

XLIV. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King
“The Gospel Harvest Begins: Part 3 – The Apostles’ Mission”
Matthew 10:16-42
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August 25, 2013 – Morning Sermon

We are concluding our summer series this morning. Our focus will be on Matthew 10:24-42 and this is a record of the second of Jesus’ recorded sermons in the Gospel of Matthew. To make sure we are in the flow of it I’ll read first Matthew 10:16-23 which says [16] *“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. [17] Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, [18] and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. [19] When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. [20] For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. [21] Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, [22] and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. [23] When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

This summer we returned to our study in Matthew picking up with chapters 8 through 10. Matthew is the first author and first book of the New Testament and interestingly has a theme. The theme for the Gospel of Matthew is an evangelistic biography declaring that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Christ of Scripture, who was sent by the Father, verified by the Holy Spirit, and now proclaimed as King and Savior to all the nations until He returns in glory. With this theme the Gospel is to be proclaimed first to the Jew and then to the Gentile and that is the whole burden of this particular book of Matthew as it moves us forward. Interestingly, Matthew arranges his Gospel in five books. We have already studied two of those books. Books 1 and 2 are found in Matthew 1 through 8 which also include the first of Matthew’s recorded sermons of Jesus. The first is the Sermon on the Mount, the Gospel of the Kingdom and is found in Matthew 5 through 7.

We returned this summer for eleven studies in Matthew 8 through 10 and we’re concluding in this one. We are in the third of the five books of Matthew. Perhaps Matthew arranged his book with five divisions because he is the first author of the New Testament, convincing the Jewish people that this is the Messiah and the first author of the Old Testament is Moses who wrote five books. I think there is a little connection here that is going on. This third book of Matthew in Matthew 8 through 10 concludes by Matthew recording a second sermon. There are six of Jesus’ sermons recorded in your Bible in the Gospels. There is one in John and five in the Gospel of Matthew. The second one is called the Discourse of the Kingdom Harvest – the harvest of the Gospel, beginning with the Jews to all the Gentiles of all the nations. This is the discourse that

sends us out. We have studied on this sermon for four studies and I will not review the twelve lessons we have learned in those four studies, but I have them recorded on our church website (www.Briarwood.org).

I do want to take a moment to highlight three of them. Here is the first one. As Jesus sends His people out into the harvest He tells them the harvest is not a problem and it's plentiful. The Lord of the harvest, when He goes to the cross, has already secured the harvest. All that the Father has given to Him, He will lose not one. He has provided the saving work at the cross. He has bought all of His people at the cross and He will not lose one of them. He says there is no problem with the harvest.

Here is the second emphasis you need to remember. Here is the problem. We need laborers. Laborers come from the Lord of the harvest. So earnestly with fasting and prayer, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.

Thirdly, Jesus says the harvest field, when the laborers go to it, will turn into a battlefield. Jesus prepares them for it. When I read from Matthew 10 at the beginning of this study I tried to emphasize that for you. Jesus says I provide the harvest, I send the laborers in response to your prayers and now I want to tell you what will happen to you, the laborers when you go into the harvest. There will be three groups that will persecute you – family, religion and the state. You will be dragged before synagogues, religion and family. Fathers will rise against their children and children will rise against parents. There will be brothers against sisters. There will be family persecution when those who don't come to Christ persecute those who do. There will be religious persecution and state persecution where they will take you to court.

Now let me tell you the extent of this persecution. There are ten statements made in the text that will tell you what they will do. They will hate, drag, flog and kill you. He even repeats some of them. So having declared that and giving them the harvest in which the harvest field will actually be a battlefield, He is now turning His attention at the conclusion of this sermon by how to be ready for that. This isn't what we call today a very seeker centered message. Come to Jesus and you get a chance to die which is life.

