

Mark 6 7-13b

We begin where we left off last week. Christ is preparing his disciples for their preaching trip. Remember that we are looking at Matthew 10. It is a parallel text to our Mark text. And it gives us a lot more detail. We are picking back up at verse 17.

Christ is continuing his discussion about what the disciples can very likely expect. Now what He is saying broadens out. Christ begins talking about their ministries during their lifetimes, not just this single preaching trip.

17 But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. 18 You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Christ is warning them up front that the kingdom of God that is present will not stop evil men from doing evil things. It is not going to work the way you might think it would. During the disciples' ministry, wicked men will remain in power and spiritual leaders will remain heretical.

This is what will happen when you preach the gospel. It can't be avoided, no matter what you try, if you are representing Christ.

People are going to take you to their spiritual leaders and the leaders will try to punish the truth out of you. They will hate you and persecute you for doing what Christ says. And Christ is not going to immediately stop them. They needed to know that. And so do we.

Christ goes on. He tells them more.

And not only will the spiritual **Jewish leadership** be corrupt, you will also be drug in front of the **world's courts**. And they will do the same thing to you.

But Christ lets his disciples in on something here. He is doing this because it allows a testimony of Christ into places that would not ordinarily receive it. That may be **for the salvation of some**. It might be **for the damnation of others**. But that is what will happen. So when it happens, realize this is a spiritual appointment set by God. And realize that God will bring **His resources to bay to handle it**. In this particular setting a believer does not have to concern himself with what he is going to say. The Holy Spirit will provide the speech.

There are some who use this verse to say that a preacher does not need to study. He just needs to show up. It is a terrible misuse of this text, but loved by lazy preachers everywhere. I think this text is very much **an exception to the rule** of how we must prepare ourselves to speak for God. And a studier of the bible is called a "workman", implyingwork.

Ok, so that is how outside authorities are going to deal with the truth being preached. But how about our families, the place we expect to be safe?

21 Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.

Well, there is no safety at home either. This **kingdom of God** offers us no immediate protection from the harm that the world can do to us. Wherever there are people, there will be people who hate us as we declare the Gospel. And why are we hated? Is it because we are so obnoxious? No, that should not be the case. If we follow Christ's example, we will remove the offense that comes from our own selfishness. No. We are hated by "Christ's Name Sake". Essentially, we will be hated for representing Christ well. They are simply hating Him through us.

But he who endures to the end will be saved. 23 When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

This has always been part of the Christian message. Christians are overcomers. They keep on keeping on. And making it to the end is what is important, whenever and however that end arrives. Those who are truly Christ's children will persevere. They might not do it in a pretty fashion. But they will make it to the end, even under very great distress.

As Christ continues it becomes clear that Christ is talking about the future. And He is describing exactly what will happen. This is exactly what happened in Acts and is still happening today. Believers in Iraq have had this exact choice. It is in this passage that we learn that it is normally ok for a Christian to flee persecution. That is an available option. We cannot fight back if we are being singled out for loving Christ. But we can leave.

As for the last line, **you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes**, it seems to me that Christ is talking about returning to their meeting place before the disciples have gotten to visit every city. That is the only interpretation that makes sense to me and that could still be true.

Now Christ goes on.

He is telling us about the cost of representing Christ.

24 A disciple is not above *his* teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *will they call* those of his household! 26 Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

Remember that the disciples probably did not have a servant view of leadership. Nor did they envision that a person's inclusion into the kingdom of God would be

optional. They had visions of the kingdom being one of force. So everything Jesus is saying would come very hard to them.

Now Christ is telling them, you are going to be treated about like I am. Don't get the idea that you will be royalty. Don't think that you will walk into these places as the bigshot and the head honcho. Nope. It will be like I am, Christ is saying. And how do they treat me? They call me the devil in very demeaning terms. So if they treat **Me** like this, you better get the point. They will surely do the same to you.

We too need to keep this in our minds. In our country we have been protected from much persecution. But that cannot last forever. The regard for Christians, as a whole, is being steadily eroded in our culture. So we will find that we will receive more and more treatment that resembles the kind of treatment that Christ received.

