

# We Have Been Sent Into The Harvest

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[0:00] Well, last week, we were in Matthew 9, 35-38, and we saw the heart of Jesus for the harassed and helpless, those without a shepherd.

And we saw His compassion. He's moved by that. And He called us to pray. To pray that God would send out laborers into His harvest.

And again, I don't know if that had any effect on you this past week of the people that you normally encounter, maybe someone at PDQ or Walmart or Festival or in your gym, and you're like, man, maybe they are a sheep without a shepherd.

We've been praying this week that God would raise up laborers into His harvest. Have you been praying that? And if you've been praying that, has it occurred to you that you are one of the laborers to be sent into His harvest?

This morning, we're going to take a high-altitude view of Matthew 10, which means this. We're not going to be able to get into a lot of the detail. But what I want to help you see is the calling and the commissioning of the twelve apostles in all of Matthew 10 glory so that you can feel the full thrust of what Jesus is calling these band of twelve to.

[1:32] And so we're not going to get into the nitty-gritties of everything, but I want to help you see the significance of what Jesus calls them to. Because the same Jesus that called the twelve to go to the last sheep of Israel is the same Jesus who's calling us to go to the city.

The one who sent the apostles is the one who sends us. The apostle Paul talks about this sending-ness as being ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

We are ambassadors for Christ to this city. We will represent Him. And so what we're going to do is we're going to walk through Matthew 10, and I want you to see five aspects of Christ's commissioning of the twelve, and I'm going to seek to aim it at us.

And so here are the five things, the five aspects. First is you be sent. It's the first thing you need to realize. You be sent. You've been sent.

You be sent. You be aware. You be brave. You be devoted. And you be generous. And so would you open up your Bibles if you haven't already and open to Matthew 10.

[2:53] I'm going to read through Matthew 10, 1-15 to help you to see that you are sent. I'm really going to spend most of the time in this section on the first eight verses, but I'm going to read the whole thing for you.

1-15. And He called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction.

The names of the twelve apostles are these. First, Simon, who's called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector, that's the one writing this, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and proclaim as you go, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cleanse lepers. Cast out demons. You received without paying. Give without pay. Acquire no gold, nor silver, nor copper for your belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.

[4:13] And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And

if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it.

But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

This is the account of the actual calling and sending of the 12 apostles. And again, I'm just going to focus on the first eight verses here, but there's a couple things that I really want you to notice.

Let me ask you a question. Close your Bible for a second. Can you name the 12 disciples, the 12 apostles off the top of your head? It kind of goes, for me it goes something like this.

Well, there's Peter and Andrew, James and John, then there's... And Judas Iscariot. And so when you can remember just half the apostles, you're kind of like, huh, what does that mean?

[5:31] You know what? You should actually be encouraged by that. Do you know why? The apostles were just ordinary Joes. Not too memorable.

Very much like you and me. Working class guys. Ordinary guys called to do something extraordinary. They're just guys.

And so, you can't name the 12 disciples? That's okay. They're ordinary guys. Let that say something. You're an ordinary Jane or Jo yourself.

And your God has called you to something extraordinary. To proclaim a message. The gospel. That alone can change a person's eternity when believed.

But there's more. Something else I want to point you to the 12. If you look at them, you're like, okay, there's a bunch of fishermen here. And then when you read Matthew was a tax collector.

[6:40] And then you read that Simon the Canaanite. Well, he was actually a zealot. What you got to realize is these are ordinary Joes. And some of them had very different backgrounds.

You know what a zealot was? He was an ultra-nationalist in Israel. So, could you imagine an ultra-nationalist saddling up to Matthew, the former tax collector who was raising money for Rome? So, the ultra-nationalist would be, you did what? You were what? You were giving money to the people we want out? So, you know what the little lesson is for us?

You know what Jesus does? He calls ordinary people with very diverse backgrounds and He unites them together on a mission that's all about Him.

