they will work, or who they will marry than about whether or not they are embracing the cost of discipleship.** I've interacted with some of you who even encourage your children *away* from serving in the ministry of the church for worldly reasons. If this is you today, embracing the cost of discipleship means for you standing up and parenting your children! Not coddling them like our culture does. Is Christ going to ask them where they worked or went to school on the Day of Judgment? Or is he going to ask them, did you preach my name? Did you embrace my cost of discipleship? Brothers and sisters, if we as Christian parents aren't willing to faithfully raise our children to love and serve Jesus, (by God's grace) we will never be able to reach an outside world that is hostile to the gospel. **Our families aren't more important than Jesus. Do you understand this this morning?**

The family division that can arise from standing for Christ can look different depending on the specific family context. We've heard Bob recite extreme examples of a soldier witnessing and affirming the murder of his own mother and brother. However, just because every case won't necessarily be this extreme doesn't mean we aren't commanded to stand our ground for Christ.

Don't be afraid to stand for Christ! It's worth it! Examine your priorities this morning. Is your primary concern in life the comfort of your family, or the glory of Jesus? Parents, are you teaching your children to treasure Christ or to treasure mom and dad? Are you teaching them the cost of discipleship and that this is the path children are called to?

III. Accept Jesus' call to die to self. (vv. 38-39)

What's so interesting about Jesus' words here is the fact that at this point in his ministry he hasn't disclosed to his disciples how he would die. Nevertheless, they were all too familiar with the Roman instrument of death, the cross beam. This is an *all-encompassing call*. Notice: Jesus didn't say whoever does not take his mocking, spitting, beating, etc. he said whoever's not willing to *die for me isn't worthy of me*. We know most Christians

won't die for their profession; Jesus mentions the cross to make the point that we must be willing to die to self, enduring everything that comes our way for his sake. Like William Carpenter did for his country, we are called to count the cost fully commit to Jesus. "Whoever finds his life will lose it..." – To "find" our live is to value the temporal over the eternal. This is the contrast that keeps arising from this text. To be so preoccupied with preserving our physical lives and being comfortable at the expense of sacrificing for Christ. Our culture is all about preserving life:

This is the sort of thinking that this text smashes to the ground because this is what makes Christian Discipleship so radical: The fact that we *gain* the most (eternal life) only when we are willing to sacrifice the most. So for us, carrying our cross may mean we have to suffer in this life, but we gain the reward of Jesus forever! We may not be called to die for our faith, but Jesus' point is you better be ready and willing to regardless. Die to comfort, die to the temporal, and gain Christ! Ask yourself this morning: 'what areas of my life have I been making all about me?' Do I consider the needs of others more important than my own? Am I a generous person? Do I talk about myself constantly? Do I take everything personally? Am I the center of my universe, or is Christ?

IV. Share in the reward of the gospel. (vv. 40-42)

As we approach these final verses on Jesus' discourse on the cost of discipleship, we are presented with a glorious truth: That is, even though we may be rejected, beaten, or even killed for the sake of the gospel, the message will nevertheless *be received*. People will be saved by God, through our witness! Notice that whoever receives us, receives Christ, and whoever receives Christ receives the Father. Jesus himself said "No one comes to the Father but through me". Because we are Christ's ambassadors, we speak for our Savior to a lost and dying world. And to say that sinners accept us is to say they are accepting the *message that we proclaim and identify with - the gospel*. As you know, we can't save anyone in our own strength, but we point them to Jesus, through whom they have reconciliation with the Father. To receive a prophet, means the sinner receives someone who takes God's Word to them to receive a righteous person means they accept the gospel's implications for how they live their lives. In other words, *they believe the whole gospel*. Not just the facts, but the need for repentance, faith, holiness, and righteousness. After emphasizing those who receive the gospel, Jesus moves to those who receive the gospel and who also *contribute to the mission*. "Little ones" (42) are disciples, lowly, insignificant people by the world's standards. However, if one even provides a basic drink of water to a disciple to help the furtherance of the gospel, he will be rewarded. In

this context, I believe the reward is both the gospel and affirmation by Christ in the end that they partook of his mission.

What does this mean for us? It means that even though we will be persecuted, the gospel will not only be received by people, but some of those people will actually assist us in the spreading of the Word!

As you are faithful to acknowledge Jesus publicly and unashamedly, God will bless that faithfulness, and bring needy sinners to salvation through the regenerating power of His Spirit. Brothers and sisters, if you ever feel discouraged that your sharing of the gospel may not be having an effect, let this text be an encouragement to you! We don't endure persecution for nothing God is working through us to bring many sons to glory. This is a promise, a guarantee. Brothers and sisters, if the very gates of Hell cannot prevail against Christ and His Church, then what bother do you think our obstacles to sharing the gospel are to Jesus? Nothing will stop His Gospel!