



THE GOSPEL DEMANDS RADICAL COMPASSION
Matthew 9:35-10:42

Good morning. If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Matthew Chapter 9. While you're finding that passage of Scripture, let's pray together.

O God, this is the cry of our hearts. We want to see a great harvest. God, we pray for a great harvest in schools all across this community. We pray for countless students today, who do not know you. God, we pray for an awakening of your Spirit to so grip teenagers and student in this community that they begin to run to Christ. God, we pray for a harvest in businesses, marketplaces all across this city.

God, we pray for a great harvest, great need to be uncovered in men, women's lives all across the workforce in Birmingham, that they would see the need for Christ and that your Spirit would awaken them to your salvation, your glory, your majesty. We pray for a great harvest in inner city Birmingham.

We pray for a harvest in our neighborhoods. God, we are surrounded by people who do not know that you are good, Lord Jesus, and you are worthy. And we pray that your Spirit would open their eye to your greatness, and they would come running to your gospel. God, we want to be a part of a great harvest. We want to be a part of something in Birmingham that is eternally good. And we want to be a part of the harvest among the nations.

God, we want to make a severe dent in the billion people who have never heard the name of Jesus. God, we pray for a harvest among the nations and, God, we say to you as your church, we want to be a part, and we pray that you would show us what it means to be a part of this harvest. We know this is something only your Spirit can do, and so we bow before you in desperation for your Spirit. We pray that you would do it. You would do it in our lives; you would awaken our eyes and our hearts to the need around us, and that you would awaken the hearts and lives of people to your grace and your glory.

We pray that you would do a work in Birmingham that causes your name to get great glory. We pray that you would make a great name for yourself among the nations and that you would do it through us. God, we want to be a part of advancing your Kingdom and multiplying the gospel to the ends of the earth. So we pray for your Spirit to guide us in our time in the Word today toward that end.

We praise you for this church. We praise you for the people and the gifts and the skills and the passions that are represented here. We praise you for what you have done by your grace in lives here. God, I pray that you would take your grace and you would multiply the gospel through us, and make this church a church that counts for your glory in the ends of the earth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Two Ingredients of Radical Compassion...

We are in a series calling radical what the gospel demands. Most of the year, up to this point, we have been talking about the gospel and the implications of the gospel for our lives. If we really believe this gospel, it changes everything about how we live. If we don't believe this gospel, then routine, perfunctory religious motion and activity make sense. We're just playing games anyway on Sundays. But if we believe this gospel, the implications are radical for the way we view our lives, for the way we view the church, for the way we view those who are lost, and the way we view those who are poor.

We are going to look at the way the gospel radically changes the way we view the lost, and the way we view people who do not have a relationship with Christ. The gospel demands radical compassion. I want to show you two ingredients of radical compassion in Matthew 9 and 10 today.

Number one, I want to show you in the Word supernatural awareness of the condition of the lost. The first ingredient of radical compassion is a supernatural awareness of the condition of the lost. The second ingredient is a sacrificial obedience to the commission of Christ. Supernatural awareness of the condition of the lost and sacrificial obedience to the commission of Christ, you bring these two together, and you have the radical compassion that the gospel demands, that the gospel requires.

Remember we're talking about coming to Jesus on His terms, and we come to Matthew 9:35-38. And these verses, one of the clearest links between supernatural awareness or awareness of the condition of the lost and the commission of Christ to go to those who are lost. So what we're going to do is we're going to read the end of Matthew 9, and then we're going to read all the way through chapter 10. Matthew Chapter 9 sets the stage—gives a picture of condition of the lost, and then I want you to see how Jesus responds to that when He calls out His disciples and what He calls them to do. So we're going to read a pretty extended passage of Scripture, and I want you to picture this with me, Matthew 9:35.

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness." Now see the condition, awareness of the condition of lost here. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few" (Matt. 9:35). So there's the condition of lost. Now it transitions to the commission of Christ. "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt. 9:35).

He says, "Ask the Lord of the harvest," and then He sends them into the harvest, Chapter 10 verse 1,

"He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans" (Matt. 10:1-5).

