

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

November 10, 2024

I. Introduction

A. **Matthew 10:24–31**, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. [25] It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household! [26] Therefore do not **fear** them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. [27] What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. [28] Do not **fear** those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather **fear** Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. [29] Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. [30] But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. [31] So do not **fear**; you are more valuable than many sparrows.”

B. Pray

II. The disciples and examples of life in ministry

A. [24] A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. [25a] It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master.

1. The essence of this message is that we should expect the same kind of treatment and response that Jesus received from the religious community, unbelievers, His family, and His disciples.
 - a. In other words, we should expect that some will reject our message, try to embarrass or discredit us, and ridicule our godly life-style.
 - b. Some will seek to silence us by means of persecution, threats toward our family, imprisonment, torture, or death.
 - c. And some will respond with faith, repentance, the denial of self, spiritual growth, and godly living.
 - d. Jesus said it this way in **John 15:20**, “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours (*what you present from God’s word*) also.”
2. Why should we expect the same kind of response and treatment as Jesus? Because we are representing Him and His teaching – which challenges our natural inclinations toward self-rule, self-centeredness,

- the use of power to make others do what we want or take from them what we want, and the pursuit of happiness through the gratification of our longings, passions, ungodly inclinations, and foolish whims.
- a. In other words, as His representatives who are passing on His teaching and way of life, and who are living accordingly ourselves, we will not gain more respect, or a broader base of influence, or greater fame and approval, or a larger degree of acceptance from any part of society than He was able to do.
 - b. Therefore, if we outdo Him in any of these areas (*respect, influence, fame, approval, acceptance*), it most likely means we have stopped representing Him, and we have forsaken His teachings and way of life for an altered, watered down, and – in some ways – contrary version of His gospel.
3. However, Jesus did say, “It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master.” In other words, though we will never outdo Him, it is possible we will do as well, and that would be good.
 4. So how does this apply to us today. I want to present two ways.
 - a. **First**, we should never be glad or uncaring about the eternal loss that unbelievers face. Nor should we be too fearful to speak up when we have an opportunity to invite unbelievers to repentance and faith, **or** to urge believers to greater godliness. But neither should we be discouraged if very few listen and fewer still respond as hoped.
 - b. **Second**, we ought to be wary of Christian leaders who are able to amass large followings, are treated as celebrities within the larger Christian community, are popular with politicians and business people, and whose success is praised as proof that God is using them for His good.
 5. Finally, in His parable of the four soils, Jesus speaks about sowing the gospel on four kinds of soil (*people*) – (1) the hard, road-side soil, (2) the rocky soil, (3) the thorny soil, and (4) the good soil. One of the points of the parable is that of those we evangelize and seek to influence with the truths of God’s word, only a few will respond as we hope they will. Therefore, in spite of the challenges and lack of hoped for response, let us persevere in speaking and inviting, for God’s sake and for the sake of those who will listen.
- B. [25b] If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household! [26] Therefore **do not**

fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. [27] What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

1. If people will verbally attack, falsely accuse, and say insulting and derogatory things about God, Jesus, and the Scriptures, they will do the same to you – should your Christian beliefs and life-style become a threat to their way of life and sense of well-being.
 - a. The reality is, evil, selfish, self-ruled people love the darkness, because it is the darkness that approves of and allows them to do evil.
 - b. As Jesus said, everyone who does evil **hates** the Light, and does not come to the Light **for fear** that their deeds will be exposed (**John 3:19-20**).
2. However, in spite of the expected negative response from unbelievers, Jesus exhorts us **not to fear them**.
 - a. So what is it we are not supposed to fear? Their words – their derogatory, slanderous, lying words which they publicly proclaim in an effort to silence us and turn others against us.
 - b. However, though we are maligned and slandered for identifying as a Christian, or for exposing and opposing evil by speaking the truth of God and God’s word, and though the lies being told about us may severely damage our reputation, God will make sure that the truth about who is righteous and who is unrighteous will ultimately be made known – if not in this life, then in the next.
 - c. In other words, God will not allow our reputation to be eternally ruined, therefore there is no reason to fear their reputation-ruining words, for truth will prevail, evil will be exposed, and the wrongs will be made right, even though such corrections may take years.
3. Therefore, whenever and wherever possible, proclaim the gospel of salvation, the truth of God’s word, the wisdom of godliness, the love of God, the word of reconciliation, and whatever else unbelievers, and immature Christians, and wayward Christians need to hear.
 - a. Of course, we are to speak in a respectful or even tender manner. And we are to speak with reason and clarity – so that the message makes sense and can be understood by anyone who will listen.
 - b. God’s word affirms this in **Colossians 4:5-6**, “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. [6] Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”

- C. [28] **Do not fear** those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but **rather fear Him who is able** to destroy both soul and body in hell.
1. Once again, Jesus says “**Do not fear**,” but this time it goes beyond cruel, derogatory words to **not fearing** cruel treatment and even death for being a Christian and speaking about God and the Christian life.
 - a. There are places and times when speaking the truth, even in loving, respectful ways, can result in prison, torture, and death – inflicted by those who do not want the truth spoken.
 - b. Given our humanity, this kind of abuse and suffering becomes a far more effective deterrent than verbal abuse – for no one wants to suffer physical pain, including a painful death.
 2. Therefore, I suspect this is why Jesus said “**Do not fear** those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul.”
 - a. Notice, Jesus draws a comparison between the killing of the body and the killing of the soul – as if one is worse than the other.
 - b. Why? Because physical death, though it is a serious loss and can be excruciatingly painful, is momentary and therefore insignificant **in comparison** to the death of the soul, which is an eternal loss and eternally painful.
 - c. Though I have not experienced this kind of physical pain or loss, Jesus did. He knows what He is talking about, for He endured agonizing pain and a violent death at the hands of the religious leaders – simply for preaching the gospel of the kingdom and doing good.
 3. Jesus continued on to say “but **rather fear Him who is able** to destroy both soul and body in hell.” It is my opinion that Jesus added this statement because He knows the motivating power of fear.
 - a. As I have said before, fear, and that includes irrational fear, is one of the most common and powerful motivating forces in our world. When it is irrational fear, it is always self-destructive.
 - b. An example of the destructiveness of an irrational fear is fearing the loss of your physical life and a painful death more than fearing the loss of your soul and an eternity apart from God – which is the worst kind of suffering.
 - c. But what is also irrational is that though most of us are highly susceptible to the motivating power of fear, most of us are only marginally motivated by what is truly valuable. For example, many choose selfishness over love, enmity with God over a reconciled relationship with God, and the pleasures of this life over the pleasure of an intimate relationship with God for eternity.

4. Therefore, in His statement about **who to fear**, Jesus gives us a comparison of two values: (1) the value of your life in this world, and (2) the value of your life in eternity. What you value the most now, in relation to how you live here and where you spend eternity, is vital, because what you value the most now, you will continue to value when what you value is severely threatened.
 - a. For example, when those around you turn against you simply because you bear the label “Christian,” or because you love God and righteousness enough to make a stand for what is just and loving, and for speaking the truth where truth has been abandoned – then in that day you will make a choice – the choice between God, His righteousness, and the good of others (*on the one hand*), or self-protection and freedom from present suffering (*on the other*).
 - b. However, either way there will be a cost, and that cost will come in the form of suffering. You will either suffer forms of isolation, persecution, pain, and an untimely death in this life, or you will suffer the pain of separation from God and all that is good in the next life.
 - c. Therefore, if fear is the motivating force for making your decision, I urge you to give serious thought to Jesus’ words, “**Do not fear** those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but **rather fear Him who is able** to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
 - d. In other words, if you are going to suffer, suffer for what is truly valuable, that is, for what is eternal rather than what is temporary, for once the temporary is over, it is gone forever.
5. One final thought before moving on, back in **Matthew 10:17-18** Jesus said, “Beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, **as a testimony** to them and to the Gentiles.”
 - a. The point Jesus is making is that though you will be the one suffering, it has a godly, eternal purpose. It’s purpose is to bring to those who may otherwise never meet a Christian and see the Christian life in action – an example of why faith in God matters and what godly living looks like.
 - b. The reality is, you may be the only testimony some people will get. And though that means suffering for you, it holds great value for God – who doesn’t want anyone to perish in hell for eternity. And it holds value for the lost, who, because of your testimony, may repent, come to faith in Jesus Christ, and go on to live a godly life.

D. [29] Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. [30] But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. [31] So **do not fear**; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

1. This is Jesus' third "**Do not fear**." And the reason this time is to encourage us rather than warn us.
 - a. Therefore, if God is aware and feels the pain of a sparrow's suffering and death, and if He has numbered the hairs on your head, then you can be certain He is aware and feels the pain of your suffering or death as a result of remaining faithful to Him.
 - b. And why can you be certain of this? Because you are way more valuable to God than sparrows or the hairs on your head.
 - c. The encouraging truth is – no one harms us without God's awareness of what is happening to us and who is doing it. And no one can do evil to us (*or anyone else*) without receiving the due consequences of their evil deeds.
 - d. This is one reason why **Romans 12:19** says, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."
2. Therefore, do not fear, for though evil people can mistreat you, take away your freedom, make you suffer loss and pain, and even kill you, in those moments you are just as safe in God's hands as when you are enjoying a healthy, pain-free, blessed life.

III. Conclusion

- A. Without question, fear motivates. Sadly, we too often allow irrational fears, unnecessary fears, emotionally and relationship unhealthy fears, and any other self-destructive fears to drive us to foolish choices and behavior. Learn to discern these kinds of fears so you can run from them and replace them with godly, God-trusting choices and behavior.
- B. However, there is a fear that is rational and well worth using to motivate yourself in the right direction, and that is the fear of God – who not only can end your life whenever He wills, but can send you to hell for eternity.