

HE SAID WHAT?!?!

Title: Part 6 – “Not Safe, but Good”

Date: May 17, 2026

While everyone in the house is saying “Hi” I want to take a second to welcome everyone joining us online or on our app. We consider you a part of our family, and we'd love to know how we can pray for you or serve you this week. AND if this message blesses you in any way, consider sharing it with a friend.

Well, who's excited for the teaching of God's Word today? Come on, who needs to hear a fresh word from God in the House? If you have a Bible with you or on your phone, we are heading to **Matthew 10**. If you don't have a Bible, no worries, we'll throw everything on the screens.

BUT before we dive into this I have a disclaimer. Turn to someone next to you and say, “Oh boy...” Here's my disclaimer. What Jesus says in this passage is going to be uncomfortable. I considered skipping this text. I did. For about five seconds. But you can't do a series on the things Jesus actually said and only include the nice ones, amen? That would be spiritual malpractice and honestly, I think this might be the one some of us need to hear the most.

So, Matthew 10, starting in verse 34. Jesus tells His disciples this as He is sending them out on their own:

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.

Alrighty then... some of you are like, “Is it too late to leave and catch this one online?”

If you are just jumping in with us, we are in week 6 of a collection of messages called “He Said What?” where we have been getting to know the REAL Jesus in His own words. Over the past five weeks, we've met a Jesus who is compassionate, gracious, fearless and beautiful. He asks the question that defines your identity. He reveals a God more loving than you expected. He diagnoses what keeps you stuck. He extends grace that refuses to condemn you. He looks at your unseen sacrifices and calls them beautiful.

This is a Jesus most of us really like. He's warm. He's safe. He's the Jesus you put on a greeting card or a coffee mug, right? BUT today, that same Jesus says something that doesn't fit on a coffee mug. I even looked on Amazon, no mugs with this saying on it. Jesus says something so confrontational and disruptive that it would probably land Him on the FBI terrorist watch list if He said it today, right?

SO, I'm calling this message:

Not Safe, but Good

Everyone say, "Not safe." Now say, "But Good!" We will see how the real Jesus is BOTH of those.

AND to get us rolling I've got a question for you, and I want you to be honest, even if just in your own head. How many of you are tired? Not just physically tired, but tired of pretending, tired of performing, tired of managing everyone's expectations. Tired of saying "I'm fine" when you're not fine. Tired of keeping a peace that isn't actually peace at all—it's just the absence of conflict, which is not the same thing. Anyone comfortable enough to admit you are tired of all that today?

So, if that is you, let me throw out something that might be controversial:

Jesus didn't call us to be nice.

That also is not on coffee mugs. But Jesus never once called His followers to be nice. Instead, Jesus called His followers to be radically kind, loving, and truthful, which often involved uncomfortable, or courageous actions rather than just being "nice." BUT today we have churches in our country that are more committed to being nice than to being faithful.

And I want to be careful here because I'm not advocating for being a jerk. Please don't leave here and go pick a fight with your mother-in-law and say, "Pastor Brian told me to bring the sword." That's not what this is. But there is a massive difference between niceness and cowardice. There is a massive difference between being gracious and being gutless. And Jesus is about to draw that line for us.

How many of you have ever read the Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis? In "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" there's this moment where the children first hear about Aslan, the lion. And one of the children, Susan, asks if Aslan is safe. And Mr. Beaver looks at her and says:

“Safe? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn't safe. But he's good.”

That's the passage in front of us today. The Jesus we've been meeting for five weeks is absolutely good. But He is not safe. And I think our culture—and as I said, a lot of our churches—have tried to make Him safe. We've sanded down the edges. We've removed the parts that make people uncomfortable. We've turned the Lion of Judah into a house cat. And then we wonder why our faith has no teeth! Amen?

Because the version of Jesus that never disrupts anything is also the version of Jesus that never changes anything. If your Jesus has never made you uncomfortable, you might be following a Jesus of your own design! And friend, that Jesus cannot save you!

