

For My Sake

Matthew 10:16-22

- Jesus provides instructions for His disciples in our passage of the day
- His topic is persecution, particularly that which will come after His crucifixion
- And the harsh realities of discipleship in the church age are made clear
- Remaining committed to Christ will be an ongoing challenge

- For those of us who have the privilege of living in modern, Western societies
- Cultures that have a tradition of religious liberty and personal freedom
- His words may appear to lack relevance
- But leaders and governments, citizens and institutions drift away from their moorings
- They always have - and we must learn from the past

- For these disciples, all that Jesus describes is in their future
- He says they will face suffering and constant threat "For My Sake"
- Which is our theme from Matthew 10:16-22

- On our island, in our country, we have protections from some of the things in this text
- This is not the case for neighbors in our region
- In Asia and beyond
- Many believers face constant threat for preaching in Jesus' name

- They are not unlike the disciples listening to Jesus in this passage
- Informants for those hostile to Christianity were secretly plotting and watching
- The wider society had a built-in bias against the gospel
- Their responses to it were often swift and violent
- To speak truth in public or private was always a risk

- You'll understand the situation when you hear our text in its entirety
- Then we'll spend some time in the details...

Matthew 10:16-22

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

- This may sound like doom and gloom
- Bad news stacked upon bad news
- And in some ways, it is
- We pray for those confronted by fierce persecution
- But we also understand the growth that happens in these circumstances
- Christ's church shines as a light in these periods of darkness
- And He sustains and blesses His people through them
- Let's explore the text and talk about some of that further...

Matthew 10:16

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

- There is a startling warning and a fascinating command here
- Jesus released His vulnerable sheep in a society populated and led by wolves
- They would no longer have His physical presence
- But He didn't consider staying with them
- This was not God's will
- The Holy Spirit would be with them
- They would experience His indwelling in Acts chapter two
- And every believer thereafter has the benefit of His presence as well
- The wolves must contend with disciples empowered by God for such a time as this
- Wise disciples
- Jesus says we should be "wise as serpents"
- One commentator wrote this about the phrase...

"Serpents have always been an emblem of wisdom and cunning... The Egyptians used the serpent in their hieroglyphics as a symbol of wisdom. Probably the thing in which Christ directed his followers to imitate the serpent was in its caution in avoiding danger. No animal equals them in the rapidity and skill which they evince in escaping danger. So said Christ to his disciples, You need caution and wisdom in the midst of a world that will seek your lives."

- He also said we should be "harmless as doves"
- Another commentary describes it this way...

"Be so prudent as not to irritate the wicked, and those who shall oppose you, either by your behaviour or your doctrine, unnecessarily, and avoid all unnecessary dangers... and to your prudence join a harmless and inoffensive behaviour, rendering yourselves remarkable for integrity amid the greatest temptations, and for meekness amid the greatest provocations."

- You are entering dangerous territory, He reminds them
- Do so with a holy boldness and humble caution

- There is more...

Matthew 10:17

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

- Be careful, Jesus says
- People will arrest you and take you to be judged
- You may be flogged in their synagogues

- Authorities, their servants, and even the citizenry loyal to those authorities can be dangerous
- In this case, it was to religious authorities
- In our day, they may be religious or violently non-religious
- The warning remains
- Be careful

- Leaders will very likely play a role...

Matthew 10:18

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

- Make no mistake about the reason for your persecution, Christ reminds them
- You will be brought before every manner of authority for Jesus' sake
- His is the name they hate and oppose
- And they oppose His follower because they follow and preach in His name
- They are not of this world - as He was not of this world
- And their life is wrapped up in that which is above

- If we know Him as Savior
- And live in a Godly way for Him
- We find ourselves in this same category
- Potentially under threat from enemies of the cross

- When we find ourselves before these leaders
- We must testify of Him
- Even under threat of beatings or imprisonments or worse

- God will give us the words to say...

Matthew 10:19

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

- This is a remarkable text
- Jesus assures them He will deliver exactly the words every persecuted saint needs
- Exactly at the time we need them

- It is not for us to rehearse a scripted answer
- We have not a mantra to repeat
- He know His followers
- He knows exactly where we are
- And who we're talking to
- Their inner thoughts and feelings
- And our inner thoughts and feelings

- He has exactly the right words
- We need not fear, simply trust and obey

- Here is the wonderful news...

Matthew 10:20

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

- Yes, Jesus would physically depart
- But He would not leave us Comfortless
- He sent another Comforter
- His Spirit
- To dwell in us

- And at these moments, we desperately need Him
- He is always there
- Never leaving us

- Of this we can be confident

- Be aware of another potential (gut-wrenching) reality...

Matthew 10:21

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

- Family members may deliver us up
- Fathers may deliver up their own children
- Children their parents
- Even sending us to our deaths

- Such is the deception of sin and the wickedness of our enemy
- We must not rule out this possibility
- It happened in the past and it happens today

- But remember this...

Matthew 10:22

22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

- It will appear at times that every man hates Jesus' disciples
- Maybe in our lifetime
- But there is relief and a better end for all who endure

- The worst any persecutor can do is take our earthly life
- Everlasting life remains
- In heaven
- With Him

- There will be deliverance
- Either from their beatings and prison cells
- Or in glory
- Forever

Christopher Harper, Take Note 2023