These are Jesus' kind of marching orders, about to send them out,

"Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. 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.

"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 Beelzebub, 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. "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" (Matt. 10:6-34).

This is Jesus speaking.

"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 members 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" (Matt. 10:34-41).

The Condition of the Lost...

So here's the picture: condition of the lost leading into the commission of Christ. So let's start with the condition of the lost. I want you to see, and we're going to go briefly through a variety of points and we're going to camp out on a couple of others. So follow along; condition of the lost.

See their size.

See their size. When Jesus saw the crowds He had compassion on them. He saw the crowds. Historians estimate that in this region of Galilee at this point there were probably around 200 different cities or villages. Some estimate up to about three million people. Jesus was interacting in a region with that many people, and when he saw the crowds He had compassion on them. There is a depth of feeling here that goes beyond just an emotional feeling, even a spiritual feeling. This word is a physical feeling. Jesus saw the masses of people and it agonized him physically, spiritually, emotionally to see the crowds.

And this is the Jesus who lives in you and me. So I implore you to look beyond here, to look beyond the comfortable chairs we find ourselves in, and to see the crowds, 6.7 billion people.

I've talked about this. Out of those 6.7 billion people, one-third claim to be Christian. And those are those who claim, in many senses, politically or socially to be Christian, likely not all actually followers of Christ. But even if we assume that they were all followers of Christ, that leaves over 4.5 billion people, including hundreds of thousands of people in Birmingham, Alabama, who today stand under the judgment of God and are on a road that leads to an eternal hell, if this gospel is true.

If this gospel is true, then 4.5 billion people today are headed for everlasting destruction. And if that is the case, then we cannot play games with the church. And if that's true, we cannot play games with our lives, not with that size of a crowd. See their size.

Feel their suffering.

Second, feel their suffering. Jesus didn't just see their size and He didn't just see their sin. He saw the depth of suffering that plagued them because of their sin. It says they were *"harassed and helpless, downcast and destitute, like sheep without a shepherd."* Whether He was preaching to them or healing them, Jesus had a depth of compassion for the people who He was ministering to, who He was around.

I love what a guy name Paul Brand says. Dr. Brand worked among lepers for many years and he reflects on the way Jesus interacted with the crowds, especially those who were diseased. And I want you to listen to what he writes. He says,

"Jesus reached out His hand and touched the eyes of the blind, the skin of the person with leprosy, and the legs of the cripple. I have sometimes wondered why Jesus so frequently touched the people He healed, many of whom must

have been unattractive, obviously diseased, unsanitary and smelly. With His power He easily could have waved a magic wand, but He chose not to.

"Jesus' mission was not chiefly a crusade against disease, but rather a ministry to individual people, some of whom happened to have a disease. He wanted those people one-by-one to feel His love and warmth and full identification with them. Jesus knew he could not readily demonstrate love to a crowd, for love usually involves touching."

See the size. Feel their suffering individually. Feeling their suffering. Aren't you thankful that Christ is willing to touch the dirty, the diseased and the despised? This is the picture here. And this is huge because what we need to realize is this depth of compassion in Christ does not arise from qualities or characteristics that are inherent in others. The reality is the people He saw were sinners, and He was the one who had been sinned against. There was absolutely nothing in them that would cause compassion to rise up in Him. He was the infinitely Holy God of the universe. There was nothing in Him that would cause compassion to rise up when looking at sin. It's indignation toward sin. So how did He respond this way?

Think about it with me. When we see a child...Last night Heather and I were driving back into town late in the evening and our two boys were sleeping in the back, and I'm looking at them as they're sleeping. You know that scene when you see a child sleeping. It's just so innocent and it's easy to have compassion just well up in you at that moment. But it's a whole another story when that two and a half year old is indignant towards his dad, and he is being defiant and saying no in my face. Now this compassion is not quite so automatic anymore. Does that make sense? Yes. Amen!

We respond to others, but the beauty of Christ is His compassion is not based on externals and others. His compassion is based on an internal reality in Him, a compassion that wells up, and the reality is the only way you and I could ever have this kind of compassion is if Christ is in us.

