

Communion Service**Matthew Chapter 10: v. 25-33.**

Theme: Confronting the enemy within.

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.

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. 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.

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.

Introduction

Last month before Communion we started a new teaching block in Matthew's Gospel.

This teaching block is all about Jesus preparing the disciples before their first mission trip.

Last month we learnt that focusing upon the Gospel message and going where Jesus wants you to go were essential preparations for Mission.

We also learnt that Gospel workers need Gospel supporters, and they are just as important in the gospel outreach.

Finally, we learnt that our lifestyle and Christian character was the best way to witness for Jesus. The more we are like Jesus, the better we can witness for Him.

The rest of chapter 10 is devoted to two themes.

Jesus prepares His disciples for the **enemy within** and the **enemy without**.

Today we will focus upon the **enemy within from v. 26-33.**

In these verses Jesus shows His disciples three ways that they can be stopped from living the Christian life the way God intends it to be lived.

It is easy to identify these ways by their common thread. **In v. 26 it says "do not fear",**

In v.28 Jesus repeats the words "do not fear" and in **v. 31 Jesus says again, "do not fear".**

Although Mission trips at this time were likely to suffer persecution from outside, Jesus first of all exposes the challenge to mission from inside their hearts and minds.

As we go through these three challenges, Jesus gives His disciples a **reason to be encouraged** as they face the reality of fear from within.

Although we are dealing with a challenge to mission in Israel, 2,000 years ago, the transferable principles are valid for our mission challenge today.

1. Do not fear when they slander you. – v. 25-27.

In v. 25b we are told that they called Jesus "**Beelzebub**".

Beelzebub was the prince of demons. If we turn back to Matthew Chapter 9: v.34 we will notice what the Pharisees said about Jesus, "He casts out demons by the ruler of demons".

This slander about Jesus from the respected religious leaders must have already hurt the disciples. No doubt the real devil was already challenging the disciple's thinking about following Jesus.

It is one of the characteristics of Satan that he is an accuser of believers in Jesus.

He is the Father of lies. (John 8: v.44)

The disciples would have had a fear of being different from the religion of the day.

If the disciples followed Jesus, then people would slander them too.

The temptation is to give up when we are under the pressure of slanderous accusations.

Sometimes these are rather mild, like "you don't really believe in the Bible, science has proved it to be wrong..." you are a horrible person if you object to my "Gay" life-style. There is a word for people like you. It is "Homophobic."

Everywhere Christians go they are slandered if they teach the truth about God's word to a society that rejects it.

But Jesus said "Don't be afraid..." He gives the reason why in v. 26-27.

(v. 26-27)

²⁶ Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

²⁷ "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.

Firstly, we need to understand the immediate context of Jesus's words and then apply them to our situation today.

When Jesus spoke these words, nobody really knew what the Pharisees, Chief Priests and Scribes were plotting. They were plotting to kill Jesus.

Everybody thought that these godly men upheld the traditions of the Jewish nation and were closer to God than anybody else.

However, the reality was that these men were completely out of touch with the God of the Bible and history has **uncovered** their evil scheme to kill Jesus.

Jesus tells us in v. 27 that the way to counteract slander from the devil is to **carry on preaching the Gospel.**

The truth of what you are preaching will be vindicated by changed lives.

When people respond to the Gospel message, and really trust Jesus for their Salvation, their lives are changed completely for all eternity.

When we are slandered in whatever form, we must believe in the power of "**Truth**" to transform lives. The truth is contained in the Bible!

2. Do not fear when you are physically persecuted – v. 28-31.

The second threat to those on a mission to preach the Gospel is the threat to physical violence. This threat was very real for the disciples, and it is very real for Christians living in Muslim countries around the world.

It is also something that can be experienced by Christians anywhere in the world today.

When I lived in Scotland in 1992, I had a brick thrown through my house window and was burgled. In London in 1994 I was punched in the face and fell to the ground and also had my Church office set fire by two children aged about 10 years old.

This is only very minor, but it did bring a sense of fear at the time.

Jesus tells His disciples that there is somebody greater to fear than the people who inflict physical violence upon you.

Psalm 34: v.9 (N.K.J.)

⁹ Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints!

There is no want to those who fear Him.

Jesus said that the only way to overcome human fear of physical persecution is to have the **correct fear of God.**

Proverbs 9: v. 10

¹⁰ "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.

Exodus 1: v. 17

¹⁷ But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.

Deuteronomy 10: v. 12.

¹² “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

When we fear God we take the **long term view of eternity**, knowing that whatever happens, God will raise us from the dead one day for a much better life that will exist without sin and without the fear of persecution.

In v. 29-31 Jesus encourages His disciples with the message of love, care and concern for what happens to us, even down to the smallest detail.

Using the hairs of our head and one of the smallest birds, Jesus gives us a visual picture to encourage us that God is sovereign in our individual circumstances.

The smallest sparrow is 12 cm. long and the largest is 18 cm. long.

We are born with 100,000 hair follicles. Jesus is not saying that he doesn't care about bald people. He is saying that the detail of His care for us is amazingly incomprehensible.

This is very encouraging!

3. Do not fear the rejection of dis-interested people. – v.32-33.

The fear in these two verses is not so clear. The thing we need to think about is what stops us confessing our faith to other people, apart from the fear of violence and apart from the fear of slander and being laughed at?

Well it is probably the fear of **rejection or people not being interested in Christianity.**

One thing that is very certain, once you start sharing your faith with non-Christians, where ever it might be, **you are going to get rejection** or people not being interested.

If you fear rejection, then you will not want to keep sharing your faith.

The amazing encouragement is that whenever we share about Jesus, it is then forwarded on to our Heavenly Father.

Imagine the scene in Heaven. You go out one day and share your faith with one person, the news gets up to Heaven and the cheers go up.

“Praise the Lord, somebody actually shared their faith today on the earth!”

It is **very discouraging** when we purpose to go out on a mission to share our faith and nobody is interested. However, if we could hear the cheers in Heaven whenever we get the opportunity to share our faith, we surely must not fear and keep going.

When the going gets tough on a mission trip, the Holy Spirit encourages us to keep going.

1 Corinthians 15: v. 58.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.