

A BETTER WAY: Week 5

Engaging a Culture of Hatred with Endurance

Matthew 10:21-25

1. Summary

There is a level of animosity in the world that leads people to betray family, oppress the vulnerable, and demonize those they see as enemies (i.e. those with political, cultural, religious, personal differences, etc.). Such hatred flourishes when people lack empathy for others and dehumanize them rather than feeling compassion.

Jesus assured his followers they would be on the receiving end of such hatred because he himself was betrayed, persecuted, and demonized to the point of his own death. He said, “you will be hated by everyone (lit. “all kinds of people” from governments to family members) because of my name” (Matthew 10:22).

In sending his disciples into a culture of hatred, he taught them to engage the world not by repaying hatred with hatred, but by enduring (i.e. staying true to their commitment to following Jesus, to carrying good news; Matthew 10:21-22), seeking the hospitality of those who are different rather than wearing persecution as a badge of honor (Matthew 10:23), and cultivating compassion and empathy for people rather than demonizing those on the other side of cultural divides (Matthew 10:24-25).

2. Introduction

a. Welcome

b. Series setup - A Better Way

- i. Week 1: Distress - Compassion
- ii. Week 2: Individualism - Hospitality
- iii. Week 3: Power - Wisdom
- iv. Week 4: Self-Preservation - Sacrifice

c. Cultural concerns today

- i. Health - mental, emotional, physical, relational, spiritual - esp. teens
- ii. National & Global concerns - economy, government, war, hunger
- iii. Civility - attitude toward people with whom you disagree - home, school, work, neighborhood, church, news
- iv. Macro Trends - information technology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, post-Christendom
- v. Gender & Sexuality - personal identity, gender fluidity, trans athletes
- vi. Race - tension, reconciliation, diversity

vii. Family - marriage, divorce, singleness

d. Today: Stories of Hatred

- i. At the federal level, hate crime laws include crimes committed on the basis of the victim's perceived or actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.
- ii. Headlines this weekend show hate crimes rising against transgender people, Hindus, minorities.
- iii. In NC, a brawl at a 6-year-old football game.

e. What do we do in a culture like this with stories like this?

- i. Not easy to answer, but we get some grounding in Jesus.

3. Three Sayings of Jesus

a. **Overcome hatred with endurance.**

- i. **Matthew 10:21-22** "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

1. This is like a wisdom saying. A proverb. There is power in knowing the tactics of the enemy. The ways of the world.

2. Betrayal of a brother, rather than love and loyalty.

- a. Micah 7:6-7. Hatred among God's people!
- b. Judas betrayed Jesus to death.
- c. May also be persistent disloyalty for a lifetime, all the way to the grave.
- d. May also be violence legitimated by the fear of death

3. "Hated"

- a. Hatred is a relatively stable feeling of intense dislike for another person, entity, or group. Hatred is distinct from short-lived feelings such as [anger](#) and disgust. While some forms of animosity may only manifest briefly and mildly, hatred is a form of active, ongoing hostility that often uses up significant emotional energy. **When someone feels**

hatred for another person, they often spend much of their time fixating on their anger, contempt, or dislike of the other person.

- b. What seems clear is that hatred tends to emerge as a learned emotion that flourishes in the absence of [compassion](#).
 - i. Compassion is feeling sympathy for another's pain or distress combined with the desire to soothe that person's suffering.
 - ii. Remember week one. Jesus looked with compassion on people in distress. Interesting that the antithesis to compassion is hatred.
 - iii. **Spiritual Check-in / Soul Index Exercise**
- c. Feelings of hatred or intense emotional dislike develop for many reasons. People might begin to hate another person or group when they:
 - i. Feel [envy](#) or want what the other person has. They may consider it unfair that someone has what they lack.
 - ii. Have contempt for another person or believe them to be inferior.
 - iii. Learn hatred from parents, their community, or other social groups.
 - iv. Are [humiliated](#) or mistreated by another person.
 - v. People also hate when they feel [powerless](#). Rather than turning their anxiety and shame inward, they may project that negativity onto an external target
 - vi. In other cases, a target is hated more for what they represent than for specific actions they have taken.
 - 1. Jesus said this would be the case for his followers. They would be hated because of his name. Everything he represents.
 - 2. **John 3:19.** This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

