

Bible Study Guide: Week of 6-15-2020

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Matthew 10:24-39

24 "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! 26 "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 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. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. 34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and one's foes will be members of one's own household. 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:24-39

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The theme of a disciple not being above the teacher nor the slave above the master is common in the gospels. It is one of Jesus' most well-known expressions. Already at this point in Jesus' ministry he was experiencing resistance to his Gospel message. While the Gospel is assuredly good news for us, it can be bad news to the sinful parts of our lives that we still cling to. In Jesus' ministry, this manifested in various ways. For instance, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons "by the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 12:24). "Beelzebul" is a term based on a Canaanite god "Ba'al Zebul" or "Ba'al Zebub." "Ba'al" was the Canaanite term meaning Lord or God. "Zebul" means "house" or "dwelling place." "Zebub" on the other hand means "flies." So the Canaanite god was either known as the "lord of the heavenly home" or "lord of the flies." Either way, by Jesus' day the term was applied not to a god, but rather to a demonic ruler or prince; the chief demon, in fact. When Jesus' opponents accuse him of casting out demons using the power of the chief demon, Jesus goes on to explain that, by their logic, the demons must be divided against one another and, therefore, doomed to fall. Here, Jesus is warning his followers that they can expect the same unfair treatment and accusations as he will endure. Jesus is warning his followers not to

expect a smooth road or an easy journey in following him. Remember, Jesus' road leads to the cross. Those who follow him can expect a similar path.

26 "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.

The powers of this world will eventually be unmasked and the truth of God will be revealed in time. Therefore, Jesus tells his followers to be bold in their proclamation of the gospel.

28 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.

"Those who kill the body" may refer generally to anyone who wishes to harm the disciples, but it chiefly refers to political powers that will seek to stifle Jesus' message. He himself will be nailed to a Roman cross—the ultimate display of authority that Rome had to wield against him. Yet, we know that he conquered the cross and death itself. So here, he warns his disciples that they are not to fear those who can similarly put them to death to silence the gospel message. Rather, they are to fear "him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." The term for "hell" here is *Gehenna*, the name of a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem which is used metaphorically for a place of eternal torment for the unredeemed. In other words, Jesus is saying, the disciples should worry not about physical death or threats, but about being true and faithful to the gospel. Even if their bodies perish, they will be vindicated in eternity.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Here Jesus explains that the God who knows each hair on their heads and who keeps count of every tiny sparrow knows and values the disciples and has them well in hand in spite of what might happen to them in this life.

32 "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

Jesus reminds the disciples that their witness and faithfulness matter and that they are to be faithful and sure in their acknowledgement of God just as God's acknowledgement of them is true and trustworthy.

34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

We send Christmas cards that say "Peace on Earth." Jesus is our "Prince of Peace." Jesus said to his disciples, "My peace I give to you" and "Peace be with you." How is it that he can say he has not come to bring peace, but a sword? Certainly his words can be misinterpreted, as one of his disciples seemed to misinterpret them in the garden of Gethsemane, taking up a sword to fight for Jesus (Matthew 26:51). Although Jesus' rule and reign is one of peacemaking, the powers that oppose God's rule will often fight to maintain control. Jesus is not urging his disciples to use violent force, but rather to expect violent opposition to Jesus' gentle rule.

35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

As often happened for Jesus' early followers, Jesus predicts that his message will cause divisions among families. People would have to choose between family allegiance and allegiance to the gospel message. This seems strange to our ears because we live in a culture in which Christianity has been normative for generations. We cannot imagine that someone choosing to follow Jesus would cause hardship or conflict between that person and his or her family.

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

The gospel presents Jesus' would-be followers with a demand to reorganize the hierarchy of their lives. God becomes the chief concern of the life of the disciple. Likewise, the gospel presents Jesus' would-be followers with the daily challenge of cross-bearing.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Where do you find fear in our world today? How do Jesus' words about fear and power speak to our current situation?**
- 2. What might it mean for your own life and journey as a disciple that Jesus said he came to bring not peace, but a sword?**
- 3. How is God calling you to take up the cross and follow him this week?**