That's what He's done here. That's what He's doing here. He's uniting ordinary people with diverse backgrounds and He's uniting us together and placing us on a mission to proclaim Him to this city and to this world.

[7:51] When we see the calling of the twelve, you've got to know that hey, these are ordinary guys. Some with very different backgrounds and Jesus is calling them on a mission to go.

They're not all the same, but they're united by the same Savior. And in verse 2, we see for the first time, this is I think the only time in Matthew that the disciples are actually called apostles.

Now, if you're not familiar with that word apostle, it comes from a Greek word that means to send out. Sent out ones. And in the New Testament, that word apostle is applied to a variety of people throughout it.

And so, it can be used of people just being sent out generally to give a report from one church to the next. It's used of Jesus Himself in Hebrews 3, chapter 1, to talk about the apostle and high priest.

And it's here talking about the twelve. And so, the way that I like to, that's helpful for me to refer to the twelve as apostles is they are the twelve capital A apostles.

[9:00] They are uniquely called by Jesus for a unique work in salvation history. These are the men that Jesus is going to build His church upon.

And when we read in Acts 1, when Judas has died and the early church is looking to replace him with another apostle, do you know what the requirements of an apostle are?

Do you know what they insist on? There were two. The man that was going to replace Judas, he had to have walked with Jesus from the baptism of John all the way to the ascension of Jesus.

So he would have been an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry. He would have heard all that Jesus taught. But that's just the first requirement. The second requirement is this. He would have had to be an eyewitness to Jesus after His resurrection.

That's what was required for an apostle. They played a unique role. They were uniquely called by Jesus Himself to this task.

[10:07] So for us, what that means is, hey, we're not capital A apostles. But we have been sent by Jesus. The God of the Bible is a sending God.

That's what He's been doing ever since the beginning. He sent out His people under the old covenant, Israel. He sent them into the nations that they would declare God's glory among all peoples, among all nations.

The nations would see Israel and they would say, whoa, what a God you've got. Psalm 67 was a psalm Israel would sing. God had sent them to the nations.

So under the old covenant, Israel was to be God's representatives on earth to the nations. Under the new covenant, which is the promise, the relationship God established through the blood of Jesus.

Under the new covenant, God's new people, the church, we're His representatives to the nations now. And the word that the Apostle Paul used for that in 2 Corinthians 5 is we're His ambassadors.

[11:17] We represent Him. We speak for Jesus. You know what's amazing about 2 Corinthians 5? The Apostle Paul talks about, well, we have received the ministry of reconciliation.

We've been reconciled to God through the Gospel. And we've been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, which means we proclaim the Gospel. And you know what is amazing about what Paul says?

Paul talks about it as this. When we preach the Gospel, it's God making His appeal through us. It's amazing. So what I want you to help you to see here is in this calling of the 12, the commissioning of the 12, is that yes, Jesus sent them out and He has sent us out.

God wants to make His appeal through us to the people of the city. He wants to call them to Himself. Which brings us to this different piece of this, starting in v. 5, 6, and 7.

I want you to see the primary thrust of the calling and commissioning of these disciples. The primary thrust of their mission was to proclaim, to announce, to declare, to make something known.

[12:40] You might have noticed that Jesus kind of limits the scope of this ministry, this mini-mission that He's sending them out on. We read that in v. 5. Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the last sheep of the house of Israel.

That's kind of like, why would you do that, Jesus? Why would you put limits on the Gospel going out? Why would you want to do that? Well, we do know that at the end of Matthew, Matthew 28, Jesus says, go to everyone.

Go make disciples of the nations. What He's doing right here is very important. You see, what He's doing right here is Jesus is saying, go first to My people Israel.

Go first to the ones who've been given the Scriptures. Go first to the ones who should be anticipating My arrival. Go to them first. Go to those who are lost sheep wandering, sheep without a shepherd, and declare to them, the shepherd king has come.

The kingdom has come. And the king has come. Declare to them. And so the apostles going out in declaring that the kingdom of heaven is near and the king has come.

[13:50] Do you know what that does? It functions two ways. It gives Israel an opportunity to respond. And by and large, most will not respond. And so it also functions as judgment.

You've been given an opportunity to hear, but you didn't hear. And so the Gospel then goes to the nations. We see that played out all through the book of Acts too. in Paul's modus operandi of mission work around the Mediterranean basin.

What we're reading here is what John describes in John 1. Jesus came to His own, but they did not receive Him. He came to the Jews and they didn't have eyes to see.

They didn't have ears to hear. And so those who did receive them, He gave right to become children of God. And so Jesus sends His apostles out to this specific group of people to give them opportunity as well as to say, you had your opportunity.

I'll now go to the nations. And so that go that we read about in verse, I believe, where is that go?

[15:02] In verse 5, go. Nowhere among the Gentiles. That go will move from Israel to the nations in Matthew 28. In verse 7, notice what they're

going to be doing while they're going.

And proclaim as you go. Announce as you go. Declare as you go. And what do they declare? The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The kingdom's come. And implied in that message is the King has come. What's pretty cool is that this is the same message that John the Baptist preached in Matthew 3.2.

It's the same message that Jesus Himself preached in Matthew 4.17. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. The King has come. The shepherd is here. Be reconciled to the shepherd.

Our calling to represent Jesus we take our cues from this calling here. If their primary calling was proclamational, our primary calling, our primary responsibility is to proclaim Jesus as well.

[16:16] And so we proclaim good news. Remember when Jesus sent out the apostles here, He hasn't died. He hasn't raised. And so He's going, go, declare that the kingdom of heaven is here. What we get to proclaim is this.

The kingdom of heaven is here, but look at what the King has done. The King, the long-awaited one, came, lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death.

He died for sinners. And then He was raised from the dead. He's reigning on high. And one day He will come back. That's what we get to proclaim. It's all about Jesus.

It's all about Him. Going back to the harvest metaphor, the harvest is plentiful, but the labors are few.

This proclamation that we are to announce about Jesus, this is the primary tool with which we labor in the harvest.

[17:18] This is the sickle of the harvest. This is what we declare and people respond to.

And when people respond to the Gospel, they have been reaped unto the Lord of the harvest. They've been reunited to Him. And so our responsibility is to declare.

Think about it this way. The moment you believed in Jesus, your conversion was your commissioning.

That's how you've got to think about it. When you were converted to Christ, you were commissioned by Christ. And so just imagine, let's say at the moment of your conversion, this passport from heaven drops down into your hands.

And you open it up and it says, citizen of the kingdom. And there's this big blood red stamp saying approved. You're official.

[18:23] You're part of the kingdom based upon the finished work of Jesus. And then you flip that over and do you know what that says? Authorized. Blood red stamp. To proclaim.

Commissioned. To go. Your conversion and your commissioning happened at the same time. When he met Jesus and he responded in faith. All this to say, you've been sent.

It's who you are. You be sent. Now there's one thing I'd like to draw out more and it's the relationship between verses 7 and 8.

And proclaim as he goes saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cleanse lepers. Cast out demons. What's the relationship between the two of those?

Furthermore, do we have authority today as believers to exercise, to cast out demons, to heal the sick, to raise the dead?

[19:24] Is that authority ours? The quick answer is yes it is. But here's what you need to realize. There's a relationship between the two.

The message is the primary responsibility of our calling. We're here to proclaim. The miracles attest to the message. They point to the message.

And so here's how that works out for us. We are here primarily to declare that Jesus came for sinners. That he's the king. His kingdom has come.

And we also take steps of faith. When we become aware of demonic activity, as far as we can discern, we step out in the name of Jesus and we tell demons to be gone.

When someone is sick and needing healing, we go and ask in the name of Jesus that they be healed. When someone dies and we're there, we pray that God would raise them from the dead.

[20:32] The authority is ours. Do you know how I know that? Look in your Bibles to Hebrews 2. Hebrews 2. Since, therefore, the children share in

flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, speaking of Jesus, that through death, his death, that through his death, he might destroy the one who has the power over death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Would you now flip over to Colossians 2. Verses 13-15.

And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside in nailing it to the cross. There's cross talk right there. Now look at verse 15. He disarmed the rulers and authorities. Those are references to the demonic powers.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. How did he triumph over the demonic world? Through his death on the cross.

[22:08] The death of Jesus Christ is the decisive defeat of the devil. That's where we stand now. That's the authority in which we have been brought into when we are transferred the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved Son.

So we don't fear the devil. We stand firm against him. Ephesians 6. So what I want to help you realize is when you read this commissioning and you're like, are we supposed to be doing this kind of healing stuff today?

Well, we're definitely going to be proclaiming. And as opportunities present itself, we step out in faith. Realizing it's about the gospel. It's about the fame of Jesus.

So here's what we've learned so far. The apostles were ordinary guys with diverse backgrounds that Jesus called onto mission. We are ordinary Janes and Joes with different backgrounds that God has called on a mission about Jesus.

And the primary focus of our mission is proclamational. We've been called to something. So here's how I want this to sit in you. The question is not if you've been sent.

[23:24] The question is where have you been sent? It's not if you're supposed to be representing Jesus. It's where are you representing Jesus? You are an ambassador.

It was part of your conversion and your commissioning. You are on mission, brother, sister in Christ. It's part of who you are now. So your family, you're sent there.

You're there to represent Jesus. Moms and dads, you represent Jesus to your kids. Your neighborhood, you've been sent there. God has placed you there. Your workplace, you are an ambassador for Jesus in your workplace.

The gym where you exercise, you're an ambassador of Christ there. You've been sent there.

Teams, clubs, whether you're involved with or your kids involved with, those are opportunities.

You've been sent. Last week we saw that this city is full of the harassed and helpless sheep without a shepherd.

[24:35] And we pray to the Lord of Harvest to send out laborers. This morning, the question is, do you see yourself as one who's sent? Do you know the difference that makes?

When you show up somewhere and you're thinking, you know what? I am here as a representative of Jesus Christ. It changes everything. It's time to start thinking about yourself a little differently.

Let God's word form your own identity in relationship to this world so you be sent. You are an ambassador.

We must be aware. In verses 16 through 25, of Matthew 10, we read this. Behold, I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues. And you will be dragged before governors and kings for My name's sake to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

[25:43] When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your father speaking through you.

Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and the children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

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. Jesus seems in this part of Matthew 10 to be moving from the specific calling of these apostles to the lost sheep of Israel to now anticipating more of a bigger harvest.

And here's how you can tell. In v. 18, Jesus says, And you will be dragged before governors and kings for My name's sake to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

Jesus is anticipating that these disciples and apostles, they will be going beyond Israel. And what He foresees and what He tells us of is ministry at cost.

[27:08] What He describes sounds like many events from the book of Acts to be honest with you. Apostles and early disciples suffering greatly as they proclaim the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what He sounds like He's describing. So, in v. 16, He says, Behold, I'm sending you out as sheep among wolves. Do you know what that's a picture of? Do you know what wolves do to sheep?

Wolves are ravenous. Wolves are brutal. Jesus calls us to be, I'm sending you out into a danger zone. This harvest is a hazardous harvest.

It's dangerous. There be wolves in that harvest. Jesus is speaking of particular people.

We'll hand the disciples over. Over to be persecuted. Over to be flogged. Over to be hated. All on account of Jesus. Being a laborer in God's harvest is hazardous work.

[28:23] And here's why. To be a laborer in God's harvest means that you must necessarily identify yourself with Jesus.

And when you identify yourself with Jesus, you became a target. Many people who are dead in their sin and they're delighting in their darkness, when you move towards them to talk about Jesus, they don't want to hear anything from you.

But even worse yet, they resent you for raising Jesus with them. They resent you for even suggesting that change is needed.

You must be aware. Jesus is warning the apostles and He's warning us the harvest is hazardous. There's dangers. Look at verse 17.