But look how we are to respond in the midst of that treatment. They treat us horribly. They accuse us of motives and actions that resemble nothing of the truth. The **issue at hand** in our country right now is a very good example. Christians are being called haters of homosexuals. And while there certainly may be some Christians who actually do hate homosexuals, that does not **describe most Christians**. This is simply an issue where God defines some activity as being wrong and many believers line up behind what they are convinced that God has said. There may be **no hatred at all** for the people committing that particular sin. But since we stand against a lifestyle that is so loved by so many, we must be motivated by hatred, the world around us concludes.

So, how are we to respond? This is as applicable to us today as it ever was. Christ said, **Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.**

Might the parties that accuse us wrongly gain power to harm us? Yes. Might it cost us dearly? Yes. Might it resemble sheep thrown into a wolf pack?

Absolutely. OK then, we **ought to be afraid**. No. Why?

The play isn't over. This world is not the end. A God will stand in judgment one day and right all the wrongs and punish all the rebels who hate Him.

God knows what is going on. Just because He doesn't do anything **yet** does not mean that He will **never** do something. We just need to wait patiently upon Him.

We talked about the rest of this text when we were talking about the difference between **Jesus speaking in parables** and how **we** are supposed to speak.

27 "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

This was spoken to the disciples before they went on their first preaching circuit. He was telling them, fly your banner high. Don't back down. Don't be intimidated. Even though you **KNOW** how it will be received by some. You **KNOW** it is going to get you into trouble. Don't stop. And don't worry about those who can do you temporary harm. Consider only He who determines your eternal destiny.

What a pep talk to ministers. Look at how Jesus does not mince words. He does no sweet talking. He tells no lies. He is laying out the cost. Wally Weeks often uses a quote from Paul Washer that I like. He says that The message you save people **with** is what you save them **to**. When we call people to Christ, we must call them to the Gospel. It may **cost** everything, but it is **worth** everything. People must understand that you cannot add Christ to your life. If you understand the message properly, Christ **IS** your life. Your life revolves around Christ. And to die for Him is an excellent use of your life.

That is the essence that Christ was passing on to these 12 men.

Now Christ could have left it at that and said, just do it. But He didn't. He gave them more to think about. He gave them some comforting truths.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

When I lived at home in Elysburg, I worked for my dad. My dad had a furniture and appliance store. Now sometimes we would run wire and pipes to hook up customer's washing machines and dryers. And sometimes those wires would need to be run in crawl spaces under people's houses. That was often awful work. And if my brother or I were available, it was always us who would get those jobs.

Why? Because we represented our father's interests more than any of the other employees. But we could have thought about this differently. We could have thought that dad picks us for the ugly jobs because he cares about **us least**. But that wasn't true. He actually cared about us **most**. And that is what made us fit to send. Our father was more committed to us and we were more committed to Him. That is what made us well suited to take on the worst jobs.

Jesus is dealing with the disciples to convey the same sort of thing.

The disciples may have thought, Christ is sending us out to face these wolves because we don't matter. He is sending us out like chess pieces He is willing to lose because they don't really matter. We really aren't valuable to Him.

So the disciples may have overcome their fear of what would happen to them, but that led to another fear. The fear that they were not special to God. The fear that they held no value to God. The fear that they were **just expendable**.

And Christ overcomes the fear. He tells them that Christ cares about the valueless sparrows. And even their deaths are overseen and determined by God's will. But your value exceeds theirs a million fold. So don't fear that you are not valued by your Father. You may come to an end much like theirs, but it will never be meaningless or valueless. Christ always has you in His will and He values you. This is a true statement that we do well to think about. It is the kind of truth that we know in our heads. But our hearts are often not convinced. It is easy for us to respond to God in a way that would portray that we really don't believe that God loves us. And those feelings and thoughts drive us to do things that don't make sense. Like rebellion, or disobedience, or apathy. When we trace it back, often what we really don't believe is that God loves us just as we are. And He does. He says He does if you are His child.

32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Christ is laying out before these departing disciples an important distinction between those He sends **who will pay a great price**, and those who are not willing to pay such a price.

He is essentially saying that if you go out and do the job I have told you to do, and don't back down. If you stick with the message, even when it costs you dearly, you can rest assured that **I will be doing the same for you** in front of the Father. I will make sure you are safe and rewarded, just as you were true to me when presenting my message. If you will represent Me, trust me that I will represent you.

