

## Christ's Expectations For His Disciples

### PRAY

We're picking up a series in Matthew where we left off in Chapter 10.

As we do, we'll see in many ways that Christianity is really simple.

It's all about Jesus, and working out who he is

– which is why working through the Gospels, where you see Jesus most clearly and vividly, is so important –

and then working out what your response to him will be.

Who Jesus is, and how you respond.

But actually, there's not a lot of freedom in how you choose to respond to him. Like you can decide what suits you best. What you'll take and what you'll leave.

Jesus tells you how to respond to him.

And in this, he is uncompromising.

Listen to his words in the chapter we're looking at today

10:37 "anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me".

10:38 "Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me".

10:32 "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".

10:39 "whoever finds their life will lose it, but whoever loses it for my sake will find it".

Who does he think he is??

That he would demand affection of him above all else, even my own family.

That he would demand devotion to the point of self-denial and death (what a horror to our current setting).

That he would claim your status before God, depending on your acceptance or rejection of himself.

This is a man who can only be who he says he is – God, or completely deranged.

The context Jesus says these things is as he's sending his disciples out on a short-term mission trip.

And as he does it, he's shaping their expectations of what discipleship, representing him, bearing his name, following him will look like, especially as he sends them out like sheep among wolves.

A dangerous setting as it would be easy to flee from Jesus rather than follow.

And there's something to note as we begin in chapter 10.

The first section of this chapter is not a model for us for discipleship and mission.

Many people *have* used it like this.

So you can see in

vs8 that you should expect healings, resurrections, and exorcisms – miraculous signs should accompany your mission.

from vs 9 that you shouldn't take anything with you, no money, extra clothes.

From verses 12-15 that there's a demonstration of the judgment a household will receive if they don't accept you.

But here's why we shouldn't use this as a model.

The first one is glaringly obvious.

Anyone spot it?

Yes, in verse 5 and 6 this is a mission only to the Jews, not the gentiles.

And we know from Matthew 28, that our mission is to be to all nations.

Something has changes between these chapters – the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Gospel for all nations.

But he's another reason. Keep your finger in Matthew 10, and come over to Luke 22:35

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"

"Nothing," they answered.

He's speaking of this mission trip in Matthew 10.

<sup>36</sup> He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.

So close to the fulfilment of his death and resurrection, Jesus redefines the rules.

We can't lift this section from Matthew 10, and directly apply it to ourselves. These are guidelines for the 12 disciples, not us. And that's not tricky to work out, it's just knowing your Bible.

But I think the scope of Matthew 10 widens from verse 17 onwards, so that it is applicable to us.

Jesus begins to talk about not only the immediate mission trip of his 12 disciples, but more broadly into the future concerning all his disciples.

See in verse 17 he says, <sup>17</sup> Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. <sup>18</sup> On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.

We're no longer talking about a mission to Jews only, but Gentiles.

And what's more, the chapter ends with these big broad pronouns – whoever, anyone.

He's talking about us.

We begin to see clearly what Jesus tells us to expect, and think about mission, life, following him.

Huge things to consider.

I'm going to break it down into a few headings:

1. What to expect, and whom to expect it from
2. Why we should expect it
3. How to stand

### **What to expect, and whom to expect it from**

It jumps out at you pretty quick.

Hostility and division

Have a look from 16

<sup>16</sup> "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup> Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. <sup>18</sup> On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

<sup>21</sup> "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>22</sup> You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

This is what to expect as a follower of Jesus. Division. Hostility.

It's not hard to see is it.

Especially today as secular society leans further and further away from their Christian heritage.

Try speaking about your Christian views on sexuality and gender at a university discussion forum.

This has been happening for ever.

Ridicule and hatred for the followers of Jesus, for all ages past and present.

This is a long time ago now, but I assume you know him well, and may even recall watching this. But Peter Jensen on Q&A, as the archbishop at the time, speaking mostly with **Catherine Deveny**, on whether they believe in a God or not. Many of topics were touched on, including homosexuality and equality. About which Peter Jensen said that there was an equality in the Bible, no matter the life you've lived, the salvation Jesus offers is for all. He spoke graciously, and calmly.

Catherine Deveny later wrote that sitting next to Peter Jensen was torture, and agony. Because under the gentlemanly veneer, lay a heart of evil.

Christians will be mocked, and hated.

And Vs22 summarises who we should expect this from – everyone. See it there.

So come, be a disciple of Jesus!

I used to be a salesman before ministry. So I happen to know a thing or two about salesmanship.

Now I gotta tell you that this has got to be the worst sales pitch ever I've ever heard.

Normally you start with you best foot forward, but Jesus starts with the absolute worst foot.

