

Sunday 27-February-22

The King's Ambassador's Part 2

Isaiah 8:11-13

¹¹ This is what the LORD says to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people:

¹² "Do not call conspiracy

everything this people calls a conspiracy;

do not fear what they fear,

and do not dread it.

¹³ The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy,

he is the one you are to fear,

he is the one you are to dread.

Matthew 11:24-42

²⁴ "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶ "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the

soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn

"a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

³⁷ "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

⁴⁰ "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous

person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

Sermon: King's Ambassador's – Part 2

It would be good to have your **Bibles opened** up at **Matthew 10** – starting at **verse 24** – we're going through to **verse 42**.

Let me pray for God's guidance and understanding

Let's pray...

Recap

Last week we talked about us all being **ambassadors of Jesus**

And we said we were to be **“good” representatives** of Jesus and bring Him honour – and we are not to be **“bad” representatives** of Jesus and bring Him dishonour

We said last week - being ambassadors of Jesus looks like:

[PowerPoint 1-Recap]

1. **Ordinary people who can do extraordinary things** because of **Jesus' power/name** [*e.g., Mick Alley began a ministry to the Samburu tribe in Kenya in 2007 on his own - [He now has 35 staff in ministry; 30 gospel workers who lead Bible studies, church services and Sunday school classes for over 700 people per week; plus, schools ministry to 1000 students; and 3 bible seminars a year reaching 500 people]*– remember God uses the weak, the foolish, the lowly (1 Cor 1:27) and shows His power]
2. **Having a specific mission** to do: to **bring the** message of Jesus to lost sheep and to **help** those who are **broken**
3. **Relying on God's provision** in that mission
4. **Can expect opposition** because we are ambassadors of Jesus

What being an ambassador of Jesus looks like

So, as we continue in chapter 10 – **Jesus explains** in further **detail** what being His ambassadors looks – and He's expanding on that last point about expecting opposition...

[PowerPoint 2-Heading]

1. Don't expect better treatment than Jesus (vv24-25)

- First - As ambassadors of Jesus, we mustn't expect better treatment than Jesus got – that's in v24-25

[PowerPoint 2a-treatment]

- The **student** is not above the **teacher**
- At school, a **student** doesn't get a better desk **than the teacher**
- At work an **employee** doesn't get more wages **than the boss**
- Jesus says **if He gets called Beelzebul/bud** – which is another name for the Devil – **His followers will get called all sorts of names for following Him too**
- Application: As followers of Jesus – we **may get the same or similar treatment to Jesus** – rejected, mistreated or persecuted
- Are we up for this treatment – remember last week Jesus said "when" His disciples are **persecuted** – not "if"?
- If we're NOT getting any negatives about our faith – it's worth asking ourselves – are we hiding our faith in Jesus – rather than sharing it?

(pause)

2. Don't make people bigger than God (vv26-31)

- Second – as ambassadors of Jesus – **don't make people or circumstances bigger than God** – that's in verses 26 to 31

[PowerPoint 2b-people bigger]

- **Jesus tells His disciples** not to be afraid of those who persecute them – v26.
- When we are afraid of people who are persecuting or ridiculing us because of our faith in Jesus– we're **making those people really big and making God really small**

- We're basically saying their threat to us is **bigger than what God can do to deal with it** – and we're **putting limits on God**
- Instead, we are to **be bold and share our faith** – because as Jesus says – vv26-27 - at the end of the day – **the truth about God and the truth about Jesus will all come out in the wash** – it will all be revealed.
- V28 – the worse that people can do to us is **kill our body** – they can't kill our soul – which is designed for eternity (as Eccl 3:11 says - *God set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*)
- So, **Jesus says** don't be afraid of humans who can only kill the body – but be afraid of the One (that's God) who controls our final destination when we die – either Heaven if we believe in Jesus – or Hell – if we don't believe Jesus
- [The Russian invasion of the Ukraine can't take away the souls of the Ukrainians – but God can take away the souls of those who perpetrate evil and persecute Christians – and cast them into Hell]
- This warning “not to be afraid of humans” is nothing new – our **OT reading from Isaiah 8:11-13** – God through the prophet Isaiah - warned the people of Israel about the same thing –
- **Isaiah warned the people** – not to listen to the latest conspiracy theories – and not to be afraid of what people are saying
- Instead – as Isaiah 8:13 says - *The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread.*
- You see **God is bigger than any human being**
- God is a **detailed God** – see v29 – **He's involved in the life of sparrows** (which are 2 a penny) – and V30 - **He even knows the number of hairs on our head**

