

The Cost of Mission

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[0 : 0 0] Reading comes from Matthew chapter 10. Please follow a line on the screen in your bulletin or your own Bible. In Matthew 10 verse 16 we read, Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpent and innocent as those. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged over, you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

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, for it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your father speaking through you. 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, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly I say to you, you will not have gone through all of the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have caught the master of the house with Ziba, how much more will they malay those of his household? So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 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. Are not two sparrows sold for one penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my father who is in heaven. Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 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. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. 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. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it.

[3 : 2 3] And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Whoever receives you receives me. And whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he's 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. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he's a disciple. Truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

This is the word of God. Thank you so much, Ellen, for reading that. Wow, this is a really tough passage that we're going to be looking at. But before I start, I just want to say just a really massive thank you to you as a congregation. We gave birth to our second child a few weeks ago, and you guys have just been awesome, just praying for us, supporting us, bringing food. We are just so grateful for the way that God is at work in our family, our Watermark family together. So I just want to thank you for your love and support.

We've really sensed that during this time. Let me just pray for us as we look into God's word together. Father, let's pray. Father, I just want to thank you that you are a God of awesome, gracious, good, power, kindness, compassion. You're a God who knows us. You're a God who hears us. You're a God who sees us.

And Father, right now it feels like even as a church family, there's just a lot of sickness going around. There's just a lot of challenges that people are facing. Lord, we keep praying for Wilson and Gloria and Jacob and the family there. We keep praying, Father, for Ed and Trish and the choice, for Maddie's in hospital, for Cecilia, whose dad is sick right now, and for many other people who I know are struggling, whether with health issues or other family issues. Lord, we just pray for them. We pray would you have your healing hand on them. We pray that you would show your power and your mercy and restore, Lord.

Show us your grace and your kindness to each one of these families, we pray. And we pray, Lord, in this city where there's just so many things going on, whether it's with COVID, whether it's with politics, whether people are leaving, people are coming. Lord, just we pray in the midst of all the uncertainties, we pray that you'd help us as your people to keep your eyes fixed on you. We pray that even as we look into this tricky, challenging passage, Lord, that we would see the great hope that we have in you. We would see that you are worth giving everything for because you are the only thing, the only one who is rock solid in our lives and in this city and in our world. So, Lord, I pray that you'd speak to us. Give us hearts which are open. We love you. In Jesus' name, amen. Great. So, good morning again. If you don't know me, my name's Chris. I'm one of the leaders here at Watermark. And we're going to look into this tricky passage today, which, to be honest, I kind of wish Jesus hadn't said some of these things. But let me start by taking you back to the year 302. For 40 years, Christians had enjoyed a time of peace and there'd been a lot of growth in the churches. But then the Roman emperor, Diocletian, decided that he wanted to return to pagan ways and to persecute the Christians. And if you want to target and a movement, you hit the leaders. And so, what Diocletian did, he got to the pastors and the bishops who in every town were the guardian of the scriptures. There was just one Bible in the whole town for hundreds of people. And so, these pastors, these leaders, and some other members of the congregation were dragged in front of courts and the officials. And they were threatened to say, either you renounce Jesus, you burn those Bible, or we'll kill you. And many of the pastors, they refused and they were martyred. But some decided to take the easy way up. They renounced their faith.

[8 : 05] They burnt the scriptures so that hundreds of people were denied access to God's word. And they went free. Three or so years later, a new Roman emperor came into power. And just a few years later, Christianity was legalized. In fact, it wasn't just legal. It now actually became beneficial to be a Christian. You could get great career benefits. You could get networking opportunities.

There was a huge advancement that could happen if you just became a Christian. It was a time of peace. And throughout the world, throughout church history, throughout the world today, and even in churches today, you see this whole spectrum of what it means to follow Jesus from persecution to times of peace. But do you know actually that the thing which has caused the most dishonor to Christ and has been the most dangerous for Christians, whether in persecution or in peacetime, has been when we have chosen our own ease and our own comfort above Christ, when we've chosen a kind of consumer Christianity. And so what happens when we are tempted to do those things, to put comfort above Christ, is that Jesus becomes a little bit more like your pet hamster. You keep him in a little box, confined, on your desk during the week so he doesn't disturb you too much, and then you bring him out on Sundays to feed him with some worship. And that just kind of suits us fine. But Matthew's gospel, which we've been going through over the last few weeks, Matthew has been painting a different picture of Jesus.