So, what does Jesus actually say here? And why would the Prince of Peace say He came to bring a sword? Let's dig in. Number 1:

1. Jesus didn't come to make you comfortable; He came to make you free.

Let me give you the context because this verse gets yanked out of its setting all the time and it creates all kinds of problems. Matthew 10 is a COMMISSIONING chapter.

Jesus is sending the twelve disciples out on their first mission trip. He's given them authority to heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons. Pretty amazing stuff. But then, starting in about verse 16, He starts warning them. And the warnings get progressively more intense. “I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves.” “They will hand you over to local councils and flog you.” “Brother will betray brother to death.” “You will be hated by everyone because of me.”

This is not a pep talk. This is not a “you've got this, go get ‘em” speech. This is Jesus being brutally honest about what following Him is actually going to cost. And then He drops verse 34:

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. **IDID NOT COME TO BRING PEACE, BUT A SWORD.**”

Now, at first glance this seems like it contradicts everything we know about Jesus. This is the same guy the angels announced at His birth with “peace on earth and goodwill toward men.” This is the same guy who told His disciples in John 14, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.” So, which is it? Peace or a sword? Is Jesus contradicting Himself?

Which is an honest question, right? BUT here's the distinction that Jesus is making. There are two kinds of peace. There's the peace that comes from everyone pretending

everything is fine. And there's the peace that comes from truth. The first kind of peace is what I call the "Thanksgiving dinner" peace. You know what I'm talking about. Everybody sits at the table, nobody mentions the elephant in the room, you talk about the weather and the football game, and you call it a nice holiday. Meanwhile, underneath the surface, there are unresolved conflicts, unspoken resentments, and relationships that are slowly dying because nobody will say the thing that needs to be said.

That's false peace. That's the peace the world gives. And Jesus says, "I didn't come for THAT." Remember what I said before, "Jesus didn't call us to be nice."

"OK, that's great and all... but Jesus says He's bringing a sword. Last a checked a sword is a weapon." AND you are right, and this is where our English and our cultural imagery get in the way. The word we translate as sword is not what you are thinking. I saw sword and you think King Author and Excalibur or Captain Jack Sparrow. BUT the actual sword Jesus is talking about here is more of a short dagger used for cutting and separating. Often carried by fishermen to fillet a fish. Meaning, Jesus is not calling for holy wars or crusades or anything like that. He's describing the inevitable result of truth in a world that prefers lies.

In other words, He's saying, "When you follow me, when you actually live by my values and speak my truth and refuse to compromise on what's right, it's going to create division. Not because you're being divisive, but because truth always divides." Does that make sense? A surgeon's scalpel cuts and divides, not to destroy, but to heal.

In fact, this is the same Greek word that is used in Hebrews 4:12:

¹² For 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.

So, Jesus is warning His guys, "Hey, when you go and proclaim the truth of My Kingdom, it's gonna cut, it's gonna make some people uncomfortable, but that is OK!"

Then He says this in verses 35-36. Jesus quotes the prophet Micah in Micah 7:6:

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."

Now, Micah originally wrote that about a society so corrupt that you couldn't even trust your own family. But Jesus takes that prophecy and repurposes it. He's saying: the

division in YOUR household won't come from corruption. It'll come from conviction. When you start following Me for real—not just Sunday-morning following, but Monday-through-Saturday following—not everyone in your life is going to be on board. Your family might not understand. Your friends might think you've gone off the deep end. Your coworker might stop inviting you to lunch. Not because you did anything wrong, but because your life is now making their compromise uncomfortable.

I've seen this play out so many times. Someone gives their life to Jesus. They get baptized. They start changing. They stop going to the old places, stop engaging in the old behaviors. And the people around them—sometimes even the people who love them most—start pushing back. “You've changed.” Yeah, that's the point! “Well, you're no fun anymore. You think you're better than us or something?” No, I just think there's something better FOR me.