- Application: If He cares about the lives of two common sparrows – **how much more will He care for us human beings** – His prize possession– who God sees as worth more than many sparrows
- Application: Therefore, we can be **confident that God knows and cares for us intimately** – down to the small details of our lives!
- God is - a **God of the big picture** and a **God of detail!**
- Application: And if we know God loves and cares about us intimately – there's no need to be afraid – instead as 1 John 4:18 says- *perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment*
- Application – And because **God is in control** and **He loves us** and **wants us to be ambassadors for Jesus** - **we can be bold** – as Romans 10:9-10 says:
⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.
- Application: Is there someone we can boldly share the Gospel with – but we're afraid to - because we're not sure how they will react – and what they will they say to us?

(pause)

3. It's all about Jesus – not us (vv32-42)

[PowerPoint 2c-All about Jesus]

- Third – it might sound obvious – but being ambassadors of Jesus means – **it's all about Jesus – not us - that's in verses 32 to 42.**
- In our Christian walk – v32 – **we are to acknowledge Jesus** – it literally means to speak the same as Jesus – in other words – **we are to be on the same page as Jesus.**

As people watch us or listen to us – **it's like we're a sign post** – that says – *don't look at me; look at Jesus.*

- And when we tell others about Jesus (acknowledge) – **Jesus will tell God the Father about us** – that is Jesus will acknowledge us before God the Father
- On the other hand – v33 – if we don't acknowledge Jesus – **then Jesus has the right to disown us. Because we would have rejected the name above all names and rejected the only name under Heaven by which we can be saved** (Acts 4:12)
- To show that Jesus is to be our priority in our lives – He says –in **v34** – **that He's not come to bring peace on Earth – He's come with a sword**
- Not a literal military sword – but the **sword of His Word – God's Word**
- **God's Word is powerful** –
- God promises in Isaiah 55:11 – that **His Word will go out and achieve His purposes and not return to Him empty**
- And as the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 4:12 that – *the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*
- You see the **Word of God** is a **powerful weapon** – like a sword
- It **changes people from the inside out** – it **penetrates stubborn hearts** – and **transforms people's thinking**
- It afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted
- God's word - both wounds and heals
- It sometimes causes offence – especially when people refuse to take on board what God is saying
- And because God's word sometimes causes offence
- **Jesus says in v35 and 36** – it **may cause conflict** within families

- For example - the conflict may be where we believe in a truth from the Bible – say like **John 14:6** [where Jesus says – *“I am the way, the truth and the life - no one comes to the Father except through me”* – and someone in the family can’t accept Jesus is the only way to Heaven – **they might believe all other religions lead to Heaven**
- Another example – we **believe God’s definition of marriage in the Bible is between a man and a woman** – but someone in the family supports same sex marriage – and this leads to conflict.
- Jesus is warning – that as Christians – **we must expect opposition** – **we must expect conflict** – even in our own families – **BECAUSE we have made Jesus a priority in our lives!**
- Jesus makes it clear in v37 – that as ambassadors of Jesus – **our priority is Him first.** We **must love Jesus** more than our father, mother, son or daughter
- It doesn’t mean we are not to love our family members – it just **means we are to love Jesus more!**
- This may trouble us – and sometimes make us uncomfortable – but as Jesus’ ambassadors - **our first love must be Jesus** – Jesus demands us to make Him a priority over everything and everybody – **it’s all about Jesus** – not us!

