

March 19, 2017

“The Mission Before Us - Part Three”

Matthew 10:26-42

FCF: Not knowing what we're getting into

PROPOSITION: (anchor) As followers of Jesus, we are being sent in His name.

(magnet) And there are things we must know as we go.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

It was April 1861. North and the South stood prepared to do battle. But neither knew what awaited them. So they came in droves. Knowing little of discipline, drill, life in the open, following orders, mastering weapons, digging earthworks. Having to endure food shortages and agonizing homesickness. Combatting diseases they had never known, wounds they had never imagined, and medical treatments that were both painful and pathetic. Neither knew that roughly 650,000 men would lose their lives. These soldiers blue and gray and the nation as a whole had no idea of what they had gotten themselves into. They had no idea the cost could be so high.

Such unpreparedness, of not knowing or having any idea what you're getting yourself into, is possible with the Christian life as well. Jesus would have us to know and to be prepared.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Matthew 10:26-42](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Last week, I mentioned news stories of ambassadors. I have another - Japan's recent decision to recall its ambassador to South Korea. Such a step is a formal public way of showing displeasure. What caused this flare up? South Korea placed a “comfort woman” statue in front of a Japanese consulate. Why? As a reminder of wartime sex-slaves, Korean women forced into front line brothels for the Japanese military in WWII. This is a terrible blight in the history between these nations and it's something they've been working to address. With this action, Japan felt South Korea had slighted the progress made. And so they recalled their ambassador.

Jesus isn't recalling His ambassadors. He's sending them forth. That's the main theme of Matthew 10 - the calling, commissioning, and sending of the Twelve. And then the necessary and vital instruction that went with that. So here's the thing. For followers of Christ today, that calling to serve as ambassadors of Christ has not changed. Nor has the instruction. As followers of Christ, we are still being sent in His name. And there are things we must know as we go.

There are three such things made clear in our text. First, who we are to fear. Second, who we are to choose. And then, thirdly, who it is that has sent us. Let's look at these in turn.

I. WHO TO FEAR

First, who to fear. The sure resistance to the gospel leads to a threefold command not to fear man but God, to give Him the weight He is due. A threefold command and the reasons why.

A) The Emergence of Truth

The first reason has to do with the emergence of truth ([READ Matthew 10:26-27](#)).

1. All will be made known

Whatever evil men conceal, whatever mysteries have yet to be revealed, all will be made known.

2. All should be made known

So all should be made known. We have no need to hold back, to play it safe. Ours is to speak.

B) The Non-Permanence of Death

That's the first reason. The next is the non-permanence of death ([READ Matthew 10:28](#)).

1. The obvious facts

There are some obvious facts. What, after all, is man? And who, after all, is God? Think of it this way. The worst man can do cannot match or even compare to the worst God can do.

2. The obvious paths

Those are some obvious facts. Which creates some obvious paths ([READ Proverbs 29:25](#)). The fear of man is a trap, a prison. Not so the fear of God. That is the very beginning of wisdom.

C) God's Watchful Care

So that the second reason. The third is God's watchful care ([READ Matthew 10:29-31](#)).

1. The smallest of things

The sparrow was known as the smallest of creatures. The penny was the least valuable of coins.

2. The greatest confidence

This is a "from lesser to greater" argument meant to instill the greatest confidence. The idea simply being, if the Lord is concerned with the smallest details, how much more our very lives?

Which then leads to this conclusion ([READ Matthew 10:32-33](#)). Here's the idea. The three great assurances of vv.26-31 enable the good confession in vv.32-33. That confidence in Him allows for a pattern of faithfulness to Him. Not an unattainable perfection but a pattern.

As we go forth, we have no reason to fear man. And every reason to fear God.

Illustration:

Some of you may recall a scene from one of the Charlie Brown TV specials where Lucy is sitting at her psychiatrist booth, listing off a series of fears - hypengyophobia, aelurophobia, climacophobia, thalassophobia, gephyrophobia, and pantophobia - the fears of responsibility, cats, staircases, oceans, crossing bridges, or just everything. We fear all kinds of things.

Application:

It's worth knowing that "do not fear" may well be the most common command in the Bible. Here's a sampling. We are told not to fear conspiracies, shame, insults, financial loss, loneliness, armies, enemies, hostility, lack of a leader, suffering, and death - ours or another's.

It's quite a list. And a command. But we are given reasons not to fear. The mission is such that we might well be tempted. Resistance to the gospel will come. As will persecution. And so the temptation to fear. But we have no reason to give in to it. And every reason not to.

II. WHO TO CHOOSE

Which then takes us from who we are to fear to the second point, who we are to choose.

A) *The Division*

The choice will come because of the division that will come (**READ Matthew 10:34-36**).

1. Surprising

This is surprising at first. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and His followers are to be peacemakers. The gospel is a message of peace and reconciliation - with God, others, ourselves, and creation.