He's been showing us that Jesus is the King, the divine Messiah who has come to bring in his kingdom. And he's been preaching and teaching this kingdom, but he's also been embodying this kingdom by bringing healing and restoration and forgiveness and deliverance to outcasts, to sinners, to the sick, to the marginalized, to every person from every background, race, tribe, and tongue, calling them to repent and believe and come into his kingdom. He's been calling people to follow him.

And last week, Kevin took us to Matthew chapter 10, which marks a transition in the book of Matthew from where Jesus has been teaching and doing and healing and doing all these signs of the kingdom to where now the focus now shifts off. He sends out his disciples to do the very things that he himself has been doing. And we've seen that disciples of Jesus are people who are with Jesus. They become like Jesus and they do what he does. And so as he sends them out on his mission to preach, to teach, to heal, to embody the kingdom of God into our city, just as he calls us to and sends us out into the neighborhoods and the areas of Hong Kong and Asia around us. So

Jesus is going to up the ante a little bit today. He's going to say that if we're a disciple and a follower of Jesus, who's becoming like him and doing what he does, then there's going to be scars. There's going to be scars of mission, but he's going to give us, there's going to be courage for mission and there is a promise for mission. So that's where we're going today. There's three things, scars, courage, and a promise. So let me start with the scars of mission. Jesus verse 24, he says this, a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It's enough for the disciple to be like his teacher. Okay. I mean, that, that, that's, that's great, isn't it? In fact, in Watermark, I've just seen so many times where the, the love that people are showing, the service that people are caring for one another, praying for another, I just see glimpses of Jesus at work in our community. It just looks something like him and it's beautiful.

But Jesus goes on to say, if they have called the master of the household, Beelzebub, and the, the message translation says, calls that dung face. That, that's an insult. Okay. He says, if, if they call Jesus that, then how much more are they going to call those who are of his household, his followers, his family members? You see, what he's saying is, if you're going to be my followers on my mission, there's going to be scars. Just like me. Because my life was marked by deep love, but also deep suffering, which is where you see that love. Because when the kingdom of God breaks through, there is always pushback from the kingdom of darkness. You know, Jesus says it like this. He says about his own life, he says, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

[13:31] You see, what he's saying, just as grapes need to be crushed for the beautiful wine to come out. So Jesus was crushed in rejection, in insults, in, in betrayal, all the way to death. In order to bring us into his kingdom in order for this fruitfulness of many lives to be transformed. And he says, we as his followers should expect the same, that kingdom fruitfulness in our lives will also bear the same kind of scars. You know, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it like this. He said, when God calls a man or a woman, he bids him come and die. That's challenging, isn't it? Because many of our evangelism techniques, what we say is we say, come to Jesus, get love, peace, joy. And we forget the small print, which says, actually, there's a place where you've got to die to find life. And Jesus isn't, isn't covering over the small print. He's telling it like he is. Verse 16, let's kind of go back to where he says, he says, behold, I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Now just think about that image for a moment. That's not particularly comforting, really, is it? I mean, because sheep, have you ever seen a sheep? In Hong Kong, probably not. But sheep are defenseless. Sheep have no claws. They have no sharp teeth. They can't run fast. They're a cloud on legs. But wolves are predators. They have sharp teeth.

They have sharp claws. They can run fast. And they like eating sheep. What is Jesus saying here? What he's saying, he's saying there's a legitimate reason why many of us really find it difficult to go out on mission, out of our comfort zone, because it is scary and threatening. Why? Because we're not, Jesus isn't sending us out onto neutral territory. He's sending us into our neighborhoods and workplaces and families where there is a clash between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light.

They are war zones. And so he says, be wise. Like, don't be naive. Don't be naive about this. Like, just think about it. You see on it, you're desperate to find somebody to date. And you look on that dating app and they put Christian on the label. And you think, wow, finally. And then when you meet the person, you see that they don't really go to church and they're pressurizing you to sleep with them. And you go, but it says Christian. And Jesus says, be wise. Be innocent. Be alert to Satan's tactics. There's a war on. And you know, you can feel the heat of the battle. Sometimes with outsiders. But Jesus focuses down and says, often it's with those who are closest and most precious to us that the challenge comes. He says this, people will betray, will deliver you over to the courts and flock you in their synagogues. But when they deliver you over, don't be anxious.

[17:06] And then he says, brother will deliver brother over to death. And he says a father and his child and a mother. And you see, this is really challenging. You see, but the word deliver is the same word that is used for betrayed when Jesus was betrayed by his close disciple Judas.

You see, what he's saying is Jesus himself knew opposition from those closest to us. And for those who follow us, we may too.

And then in verse 34, he gets even stronger. He says, don't think I've come to bring peace on the earth. And you go, what? He says, I have not come to bring peace on the earth, but a sword. And you think, really? But I thought you were the prince of peace.