It's just so different in the way we view sinners. We see people in their sin and we see evidences of sin, and frustration rises up in us and indignation, and disgust in some instances and some facets of sin. These are the emotions that rise up in us, and that's natural. But it's supernatural when we see sin, and compassion rises up within us, and we feel and identify with people's need and hurt and suffering. This is the picture of Christ.

Realize their separation.

See their size, feel their suffering, and third, realize their separation. A couple of weeks ago when we looked at this passage briefly, I mentioned that "harvest" here, "harvest is plentiful, the workers of the few...the Lord of the Harvest." "Harvest" is biblical imagery in so many different places for judgment.

Isaiah 17, we won't turn to these; you might write them down. Isaiah 17:10-11, "*The harvest will be as nothing in the day of disease and incurable pain*" (Is. 17:11). Joel says, "Bring all the nations to where I will sit to judge them. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." Listen to what Joel says, "Come, tread, for the winepress is full...multitudes are in the valley of decision."

The picture in Joel is there's a multitude of people in the harvest and their eternal destiny is at stake, and there's a Lord of the harvest who is looking over them. It's the same picture in Matthew 13. At the end of the age Jesus will come and He will separate the wheat from the tares. The wheat, those who are righteous, go to eternal life. Tares, those who are

unrighteous, to everlasting destruction, to a furnace of fire that is never quenched. When Jesus looked at the crowds He saw eternal realities at stake. He saw multitudes of people in a valley of decision, to use Joel's words.

The same thing, Revelation 14:14–20, this is the picture. Realize their separation. And it's exactly what 2 Thessalonians 1:7. Listen to this. The Bible says, *"This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power."*

This is what the Bible teaches. The Word of God says that there is coming a day when multitudes of people will be punished with everlasting destruction. Revelation 20:15 says they will be *"thrown into a lake of fire."* Earlier in that chapter it talks about how the smoke of that fire, *"the smoke of their torment,"* the Word says, *"rises forever and ever"* and ever and ever (Rev. 14:11). These are eternal realities that are at stake in the harvest, and Jesus knew these things.

And it's at this point, where I know some people will check out and say, "It's not real. I don't believe those verses," and that's one option. But the reality is if you take that option you cannot follow Christ. You cannot be a follower of Christ and choose to receive some of His words and ignore other words from Him. So you check out on His Word, you check out on Christ altogether. This is what the Bible teaches.

The question then is do we believe Jesus? Do we believe these words? And if we do, if we believe these words, 2 Thessalonians 1:7 and Revelation 20 and what He's talking about with the harvest, and we do exactly what Jesus said, we fall on our faces and we ask God. We plead with God to open our eyes to the condition of the lost around us. We ask and we plead Him to free us from temporary views, to deliver us from temporary views and the people around us and to give us eternal perspectives.

We need to see like this. We cannot ignore the crowds. We cannot ignore the crowds, turn a deaf ear to sin and suffering around us. We have this temptation to wring our hands in pious concern when we look at what's going on in the news. We wring our hands in pious concern and we thank God that we're not sinners like them. That's exactly what Jesus was rebuking in the first century.

We cannot be those sorts of people. We are so blind to these eternal realities. We get so caught up. We're so consumed with such trivial things, our emotions so consumed with games on Saturday. I wish I could say this every single Sunday. It doesn't matter. Who cares? There are thousands of people who are going to eternal damnation. Who cares who wins or loses artificial battles? Supernatural battle at stake here; let's live for this. Let's have our emotions wrapped up in this.

We need God to deliver us from natural affections to supernatural affections, a supernatural awareness of the condition of the lost. If this is true then it changes everything. God, give us a gripping, compelling, consuming awareness of the condition of the lost.

The Commission of Christ...

Jesus beckons us to pray.

And this is where the link comes in. Jesus sees the crowds this way and He gives this commission. He says, "*Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into his harvest field*" (Matt. 9:35). The commission of Christ, Jesus first beckons us to pray. Jesus says, "Disciples, look at the harvest, pray. We need workers. Pray that God would send out; ask God to send out workers into His harvest field."

