



Matthew 10:32–39

32 “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. 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.

Reflection

I don't know about you but I'm finding Matthew 10 really hard. It's so confronting and so real. Jesus is speaking plainly and quite frankly he's describing a life that I

don't want. Who wants conflict and families torn apart, who wants to carry a splintered cross on their shoulder and to lose their life? If this is reality, then give me fantasy – which is where the majority of our culture chooses to live.

But Jesus and his followers are all about reality. We're deadly serious about it. And one day soon, for every single person on planet earth the bubble will burst, the dream will disappear, and cold, hard reality will confront them. It will come in a thousand different ways; a tightening in the chest, a call from your doctor after a mammogram, stepping out onto the road while looking at your mobile phone. And in that moment, reality will come crashing down. It's urgent says Jesus so as my followers you need to be real, for yourselves

but even more so for others.

If it's not preferring fantasy to reality then the other temptation we might face in approaching this passage is to say that it's for missionaries and not us. So let's overlook it and flick to some more comfortable teaching that's meant for everyone. But the reality of Christianity is that every follower of Jesus is a missionary, and most of us will never go overseas. Most missionaries stay exactly where God has placed them sharing Jesus within their unique circle of friends and family and work relationships. So whether you're in Afghanistan on the mission field, or in a high rise office tower on the mission field, these verses apply. I wish they didn't, and in fact I'm sure that Jesus wishes they didn't, but we live as members of the kingdom of God within

the kingdom of this world. Our culture is the domain of Satan, sin and death and so it is hostile to any talk of Jesus, of Christianity, of sin, of judgement, of punishment, even talk of living honest, upright, socially responsible lives. Our world is hostile: in its own way the office is as hostile to Christianity as Afghanistan.

So whether you've been sent to the office, or the classroom, or to the workshop or to Pakistan or Nepal; wherever God has sent you he is saying to you this morning, right now,

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father

in heaven.

If you're a Christian then you'll live openly as a Christian. If Jesus is really important to you then you'll speak about him and follow him and defend him and choose him at work, in front of your children, on the sporting field, and over dinner with your friends. If you're not speaking about him, and not living for him in these contexts, and if you feel nothing, no guilt, no need for repentance, like nothing's wrong then these verses should be taken as the strongest of warnings — whoever disowns me I will disown.

And when you do speak up for Jesus, the passages continues, it isn't going to go well. The prince of peace hasn't come to bring peace. He's come to bring the sword

because people don't want his peace. Families are going to be divided down the middle because of him, hate each other because of him, and we must choose him over our families if we're to be worthy of him. What does all this mean? The gospel of Jesus Christ is divisive. You've heard it: 'How dare you accuse me of sin? How dare you believe in hell? How dare you suggest that there is a higher authority than me when it comes to how I should live my life? Jesus divides. Even families. Often families.

Two very powerful verses to conclude. The first one:

38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Don't these words just turn life on its head? Good income, nice house in the suburbs, maybe some children, lots of happy holidays ... dragging a heavy Roman cross on your shoulder as you walk to your death. How do we reconcile this verse with the many God given blessings of modern life? How do you feel about this verse? Jesus paints quite a picture. Consider the weight of a Roman cross, the inevitability of carrying around death on your shoulder, the public scorn, the humiliation, the shame; but consider the pride in following in the footsteps of your saviour, living the life that he lived, following the example that he set, each living moment pointing directly to his all sufficient sacrifice. What does this look like living amidst the blessings that many of us enjoy in Sydney?

The second verse should be our memory verse. It captures it all. Where can you write it? Write it on your heart.

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

There's hope here. There is real life in Jesus. Not pretend life but real life. Real happiness. Real hope. Real peace. Real meaning and purpose. The sacrifice is worth it; in fact it's no sacrifice at all. The persecution is worth it; your love for God and other overwhelms the hurt. Like Jesus calling hanging on the cross and praying for his enemies, 'Father forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.' And carrying that cross, well my burden is easy, says

Jesus my yoke is light. For the joy set before him Jesus endured the cross and for the joy set before us we can carry ours. It'll mean we lose our life; but what does it benefit a person to gain the whole world and yet forfeit their soul? And if not your soul then what does it benefit a Christian to gain the whole world at the expense of taking others to heaven with them?

Think

These are a few questions to think about as you feel the weight of this passage. Tangibly, what will Jesus' words mean in your life today? Your day might be filled with meetings, back to back. How can you acknowledge him, take up your cross, lose your life today so that someone might gain their soul? What's the short game

here? The medium game? What long term changes are needed in your life? This is a hard passage but we can't just set it to one side. This is Jesus talking about mission – what could be more important?

Pray

Then please close this morning with heartfelt prayer. I don't know what you need to speak to God about but please open your heart to him about it right now.