Come follow me, I'm sending you out among wolves, to be flogged, arrested, betrayed, rebelled against, and hated by everyone.

But you know the craziest thing – it works!

Look at us! Here we are, following Jesus.

And I know many of you follow Jesus in the midst of hostility and division.

And some of you might be thinking, I've never heard this, I didn't know this was involved!

Now you know.

Words like this from Jesus is what makes "healthy wealthy and wise" so ridiculous. The prosperity Gospel is a fraud.

People can sometimes get away with thinking that becoming a Christian is supposed to bring some sort of tranquillity in their life.

But the life following Jesus is anything but that.

Later in the chapter Jesus will say <sup>34</sup> "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> 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—  
<sup>36</sup> a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

But hang on – isn't Jesus the prince of peace? Doesn't he come with good news?

This is a problem that begs answering, and we'll get to it in a moment.

But why do we continue to follow Jesus is it's this hard, and brings hostility and hatred and division??

Why does Jesus horrible sales pitch work!?

Because the message and person of Jesus is true.

It's beautiful

It's good

It's worth losing everything for.

What is so precious as to know the Lord of life, and walk with him, and know that he holds your life beyond the grave. Who's love for you doesn't change. Who can fully sympathise with everything you feel and suffer. Who rescues you from a life completely void of meaning. Who forgives you. Who restores your status as a son and daughter of the God who made you.

I would walk over cut glass to follow Jesus, wouldn't you?

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### **Why ought we expect such hardship following Jesus?**

The answer is very simple, see in verse 18, Jesus says it's "on my account", and in 22 he says you'll be hated by everyone "because of me".

And this is what Jesus is teaching from verse 24

<sup>24</sup> "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. <sup>25</sup> 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!

Essentially, if people hate Jesus, they will also hate those who follow Jesus.

But why is Jesus hated?

And this is the big idea...

Jesus comes into a world of rebellion, and shines the light on it. He exposes the rebelliousness in the heart of every human.

If you love rebellion, you will hate having it exposed, and you will hate the one who exposes it.

You get this in drug companies.

They create a drug in a lab to treat a disease.

The drug develops an unwanted side affect.

They lose their market, and so begin selling it in markets that don't have as tight restrictions.

And this really happens. Morally bankrupt.

How does that company feel about a whistle blower.

They hate it.

And that's what having our sin exposed is like.

And our sin is much deeper than just doing morally bankrupt or things.

We've hijacked the world God has made for our own purposes.

We're not just stealing things, we're stealing our lives from God.

Imagine going on a tour to Buckingham Palace, and you're walking through the corridors with a friend. You glance to the left, and you see a glimmer at the far end of the room. Queen Elisabeth II's throne, surrounded by red rope.

You grab your mate and say, "you hold up the rope, while I duck over and sit on the throne so you can grab a sneaky pic".

Your friend is horrified – you can't do that! It's reserved for the sovereign. For royalty. No one else may sit on that throne.

Well friends, that is what we've done with our lives.

In our lives there is a throne for a ruler – the one who made us. The only one worthy of sitting on it is the one who owns it.

In our arrogance,  
we take that throne for ourselves,  
or we try share it with God, "can't we both sit on it".  
Or we set up a throne beside it, as long as it's equal with God's throne.

Sin dreadfully usurps the throne away from God.

It places you as the ruler, and the owner of your life. Not God.

And it's from this perspective that taking up your cross,  
a phrase from Matthew 10, that just means to *die to yourself*,  
rings true.

You were never meant to live for yourself.  
Live for the God who made you.

It's from this perspective that when Jesus says:  
whoever saves their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will find it,  
is such good news.

Jesus is calling our lives to be turned back to the very purpose they were created for. To be in orbit around God and his purposes, not ours.

Our purposes are small. Ecclesiastes. Our purposes are limited, finite, futile, frustrated, meaningless. A life lived like this shrivels up.

God and his purposes are great beyond our imagination. He transcends time, he's infinite, he knows all things and has been working salvation for man to his own glory since before time began.

He has worked the universe into existence, and knows every part of the far reaches of time and space, beyond what the brand spanking new James Webb telescope can see,

and yet, he knows you, down to the hairs on your head.

A life lived for God, is a life that expands.  
A life that begins to reflect more of God himself.  
When we live for God, and yield the throne of our lives back to him, he not only forgives us – he restores us back to the purposes he created us for.

And ultimately, he will restore us to perfect relationship with him in Glory.

Giving up your life, to live for the sake of Christ is not some terrible sacrifice made on the altar of human freedom.

It is a sacrifice. But one restores humanity, not destroys it.