Why does that happen in this world? Satan is a defeated foe but an active adversary. He has two basic adversarial tactics/strategies. Number one is penetration. Paul said to the church at Ephesus, "When I leave savage wolves are going to come in among you, the leaders of this church." Satan loves to infiltrate. He penetrates in order to infiltrate. He penetrates the church to discourage it, to detour it, to compromise its message and to get it off track of its message. He penetrates two groups. He penetrates the leadership. If he can get false leaders and teachers then when the shepherd drops the sheep scatter. The second group he goes after is the membership. He attempts to infiltrate the membership with grumbling, complaining, slander and gossip. He loves to be able to turn them on one another. So that's what Satan delights to do.

Satan not only penetrates but he also loves persecution. He does penetration to do infiltration of leadership and membership. He does persecution to do intimidation because whatever you fear controls you. So Jesus says when you go to the harvest Satan will come to intimidate you. He will try to silence you with the fear of man so that you won't speak for Him in that fraternity or that sorority or that team or to your classmates or to your friends or to your co-workers or neighbors. We might be ridiculed or mocked.

As I'm talking about this intimidation, being dragged or killed, you might be sitting there saying "What world is this guy living in?" The real question you ought to

ask yourself is ‘what world are you living in?’ You happen, in God’s providence, to be living in a very graciously, given bubble. If you were to go to Egypt right now you would see the fifty two churches that have been burned to the ground in the last two weeks and to the homes of Christians who have been destroyed and believers who have been killed. You could go to Uganda or the Middle East or Syria or places of Europe and you’d see much persecution among God’s people. We are living in a bubble and I would suggest to you that unless we get a Gospel Awakening, the bubble is about to burst.

The question is what will you and I do? What are we doing right now with the snide intimidating tactics of the world? What will you do when they actually start dragging you and killing you? You can’t be effective in the harvest unless you’re faithful. You can’t be faithful unless you’re fearless. It’s not the fearlessness that is screwed up from the inside of human resolution. It is a God given fearlessness that manifests itself with courage and humility all at the same time.

That’s what Jesus sets out to do in the last part of this sermon. He has given them the expectation and hasn’t painted anything a rosy color. Now He is going to take the moment to lead them through what the reasons are to be fearless, how it results in faithfulness and its effectiveness in the harvest field. That’s what He walks them through.

I want to try and illustrate this before I get into the text. When I was in college in the late 1960s there was a brochure that was handed out to us about a new academy that the Kansas City Royals (the baseball team) had just started. You had to pass an athletic and academic test to be eligible for this academy where they were trying to develop their next players from high school and college. If you passed then you would go. If you went they would teach you the fundamentals, intricacies, and the ins and outs of the game of baseball. On the first day you would go to the field. There was a man in our congregation that had gone to this academy that had verified this for me. As you went out to the field they would stand you at the infield, one of the coaches would go to the home plate dressed in a pitcher’s mask, batting helmet and athletic cup and then a pitcher would throw fastballs and hit him. He would take ten pitches. Then he would step aside and say “I’m still living. It didn’t kill me.”

Why didn’t they start with ground balls, fielding from the ground up or a swing? It was because they knew that it didn’t matter how athletic they were, if they were afraid of the ball they wouldn’t be able to play baseball effectively. It’s just like a football coach knows that if you are afraid of contact then you can’t be a football player. It’s just like a swimming coach knows that if you’re afraid of the water then you can’t be a swimmer. Fear paralyzes and Satan knows it. He can intimidate us into passivity or silence or we can come to God’s Word and see how Jesus can free us from fearlessness that leads to faithfulness that leads to effectiveness.

Let’s take a look at our text for this study now. Matthew 10:24-25 says [24] “*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. [25] It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.*” Basically the first One who gets mocked, dragged etc is Jesus. His own family didn’t believe who He was. He was brought before the religious leaders of the Sanhedrin and the courts with Pilate and Herod. They even told Him He was doing it because He was

demonic. Now if they have done that to Him, what will they do to you? How does He want you to respond when the inevitable comes to your life through intimidation?