4. "Everyone"

- a. Not just institutions as in vv. 17-18. Also family relationships. Lit. “all kinds of people”
 - b. More personal and painful than institutional hostility.
- 5. Fear and doubt are natural responses to all this hatred and violence, especially when we see it among God’s people. It would tempt a follower of Jesus to give up her faith.
- 6. “Endures to the end will be saved”
 - a. We start off as a Christian through making a commitment to follow Jesus. We live as a Christian by continuing to follow Jesus.
 - b. Perseverance of the Saints.
 - i. As a middle school student I was plagued with doubt about whether I was saved. Whether I would go to heaven or hell when I die. I was concerned about whether I made the commitment the right way. But that’s not the place to look for assurance. It’s a matter of continuance - enduring to the end of life; the end of the age - that assures one of being saved.
 - c. Salvation is a present reality for those who follow Jesus and represent his kingdom in this world. At the same time, ultimately, salvation means living eternally in God’s presence after we die. That comes to those whose faith endures throughout their lifetime. The most fundamental goal for ourselves and others.
 - d. As a young parent I had lots of goals for my kids - now I just want to see them go to heaven when they die. When it comes down to it, that’s the basic thing.
- 7. Band of Brothers - My friends

*This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,*

*From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered—
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother;
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.*

b. Seek welcoming hospitality, not persecution.

- i. **Matthew 10:23** When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. For truly I tell you, you will not have gone through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

1. “Flee persecution”

- a. Persecution is not a badge of honor. Not something to be sought out. The disciples were to seek welcome hospitality, not persecution.
- b. There are parts of the world where Christians are truly persecuted for their faith, but it is not here.

- i. Throughout 2021, the number of Christians killed in **Nigeria** arguably reached the level of genocide. About 17 Christians are killed per day, according to **ACIA Africa**. In 2021’s first 200 days 3,462 Christians were murdered — the highest number since 2014.
- ii. The conflict in Nigeria is ongoing. Since 2009, nearly 43,000 Nigerian Christians have been killed, according to a **report by Intersociety**.
- iii. North Korea is one of the most hostile countries towards Christianity in the world. Religious freedom within the country is nonexistent, and Christians must keep their faith secret or else face execution, torture or imprisonment in a labor camp. Of the estimated 400,000 Christians in North Korea,

50-70,000 Christians are currently in labor camps, according to **Open Doors USA**.

2. “You will not have gone through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes”

a. Various views.

- i. Second coming? Resurrection?
- ii. Maybe more likely a short term view connected with the immediate assignment. Jesus would die and rise again before all Israel is reached.
- iii. The mission to Israel is incomplete.

c. **Empathize, don’t demonize.**

i. **Matthew 10:24-25** A disciple is not above his teacher, or a slave above his master. It is enough for a disciple to become like his teacher and a slave like his master. If they called the head of the house ‘Beelzebul,’ how much more the members of his household!

1. Jesus articulates a principle of subordination and applies it to his followers' subordination to him. Disciples and slaves are both subordinates.

a. Persecution is certain, not prosperity, even as we seek welcoming hospitality. Rejection vs. welcome.

b. Beelzebul - “lord of the flies”

- i. Luke 11:15. But some of them said, “He drives out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.”

2. Christians will be demonized. Dehumanized. But dehumanizing and demonizing other groups is not the way to respond.

3. Dehumanization research suggests that when people see others as less than human, [empathy](#) centers in the brain deactivate.

4. Empathy is the ability to recognize and relate to other people’s [emotions](#) and thoughts. Empathic thinking is often characterized as the willingness and ability to place oneself in another person’s situation, to feel another person’s feelings, or to recognize that another person might experience feelings in the same way as

oneself.

- ii. **Romans 12:17-18.** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
- iii. **Ephesians 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.