And it gets even stronger. He says, but I've come to set a man or divide a man against his father and a daughter against his mother. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. For a Jewish listener, this is the equivalent of how the royal family would have received the recent interview with Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

[18:31] This was shocking because every Jew at the time would agree with Michael J. Fox, who says, family is not an important thing. It's everything.

And it's for many of us in Chinese culture, too, that's the same idea. And so what is Jesus saying in this? He's not saying, deliberately go against your family or just be a rebel.

He's not saying, kind of, be an idiot and get some response, bad response back. He's not saying that because he's very strong with the religious leaders of calling them to uphold the commandment to honor your father and mother.

Jesus is big into family. He's not saying either, I'm all about violence. This isn't justification for things like the Crusades.

What is he saying? He's saying that when believers choose to follow Jesus, family members may reject your profession of faith and your new identity in him because they're rejecting Jesus himself.

[19:44] And if they do, his call is to choose me, even above your most precious family members. You know, in Western individualistic society, we say, hey, I want to do what I want to do.

In traditional Eastern societies, it's I do what my parents want me to do. But for Jesus' disciples, it's we do what Jesus wants us to do.

And often that's going to be compatible with your parents' wishes. But where it is not, where there are clashes, Jesus says, choose me.

Will you follow me? You know, I went to Cambodia a couple of years ago and I met this church planter, a Cambodian church planter there, whose father had been killed by the Khmer Rouge. And he was the eldest son and he was expected to support and look after the family. And his family wanted him to study at college and to become a tour guide because that was a lucrative job.

[20:46] But he became a Christian and he felt God calling him to be a pastor and a church planter. And his family, his mother and the rest of his family could not believe this.

They threatened him with disowning him. They said he dishonored the family. How could he be so selfish? All these things. There was an emotional blackmail.

And he was just so torn in this time because he loved his family. But he really felt God calling him. And so he actually decided to leave to go to Bible college.

And his family disowned him. Fast forward a few years' time when he'd actually been planting a number of churches. And he actually managed to, because of his church planting work, he actually got connected with working for an NGO, which actually paid him a really decent salary.

And in that time, his family had seen the way that he had lived his life. And some of his family members started coming to Christ. And he was able to both support his family, but also see them one to Jesus because they'd seen how much Jesus meant.

[22:00] You see, Jesus loved his family more than even he did. He just couldn't understand it in the moment.

And so that is what the call that Jesus is saying. He loves our families, but he wants us to place him first because placing him first is the best way to really love your family with eternal consequences. You know, some of us, we know just how challenging and how hard this really is. Some of us, our families, our parents, they have a lot of expectations on us, whether it's to do with marriage, whether it's to do with careers, whether it's to do with parenting choices or finances or lifestyle decisions.

And there's often a clash of values between their values and Jesus' values. And it's hard. Many of us know that. Particularly when you know your parents have just invested so much in you.

Some of us are being held back maybe from thinking about baptism because of family pressures. Some of us, as God is going to be calling some of our families to really engage in the fostering and adoption program that we're really trying to push as a church, some of you are going to get pushback from that from close members of your family.

[23 : 21] And Jesus says, don't be surprised. Don't be surprised. If you're in peacetime or if you're in persecution, there will be pushback. But will you follow me and trust me in this?

And you've got to think, all this feels like a little heavy, doesn't it? How can you do that? That sounds scary. Which is why Jesus then moves on to his second point, which is the courage for mission.

Because when you hear all of these different things, isn't often animal's natural response fear? And Jesus knows that because he expects it as normal.

That's why four times in this passage he goes, don't be anxious. Don't be afraid. Have no fear of them. Don't fear those who kill the body. Fear not. Do you get the idea?

He's telling us, don't fear. Why not? Why not? Well, because, he says, fear God, not people.

[24 : 25] Why? Because two things. One, your life and your future and everyone's, a whole of history, is in God's hands. Look at it. Verse 28.

Don't fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

And then later on in verse 39, he goes, whoever finds his life will lose it. And that's the same word in Greek, just slightly different grammar, same word as destroy. And whoever loses, same word, his life for my sake will find it.

What is he saying? He's saying human beings right now may make your life uncomfortable, can pressurize you, can intimidate you, can hurt you, can even in the most extreme circumstances kill you.

But, they can't touch the inner core of who you are. Because that's in the hands of the source of life, in your creator, the God of the universe, our Father himself.

[25 : 35] Life itself and all of your future is held, not in your parents' hand, not in your boss' hand, not in anyone else's hands. It's held in his hands.

And so he says, fear me, which means look to please me, honour me first, by being willing to proclaim me, go public with your faith, from the housetops.