Matthew 10:26-34 says [26] *“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. [27] What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. [28] And 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? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. [30] But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. [31] Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. [32] So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, [33] but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is 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.”*

He has come to bring the Gospel of peace and when you come to Him you are at peace with God and have the peace of God but the Gospel of peace does not bring peace to the world for those who reject. For those who reject it, it brings out the sword against it. When Jesus went to the cross He satisfied the wrath of God. He set in place the Gospel that actually provokes the wrath of men. So that sword will come out against the Gospel and those who proclaim it. What is the result?

Matthew 10:35-39 says [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 a person's enemies will be those of his own household. (The one in the house that does not accept and receive Christ then brings enmity against the one that does.) [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 his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. [39] Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

In looking at this text, I want to unravel the tapestry of the statements that Jesus makes in order to liberate us from fear so that we are fearless and then the result and the evidence of fearlessness which is faithfulness which leads to effectiveness. What does He say to liberate us from fear and promote fearlessness? He gives five statements. Here are the five reasons He gives for fearlessness.

The first one is Divine vindication. In Matthew 10:26 He says ... *for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.* He is saying that they will bring charges against you, malign you, and they have called Me a work of Beelzebul but there is coming a day of Divine vindication. I will vindicate My people. In fact, Peter picks up on this and will later say “the things they speak evil of you on the Day of judgment, on that Day they will glorify God for what you have done.” He says let’s make this clear. What you are being maligned with, these false charges, I will vindicate you in that day and their evil I will expose. I will vindicate you for the charges of evil then I will expose them in their evil purposes against you. Divine vindication leads to fearlessness.

The second one is Divine limitation. Matthew 10:28 says [28] *And 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.* He says let Me liberate you from the fear of men by reminding you of the liberating fear of God. What you fear is what directs you. We are allowed only

one fear in life and that is the awe of the majesty of the sovereign God of glory. It is the beginning of the wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Don't fear man. The worst they can do I have limited. The only thing I would allow them to do or the ultimate that I would allow them to do is to kill your body and that becomes your promotion day. That is the day you move to the new heavens and new earth with a new body. So don't fear those who can kill the body. That is all that I've allowed Satan and those who would follow him to do. That's it. There is a Divine limitation.

Simply He is saying killing your body is not termination, killing your body is only transition and transformation for the believer, but there is One who has authority over body and soul. It is the One who has the sentence of eternal life or eternal death in a place called hell or eternal life in a place called the new heavens and the new earth. He alone is worthy of your awe and majesty. Whatever is done against you and your body in this world is a temporal act and it is limited. They cannot send you into eternal condemnation. That is the prerogative of the sovereign Holy God of glory. So there is a Divine limitation upon the threats of those who bring persecution and judgment.

The third one is Divine Providence. I made the sparrow one of the least significant that can be bought for a penny and if a sparrow cannot fall or die without My engagement, knowledge and sovereign care, you are worth more than sparrows. By creation I made you in My image and by redemption I gave My Son to save you from your sins, to purchase you. If I care for sparrows, if I number hairs on your head, if I am engaged in your life and not that all things are good but all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose, then do not fear. I can take the care of hair and sparrows then I can take care of you. Sometimes I'll take you from the fire or sometimes from the water or sometimes through the fire or through the water but you'll never go through it without Me all the way, because I am yours and I have called you by name and you are Mine.

The fourth one is Divine justification. How do you know a saved man or woman? You are saved by faith. When someone believes they confess Christ. With the heart man believes and with the mouth he confesses. Those who confess Me before men I will confess before the Father for they are Mine. Who are Mine? It is those who believe in Me. How do you know those who believe in Me? They confess Me before men. Confessing doesn't save for confessing is the evidence of your faith and your faith is in Christ. It is Christ alone who saves you but the evidences of your faith is that confession. So those who have confessed Him before men, there is coming a day of justification that when we stand before God it is Jesus before the Father and all of the world that He declares, "They are Mine. They are washed in the blood and clothed in My righteousness."

Fifthly, there is also a day of Divine condemnation. Your enemies who are not converted, they one day will stand before the Lord in judgment. For whoever confesses Me and acknowledges Me before My Father in heaven, I will acknowledge before My Father in heaven but whoever denies Me before men, rejects Me, there is no other way of salvation. They will be denied before God the Father in heaven. So there is fearlessness, why? There is Divine vindication, Divine limitation, Divine Providence, Divine justification and Divine condemnation against those who would have destroyed His testimony but in fact will stand under His judgment in that Day.