They will deliver you over. Look at verse 19. When they deliver you. Look at verse 21. Brother will deliver brother over to death. Verse 21.

[29:34] Children will rise against parents and have them put to death. Jesus, I did not know that death was a possibility when I agreed to follow You. It is.

It is. It is. The history of the church is chock full of a long list of faithful brothers and sisters who laid their life down for the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do you remember Jim Elliott? He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. He died seeking to bring the Gospel to a distinct group of people in South America.

Verse 22. You will be hated by all for My name's sake. Verse 23. They will persecute you. You know what the point of all this is? It's like, guys, I'm sending you out, but be aware, it's hazardous stuff.

It's dangerous. There are going to be people who are going to want to hurt you. Suffering, persecution is part of the kingdom work. That's part of it.

[30:53] If you flip back to Matthew 5, it's not like Jesus is kind of showing us the fine print right now. Remember, Matthew 5, this is part of the Beatitudes.

This is part of a profile of a faithful citizen of the kingdom. We read this. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Suffering is part of it, gang. The work that Jesus has called us to do, it will not go forward without resistance.

but I love verses 18 and 22. It so helps me. When I hear about persecution and I start thinking, oh, I don't want to get hurt.

[31:56] When I read verses 18 and 22, it helps out so much because it's not about me. It's not about you. Look who it's about. It's about Jesus. It's about Jesus. It's about Jesus. It's about Jesus.

It's about Jesus. And you will be hated for My name's sake. It's about Jesus. You know what we need to be asking ourselves? Here's what we need to be asking ourselves.

Is Jesus worth it? Is He worth it? Is who He is worth it? Is getting His name into this city worth it? Is reconciling people in this city worth it?

For people going from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the Beloved Son, is that worth it? Is it worth it that eternity changes here in this city? Is it worth that?

It's worth it. But we say it's worth it knowing that it's coming at a cost. Here's another side of this. Brothers, sisters, if you became a Christian and you're thinking that being a Christian means that you're going to be liked by everybody you meet, Jesus says, you're mistaken.

[33:07] Some people will like you. Some people will hate you. Just because you claim Jesus. Next thing I want you to notice is this.

This is the stuff that only God does. It's astounding. He says in verse 18, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for My name's sake, purpose to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

Jesus' purposes are suffering. Jesus says, the only way to get the gospel to these folks is if you get dragged away and you got presented to them.

Then you get to bear witness to them. You know what bearing witness means? It's kind of a court scene where you share the facts. Nothing but the facts. You give the facts. You give the facts about who Jesus is, what He's done.

And so what Jesus is saying here is, hey, you're getting dragged before these rulers and these synagogue leaders and these councils, it's all a part of my plan to get the gospel out.

[34:22] The gospel moves forward when we suffer. We're given opportunities. And verses 19-20 is such a wonderful promise that God will speak by His Holy Spirit through us when we find ourselves in these very difficult and trying circumstances.

Think of Stephen in Acts 6-7. Do you remember that beautiful message he delivered in chapter 7? Do you remember what happened to Stephen? He was then stoned after delivering the goods. And do you remember where those people who stoned them, they laid their cloaks down?

Do you remember whose feet they laid them down by? Saul of Tarsus. God, it was that word. So when you find yourself in a hard situation, dragged before somebody, and you're having to bear witness to Jesus, our confidence is that the Holy Spirit is going to give us something to say.

But you know what? We know what we're not going to say. The Holy Spirit isn't going to compel me to speak about mathematical theory. The Holy Spirit isn't going to say, okay, let's talk about geological plate tectonics right now.

[35:39] That's not it. The Holy Spirit spotlights Jesus. And so in those moments, you can believe that you're going to be compelled to open your mouth up about the One who came to save you and the One who came to save the people that are persecuting right there.

And so in light of that, what's the call? Look at verse 22. And you will be hated for my name's sake, but the One who endures to the end will be saved.

