

Sermon Matthew 10 21 33 2nd Sunday after Pentecost Series A

Sermon: 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 10:21-33(vv. 26, 27)

Theme: Courage in the midst of danger

Goal: To encourage Christians to endure hardship and to proclaim the Gospel, trusting in God's promises.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Have you ever heard a motivational speaker? I have a friend in Brazil whose job is to present motivational speeches. He is a great speaker and encourages people a lot! He was even invited to speak to pastors and teachers and other leaders of the church. The audience always became excited and was amazed about his ideas and proposals to overcome some crises in life.

In our text, Jesus seems to be just the opposite of a motivational speaker. He is sending His disciples two by two on a mission trip to the towns and villages of Israel. Instead of words of encouragement and motivation, He warned them against several bad experiences they would or could have. If I had been among His disciples, I would probably have answered to Jesus: *Thank you Master; but it is not this kind of life I was looking for when I became Your disciple. I want to enjoy the benefits of Your kingdom. I want to have peace in my life. I want to be free from problems and contrarities. ..*

Jesus didn't want to deceive or to frustrate His disciples. He is honest to them warning them so that they would be prepared how to react facing problems, difficulties and even death in their mission. And after the warning, comes the true motivation and encouragement: His promise. "Don't be afraid" is repeated three times in this text, with the assurance of God's presence and help all the time.

I – “Don’t be afraid” facing opposition due to your faith.

The first warning is against opposition in the midst of your own family and friends due the Christian faith. “Brother will betray brother to death and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents...all men will hate you because of me.” *Jesus seems to be speaking of a radical life which has nothing to do with me* (Phil Brandt PBrandt@cu-portland.edu). Or does it have?

I heard from a class mate of mine from the primary school when I was last time in Brazil, that she wanted to take her grandchild to the Confirmation Class; but her daughter prohibited her to do this. It was a big quarrel inside the family because the granny was a faithful Christian, but the daughter was violently opposing any Christian influence on the child’s education. – Do you know similar stories? Maybe you are facing such opposition inside your family...

What is the advice of Jesus about this? “Do not be afraid of them... A student is not above his teacher.” – Jesus Himself suffered a strong opposition of His brothers at the beginning of His ministry (Mark 3:21) and of His class mates and friends in Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6). If it had happened to the Teacher, it wouldn’t be different with the disciples. But: “Don’t be afraid of them... What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.” This means: Don’t stop working; don’t stop proclaiming the Good News due to the opposition of your family and friends; do the work you are in charge of!

Thanks God that the disciples didn’t give up proclaiming the Good News in face of the opposition they suffered from friends and from the established church of their time. Due to their perseverance and with

God's blessing the Word of God was proclaimed to the entire world and reached us as well. They were not afraid, but trusted in God's promises.

II – "Don't be afraid" – even facing death due to your faith.

Jesus goes further in His warning: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." Would you persevere in the Christian faith if you were threatened with death because of your Christian faith? I pray God that we will never have to pass through this experience.

The News noticed some weeks ago that a pregnant woman was condemned to capital penalty in Sudan because she converted from Islam to Christianity. The baby is already born and they are only waiting until the baby turns two years old to execute the sentence. I heard an interview with the brother of this lady and he agreed with the sentence because she was considered a betrayal by her family. But she didn't deny her Christian faith, and, as far as I know, she is in prison and several Human Rights entities and Christian churches are trying to free her.

Jesus Himself experienced death in His body, but commended His soul in the hands of God. Therefore He says with authority: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." All the disciples, but John, experienced the death of martyrs. "*The blood of the martyrs watered the seed of the Word*" wrote a historian. The death of Jesus and of many martyrs didn't stop the salvation plan of God on our behalf. On the contrary, the death of Jesus was in God's plan and His resurrection assures us that God loves and forgives us, and has the door of His home open to us. Nowadays martyrs just confirm that it is worthy to be steadfast in the Christian faith; because those who kill the

body cannot kill the soul, which is preserved by God to eternal life!
Therefore, “Don’t be afraid.”

III – “Don’t be afraid” – God takes care of you.

The third time Jesus uses the words “Don’t be afraid” is more in a positive way than as a warning. He says: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” The care of God for us goes to the extreme of details counting the hairs of our head! (God doesn’t spend so much time counting my hairs anymore...) What shall we say then? Shall we doubt about His care and be afraid in face of whatever can happen to us? We shall lift arms and legs to heaven in thanksgiving for all the good we are receiving from Him. Read the today’s Psalm 91 at home again, slowly, and meditate on God’s promises of care and protection even in the midst of war and pestilence. Think about how many times our prayers were heard by God to the tiniest details; sometimes just a wish that came through... Think about our childhood and what we have achieved in our lives now... Think about the Christian Church and all the oppositions she has faced in the past and in the present; and we still have the pure Gospel among us and the Sacraments. Think concrete in God’s blessings in our lives and number them. We will sing the hymn after the sermon, “Count your blessings”.

Conclusion: This “Upside down” motivational speech of Jesus is not just about our earthly and physical condition of life; it is not just to improve our style of life; but it is connected with the preaching of the Gospel and our faithfulness to receive eternal life. Jesus said: “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my

Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven... But he who stand firm to the end will be saved.” Goods and physical life are not as important as eternal life. And this we have only by grace of God, by faith in Jesus. Let us rely on Gods promises and be faithful to Him in good or in bad situations of life. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 22 June 2014