And if you lose your own comfort now, for the sake of making me known, you won't miss out, because I'm the one who holds your life itself. So look to please me first.

But then, in the same time, there's also this warning, which he says, if you live for your own comfort now, be like a chameleon. Like, just wanting to blend in, just wanting a comfortable life, so just staying, like, Jesus light in your life.

Jesus is your hamster kind of religion. You may avoid all the opposition from people right now. You may have comfort, you may not, but you may have comfort now.

[26 : 45] But you'll get opposition from God later on, on judgment day. And he says, God is the eternal judge, who has your entire life in his hands.

He can both give you the whole of life, but he can also take it away. So look to him and please him, because he's the win-win situation.

You know, there was a tennis player, Australian tennis player, Margaret Court, who's a pastor. She got mocked for some of her disagreement with gay marriage a few years ago.

And in a tweet by a fellow tennis player, Martina Navratilova, she said to her, Margaret, hashtag, wrong side of history.

Jesus is saying, history is not judged by the current cultural trends or what seems to be comfortable right now. The true hashtag, wrong side of history, occurs on judgment day when we stand before the king of the whole universe and we want to be on the right side.

[27 : 56] The side of those who are loved by him. So he says, don't fear, look to please him first. Your life is in his hands. Secondly, he says, don't fear because the sovereign God of the whole universe knows you and cares for you intimately.

I love this. This is great. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear not, therefore, you are more value than many sparrows. You see, in the first century, a sparrow was the cheapest thing that you could buy in the market.

And so if one sparrow dropped dead, nobody cared. It's like, you know, if you walk past those vegetable stalls and you just see like a straight grape or a mushroom just in the gutter there.

Like everyone walked past it. They trample on it. Nobody cares about it. At all. It's so insignificant.

And then he goes, actually, your hair. How many of you have actually itemized how many hairs you

have?

[29 : 03] I just had my hair cut, but I didn't look at how many I lost. Because I don't care that much about it. We care about our hair, but we don't care about the details of it in that intimate attention.

But Jesus is saying, if he has itemized every hair on your head, if he knows even that grape, even that little mushroom there, then don't you think, if he cares and is attentive and has his hands watching over even that, that the very things which are far more significant in our lives, that we really care about, that our very life itself, don't you think that he cares way more than you do about it?

Don't you think that you matter? He says, you are of more value to him than many grapes, many mushrooms, many hairs, many sparrows. This is awesome.

It really is. He says, you know, my daughter, when she was born, she was just tiny, but she's precious. And how do you treat someone who is precious and valuable?

Oh, with great care and attention. That's how Jesus, that's how God the Father, thinks of you. And it doesn't matter how insignificant or how inadequate or how ignored, how rejected, how hard your life is, he says you matter to him.

[30 : 37] That is an awesome truth. So he says, don't fear. But can I be honest? Like, just really honest for a moment.

I actually know these two truths. And yet, sometimes I still fear. Right? Sometimes I still have fear in speaking about Jesus to people, in really facing the cost of living for his kingdom.

You know, Tim Keller shared this story about a teenage girl that he met. And she came to him and said, you know, I know Jesus loves me. I know I'm his child.

I know I'm valued by him immensely. But what's the use of that when none of the boys in my class like me? I love her honesty.

Right? Because what she's saying is she fears the social rejection, the relational rejection of the boys more than she does fear God. she's actually saying she loves the acceptance of those boys around her more than she loves the acceptance of Jesus.

[31 : 45] And that's real. Because I think functionally that's where many of us live. Don't we? But we know these truths but they haven't sunk into our hearts.

And so the call to die, the call to mission sounds like a call to suicide, sounds like a call to ruin your life rather than a call to finding life as Jesus says.

But can I just share very personally? You know, when I've realized that actually that's what's going on in my heart with all of my fears and I've come before Jesus and just repented and asked God to restore a fear of him and a love for him and a delight in him to know that value in my heart.

And then he's given me opportunities to step out in obedience and to share my faith or to make significant decisions for his kingdom which I know are going to cost which get pushed back where there is rejection where there is discomfort where I have felt the shame of others.

Do you know two things have happened? One, I've really felt the pain and the wrestle and the struggle. It's real. It's uncomfortable.

[32 : 53] Dying to my own comfort and my own approval really is painful. And even at the same time as I've wrestled I've discovered actually increasingly the heart of Jesus that actually as we are rejected we see how incredible his love for us is that he was rejected even by us in so many ways and yet we just sense more of what he's done for us.