But there is another alternative. There will be those who will not confess me. The people who will try to kill you will not be confessing me. Neither will those who I send but who cave in to their fears. There will be some who prove themselves to have no faith. And just as they would not represent me, I will not represent them. At this point I would like to read you a story that John MacArthur tells.

In his book *I Love Idi Amin* ([Westwood, NJ.: Revell, 1977], p.112) Festo Kivengere, a leading evangelical minister in Uganda, tells the history of persecution and martyrdom of Christians in that country. In 1885 three Christian boys, ranging in age from eleven to fifteen, were forced to give their lives for Christ because they would not renounce their faith in Him. The king was adamantly opposed to Christianity and ordered the boys' execution if they did not recant. At the place of execution the boys asked that the following message be given to the king: "Tell his majesty that he has put our bodies in the fire but we won't be long in the fire. Soon we will be with Jesus, which is much better. But ask

him to repent and change his mind or he will land in a place of eternal fire." As they stood bound and awaiting death they sang a song that soon became greatly loved by Christians in that country as "The Martyrs' Song." One verse testifies, O that I had wings like the angels, I would fly away and be with Jesus.

The youngest of the boys, named Yusufu, said, "Please don't cut off my arms. I will not struggle in the fire that takes me to Jesus." Because of the boys' testimony that day, forty adults trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation, and indirectly countless more converts were won to the Lord over a period of many years. By 1887 a large number of other Christians were martyred, many of them inspired by the fearless, loving testimony of those three boys. None of those martyrs knew much theology or much about the Bible, because most of them were illiterate and all of them were relatively new believers. But they had a deep love for Jesus that they refused to hide, no matter what the cost. As is nearly always the case, those who died were replaced several-fold by new converts who came to Christ because of their testimony.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 8-15.

That is just one example of what we may be called to. And it is what love for Christ looks like in the face of persecution. Christ will not deny these boys before His Father.

Then Matthew goes on.

34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to '*set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law*'; 36 and '*a man's enemies will be those of his own household*.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Evidently this is something that the disciples must have been tempted to think. And it would not be surprising. After all, didn't they expect to have the Messiah pull the Israel nation together as one? Wasn't the Messiah coming to improve community life in Israel? Wasn't it all about making things better?

Well..... no. He was coming to rescue lost sinners for an eternal kingdom where peace would reign forever.

So if they were thinking otherwise, they needed to stop that thinking right now. Did they? Probably not. They probably carried some of these assumptions with them until Christ was crucified. At that point they had lots of reasons to rethink **all** of their assumptions.

Think about how you would have felt if you were the disciples. Christ is telling you what you have to look forward to. Part of your ministry will be leaders of all kinds trying to shut you up and kill you.

Now part of your ministry results will be to split families into open hostility against each other.

And even more than that. If you are not willing to pay that cost as a family member, you will not enter the kingdom of God. And it will fall to the disciples to tell people that. The potential followers will talk about the cost just being too great and the disciples will have to say, "It is what it is". Christ is worth the cost.

Follow Christ or don't follow Christ. It is your decision.

The disciples were probably cringing when they thought about the implications. But Christ doesn't stop there. He goes on from talking about Christ costing you your family bliss. He goes on to say this.

38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

Now when we hear this, we think of it symbolically. We ask, what is my cross? What is the cost that I must bear for Christ? His audience did not receive it that way. His audience would have heard, whoever is not willing to sit in an electric chair for me is not worthy of me.

They understood that what Christ was talking about was not figurative. It was a literal instrument of a torture filled and brutal death.

So they got the point. To follow Christ meant being willing to die for Christ. How about things going better with Christ? What about your best life now with Christ? What about all the benefits of positive thinking? What about the name it and claim it prosperity teachings? Yeah. What about it? That is not what Christ presented to His followers. He presented His worth. He presented a future city that would be worth it. He promised His love toward us. He promised to give the grace we need when we need it. But paying the price of death needs to be considered, because **Christ is worth it if we ever have the chance.** And if we aren't willing, He does not need or want followers like us. It is pretty straight forward. You don't find much of a picture of Christ with His hat in his hand begging sinners to follow Him, like many evangelistic appeals today. Christ holds out His value and holds out our need. And it is the most wonderful opportunity in a lifetime to respond to His call.

39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

How much of our lives are spent trying to **find our lives**? How much of our time is spent chasing after things or experiences that we think will make us happy?

How much of the time do we live like the world around us?

I look at the news on the internet on Fox news almost daily. And it is often that I see that someone in an obituary who has experienced those things that many

people chase. They are dead, often by taking their own life. Why? Intense unhappiness. They found their lives. But there was nothing there. It is like peeling away all the skins of an onion and finding that there is nothing in the middle. That is what we are all like. Some people can actually describe that experience. But for many, they do not realize they are losing everything until they will be resurrected for judgment, and they will see that they have lost everything that matters, no matter what they had in this lifetime. He who sinks everything into this life, he who finds this life will ultimately lose this life and all life worth living.

But the irony is those that hold their lives loosely, those that are not all that bent out of shape about what happens to them because they trust Christ, those people who live for Christ and accept what comes from Christ's hand, those people cash in at the end. They will find real life. And that real life isn't primarily the life we have here and now. Oh we sometimes have tastes of what is to come. But this life is not the payload. Real life will be continually experienced, without interruption, after the resurrection. Real life will be a sinless existence with perfect fellowship with Christ and His children.

There is no telling what we might have to face here and now. But no matter what it is, it will be worth every pain. We will find true life.

40 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." (NKJV)

Remember that Jesus was talking to his disciples as he was sending them out.

There are going to be a lot of things that appear to be merely chance. There will be times when it appears that people just personally like the disciples and their own personal skills have won them a place in their hearts. But it will not be that way. If the disciples are representing Christ, and people do things to help them, it is because of something supernatural. If the disciples are truly received, there is something supernatural going on.

When a person supports a ministry because they believe in that ministry and want to honor Christ by helping, we see in this text that this person **shares in the reward** of the person actually doing the ministry.

Do you realize what that means? You do not need to have the gifts of preaching or teaching. You do not need to have skills that you feel you were not given. You can serve Christ just as you are. And if there is a way that you can help a ministry to do the work they need to do, you will share in the reward of those doing the actual work.

Christ told us to store up treasure in heaven. Christ said when we aid a ministry that is doing His work, **we are doing just that**. I guess the question comes down to, do we really believe Him? Do we really want to store up treasures in heaven? Do we really want to forego some of the pleasure we could have here to put the money into something that lasts forever? We all have that opportunity. Whether it is money or service or whatever. How hard **is it** to find a ministry that we can serve, that we can help, that we can join in?

I have often heard pastors complain about people not volunteering for the programs that their churches are doing. Then the pastor feels like he must guilt people into getting with the program. But with what Jesus is saying, that is kinda' backwards.

Supporting a ministry is an opportunity. It is an opportunity to turn time and money into eternal reward. It is one of the best investments that can be made. We are fortunate to have the opportunity. And we are wise to use it. And we are foolish to let it pass by. It is our loss.

I know I don't always look at it that way. But I know it is true.

Yesterday Brad and I attended a meeting that Kenny hosted where we talked about some ministries at the fair this year. There will be a vespers service where Wally will present the gospel to a lot of lost people. Then there will be a pancake dinner for the workers at the fair. The gospel will go out to probably another 75 people. And then there is the week long ministry at the two fair booths.

Do you want to turn some of your time into eternal reward? You can. Get involved in a way that you think God wants you involved.

We, as a church, are supporting missionaries in Christian Aid and To Every Tribes. Do you want eternal reward? Invest.

Maybe it is a ministry in another country. Maybe it is a ministry on our street. We have opportunity to serve in so many ways. How would our lives change if we really believed this simple truth? How would our lives change if we really believed that we can truly store up treasure in eternity? We can do it with simple choices of how we spend our time and money.

Look how down to earth Jesus puts this ministry in our text. It can be as simple as giving a little one, an insignificant believer, someone **who you will gain nothing from**. If you will provide that person with sustenance for Jesus sake, that will be rewarded. God notices. And if done for Him and Him alone, it counts.

Do you feel like your life does not count? It can. There are lots of ways to serve. I guaranty you that if you will ask God to lead you and be willing to step out, He will give you a way to serve Him. **That is** His will for your life.

Now, let's look at the last thing said in Matthew.

Matthew 11:1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. (NKJV)

Look at this. Jesus didn't sit back at His office at the home center. He didn't hang out at the corporate center. He surely could have. But He didn't. He sent the disciples out, and He went also. That is our example. We are never too big to minister.