

Day One – Recap of Matthew 10:1-25

I basically know what I want for us from this passage. Now...how to get there...I confess I'm not sure. I want us to be able to wade through the explicit demands that Jesus gave to these men, demands which were given to them and do not apply fully in our own situation. We must be able to discern, therefore, that which *does* apply to us. Jesus' demands on gold and silver, staff, and belt are so foreign to us that we almost cannot make sense of His words. And yet we must pay close attention to these demands. They may not apply in their specific claims, but they do apply in spirit. What I mean to say is that we have to be able to take this text seriously without making it into a series of rules which do not have anything to do with us. If we did that, we would be able to easily dismiss it as "for them." We would do that at our own peril.

The task facing us is one marked by difficulty. Our own master was crucified; we cannot be foolish enough to think that we can bring His message without also incurring some measure of persecution. Much of the New Testament is devoted to this very idea, assuring us that we will indeed suffer and giving us hope in order to persevere through whatever should befall us. We know that every single person who took a stand for Christ in the pages of the New Testament met severe difficulty, often ending in death.

But we do live in a radically different world than these 12 men. Christianity is the default position for us, a position which brings more comfort and affirmation than persecution. Most of our friends are Christians. We usually have more to gain from our devotion to Christ than we have to lose. It's actually *good* to be a Christian in our area. Our society looks up to people who go to church, read their Bible, and pray.

This doesn't, as I'm sure you've guessed, take away the weight of Jesus' words. It is true that Christianity is popular, but this simple fact remains unchanged through the almost 2,000 years since Christ gave these instructions: disciples are hard to come by. Even if our culture does think a lot of Jesus, it doesn't think it's very smart to follow Him on His own terms. It never has.

Our own path to discipleship will be different from others'. Even within the same culture, everyone will experience persecution in different ways and to a different degree. Trying to establish some universal standard would be about as effective as establishing a standard for Bible reading, prayer, charity, service, etc. It would just turn us into Pharisees.

The most important thing to be taken away from Jesus' discussion about the cost of Christianity is our expectation. However severe or mild our own persecution, we must expect it is as the natural response to discipleship. It's not reserved for really serious Christians or missionaries. That's just what Christianity looks like. You can't have one without the other, even if it may appear that way in our particular situation.

Day Two – Read 10:26-31

The call to discipleship is the call to be like Christ, including being treated like Christ.

The more we emulate Christ, the more attractive we will become to those God is calling to Himself. But at the same time we will become more unattractive to those who reject God. Because they want nothing of Him, they will want nothing of us.—John MacArthur

In these six verses there is a phrase that is repeated three times: do not _____.

No Christian is above persecution.

Why does Jesus say in verse 26, “so have no fear of them?”

How would you explain the second part of verse 26 and verse 27?

Day Three

What is the result of verses 26b-27 in the lives of Christ-followers?

Do you ever get angry or tempted to take action against someone who is persecuting you?

How do you try to defend yourself when you are accused of doing something you believe is right; such as witnessing for Christ, defending the faith, a biblical doctrine, etc.?

Should we defend ourselves when persecuted?

Where does your responsibility stop and God’s start?

Day Four

According to verse 28, whom did Jesus tell them to fear? How would you define this fear?

What are some reasons men are not to be feared?

What are some of the results of fearing men?

What is a remedy to keep us from fearing men?

What practical things can you do to keep from fearing men?

Day Five

Challenge: What are some things you learn about God from these verses?

What is Jesus teaching in these verses?

Is it hard for you to trust God when things get hard? Why?

How can you balance the love and care of God in your life with the proper fear of God? (verse 28b)

Day Six

If you are looking to go a little bit deeper in your understanding of the text for this week, try one of these resources:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/index.php?action=getBookSections&cid=1&source=1>

<http://www.evangelibrary.org.uk/members/com/nt/jcr/mt/mat-Index.html>

Sermons Transcripts:

Ligon Duncan - http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/matthew/matthew_vol_1-2/matthew_vol_1-2/index_Matthew_vol_1-2.html

Audio:

John Piper - <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/14/>

S. Lewis Johnson - http://sljinstitute.net/sermons/new%20testament/gospels/matthew/matthew_master.html