That's the sword. It's not a weapon you swing. It's a line you walk. And not everyone in your life will walk it with you.

In a culture that is addicted to peacekeeping and conflict avoidance, this is radical. We have been trained since childhood to keep the peace. Don't rock the boat. Don't make waves. Don't be “that person.” Go along to get along. Smile and nod. And above all, whatever you do, don't talk about religion or politics at dinner.

And Jesus walks into that and says, “I'm not here to help you keep a peace that's killing you. I'm here to set you free from the prison of pretending.” Does that make sense?

When I was doing some research for this message I came across a body of research on what psychologists call “fawning.” Everyone say, “fawning.” What this is, is the fourth trauma response after fight, flight, and freeze. It's the people-pleasing reflex. It's when your default response to conflict or discomfort is to immediately agree, accommodate, and make the other person happy at the expense of your own convictions. And the research shows that chronic fawning leads to identity erosion. Meaning if you do it long enough, you literally lose track of who you are. You spend so much energy becoming whatever everyone else needs you to be that you can't remember what YOU actually believe.

I think that's a lot of Christians today! We've been so busy keeping the peace that we've lost our voice. We've been so focused on not offending anyone that we've stopped standing for anything. We've confused niceness with faithfulness.

Henry Cloud and John Townsend wrote about this in their book “Boundaries” which we have out in the lobby at Next Steps if you have never read it. But they say something that connects directly to what Jesus is teaching here:

“People who are unable to say no to others are usually unable to say yes to what matters most.”

Think about that. If you can't say no to the people around you, you will never be able to say yes to the God above you. The sword of Jesus is the thing that cuts through the false obligations, the toxic expectations, the unhealthy allegiances that have been running your life.

Jesus didn't come to make you comfortable. He came to make you free. But freedom always costs something. Which is the second thing:

2. Following Jesus will cost you something, and that's how you know it's real.

Amen? Following Jesus will cost you something, and Jesus makes that clear before He sends His boys out on their own into a world that will oppose their message. Look at verses 37 and 38. Again, at face value these are shocking statements, but Jesus says:

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.

Now before anyone panics, Jesus is NOT saying “don't love your family.” He's not saying your mom doesn't matter or your kids are unimportant. He's establishing an order of allegiance. He's saying there is one relationship that has to come first, and when that one is in its proper place, every other relationship actually gets healthier. But when family loyalty and Kingdom loyalty conflict, the Kingdom has to win.

In first-century Jewish culture, family honor was everything. Your identity was wrapped up in your family name, your tribe, your lineage. To place anything above family was unthinkable. And Jesus walks into that culture and says, “I come first. Before your parents. Before your children. Before the family name you've been protecting.” Jesus is not being cruel here, He's being clear! Because a Jesus who takes second place in your life is a Jesus who can't actually lead your life. You can't have a co-pilot for your soul. He's either Lord of everything or He's Lord of nothing.

And I know what some of you are thinking. “But Pastor Brian, I love Jesus AND my family.” Of course you do! And Jesus isn't asking you to stop loving your family. He's saying that when your allegiance to Him and your allegiance to family pull in opposite directions, He has to win.

BECAUSE here's the irony: when you put Jesus first, your family actually gets a BETTER version of you. A husband who follows Jesus is a better husband than one who follows his own instincts or what his dad told him a man was. A mom who answers to God first is a more grounded, more present mom than one who's trying to answer to everyone else. Getting the order right doesn't diminish your other relationships. It transforms them!

BUT getting the order right will cost you. I've watched people lose friendships over it. I've watched people lose promotions because they wouldn't compromise their integrity. I've watched families fracture because one person started following Jesus and the rest of the family resented the change. It's real. It's painful. And Jesus doesn't sugarcoat it.