But if you love rebellion, you will hate every word I've just said.

God owns my life??  
My life belongs to me.  
Nobody tells me what I can and can't do.  
Giving up my life to live for Christ??

This sounds terrible! It sounds cultic! Destructive, oppressive.

And this takes us back to answering the question about Jesus bringing a sword, and division, when we thought he was all about peace.

Jesus exposes the rebelliousness in our hearts, so we can see that we're actually enemies of God.

And the division is between those who repent, and those who reject.

Before Jesus saves us, he tells us we're unsaved!

That's why Christianity isn't just a lovey dovely affirming sanctuary of humanity. Humanity loves that kind of church! No problems there.

But the church that is serious about the Bible, the reality of sin against God, and the gravity of it because of God's holiness – that church will always be deeply unpopular and unfashionable, and painful to the world.

The Gospel is a message that is rarely easy, and slips along with the flow of society, but is often met with anxiety, stress and disturbance.

But that's the context of change.

Psychologists will tell you, someone will often only change when the pain of not changing is too great. You get this with dieting – when someone is so uncomfortable that they take a diet seriously.

Well that's the message of Jesus – that you have a serious, dramatic problem, that needs attention, with life and death on the line, because we have lived our lives as though God does not rule it.

Yes the Christian message is that God loves the world, but not in a way that affirms it, but in a way to save it! He loves enemies.

Jesus was never crucified for his message of love, but because of his message of Lord.

Don't shy away from this message – Jesus Christ is Lord.

That is a message that has rocked the boat for the past two millennia.

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The peace Jesus offers is not a peace now. It's a peace to come.

Peace between God and man, which we have through salvation!

But before glory, men and women still rage in turmoil against God and his people, until the last day when every knee bows and tongue confess that he is Lord.

Willingly, or not.

Don't pursue the life of least resistance.

The easy going, tranquil, happy medium, Australian dream.

If you search for that life on earth, you will either not be following Jesus at all, or be sorely bruised and broken as your expectations are dashed to pieces in the face of hostility.

The peace you have is between you and God. But we can't expect that same peace between us and the sinful world.

Amidst such division and hostility it's hard to stand.

So what words does Jesus have for **how we are to stand?**

The first is to be **Wise and innocent**

<sup>16</sup> "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

What a combination.

If you were shrewd without innocence, you might become cunning, sly, deceitful.

But shrewdness with innocence, you would be realistic, honest, wise, thoughtful, precautionous, know when to fight, and when to run, like in verse 23

<sup>23</sup> When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.

You pick your hills to die on.

On the other hand,

Innocence without shrewdness would be naivety, gullible, easily led astray.

But innocence with shrewdness and you will test the spirits, you won't be tossed by different winds of teaching, you would be loyal to the simple message of the cross, and discern distortions of it.

The second thing Jesus says is: **Don't be afraid**

<sup>26</sup> "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.

The truth will out.

You don't have to mind if someone disagrees with what you say concerning the Gospel. If they slander and mock you, and perhaps worse. Your defence will be vindication on the last day.

As you speak the truth of God's word, and stick to it, and live by it you'll be standing on the right side of history.

That's a phrase politicians use all the time isn't it.

There's a contentious political issue, and we're urged to make a decision, as we look back in history later on, and see we've made the "right" decision.

Jesus says, there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden made known.

Then in 27:

<sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.

He's saying "what you know will be true in the future, proclaim boldly now".

The truth will out, so don't be afraid of speaking it. Don't cower before men.

He has more that we're not to be afraid of.

<sup>28</sup> 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.

There is something much worse to fear than the loss of your life.

The loss of your soul to hell.

So the Bible echoes from old testament to new, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the LORD.

Fear the LORD and no one can touch you.

You can trust you are in the ultimate care of God, even if terrible things happen to you, even the loss of your life, and you are within the care and control of God's mighty hand.

So verse 29 says:

<sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. <sup>30</sup> And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

We often think, God controls the big things, how could he care about me.

But Jesus works in reverse, and says God controls the minutia of life, how much more does he control and care for the big things, the lives of his children, of far greater worth than sparrows.

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All of this begs for a decision doesn't it?  
For some of us, it's to continue following Jesus.  
For some of us, it's to begin following Jesus.

Jesus makes his last appeal to his disciples in this Chapter.

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

...

<sup>37</sup> "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. <sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Stand with Jesus.

Acknowledge him, and live for him above all else and anyone else, including yourself.

Participate with him in his mission  
Participate with him in his rejection

Because he alone is worthy to lose everything for.

So

Stand with him in salvation  
Stand with him in suffering

Let me **PRAY**