

It Is Enough

“It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.” Matthew 10:25a

This weekend’s readings put many weighty words in front of us. There’s Jeremiah’s strong accusation to the Lord. There’s Paul’s powerful call for lifestyle change. And then there’s Jesus’ warning to His disciples about what was coming and whom to fear. We could scan over these passages many times and each time, I think, different words would grab us and alarm us. It’s hard not to listen to all these words and not squirm.

Among the various phrases and lines that may strike us, I want us to focus in on a specific line from Jesus in our Gospel reading that resonates with everything we’ve read in this service. In verse twenty-five of our Gospel reading, Jesus said, **“It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.”** This statement from Jesus lays out a bold and sobering reality for followers of God. It’s both a challenging and comforting message. It’s both a convicting and consoling truth. And as we unpack Jesus’ words, I’m going to encourage all of us to dig into His words by considering this question, is it enough? Is it enough for me to be like Jesus? Is it enough for me to be like Jesus?

Now before we rush to give an answer in our own minds to this question, we would do well to recognize what this question is truly asking. For someone to be like Jesus, or as Jesus put it to His twelve disciples, for disciples to be like their Teacher, or servants like their Master, suffering is unavoidable. This why, Jesus follows up this powerful proclamation with an example, **“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.”** (*Matthew 10:25b*) In other words if people are so bold call God in the flesh a derogatory term associated with Satan, how much more boldly will they insult His followers?

Then add to Jesus’ example the isolation and persecution He describes to His disciples, **“Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake ...”** (*Matthew 10:21-22a*) Boy, what a difficult message to hear on Father’s Day weekend! Even more so, what a difficult message for any believer to hear at any time! Being like Jesus, following Jesus, it’s hard. And so, we return to our question, is it enough for me to be like Jesus?

We might not be as quick to answer this time around. Is it enough for me to be like Jesus, especially when we know what’s coming. It might be tempting to put conditions on this statement to bend it into something more appealing. It’s enough for me to be like Jesus, when life is comfortable; when my family and friends also follow Jesus; when we’re here in church; when things make sense; when everyone else we know is also doing it. Perhaps there’s another way we’d condition Jesus’ statement and if we’re honest, each of us has something that conditions this passage in our own lives. It’s enough for me to be like Jesus only when x, y, or z is met.

But Jesus’ words aren’t conditional. They aren’t it’s enough in this situation or that situation, but not that one. It’s either enough to be like Jesus or it’s not, nothing in between. It’s either face the reality of suffering or aimlessly try to find any other way to avoid it. There’s no, I’ll pick and choose where and when I must suffer. It’s not an easy thing for us to hear and that’s what makes us struggle to honestly say, it is enough for me to be like Jesus. We may want to confidently voice this, but so many things make us hesitant to do so.

And instead of denying this wrestling that we have, instead of trying to ignore and cover up this struggle we face, we have two examples in our readings this weekend that allow us to see others in this same struggle. Both Jeremiah and Jesus’ twelve disciples demonstrate to us ways that followers of God wrestle with suffering that comes their way and yet by God’s grace remain connected to Him. What we witness aren’t sinful people somehow managing to become perfect, but rather a perfect God pulling out faithful witnesses from His fallen followers.

Our reading from Jeremiah shares with us the author’s words that start with frustration and venting over what he has been experiencing. Jeremiah’s role as God’s prophet was one of the most challenging of all the prophets in the Bible. He was called to proclaim difficult news of destruction and exile to an Israel that was falsely comfortable and secure in their current situation. Exile was coming for these people who had so detached themselves from following God to the point that they would offer up human sacrifices to false gods. They didn’t listen to Jeremiah. They threatened him. And just prior to our reading, Jeremiah had been publicly humiliated, placed in stocks by one the priests because of the message God had called him to share.