Once that kind of emancipating work happens, how do you see that in someone's life? Now I want to show you from the text the five marks of faithfulness for those who have been emancipated to fearlessness. The first thing is there is an unfettered proclamation. They will shout Me from the housetops. You have to get into the flow of this. Up until now for seven chapters Jesus will do and say something and then Jesus ends by saying "Don't tell anybody." As you move into the harvest field in Matthew 10 Jesus says "not only go to the Jew first, go to the Gentile and shout it to the housetops." Get up on a wall, a mountain and shout it. Bring everything you have heard and bring it to light. You declare this an unfettered proclamation of the majesty of Christ who delights to save sinners who put their trust in Him alone.

The second mark of faithfulness because of fearlessness is unlimited allegiance. Not only will you shout it from the housetop, you will confess and acknowledge Me before men – powerful men, presidents, senators, kings, Caesars, religious leaders, state leaders, family leadership. It is not Caesar is Lord, but it is Jesus is Lord. It is before wherever that persecution would come from. There is an unlimited allegiance that is expressed that Christ is my Lord.

Number three, there is an unfettered proclamation and unlimited allegiance because there is an unrivaled affection. Those who come to Christ and are moved by the Spirit of God then there is no one or nothing that they would put before Him, beside Him, or above Him. That is why He says if you can't hate your father and mother and love Me because your persecution may come from right there, but if your life is controlled by any other relationship then that will lead to your silence in that relationship. You can't live for the favor of any man or woman for nothing takes precedence over your relationship with Christ.

Let try and illustrate it this way. I know they are well meaning when they say this. They tell people that they need to prioritize their life. We are all into that. So they say it should be something like Jesus, marriage, family, church, job, country and they'll make a list. I think that is well meaning but I think it's wrong. Jesus does not belong at the top of your list. He is your list and then He makes your list. It is because of your unrivaled affection to Him that your now free to be a prophet to your wife. If your life rises and falls on how well your life performs she can't stand that for she wasn't made for that. Your love for Christ must be total and complete which will then free you up not to suck another relationship dry, but to flow into that relationship for Christ because Christ is your all. Now you can parent your children without your children having to exist to validate your existence. Now you can engage in loving God's people and what it means to be a Christian citizen even if it means the state would turn against you because you have an unrivaled affection where Christ is your life. For to me to live is Christ and then He makes the list for our life.

Number four is that there is an unflinching obedience. We are willing to take up our cross. Jesus' cross purchased us. His suffering, His death purchased us. We take up our cross, our suffering and we don't redeem anybody but it does become a platform for us to manifest it and show our Redeemer. It becomes a platform for us to speak of our Redeemer. So there is an unflinching obedience where we will take up our cross and follow Christ because we love Him with an unrivaled affection, because we have given to Him an unlimited allegiance and because we're desirous of an unfettered proclamation in the harvest field.

Finally, there is an unstoppable self-denial. If you lose your life, you find it. If you live for your life, you lose it. One of the amazing things about Christianity is it is supra-logical. It's not illogical. If you want to live you have to die. That's why the Apostle Paul says "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. I have been crucified with Christ. The life I now live in the flesh I live by the power of the Son of God who has loved me and given Himself for me." Paul are you dead or living? Yes. I'm dead to myself and alive to Christ. We're not talking about denying self things, for that's still pretty self-centered. There may be things that you want to deny yourself to serve Christ. It is the denial of self. I'm dead to the world, to myself, I'm alive to Christ. Christ is my life – details to follow. The details will be worked out.

Here is the takeaway. Because the Gospel harvest field is a battlefield, then the Lord of the harvest will prepare the laborers of the harvest to be fearless in order to be faithful and effective in the harvest. You can't be effective without being faithful. You can't be faithful without being fearless because your fears will silence you. Stephen in the Bible becomes a great example of this. Jesus set him free and sent him into the harvest. In the book of Acts, the Gospel goes out and 3,000 people come to Christ. What is the next thing the world does? They persecute. They persecuted the believers; they sent Peter and John to jail, arrested Stephen and brought him to the synagogue. They brought him to the state and put the sentence of death on him. Family turned against him, the state turned against him and all of this was worked out directly in Stephen's life.

Stephen stood there with unflinching obedience. Read his sermon right before he was stoned. He gives this unfettered proclamation with unrivaled allegiance, unlimited following of Christ and when he gets to the end he keeps following His Savior who has gone before him. As his Savior said from the cross, he says before the stones bring him to breathlessness, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." One of the religious terrorists who is holding the coats for people to kill him will later lead others to death, will be brought to conversion. His name is Saul, now known as Paul.

Perhaps you noted something in this study. I gave you five reasons to fearlessness that leads to the five evidences of faithfulness and in those five different reasons for fearlessness, one thing was common in every one of them. It was Divine, it was God. I am so privileged to be a pastor/teacher of the Word of God because I know your Christian life is directly related to your relationship with Him and your knowledge of Him. If you have a small God, you have a small life. If you have a big God, you have a fearless life and an effective life – a Stephen life, a Christ reflecting life.

Here is my final thought. Matthew 10:40-42 says [40] *"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. [41] The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. [42] And whoever gives one of these little ones (speaking of His disciples here, just using this as a term of endearment) even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."*

Here is a little piece of good news. When you go to the harvest field, the harvest field becomes a battlefield and it also becomes a killing field, but in the midst of that danger, the Lord will raise up people that He will use to encourage you, receive you and to move you forward. Here is something else you need to know. Whatever is done to you, your Savior takes personally. In Matthew 24 Jesus says "I was sick and you visited

Me. I was hungry and you fed Me. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was in prison and you visited Me. Lord, when did we visit You, feed You or give You something to drink? When you did it to the least of these, My brethren, You did it to Me.”

On the road to Damascus there is that religious terrorist who is about to get converted, who from Stephen on had engaged in dragging, mocking and putting to death believers, there Jesus met him and said to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest Thou Me? Stephen, I own him and I have called him by name. As you participated that was against Me.” So wherever you go the Lord goes with you.

I love to study the Word of God. I have it in my language because of guys like Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer. I went to Oxford. My son had been at Oxford so I wanted to go see where my money had gone. I had one place I had to be sure to visit. There was a cross in the middle of a street where in October of 1565, two men in their 80s were being put to death because they held to God’s Word and Christ alone was King of the church. Their names were Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer. They had been drug to court and about to be burned at a stake. The last chance to recant came to them and they said “No, we will not be unfaithful to our Savior.” They began to preach from the stake, their unfettered proclamation.

They tied their hands and Nicholas Ridley said to the soldier “Please tie my bonds tight because at the moment of trial I do not want to leave my Divinely appointed post.” When Hugh Latimer heard him say that he turned to him and said “Be of good courage Mr. Ridley. Play the man. Act like a man for today by God’s grace (be fearless) for you and I shall light a candle for Christ that shall never be put out in all of England. Two hundred yards away in a jail was a man who had recanted and his name was Thomas Cranmer. When he heard that proclamation he recanted of his recantation and one year later to the day at the same place, he also met his Savior.

Fearlessness leads to faithfulness that leads to effectiveness. It is a fearlessness born of a majestic God of grace who has called you by name. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. I’m grateful to You for this sermon of Jesus that sends us to the mission field with clarity of what to expect both in the harvest in opposition and in the sufficiency of Your presence and grace. Now Lord, just as You sent the twelve send us. Take a moment for the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. Jesus wouldn’t say this to us if we did not have that tendency to intimidation and fearfulness and He doesn’t point you to the answer within you but to Him who dwells within you. Close with Him. O Lord, emancipate us from all our fears. Grant to us the carefulness of the fear of God and the confidence of the love of God that we might be faithful to the glory of God. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.