

We're stepping into the middle of a long teaching of Jesus as He sends out His disciples to announce the kingdom. He is teaching about future realities for the disciples. As we read His words to His disciples, imagine you are listening in. Imagine you are in His audience. You will find that His words to them have hope for us today.

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."
(Matthew 10:16–23)

There is a lot in this passage, but we don't have time to cover everything. Here are a few observations that will help us make connections: Jesus begins by calling His disciples to be "shrewd." What does it mean to be shrewd? The biblical writers describe three types of wisdom. The first is understanding or insight. James 1:5 says that if we lack insight, we can ask God and He will give it. Second is discernment. It is the ability to distinguish good and evil. The writer of Hebrews says that this is a learned ability that happens through following God's Word (Hebrews 5:14). The third type of wisdom is what we read here—shrewdness.

Shrewdness is how we engage the world. It is the ability to navigate an upside-down world that doesn't work the way that it should. The ability to be shrewd comes through "the Spirit of the Father." The disciples will know how to navigate a disordered world through reliance on the Holy Spirit to act through them. Why does this matter? What does this accomplish? What is the hope for the disciples as they rely on the Spirit in their suffering? The hope is in verse 23 when Jesus uses the term, "Son of Man." Son of Man is a technical term from the Old Testament book of Daniel. Daniel 7 uses imagery to describe a future reality. The

image of four beasts represents oppressors of God's faithful people. In contrast, there is a human figure—one "like a son of man"—who will have the authority of God, who will reign and be vindicated (Daniel 7:13–14). Daniel 7 is a story about victory and vindication—about who wins in the end.

When Jesus uses the term, He is using language to depict His victory over evil and the vindication of God's people. We see that emphasis in the phrase, "the one who stands firm to the end will be saved." There will be suffering, but there is the point at which suffering ends. Maybe the end will be the suffering itself. Maybe the end will be death. Even if they die, there will be vindication because Jesus has defeated evil. They will be "saved" even though they may be executed. In that way, the end is not the end.

"The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

"So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."
(verses 24–31)

Because the end is not the end—because Jesus is victorious and the faithful of God will be vindicated in the end—the disciples can have courage for the present. Jesus says three times for them not to be afraid. We can define fear in this context—as the uncertainty of who God will be in the future. Jesus exhorts them to have courage that God will be for them in the end.

Jesus gives three reasons for them not to be afraid. First, truth will one day be known (v. 26). Though injustice and false accusation may be prominent today, truth will be clearly known in the end. Second, God will outlast their offender (v. 28). Though the oppressors seem powerful today, God is more powerful. Lastly, and perhaps most compelling, Jesus exhorts His disciples to have courage because they are valuable to God (v. 31). Using

an argument from the least to the greatest, Jesus explains that God cares for the activities of the slightest animal. The disciples are worth exceedingly more to God.

Can you imagine what that must have been like for the disciples to hear? "You matter to God. You are valuable to your heavenly Father." What courage it must have instilled in them as they prepared to face hardship. Equally, can you imagine what it would be like if you lived from that belief system? What would change about your life if you lived every day from the belief that you are valuable to God?

God demonstrates His care in this way: He knows you. How does knowing you express His care? Think of it this way: have you ever been in a conversation and afterward feel like you weren't heard, your viewpoints weren't taken seriously, or your emotions weren't acknowledged? You probably felt uncared for because the person didn't make the effort to know you. The disciples of Jesus would face trials that could lead them to question if God still cared for them. Jesus gives them courage with the reminder that they are valuable to our heavenly Father.

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

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 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—**

**a man's enemies will be the mem-
bers of his own household.'**

"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. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."
(verses 32–42)

They will need this encouragement because they will face painful loss in following Jesus. Jesus describes the loss of relationships. His teaching is not permission to abandon family or family responsibilities. Rather, Jesus is saying that His disciples are to be willing to sacrifice the loss of relationships if those relationships keep the disciples from following Him. If you're a parent, you probably have expressed similar sentiments with your children. Maybe your child had friendships that were destructive or a dating relationship with someone that didn't lead to their best. You presented them with direction to forsake relationships in order for their good.

The loss of anything is hard. But Jesus says something fascinating in verse 39: those who lose actually gain. It's counter-intuitive to how the world works. The place of your loss could be the place where you find what matters.

One of the people in history who believed Jesus in these words was a French woman named Marie Durand. In late the 17th and early 18th century, French protestants (called Huguenots) were imprisoned, enslaved, tortured, put to death because of their practice of faith. In a small, walled city in the south of France Protestant women were imprisoned in a tower for 30 years. Marie Durand was one of those women.

While in the tower, Marie carved a word in the stone that you can still visit and see today. It is a word that is both powerful and confounding. Imprisoned by her oppressors, Marie Durand carved the word, "resist," to which we immediately have questions. How can you claim that you resist? This is the end of your story: you lost. In the place of seeming defeat, Durand believed that the end wasn't the end. She could resist because Jesus will be victorious.

People like Marie Durand are united with Jesus in their suffering. That is what Jesus says to His disciples in the last several verses. His disciples are His representatives in the world. Moreover, their suffering does not separate them from Jesus, but is a sign that they are closer than they think. The end is not the end. Their defeat would be victory because they are united with Jesus.

That is what happened in the story of Jesus. Jesus died on a Roman cross and Rome thought they won. They could point to the cross and say, "See, your messiah lost." Evil thought it won—it could point to the cross and say, "See, your God is defeated." But the cross was the precursor to the empty tomb. The means of defeat was actually the path for the victory of God. Jesus suffered and stands victorious for you.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC South. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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