In fact, read that highlighted word in verse 38 out loud... CROSS. This is the first time Jesus mentions the cross in Matthew's Gospel. The first time. And the disciples didn't know what was coming. They didn't know about Good Friday yet. But they knew what crosses were. They were Roman execution devices. They lined the roads. You would see them on the way into town—condemned men hanging there as a warning to anyone who would defy the Empire. So, when Jesus says, “take up your cross,” He's not talking about a piece of jewelry around your neck. He's saying following me might cost you everything. Your reputation, your relationships, your comfort, your career and maybe... even your life.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who stood against Hitler and was eventually executed for it, put it as plainly as anyone ever has:

“When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”

Bonhoeffer wasn't being dramatic. He lived it. He was a young, brilliant theologian who could have stayed safe in America, he was offered a teaching position at Union Seminary in New York. He took it. He lasted two weeks. Then he got on a boat and went back to Germany because he knew he couldn't sit in safety while his country burned. That decision eventually cost him his life. He was hanged in a concentration camp just weeks before the war ended.

Now, I'm not saying following Jesus is going to get you killed. For most of us in this room, the cost is going to look much more ordinary than that. It might be a friendship that doesn't survive your new convictions. It might be a promotion you don't get because you won't cut corners. It might be a holiday dinner that gets awkward because you decided to actually live out your faith instead of just talking about it. It might be the loneliness of being the only person in your circle who takes this seriously.

But here's what I want you to see. Every one of those costs is temporary. And everything Jesus gives you on the other side is eternal!

Now, I know that sounds heavy. But let me ask you something. What is it costing you right now to NOT follow Jesus? What's the price tag on the false peace you've been keeping? What's it costing your marriage to avoid the hard conversation? What's it costing your integrity to stay silent when you know you should speak? What's it costing your soul to keep performing for people whose approval you'll never fully earn?

Because following Jesus costs something. But not following Him costs more. It always costs more. The person who tries to save their life by playing it safe will lose the very thing they're trying to protect. Which is exactly what Jesus says next. Number 3:

3. The peace the world offers isn't the peace Jesus gives.

{PAUSE} Look at verse 39 again. This is the great inversion. This is the upside-down Kingdom in one sentence:

³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

The world says protect yourself. Jesus says give yourself away. The world says hold on tight. Jesus says open your hands. The world says build your brand, secure your future, manage your image. Jesus says die to all of it. And on the other side of that death, you'll find the life you were actually looking for.

This is the paradox at the center of Christianity. You gain by giving. You live by dying. You win by surrendering. And it makes absolutely no sense until you try it. Every person who has ever truly followed Jesus will tell you the same thing—the moment I stopped trying to save my own life was the moment I actually started living.

The great missionary to India, E. Stanley Jones once wrote:

“When you are surrendered to Christ you don't have to keep up appearances, to prove anything, to play a part; you have to just be yourself.”

He would go on to say, “We never live until we have gone to our own funeral.”

AND I'll be honest with you, there have been seasons in my own life where I was so busy protecting my life—my plans, my comfort, my reputation—that I wasn't living at all. I was just managing. Managing people's expectations. Managing my image. Managing the fallout of decisions I made to keep everyone happy. And you know what managing gets you? Exhaustion! It doesn't get you peace. It gets you a slow-burning anxiety that never quite goes away because you're always one conversation away from the whole thing falling apart.

And then God, in His kindness, has brought me to a place where I had to let go. Where the thing I was gripping so tightly had to be released. And I won't pretend it wasn't terrifying. It was. But on the other side of the letting go is freedom. That's the paradox. You think you're losing your life. But you're actually finding it for the first time.

That's what Jesus is saying. The life you've built on people-pleasing and peacekeeping and playing it safe? That's not your life. That's a cage. And the sword Jesus brings is meant to cut the lock off the door!

I think there are some people in this room right now who have been living in a cage of their own making. You've been so afraid of conflict, so afraid of disappointing someone, so afraid of losing something, that you've been saying no to God for years. You've been saying "yes" to everyone else and "not yet" to Jesus. And it's exhausting you. The performance is wearing you down. The people-pleasing is draining your soul. And somewhere deep inside, you know there has to be more than this.