2. But inevitable

All of which is true. But, at the same time, this Prince demands unqualified allegiance. He has not come to cause division but, to the extent we heed it, such a call inevitably leads to division.

B) *The Decision*

Which brings us to a choice. The division forces a decision (**READ Matthew 10:37-39**).

1. Backdrop - His supremacy

The backdrop to the decision Jesus forces is His supremacy. Let me walk you back through what He has said. In vv.32-33, He says that our eternal destiny hinges on how we respond to Him. In vv.34-35, He refers to His coming to earth as One from the outside. Now, in vv.37-38, He speaks of being worthy of Him and of the need to take up the cross - to die to ourselves for His sake. Then, v.39, the grand paradox of losing and finding, far beyond anything any rabbi would say.

2. Priority over all

That's the backdrop, His supremacy over all. Which is why He demands a priority over all. Yes, we are called to love family, friends, even strangers and enemies. But He has to take the priority of place. All others then have to be, by comparison, but somewhere off in the background.

Jesus is saying that, as we go forth in His name, we have to know who to choose.

Application:

Let me give an example as to how this plays out. In family life, the best thing you can do for your children is to focus on your marriage, to put it first. And the best thing you can do for your marriage is to focus on your relationship with Christ, to put Him first. There's an order.

We have to put Him first in all things. We have to learn how to interrogate ourselves. When it comes to our fears, we need to ask, "Why is that dominating my thoughts? What's going on there?" When it comes to our choices, we need to ask, "Why the pull in that direction? Why this draw so strongly to comfort and ease? To security and control? To others' approval?"

The mission is such we will be forced to choose. And we need to be prepared for that.

III. WHO HAS SENT US

It will make clear who we are to fear and to choose. And then yet also who has sent us.

A) *The Principle of Extension*

This is a recurring idea we've seen in Matthew 10, the principle of extension.

1. His ministry

First, having to do with Jesus' ministry. That is, our ministry is to be an extension of His own. We are to go forth with His message, according to His methods, all while relying on His Spirit.

2. His response

Our ministry is to be an extension of His own. With that, we should expect our response to be an extension of His own as well. That is, the resistance we meet is ultimately a resistance to Him.

B) A Shift of Emphasis

That's been clear so far. But now we see a shift in emphasis (**READ Matthew 10:40-42**).

1. The reception

Jesus speaks of how others receive us. He says that, ultimately, to reject His servants is to reject their Master. But conversely, to embrace His servants is to embrace their Master. That's the level at which Jesus identifies Himself with us - the message, messengers, and the Master.

2. The reward

But He goes further and speaks of the reward - a shared reception and a shared reward. That is, "Those who receive you will share in your reward since they are partakers with you in the work."

The main thing is the tie binding Jesus to His followers. We need to know who sends us.

Illustration:

Let me take you back in time a few centuries before in Israel's history to another king. David had recently ascended to the throne and was in the process of consolidating his power (**READ 2 Samuel 10:1-5**). This began the war between Israel and the Syrian-Ammonite armies.

Why did David respond as he did? It wasn't just because of a fraternal brotherhood in arms. It was because a strike at the messengers was a strike at the one who had sent them. This was not about petty revenge but about David's calling as the divinely anointed king of Israel.

Application:

Fast forward now to centuries later, to great David's greater son. Jesus continues to send messengers in His name. And He closely and gladly identifies Himself with them. With us.

No matter what fields or settings or callings we may be serving in, this principle of extension still applies. And nothing has changed except now we have a clearer view of Him.

Which begs a question. Where do you feel stretched, out of your element, facing points of resistance to the gospel and opposition to His kingdom? Who has sent you into those arenas? You can appeal to Him on that basis. And have a sense of purpose and resolve as you go.

The mission is such that there are things we need to know, including who has sent us.

CONCLUSION:

This call to follow is a difficult one to heed. It presents a challenge to our inclinations and aspirations. So much so we might want to make some changes or adjustments, to update or modernize, to modify or dilute Jesus' clear teaching. But we aren't given the liberty to do that.

Back to the early days of the Civil War. Many a recruit had his own ideas as to what service in the army should look like. Here's one account ([READ Soldiers Blue and Gray, p.7](#)):

Patriotism had its limits. A Midwestern unit was being formed, and the enlisting officer proudly announced to a prospective member that the regimental flag would bear the words: "Victory or Death."

"I object to the motto," the man said.

"Why so?" the officer asked. "How shall it be changed?"

The potential recruit answered: "Make it victory or pretty badly wounded, and I'm your huckleberry."

Well, you can't fault the man's honesty and ingenuity. But we don't get to change the motto.

We are soldiers of a king, pledged to the advancement of His kingdom. We are disciples of the Master, committed to learning from Him. We are the branch abiding in the Vine, leaning into Him and finding our lives in Him. We are followers, followers of Jesus. And, as followers of Jesus, we are being sent in His name. And there are things we must know as we go - who to fear, who to choose, and who has sent us. May we hear and heed our Lord's instruction.

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