So when we face hardship, and we will, it's not getting easier to be a Christian in the United States. We will face hardship. All those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

2 Timothy 3. The call is to endure. Endure all the way to the end. And then Jesus tells us how to do that.

He tells us by looking to the Son of Man. I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. Now, there's a lot of ink on what is meant by the coming of the Son of Man.

[36:51] And I'm not going to bore you. But what we see happening is this. Jesus is saying, hey, when you face hardship, you look to Me. The Son of Man. It's a reference to Daniel 7.

When the Son of Man comes and He's presented before the Ancient of Days, and the Ancient of Days gives Him an eternal dominion, authority over everything. He's like, when you suffer it, remember, I am in control, and God has put all things under my feet.

It's a servant of purpose. And if that weren't enough, Jesus says in verses 24 and 25, a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house usable, how much more will they malign those of his household?

If you're My disciple and they're calling Me the devil, what do you think they're going to call you? Like Savior, like follower. Like teacher, like disciple.

[37:57] Like master, like slave. We'll suffer, because He suffered. But we'll be faithful as He was faithful. So, we're ambassadors.

We're sent ones. And Jesus is saying, you're being sent into a war zone. You're being sent into a hazardous harvest. The advancement of the kingdom will come at cost to us.

So the question is, is He worth it? Is Jesus worth it? And when you've encountered Him, and you know what He's done for you, and you know what He wants to do for others, it's like, oh yeah, He's worth it.

He's worth it. When you read things like this, what happens in your heart? You get a little nervous. A little anxious.

Fear starts to well up. Your Savior's all over it. In verses 26-31, He calls us to be brave. Listen to this.

[39:05] So have no fear of them, those who will persecute you, those who hate you. For nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaimed to the housetops.

And do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father?

But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me, I'll come to that in just a second. In this section, in 22-31, three times Jesus says, fear not.

And then He gives a reason. Why not to fear? The first one is this. Fear not, everything is going to be brought to the light. There is a God. He's accounting for everything. And all is going to be seen on that last day.

You can count on it. Everything's going to come and be seen. What's being done to you, it's seen. It'll be made known. You just need to proclaim what I'm telling you.

[40:12] That's what He's saying there. Don't be afraid. God's in control. And the second one is striking. Verse 28. He says, don't fear man. Don't fear man what they can do to you.

They can just kill you. That's it. That's all they can do. Is that crazy? Do you know what Jesus says there? Fear man less by fearing God more.

Did you see that? Here's the logic. Jesus says, the most that they can do is kill your body. The one that you need to fear is the one that can destroy both your body and your soul in hell.

That's the one you need to fear. You know what? For those of us who've been reconciled to God, we don't fear our souls being destroyed in hell.

So you know what this does? When we're persecuted and we're fearing God, the one that can destroy body and soul in hell, and we don't fear our souls being destroyed in hell, do you know whose souls I'm going to be concerned about?

[41:15] The one who's given me heat. Did you know that what you're doing will result in a lifelong, eternal condemnation of your soul?

The third thing that Jesus says to fear not is the same God who's got authority over body and soul. Do you know what He does? He takes care of the sparrow.

We've got these little sparrows around the church that fly and flutter into the bushes. What kind of value would you put on them? Ten cents? Nickel? Jesus says, two sparrows aren't worth a penny. And even your father, they don't fall to the ground without Him. If God your Father is sovereignly caring for worthless sparrows, and He's got the numbers of your hair on your head numbered, if

your God is concerned about the details, and caring for insignificant things like that, Jesus says, you're more valuable than a sparrow.

Don't fear. Check this out. You ready? Let's go big. If God the Father, this is Romans 8.32, if He gave His Son for you, how much more, along with Him, will He give you everything you need to get through suffering?

[42:38] God's for you. Fear not. He's for you. Fear not. He's with you. Fear not. He's going to give you what you need to say. Fear not.

It's about His mission. It's about His glory. What a God. And so, it doesn't make the hardship go away, but it gives us boldness in the midst of it.