There is. But it's on the other side of the sword. It's on the other side of the hard conversation you've been avoiding. It's on the other side of the boundary you're afraid to set. It's on the other side of the obedience that will cost you something. That's where the real peace is, not the peace that comes from pretending, but the peace that comes from finally, at long last, following Jesus regardless of what it costs.

Come on, some of you need this today! You have been held hostage by the opinions of people who are not God! You've been living your life by committee instead of by conviction! You've been taking polls when you should be taking up your cross! And Jesus is standing in this room right now saying, "I'm not safe. But I'm good. And I will never, ever lead you somewhere that isn't worth everything it cost you to get there!"

The Jesus on the greeting card can't do anything for you! The Jesus on the coffee mug can't transform your life! But the Jesus who said, "I came to bring a sword," THAT Jesus can cut through every chain that's been holding you back! THAT Jesus can sever every false allegiance that's been draining your soul! THAT Jesus can separate you from the lie that your job is to keep everyone happy and release you into the truth that your job is to follow Him!

And yeah, it's going to disrupt some things. It might disrupt some relationships. It might disrupt your career plans. It might disrupt your family's expectations of who you're supposed to be. Good. Because what Jesus builds on the other side of the disruption is always better than what you were protecting. Every single time.

SO, let's close with this.

If you're here today and you're not sure about Jesus—maybe you've been here for the past 6-weeks and you're still on the fence—let me be straight with you. If Jesus were just a nice teacher with nice ideas, He wouldn't have gotten crucified. Nice teachers don't get executed. He got crucified because He said things like what we read today. He made claims that threatened every power structure around Him. So, I'm not going to apologize for the fact that following Jesus might cost you something. But I will tell you, what you gain is worth infinitely more than what you lose.

AND I want to point out something you might have missed. In these 6-weeks, we've watched Jesus defend a woman caught in adultery. We've watched Him honor a woman whose sacrifice was called wasteful. Next week we will watch Him extend paradise to a criminal on the cross. My point is, the Jesus who brings a sword is the same Jesus who bends down in the dirt with the broken and climbs on the cross with you. The sword isn't for you. It's for everything that's been enslaving you.

So, this week, count the cost. Read Matthew 10. Read it slowly. And then ask yourself:

What is it costing me to NOT follow Jesus?

Because playing it safe has a price tag too. And it's higher than you think. It's costing you your joy, your integrity, your peace, maybe even your soul. At some point, the cost of staying comfortable exceeds the cost of following Jesus. I think for some of you, you passed that point a long time ago.

AND if you're a follower of Jesus, here's my challenge:

Where are you keeping false peace?

Where are you avoiding a hard conversation, a necessary boundary, a Kingdom conviction because you don't want to rock the boat? Maybe it's with a family member who needs to hear the truth from someone who loves them. Maybe it's with a friend who's heading down a destructive path, and you've been too afraid to say something. Maybe it's at work, where you've been compromising your values to keep your position. Maybe it's in your own home, where you've been playing a role instead of being real.

I don't know what it is, but this week I want you to identify one area where you have been prioritizing the approval of people over the obedience of God. And I want you to take up your cross in that specific area. Not to be combative. Not to start a fight. But to be faithful. Jesus managed to be the most confrontational person in the room and the most loving person in the room at the same time. That's what we're going for. Truth and love. The sword and the embrace both at the same time.

So, where are you keeping false peace?

Because the Jesus we've been getting to know is not safe. He disrupts. He divides. He demands and that can feel threatening. But hear me church, the sword He carries is never pointed at you. It's pointed at everything standing between you and the life He died to give you.

- Every false peace.
- Every toxic obligation.
- Every chain you thought you couldn't break.
- He came to cut those things off of you. Not to hurt you, but to free you.

He's not safe. But He is so, so good. Would you bow your heads with me?

[PRAYER TIME]