(pause)

- As we said last week – **Jesus is no false recruiter** – he **spells out our job description** in great detail
- So, in verses 38-39 – **Jesus likens following Him** – in terms of taking up a **cross**
- Now remember the **Romans occupied** and ruled **Israel** at the time of Jesus
- The Romans had rather a **unique and cruel way of punishing people for crimes** – by **crucifying them on a wooden cross**

- This punishment involved the **one found guilty carrying a wooden cross to the place of crucifixion** – the **carrying** of a heavy wooden **cross** was also punishment.
- All the wooden **crosses** around the place **acted as a deterrent** for those who were thinking of breaking the law
- As Jesus tells His disciples to take up their cross – **in their minds is the shocking possibility** - that following Jesus and being His ambassadors – **may well lead to them dying for His sake!**
- You see back in verse 18 – Jesus says the disciples are His witnesses
- The word for **witness** in **Greek** is **martoos** – where we get our English Word – **martyr**
- Originally this word – simply **meant** someone who was a **witness for someone** or who **gave a testimony** about someone in court
- So, for Christians the word meant – **being a witness to Jesus and giving testimony about Him**
- But as Christians became more and more persecuted – and **many of them died for the sake of Jesus** – the word martoos then came to mean a witness who died for their faith in Jesus
- So as Jesus tells His disciples to take up their cross – He's telling them to not worry about their own life and well-being but to give their complete attention and devotion to Jesus
- As the MSG puts it in vv38-39: *If you don't go all the way with me, through thick and thin, you don't deserve me. If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you'll find both yourself and me.*
- By losing their life for Jesus – **the disciples will find eternal life** – a life with Jesus forever

- Being an ambassador for Jesus – is all about Jesus – not about us
- So much so – Jesus says – that even when people welcome us as ambassadors of Jesus - they are **actually** welcoming Jesus
- It's like the master and the students are intimately linked – by the Good News that Jesus can save people for Heaven – **and because they are so intimately linked** – when people accept us as an ambassador for Jesus – they're **actually** accepting Jesus – our master
- V42 – Even the smallest act of kindness – **giving a cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty** – has spiritual significance.
- You see - when we help someone practically like this – **we show the love of Jesus to them practically** – and because they are ever so grateful for that practical help – **they may come to know Jesus as their saviour** – and that practical action - has then turned into spiritual action
- The simple act of giving a physical cup of water – **may lead them to drink spiritual living water from Jesus – which wells up into eternal life (John 4:14)**
- So suddenly our simple act of kindness or welcome – **becomes all about Jesus – and not about us!**

Challenge

[PowerPoint 3-Challenge]

Let me **leave** us with a **challenge** again this morning...

It would be good if we were to **challenge ourselves this morning** – is there a person or a situation in our lives – **that we're making bigger than God** – and we're letting it overwhelm us – **instead of realizing God is bigger than any person and any situation.**
 Perhaps – this morning we could - commit that person or situation to God – and **ask God to show His power and sovereignty in this area of our lives.**

Conclusion (Romans 8:31)

[PowerPoint 4-Conclusion]

To **finish up** then,

If we wanted to sum up Matthew 10:24-42 – It's saying – by following Jesus – we will face – opposition and persecution – perhaps even hostility or conflict in our families – but we are to be bold and courageous – and do as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:31 – *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for sending King Jesus

Help us to follow Him faithfully as His ambassadors

Help us to expect and endure opposition – even within our families

Help us not to make people's opposition to us bigger than God Himself

Help us to realize Father, that you are sovereign in all things – and if you are for us – who can be against us

Help us to remember – our mission is all about Jesus – and not about ourselves

In His name we pray. Amen.

Benediction (Jude 24-25)

²⁴ To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— ²⁵ to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.