Once released from those stocks, we hear Jeremiah vent to the Lord. He seems to be at the end of what he can endure. He’s so frustrated that he cries out to the Lord claiming that the Lord had forced him into a situation

that he didn't want to be in. Yet, after Jeremiah voices his struggle with the Lord to the Lord, his focus in this very same comment shifts. By God's grace Jeremiah rises above his current situation to see beyond what he was experiencing. Jeremiah echoes what the Lord had promised him and with his God's eternal perspective in mind, he says, **"Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of the evildoers."** (*Jeremiah 20:13*) Trusting the Lord's promise to him, Jeremiah asserts a reality that he can't see yet; a reality that his present situation doesn't fit. By the Lord's mercy, Jeremiah sees through his suffering to the fulfillment of God's promise.

Years after Jeremiah, in our Gospel reading, Jesus is preparing His present followers for challenges like the ones Jeremiah faced. The twelve disciples are being prepared to go out on their own to various towns to share the news that Jesus had given to them. From what Scripture shares, this initial sending is successful. The disciples return with lots to report to Jesus. It appears for these disciples that it is enough for them to be like Jesus. But something changes a little later.

When the intensity and reality of suffering ramps up as Jesus is betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, these twelve disciples desert Jesus. Eleven of the twelve flee and with his betraying kiss, Judas, the other of the twelve, delivers Jesus over to authorities. Based on the bond between Jesus and His disciples, we might even say, brothers delivered brother over to death. In a short time span, these men went from acting like it was enough to be like Jesus to clearly revealing their own sinful conditions on Jesus' statement. For Judas the condition was money, for the others it appeared to be their safety that made that situation not enough to be like Jesus.

However, these brothers' failures didn't keep Jesus from perfectly executing His plan. He endured the suffering of the cross, its shame and humiliation. He died, was buried, and rose, so that He might restore these men who failed; so that He might prove to them that they were truly more valuable to Him than the sparrows. Yes, Jesus did this for all of them, even for Judas who sadly turned away from this promise. But for the eleven who clung to Jesus' promise, He would restore and strengthen them to live like it was enough to be like Jesus, so that when they were later persecuted for His name, they rejoiced instead of fleeing their situation.

Dear friends in Christ, the same God who sustained Jeremiah throughout his suffering, the same God who restored and strengthened the eleven disciples through their fears and failures with suffering, is here with you today to answer that question for you. It is enough for you to be like Jesus. And yes, while this means suffering, it also means that you have the Lord of suffering with you. He not only has endured the suffering you face, but He has also overcome all the suffering you face.

Suffering hasn't won, Jesus has. No matter the situation. No matter the intensity. No matter the conditions. Jesus has made it enough to be like Him in every circumstance. Will this still get frustrating and lead you to vent to God about what you're enduring, I imagine so. But just like with Jeremiah, He'll listen to your venting and lead you back to proclaiming His promise even though you can't see its fulfillment yet. Will you stumble and fall along the way facing moments where you'll give into fear, yes, that will happen. But just like Jesus forgave, renewed, and strengthened those eleven disciples, He will you too.

This really is a message for fathers this Father's Day weekend. Amid all the things you might choose to focus on to be the father God has called you to be, remember that it is enough for you to be like Jesus for your family, for your wife, for your kids. Point them to Jesus by prioritizing Him in your life not only here at church but throughout the week. Have a conversation about faith with them in the car, lead a devotion at the dinner table, pray with them at the bedside. Suffer along with them as they face challenges of faith. Encourage them with the eternal perspective and value that God has given you. It is enough for you to be like Jesus for He has delivered you from the hands of sin, Satan, and death. You are more valuable to Him than anything else in His creation.

This message also goes for everyone here and anyone watching elsewhere. It is enough for you to be like Jesus because He is with you in your suffering. He will lead you through your suffering. He is your sure and certain hope that your suffering does not win. As Jesus walks you through your suffering, He will also help you see through that suffering to the fullness of the promises He has made to you. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Go in peace. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan