

## *The Meaning of Discipleship*

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26“*Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27“What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. 28“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29“Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31“So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.*

32“*Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. 33“But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*

This is a long section. Early on we talked about 5 distinct sections of dialogue by Jesus to His disciples, where He teaches them with words.

Most of their teaching is observation. Him interacting with the lost sheep of Israel. But there are long sections where He teaches them like a teacher in a classroom.

In Mt. 5 - 7 we have the sermon on the mount.

In Mt. 10 we have this discourse on discipleship

In Mt. 13 we have the parables about the Kingdom

In Mt. 18 we have ecclesia people interacting with people in the Kingdom

In Mt. 24 we have end times.

At the end of these 5 sections we have something like 11:1 *1When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He*

*departed from there to . . . whatever.* The pattern is always the same.

We could argue that Matthew 21 - 23 after the triumphal entry is almost continuous dialogue, but it is not disciple making. It is a diatribe against the rulers of national Israel.

And so, beginning with what we looked at last week, we have this section of dialogue of Jesus talking with His disciples and He's telling them about what it will cost to follow Him.

Last week we saw that He was sending the 12 out and preparing them for what to expect. They are sheep and He's sending them to wolves. Not pretty.

In our passage this morning HE's going to expand on that idea. We are sheep. The world is wolves.

First a confession of sorts. I am at a threshold. I've been teaching the Bible in this pulpit for just over a year, and before that, 5 solid years; in the minor prophets, then Mark, then Revelation. We finished Revelation just in time to begin Matthew in the Sunday AM pulpit.

But I see a problem looming. Jesus taught 2 ways. He taught with words. Dialogues like we're looking at this morning. But most of His teaching and disciple making was done another way. Doing. The disciples looked on as He confronted people on every level as He walked through that land.

So my problem, of sorts, is this. I see the teaching part happening, and I think it's OK. God is blessing. Just the fact that I'm able to stand in this pulpit and teach the word of God is a gift I never expected. In a million years. And you folks graciously receive it. The feedback is positive.

But I'm worried that if that's all that happens, if there is no action wrought out of the teaching, that we'll ultimately fail. Teaching and speaking and preaching can't be an end in itself. It has to be working towards a goal. Jesus sent His disciples *out*.

Jesus method of discipleship was oracle and action. And when He was finished, the 12 were ready to turn the world inside out. Upside down. And they did. They went out and confronted their world.

So, you tell me, where will we end up if oracle, the speaking of the Kingdom, is an end in itself? No action. No mature disciples who carry on.

I'm concerned, but I'm also trying to balance my concern with patience. Wait for God to do it. Pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out the workers into His harvest. Because honestly, I don't know quite how to lead you into action.

I'm picturing a church impacting our town, outside these 4 walls, but I haven't done anything about it so far but talk. Pray for the Lord of the Harvest to send workers into His harvest. We've got a resistance to actually doing that.

And the reason is right here in front of us. Sheep, as dumb as they are, have this instinct about knocking on the wolves doors.

Let me approach this from a different angle. What if the sheep could eat a magic mushroom and power up like a Super Mario and walk right in the middle of the wolves, and they can't eat him.

A couple of sheep that are twice the size of the wolves and glowing with a super force field kick the door open where the wolves are and say, listen up you wolves.

That's silly, and you laugh, but there's a granule of truth imbedded in that idea.

Jesus is going to approach our resistance to go out amongst the wolves 3 ways in this section on discipleship.

His first argument is, that's what He has done, and we should do likewise because, well, we're not better than Him.

So, let's break this down. The reason we're going to go out amongst wolves to look for lost sheep is because God loves them, and they need to be snatched out of Satan's kingdom and brought safely into God's kingdom.

But, it's a messy business because, well, there's wolves. And right now, the wolves sort of just leave me alone because they don't really know I'm a sheep. They think I'm a wolf. Like them. Sort of a weird wolf, but still, enough like them that they leave me alone.

But if I go out talking about Jesus and His finished work on the cross, and the righteousness of God that He offers freely for anyone that will believe, the wolf thing is done. They'll know I'm a sheep. Any respect among wolves will be gone.

So you could say, by doing that, I would leave my safe, comfortable estate and move to an uncomfortable, dangerous place. Respect and acceptance would be gone. Why would I do that?

Turn with me to Philippians 2. Some of you knew I was going here.

*Ppn. 2:5 - 11 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied Himself, taking the form of a doulos (slave), and being made in the likeness of men. 8Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Jesus motivation was love for us, and Glory for His father, and He left His home in heaven to come and rescue us. He became a slave in order to do that.

With that in mind, listen again to His reasoning why we should follow

His example and do likewise. Leave our comfortable estate and become vulnerable.

24 *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. 25 “It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!*

We're talking rank. We're talking slaves and masters. And Jesus says, if you're a slave, you're a slave. You don't get to elevate and be higher than your master.

The best you can hope for is to be like your master. An equal of sorts. You can't be better.

Let's expand this idea of being like our master. We're slaves but we can be like our teacher. Listen again to Paul the apostle. This time to the Romans.

*Ro. 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Jesus says we can become like Him. The disciple can become like his teacher and the slave can become like his master. He says that is enough.

Paul says, yes, that's where we're going, but there's a caveat. *if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

It always seems to work out that way, doesn't it? No pain, no gain. We want the glory part, but there's the suffering part we're not so crazy about.

And Jesus says, hello, *If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!*

That's the scary truth folks. We've got to go out into the wolves, and they already called Jesus Beelzebul. You're lower in rank than He is. What do you think they're going to say about you. What do you think they're going to do to you.

*If indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Glory ~ Suffering. Is it worth it? Is it enough that we'll actually get motivated? The very next thing out of Paul's mouth is; *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

Paul got a glimpse. He knows what he's talking about. Jesus came from there. He knows what He's talking about!

Who was Beelzebul? Beelzebul was a jewishism. Originally the fly god, or the lord of the flies, it had morphed to mean the god who was in charge of the evil spirits, or demons. Satan.

Clearly Jesus had control over demons and the supernatural. The pharisees couldn't deny that. So they claimed His powers came from Satan.

That's pretty low. Jesus says, if that's what they say about me, what do you suppose they're going to say about you. We rank lower than Jesus. You get the idea.

So, Jesus first argument for us to go out of our comfort into the wolves is that ultimately there is Glory, but for now, we are slaves, following the example of the Master. The glory is later. Now is the degradation. We need to be obedient slaves. The motivation of being like our master, our teacher, he says, is enough.

In theory, that would be enough. We are slaves. The master says go out into the wolves. That's what you do. Without further question or discussion.

But God is gracious and we have that next word, Therefore. And He's going to give us 2 more arguments why we need to get out of our comfort zone and do this.

If we were going to outline these three arguments, which I should have done at the beginning if I was a good preacher, it would look something like this.

- God is God vss. 24 - 25
- God is Sovereign vss. 26 - 31
- God is pleased. vss. 32 - 33

God is God, we are slaves. He left His home and became a slave to show us by example what we are to do. Glory with Him awaits the obedient slaves. Therefore, go out amongst the wolves and take what comes.

God is God . . . Next; God is Sovereign

*26“Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27“What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.*

Therefore do not fear them, for . . .

Something in the next argument is a reason not to fear. But it isn't right on the surface. I had to think about this a bit.

*for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27“What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops*

Here's the frustration. We have the most glorious message ever to have been released! The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! The authority to reign of God is here. Satan is vanquished! Evil is finished. God is re-taking this world. Forgiveness is both offered and it is paid for in full.

There will be Glory in this world, and the next. Jesus will reign on the throne of David for ever.

Incredible! Beyond incredible good news. The world should be beside itself with glee at this news! There should be dancing and celebrations in the street! Sort of like the ticker tape parade in New York only it's over news a thousand times more important and a thousand times better!

Why? Why does no one care. They not only don't care, they are angry at you for telling them. It's very bizarre.

It is because this world is blinded. Paul says to the Corinthians; *2Cor. 4:3 - 5 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake....*

The world can't see it. They are blinded. There is a veil over them. What were Jesus words; concealed. hidden.

Here is the underlying logic. We fear what men will think about us because the message is to their ears, foolish.

A guy came from heaven. He lived a perfect life. He died in my place on a cross. He rose again on the 3rd day. He owns everything. Yeah, right. That's the dumbest thing I ever heard. I should be slave to that guy? Really? Where is He?

To the world, it's a foolish message and the guy bringing it is, a fool.

*1Cor. 1:22 - 25 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength*



That's a fear we have to overcome. Go be a fool to a lost world and preach a foolish message they won't receive.

How do I overcome that. That's a very real hindrance. I'm painfully ordinary. I've struggled all my life with an inferiority complex. I want the world to accept me. And now I get to shout from the rooftops a message that they think is ridiculous. Nobody wants to be ridiculous.

And Jesus argues here, that a day is coming when His slaves are going to be the rock stars. Everything's going to get flipped polar opposite. Satan's world is going to be banished. Christ will reign. The slaves that proclaimed a foolish message from the roof tops will be revealed, with Him, in Glory.

Col. 3:4 *When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

Don't fear the world who WILL think you're ridiculous. Fear missing out on this revealing of the new world order. Fear *not* being revealed with Christ, in glory that He is going to share with His slaves.

That's one reason. Paul gives us another. I just read it a minute ago. This is a powerful powerful truth. Get it.

*but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 **but to those who are the called**, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

We preach a ridiculous message to blind and deaf people who don't want to hear it, and may react badly, because God has His called out ones who are going to hear it and respond. There are some who will hear the message and the veil is lifted and the lights just come on in their heads and . . . they believe!

Right in the middle of the world that thinks you're ridiculous, someone believes! And says, I'll be ridiculous to have *that!*

For some reason it pleased God to do it that way. He chooses who will hear. He removes the blinders. He lifts the veil. Even the faith to believe and accept is a gift from God.

Paul would preach to 200 people who are looking around them for the best place to pick up stones to kill him, and one guy about 2/3's to the back, the veil is lifted, and he believes. The wife of one of the guys about to stone Paul, sees the truth she'd never seen before, and believes. At any cost. She'll face a violent husband later. Right now, it makes sense and she has faith to believe.

God chooses who believes. It is His Glory to do that.

*28“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Fear paralyzes us. We're afraid of what men will think. We're afraid of what men will do. Jesus eliminates, at least in theory, the basis of our being afraid of what men will think about us.

Now He tackles our other fear. Bodily harm. His logic is impeccable. All they can do is kill you. But you're my slave. I've got you. They can kill your body, but they can't touch your soul. Don't fear men.

DO fear God who can throw both body and soul into hell.

Here comes the Super Mario part.

*29“Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31“So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.*

The slave owner is sovereign. You are valuable to Him. Not one hair will perish from your head without His say so. Therefore, go boldly and proclaim a foolish message to a world that will think you're ridiculous and would like to strangle you, if they could, but they can't. Unless He allows it.

That's asking a lot. Jesus offers one more reason in this little outline. One more incentive.

God is pleased.

*32“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. 33“But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*

This is pretty straight forward, isn't it.

I doubt that we fully understand either the value of Jesus confessing He owns us to His Father, or the terror of Him denying us.

Unspeakable Glory on the one hand.

Unspeakable terror on the other.

Paul says I saw things that men aren't permitted to even speak. So glorious. John was going to write down the judgement he saw and the angel said, stop. don't write it down. Unspeakable glory. Unspeakable terror.

We cannot finish this morning without looking at an object lesson played out before our eyes in the last week.

A young white man walks into a prayer meeting in a black church in Charleston, SC.

He deigns to join with them as they pray. He sits alone on a back row pew. Is it reading too much into it that the 9 lovers of God were praying quietly to themselves about him. About his soul and well-being? We can't ask them. They're dead.

But the reactions from some of their loved ones who remain sort of fill in the blanks. They approached him on his arraignment . . . and forgave him.

"they know not what they do" In Acts 7:60 Stephen said something similar as the Jews were stoning him. *Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

The young man was a wolf. The 9 were sheep. In his troubled mind he was killing them because he hated them because of their skin color.

But he could have accomplished that in a line at the DMV. Or a Burger King. Why did he pick a prayer meeting of godly black people?

He was also slave to a master. He was duped by his master. He didn't even know where the hate came from. Kill christians.

OK, the hard question. Why did God allow it. 9 people on a Wednesday night. I can tell you right up front, that was the core group of that church. Praying for the 90 or whatever it was that had other things to do on that Wednesday night. Why them.

9 families torn asunder. Those families will never be quite the same. Why did God allow this to take place?

We have this notion that, hey, just a minute God. I've got some rights here too. I have a reasonable expectation of a good rich long life at your supply. As long as I'm minimally righteous, it's your job to protect and bless me.

You listen to the news and it's constantly, "what kind of a God" blah blah blah. Digging their own pit of judgment ever deeper. Mt. 12:36 *"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.."*

We forget that every breath is a gift from God. Job told Zophar: 9 *"Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this, 10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?"*

He doesn't tell us why. He is a sovereign King. We know that. We know it didn't happen because He wasn't in control and couldn't stop it. He doesn't tell us why He allows pain and heartbreak.

He does tell us in Psalms 116:15 *Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints.*

This didn't happen while heaven was unconcerned. Jesus told his disciples Jn. 12:24 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

Satan meant this for evil. Dylann Roof meant this for evil. But God will use it for good. God allowed it for His purposes which are always . . . always, good.

Luke 21: . . . 17 *and you will be hated by all because of My name. 18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 "By your endurance you will gain your lives.*

Our Sovereign God knows the hairs of your head and the number of breaths you will take on this earth. Therefore, we should go boldly and honor Him by taking this message of the Kingdom to a lost world.

Elisabeth Elliot died this week. Some excerpts from the New York Times.

Elisabeth Elliot, a missionary who inspired generations of evangelical Christians by returning to Ecuador with her toddler daughter to preach the Gospel to the Indian tribe that had killed her husband, died on Monday at her home in Gloucester, Mass. She was 88.

Lars Gren, her third husband, announced the death on Ms. Elliot's website. She had had dementia for about a decade.

Ms. Elliot wrote two books stemming from her experience in Ecuador, and together they became for evangelicals "the definitive inspirational mission stories for the second half of the 20th century," said Kathryn

Long, a history professor at Wheaton College in Illinois.

The first, “Through Gates of Splendor,” published in 1957, recounted the ill-fated mission of her first husband, Jim Elliot, and four other American men to bring Protestant Christianity to the remote Waorani (also spelled Huaorani) Indians. It ranked No. 9 on Christianity Today’s list of the top 50 books that shaped evangelicals.

Ms. Elliot focused on her husband’s work a year later in “Shadow of the Almighty.”

“Her early adulthood as she told it,” Professor Long said in an email, “was the stuff of inspiration: an intensely spiritual and deeply romantic love story with her first husband; her support for her husband and his friends when they decided to risk their lives to contact a violent and isolated tribal people in the rain forests of eastern Ecuador; her commitment to telling their story as a story of faith and triumph after their deaths; and her insistence that she and her daughter were called by God to live with their husband’s and father’s killers, which they did.”

After Mr. Elliot and his colleagues landed by plane on Jan. 2, 1956, he kept rehearsing a message of good will — “Biti miti punimupa,” meaning “I like you, I want to be your friend” — from a Waorani phrase book. Three tribe members made a friendly visit, but then there was apparently a miscommunication or a perceived threat. After the missionaries failed to make radio contact with a base station, searchers found their bodies pierced by wooden spears.

Ms. Elliot renewed contact with the tribe over the next two years. In 1958, accompanied by her 3-year-old daughter and the sister of one of the murdered missionaries, she moved in with the Waoranis, known to their neighbors as Aucas, or savages. She ministered to them and remained in their settlement, in the foothills of the Andes, subsisting on barbecued monkey limbs and other local fare and living in rain-swept huts.

By her account they named her the Waorani word for woodpecker (or crane, by another account, because of her height).

A Waorani, Ms. Elliot wrote in Life magazine in 1961, “has not a reason in the world for thinking us his betters, and he probably has some very valid reasons for thinking us his inferiors.”

She came to understand why her husband was killed, she wrote.

“The Auca was trying to preserve his own way of life, his own liberty,” she explained in Life. “He believed the foreigners were a threat to that liberty, so he feels he had every right to kill them. In America, we decorate a man for defending his country.”

She expressed similar thoughts of understanding and forgiveness in “Through Gates of Splendor,” writing: “The prayers of the widows themselves are for the Aucas. We look forward to the day when these savages will join us in Christian praise.”

End quote. And join them they did. That tribe of remote peoples became christians and they are christians to this day. Thanks to a grain of wheat named Jim Elliot. And 4 others with him.

Keep praying for the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest.