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The Gospel According to Matthew

The World's Response to the Kingdom Invasion

October 28, 2018

Sermon Text: Matthew 10:5-42

Scripture Reading: Matthew 15:21-28

Here in Matthew 10 we see the King sending His apostles out into the world to preach the good news of His kingdom. And we see the world's response. We have here then the common mission and experience of the Christian in this fallen world.

The Kingdom Announced to Israel First

Mat 10:5-42 These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town

of the Samaritans, (6) but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (7) And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' (8) Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. (9) Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, (10) no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.

This is a theme that you can follow through Scripture – that Christ came to Israel first. We saw it already in our Scripture reading this morning and you see the same pattern followed in Acts:

Until...

Act 28:25-28 And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: (26) "Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." (27) For this people's heart

has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' (28) Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

And Paul develops the theme in Romans 11-

Rom 11:11-15 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. (12) Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! (13) Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry (14) in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. (15) For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

This is all incredibly important and shows the common error of dispensational theology making the Jews the center of all that we do.

But we must move on:

The Consequences of Rejecting the Kingdom

(11) And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. (12) As you enter the house, greet it. (13) And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. (14) And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. (15) Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Rejection of the gospel is something of immense and eternal gravity. Consider the consequences of accepting Christ: peace with God. Entrance into His kingdom. And the consequences of rejecting Him – well, think of something worse than what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah – forever.

When we share the good news of Christ and His kingdom, it is always effectual. Either to save, or to condemn.

Expected Response to the Kingdom

(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.

Many of us over the years have been told by Christian books, preachers, our parents and others, that *if we offend someone, then we have done something wrong. Christians especially must be nice and likeable people.*

Wrong.

Jesus tells the apostles plainly what they can expect to happen to them. And this certainly is not the only time He warned them, and us:

Joh 15:18-21 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his

master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (21) But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Don't be anxious. Don't be surprised. Don't think that you are wrong. Don't dream up some kind of apology. The Lord in fact will give you the right words.

Over the years in this church we have seen plenty of trouble and conflict, have we not? And there were always voices accusing us of being unkind, unforgiving, harsh, judgmental, and so on. All of that is the enemy's efforts to silence Christ's word and work. If anyone thinks that following Christ necessarily means that they will have peace and popularity with everyone, they are at best grievously wrong.

And the battle rages at deepest levels:

Division at the Deepest Levels

(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.

These are *hard* words. There is a battle

raging throughout this universe. It is cosmological – involving the entire cosmos. No human being can avoid choosing up sides in it. There are probably illustrations from the Civil War, brothers on opposing sides. But it was still nothing like this war of *kingdoms in conflict*.

We must understand this if we are to think and act in accord with reality. The reality is that Christ came into this world *and ignited a world, cosmic war*. And as King, He demands everyone choose His kingdom or perish.

And He continues, giving us encouragement and emphasizing that we need not fear:

Don't Fear or be Surprised

(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. (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. (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.**

At all times in this war, Christ is with us. Don't be overwhelmed by the enemy's lies and accusations – total truth is going to prevail in the end.

The enemy tries to use fear to silence us. He does not want people to hear about Christ. So it is vital that we realize *the enemy is not the one to fear*. All the devil can ever do is destroy our temporal bodies. God on the other hand is the one to be truly feared and obeyed. There is the irony:

People who refuse to follow Christ because they don't want "trouble" in fact choose the biggest trouble for themselves possible!

Faith is required here. We must believe Christ's promises and teachings. Here, He tells us something quite incredible

about His Father – something that is true ONLY of the living and true God – *He knows every single one of us intimately. Furthermore, YOU are of incredible value to Him. THAT is what He thinks of His children.* So don't fear the enemy.

Confession of Christ Required

(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.

As we present the news of the King and His kingdom, we do so with His authority. We have the right and the duty to tell people that *their acknowledgment or their denial of Christ determines their relationship with God.* Listen to these related verses:

Joh 9:20-23 His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. (21) But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." (22) (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) (23) Therefore his parents

said, "He is of age; ask him."

And-

Rom 10:9-10 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

To *acknowledge* Christ is to *confess* Christ. No matter what the cost, we must confess that Christ is Lord, that we belong to Him, that we believe His Word, that He is the only Savior, that He was crucified, is raised and coming again.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son,
our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy
Spirit

and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the
dead.

He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of
God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the
living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,

the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

In other words, Christ does not permit us to be “secret” Christians. The confession He requires is a public one. This is one of the primary reasons for water baptism. Over the years I have encountered numbers of people who insist they are Christians, but they refuse to be baptized. We have a right to question such a “confession” that has not been made publicly.

Finally, Christ closes this section of instruction to His apostles with these words. They are sobering:

Everyone Must Choose

(34) "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (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.

These words sound strange in our day. They do not sound like the Christ we have been told about – and largely they are not! Think very carefully about His words here and let them sink in.

There is trouble. There is a cosmic war raging. And Christ calls us into the fight. WE must choose. To not choose is to choose. “He who is not with me is against me.”

Many of you have lived this out in your own lives. You followed Christ and you found that your own mother and father and sisters and brothers and even your own children are against you.

Yet we are told by so many preachers and counselors and professing Christians that surely if we choose to do so, we can get along nicely with our family members and to not do so is against God’s will. That simply is not what Jesus said. If you do not get this straight in your thinking, then you are going to be discouraged and shamed and downcast because you will think that YOU are the problem, that YOU are at fault, that YOU are the cause of the offense and if YOU would handle things differently all would be well. But then that means to be silent about Christ and His kingdom, and that we cannot do.

Jesus does not back off His command:

(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.

Choose. Choose. Choose. Do whatever, leave whoever...in order to follow Christ. Paul's own experience illustrates:

Php 3:7-11 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- (10) that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (11) that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

How many people will end on the Day of Judgment, hearing the words "I never knew you" spoken to them? And why? Because they loved this world, they loved their family, and in the end that meant that they did not love Christ.

Finally, Christ encourages us with these words about our certain reward:

(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 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 are the marks of someone who truly confesses and receives Christ:

- Receives the Apostles
- Receives and believes the Prophets
- Receives Christ's people
- Loves Christ's people

Do you see it? The person who is blessed, who inherits Christ's kingdom, who truly is known by Him, is a person who believes God's Word, and who loves God's people. If that truly is you, then be sure that the kingdom is yours. You are on the winning team.