But secondly I've also discovered the liberation from being freed from actually all these things that have enslaved me the fear of other people's opinions when suddenly you're able to be bold and actually it doesn't matter what people come back with you and you discover that Jesus is truly enough that there is this joy in Jesus that he is truly your life then the gospel penny just drops deeper into your heart and you realize that what he is saying is true.

you will never understand brothers and sisters just how valued and how loved you are by the king of the universe by simply sitting and listening to sermons or simply doing bible studies though good though those are we've got to take our faith public and as we do we will experience all kinds of different things will happen rejection for some death even for others but we'll begin to taste life in him in a richer deeper way this is the courage we have as God calls us and sends us out on his mission but finally the promise of mission and again this is just amazing because Jesus though he promises suffering in his mission he doesn't leave it there he's got this extraordinary promise for us as we go out into loving the city the end of April as we go out into all the different things that God is

calling us to in the neighbourhood in the love offering he gives us this promise verse 40 whoever receives you watermark family receives me and whoever receives me receives him who sent me now think about this this is incredible it just blew me away when I read this you see what he's saying is do you know how the kingdom of God comes and spreads in Hong Kong and in Asia and around the world how Jesus the king the sovereign creator of all the galaxies the one who has all power in his hands the one who could who breathes and speaks and life happens that God has chosen to reveal his kingdom and to draw people to his kingdom to restore and to heal through ordinary broken individuals like you and me that as we go out and the people who do receive us they receive Jesus and they receive the father and they receive the kingdom that's awesome right you see marriages will be broken which will be restored as we go out self-centered individuals will become those who have compassion and serve other people divided families will find healing the sick will be restored there will be lives which will just crushed and hopeless which find a savior who restores and gives them a life to live and hope for the future you know above us where we live there's a there's a couple there's actually a couple of units but there's a couple with a young child that have just moved in and I got chatting to them the other day and they've actually just moved in to sorry they left some very successful careers they're still quite young to work and serve amongst some teenage girls who were school dropouts whose parents had abandoned them or just in a whole load of messy situations and they've got two or three of these girls living with them and they said at times it's just been a nightmare because troubled kids have issues right and when they're in your home that makes it even more real but they said each one of these girls has actually come to faith and they have experienced they're now getting back into the schooling system their lives are being turned around and these couple are not being hauled in front of the courts in fact the social security system are referring cases to them but they are looking like Jesus and they are learning to die to their own comfort and follow where Jesus takes them you see God is calling us out on his mission to follow him for every one of us it's

going to look different it's going to look different but are we willing to say yes as Jesus sends us out because as we move out into our city even over these next few weeks this promise Jesus says if you acknowledge me if you go public about me do you know what I will go public about you before my father in heaven I love to imagine it like this and I'm going to close here but when we die we come before our father who in his dazzling glory we can hardly breathe but if we get a chance to what we would want to start saying when he says to us hey how did you follow me in life and we'll go hey I just think I didn't do a great job I was sometimes I was cowardly sometimes I just felt like things didn't work the way I wanted them to sometimes it's frustrating sometimes I fumbled over my words I tried to share with people didn't always work I tried to live for you but you know and just as we're kind of going through this Jesus will cut us off and he'll say turn around and behind us there will be this queue of hundreds and hundreds of people snaking around longer than a queue for an iPhone new iPhone launch and some of the people you'll recognize and some of the people you won't and each one of them will have a testimony to share of how God had used you to bring him into the kingdom and

Jesus will say to the father look father this is what you did through your faithful servant Yidi Echo Greg Gary Margo Kathy Brian Henry Joe Chris carry on the list of water markers and the whole of heaven will stand on its feet in applause a resounding standing ovation not for you but for the father the son and the Holy Spirit for the work that they did in your lives that the fruit of Jesus death was that people ordinary broken people like you and me were willing to have scars on us but bore so much fruit in our lives and he will get the glory let's pray father I pray that even as we hear what is just a it's just really challenging Lord but Lord you promise that you are going to be with us and so I pray for us even as we hear this Lord I pray that in our hearts that actually we'd feel that sense of fear of what it really means to follow you but then we would look up and see what a kind of saviour you are what a kind of awesome but compassionate and gracious God you are and Lord that we would bank our lives on you and you would send us out this week you would send us out every single one of us into loving the city Lord every excuse that we put up Lord I pray that you would remove that because we see that in your hands is our life our lives are not in our busyness our lives are not in our exams our lives are not in our studies our lives are not in our workplaces our lives are not even in our families good gifts though all of these are our lives are held in you and so I pray that you'd make us a people of faith a people have so many stories to tell of how you broke through and used us insignificant though we are for your glory and your kingdom in Jesus name Amen