It makes us brave. We don't have to fear. The worst thing that I can have, they'll take my life. And Paul's logic in Philippians 1 is like, okay, I've got to choose or I'll stay, fruitful labor, I'll go, and I'll be with Jesus.

It's a win-win situation. We stay, we suffer, we proclaim Christ, our lives are taken, we're with Him. It's win-win. It just gets painful.

And Jesus is very familiar with that. You have nothing to fear, gang. The work that Jesus did for you on the cross has secured your soul in heaven.

[43:48] Don't fear. I'm running out of time. In verses 32 through 39, I want you to show you the logic.

Jesus says, you must be devoted to Me above everything else. You must be devoted to Me. And here's what He does. Your image before men, you're either going to acknowledge Me before men or you're going to deny Me before men.

If you acknowledge Me before men, if you claim Me as your own, if you identify with Me, I'll claim you as My own before the Father. But if you deny Me before men, you're not worthy of Me.

I will deny you before the Father. The issue there is your image in the eyes of men. If you value what people think about you more than what Jesus thinks about you, you're not worthy of Him. And then He moves on from your image in the eyes of men to your family. And He says, I didn't come to bring peace, I came to bring the sword. And He's talking about bringing divisiveness and hardship and conflict into a home.

[45:01] Your family is the most precious relationships you have, most likely. Could you imagine what Jesus is saying here? Look at v. 37. Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Only Jesus can say something like that. Only God in the flesh can say something like that. Only the King of the Kingdom of Heaven, only the Savior of the world can say things like that.

Only He can require that kind of devotion. And He's saying, not even your family. Not even your family. Parents, not even your kids.

You're to be devoted to Me first. Kids, not even your parents. Husbands, not even your wives.

Wives, not even your husbands. First and foremost, our devotion is to Jesus because of who He is. And then if that were not enough, look where He goes from there. In v. 38 and 39, He moves from the eyes of men to your family and He moves to your own life.

[46:14] He says, and whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. He's talking about your life. Do you know what taking up your cross means?

If we were living back in the day and we saw somebody taking up their cross, do you know what we'd be thinking? Well, that person is carrying that cross to his own crucifixion. Because a cross was an instrument of death.

If you're taking up your cross, you're going to die. Jesus is saying, it's either you or it's Me. He moves from eyes of man to your family to you.

Who are you living for? He's saying, hey, if you want to be used by Me, if you want to be sent by Me, if you want to live after Me, I take priority over everything.

It's all about Jesus. And so the question we need to ask is, is He worth it? Is He worth it? And in light of who He is, in light of what He's done for you and for me, He's worth it.

[47:22] In light of what He's going to make available to people in this city, He's worth it. These are the big things. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it this way, when Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.

To be a follower of Jesus is to die to yourself in order to live for Christ who is your life. The last piece, you must be generous, is just simply Jesus saying, hey, we're working together in this mission thing.

Receive other laborers. Come alongside of them. Help them. Even the least of the disciples. Give them a cup of cold water. Brother and sister, you've been sent by Jesus into a hazardous harvest. Do you see yourself as an ambassador? Do you see yourself as one sent? Are you aware of what is out there? Are you aware of the dangers?

Are you afraid? Don't be. You have reasons not to be. God is with you.

[48:38] Be devoted. Be devoted to Jesus above everything else. Work together. Is Jesus worth it?

He is worth it. He is worth it. Be the ambassador you were sent to be. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, You are wonderful. Lord Jesus, You are the greatest hope for this city. Lord Jesus, the best thing that we can do in light of knowing who You are and what You've done for us, God, is to make You known.

Is to introduce others to You. Is to proclaim You, Lord Jesus. And so, God, we do ask, together we ask, that You would send us into Your harvest field.

That You would use us. That we would see ourselves differently and see the harvest for what it is.

That, God, You would give us strength to endure. That You would give us courage to be bold.

[49:45] That, Lord, You would help us to be singular and complete in our devotion to You. God, would You use us in this city for the glory of Your name and for the good of all people.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.