Do you want to know how I pray as pastor for this church? This is how I pray: I pray that God would send out workers from her. I pray that God would send out students from here into schools working for the harvest. I pray that God would send out businessmen and women from here into the marketplace of Birmingham working for the harvest. And I pray that God would send out moms and dads into communities all across... Singles into different realms of influence that God has entrusted to you.

I pray that God would send us out into the highways and the byways of Birmingham and scatter these people for the sake of the harvest. I pray that God will scatter us beyond Birmingham to cities in the United States and around the world.

I was traveling this weekend and met a church leader from another state who went to Ecuador after one of our teams had gone to Ecuador, and there was a student who had gone on that team to Ecuador. Supposed to be there for a week, got there and decided didn't want to come home, so decided to stay in Ecuador. And praise God his parents let him do that.

Isn't that great? Let's just give ourselves official freedom for this one, okay? You go on a short-term trip and you get there and God says stay, we're just going to officially give each other permission to say yes. That's a good thing and we will gladly send your stuff to you. I pray for people to leave. I pray for people to leave this base of ministry and go around Birmingham and around the world for the harvest.

This is the kind of praying that God is pleased with. He's pleased with praying for workers going out, and He has ordained, sovereignly ordained to bring in a harvest through the prayers of his people. So let's pray like this. God likes answering—delights in answering prayers like this.

Jesus summons us to go.

So He beckons us to pray and then, second, He summons us to go. What happens in Chapter 10 is He calls His disciples to Him and He said, "Okay, since you're praying, we're going to go out." So the picture is He calls them to Himself. It's a great word in the original language of the New Testament it's a compound word that basically means to call someone to yourself to confront them face-to-face.

And He gives them instructions, sent out with the following instructions, verse 5-7 says. And the word picture here—original language of the New Testament—it's like a military commander calling in the soldiers to give orders. You know a military commander gives orders to the soldiers. This is not the opportunity for the soldiers to express their opinions about those orders. Soldiers don't express opinions. Soldiers obey orders. That's what He's doing.

The same word was used in legal settings in the first century, when you were summoned to court or summoned before a judge to receive a sentence. You don't ask questions. You do what the judge says.

That's a reminder for us that we are the children of God and we are not in a position to express opinions. We are in a position to obey orders.

And the instructions He gives are quite interesting. Obviously we do not have time to dive in-depth into every single verse here. What I want to do is in a sense paint through Matthew Chapter 10 with a broad brush, and I want us to see summarized Jesus' orders. How does Jesus commission His people?

This was a commission that was given to certain disciples, specifically to these disciples at this particular time. At the same time, there are truths, principles, orders that are given throughout this chapter that are reiterated in other places in the New Testament for all disciples of all time, and that's really the picture you have that starts with a specific call to these disciples in a specific way. Then gradually, as you read through the chapter, it's just gets more general and more general. By the time you get to, I think it's verse 24, what you have is Jesus saying, "If anyone would come after me," any disciple—this is the picture.

Instructions...

So the words were spoken specifically to these guys at that time. The application is definitely for all disciples of all times. In different ways the application is there. So this is the Jesus who commissions us, and I want you to hear how He commissions His disciples.

First of all, He says, "Go to great need." Go to great need. This is verses 5-8, "*Do not go among the Gentiles or any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel*" (Matt. 10:5-6). Again, that's more specific. We know that we're not just supposed to go to Israel. We see even later in this book, "Go to all nations." So that was part of the specific on this particular task.

"*As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near'*" (Matt. 10:7). Now listen to verse 8, "*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, and drive out demons.*" I want you to listen where Jesus is calling them to go. He's calling them to go first...He's calling them to go to the diseased, "*Heal the sick.*" Go to the sick. Don't go to the healthy. Go to the sick, not the people it's easy to be around. People it's hard to be around; may get you sick. Go to the sick, not to where it's safe. Go to the danger, the dangerous places. Go to the diseased.

Second, "Go to the dying. Raise the dead." Spend time with those who are dying.

Third, "Go to the despised. Cleanse those who have leprosy." Do we realize how huge this is? This is a culture where if somebody has leprosy they are ostracized. You don't get anywhere close to someone who has leprosy in the first century. You avoid people who have leprosy. They make sure to let you know where they are so that you can avoid them safely. And Jesus says, "Go to them. Go to the people that nobody else wants to go to. Go to the despised."

And then He says, "Drive out demons. Go to the dirty, those who are most tainted with sin." This is countercultural. Jesus is saying very clearly to His disciples, "You know the people that the world ignores. You know the people the world burdens down. You know the people that the world avoids altogether and oppresses. Those are the people that you go to."

We're going to talk about this more in the coming days, when we talk about the implications of the gospel for how we approach the poor. But the reality is if we are a church, if we are a people, if I'm a pastor who is constantly spending time around the healthy and the well-to-do, then I am disobeying the commission of Christ. And if we are people who are known for always being around the healthy and the well-to-do, then we are disobeying the commission of Christ, because He said, "Go to the diseased, the dying, the despised and the dirty."

Jesus' commission is to go to the areas of greatest need, not the areas of least need. We are drawn to need by the commission of Christ.

The beauty of it is, listen to what He says in verse 9, "*Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.*" Here's the beauty. As you go to the needy, you will learn to trust His provision.

I love this. "Reach out to the need," Jesus says, "and what you'll find is I'm sufficient to meet all your needs." Isn't that great? "Go to the areas of great need, and you'll find that I'm sufficient to meet all your needs. So you don't need extra money. You don't need an extra bag. You don't need an extra coat. You don't need extra shoes. You don't need extra anything. You don't need any excess whatsoever. You trust me. You take the minimum along and what you'll find is when you're meeting needs I'm sufficient not only to meet their needs, but your needs."

Isn't it a good thing to know that when we go to the needy, we go to the one who...Jesus has promised to meet our needs along the way! As you go to the needy you will learn to trust His provision. Go to the needy, find your needs met. It's a good deal. Go to great needs.

Second, go to great danger. In verse 11 Jesus starts talking about how they will be received. So he's talking about "Homes you'll go into, and the reality is some homes will accept you and some homes will reject you."

Then He gets down to verse 16. I want you to listen to what He says there. Jesus says, "*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.*" Now do you think that's intended to be an encouragement? What is the responsibility of a shepherd? A shepherd protects sheep from what? Wolves. A good shepherd keeps wolves from getting near the sheep. Wolves will try to come in, attack the sheep. A shepherd's job is to keep the wolves out of the sheep.

Here we've got Jesus, the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd and He says, "Go hang out with wolves. Go be with wolves." Do you hear what He's saying here? Jesus is saying to His disciples, "Be as foolish as sheep." Sheep are among the most helpless, foolish of all domesticated animals. Sheep, even something harmless, some harmless noise can cause them to go into a frenzy. They have no clue.

As a result, when they find themselves surrounded by wolves it's not a particularly good situation, because sheep really don't have any line of defense. The only thing they know to do is run, and they're very, very slow.

So Jesus says, "When you go out, this is what you're going to be like. You're going to be like dumb sheep walking into the middle of wolves." And it's going to seem like the most senseless thing. "What are they thinking going into those places? Don't they know what's involved there? Don't they know the danger that's involved there?"

And people will think that you're nuts because of where you are going into, and Jesus says, "That's my design. You will find yourself in the middle of evil, rapacious, vicious people who want nothing to do with you, and you're actually there by my design." We don't think like this. We think if it's dangerous then God must not be in it. We think if it's going to cost me money, or if it's going to cost me my life, then obviously God would not be leading me there. What if that's actually the primary criteria by which we know whether or not God is leading us there?

Like sheep among wolves, go to danger. Let it be said of you, Church at Brook Hills, just like it would be said of sheep, "They're nuts going into those places. They're going to great danger. They have no clue." And Jesus says, "That's what it means to be my disciple," like a sheep going in the middle of the wolves.

Then He says, "*Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes*" (Matt. 10:16). So, be as foolish as sheep and be as smart as snakes. Now how do you do that? How do you be as foolish as sheep and smart as snakes? Jesus is saying, "Go without reservation into areas of danger. Go without reservation into areas of need, and when you get there be smart. Be wise."

This is the picture of Jesus on His way to the cross, standing boldly before Pilate, before Roman officials, like a sheep among wolves. Right? But He speaks with wisdom. He does not incite unnecessary trouble, unnecessary conflict. He knows conflict will come, but He's wise.

He says, "Be as smart, as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as the doves. Be foolish as sheep, as smart as snakes, and be as pure as doves." When you are in the middle of the wolves, do not let them have anything against you. Do not be abrasive, inconsiderate, belligerent; innocence here, show purity, like a sheep before her shears is silent, a sheep, a lamb on his way to a slaughter. This is the picture.

Jesus went before those who killed Him in this way and He says, "You do the same." And here's His promise. Listen to what He says in verse 19, "*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.*" If you go to the needy, you'll learn to trust His provision. As you go into danger you'll learn to depend on His power.

Jesus says, "Go into danger, and know that when you go into danger you are not alone. I am right with you and I will empower you with everything you need to speak and to live, and to preach, and to speak in a way that brings me great honor." This is the only way that one brother in India who was being skinned alive could look at those who were skinning him alive and say to them, "You take off my old garment today, but I put on a new garment of righteousness."

How do you say that if the Spirit of Christ is not in you? This is how Christopher Love's wife, when he was being led to the gallows, could cry out to him, watching her husband go to the gallows, could cry out to him, "Today they will sever you from your physical head, but they cannot sever you from your spiritual head, Christ," and she applauded him as he went. How do you do that? Only by the Spirit of Christ.

And Jesus says, "I guarantee you, I promise you, in those moments I will be with you and you will learn to depend on my power." Here's the reality. We live our lives within the safety and security that we can make for ourselves in this world. We do not need the power of God. We do not need the power of the Spirit to live comfortable religious routine. We don't need the power of the Spirit. We can do that on our own. We live our lives on the front lines

making the gospel known in Birmingham and all nations, risking our lives going into great need, going to great danger. We need the Spirit of God all of a sudden, and He says, "You will learn to depend on my power. You will need my power." Go to great need. Go to great danger.

These are interesting instructions. They seem a little foreign to us. Look at verse 21, *"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 betrayed. The kingdom of God is divisive.

It's what Jesus talks about down in verse 34, 35, 36, *"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 members of his own household.'" Don't miss the picture here.*

Family members, you follow after Jesus and you give yourself to the commission of Christ, family members will not understand you. They may even turn against you. You will be misunderstood for sure, and it'll be the commission of Christ, and that betrayal may come from the places where you would have least expected it to come from. "You will be betrayed," Jesus says. "You will be betrayed. You will be hated." Chapter 10, verse 22, *"All men will hate you because of me."*

These are strong verses. These are not usually the verses that we have like pink highlights around in our Bibles with little stars everywhere like, "Yes, this is what I'm clinging to today. All men will hate me. This gives me inspiration." This is what Jesus said, and the picture is clear.

And obviously not all men, every single person, because there will be people who come to faith in Christ and they won't hate you. We see that at the end of this chapter. But the reality that Jesus is saying is it may come from your family. It may come from the government. Or it may come, did you hear, flogged in synagogues. It may come from the religious establishment, and you may be hated by religious people when you obey the commission of Christ. But he who perseveres...

Now why will they hate us? We don't need to give them reasons to hate us, by the way. This is not an excuse for living in a way that just makes people mad. What He's saying is they will hate you because they hated Jesus, "All men will hate you because of me." We'll talk about that more when we look at this one, "You will be betrayed, hated," and third, "You will be persecuted."

"When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another" (Matt. 10:23). Did you notice the difference there? Not "if" you are persecuted in one place, "when" you are persecuted. Jesus did not say, "If you're going to be persecuted." He said, "Guys, you're going to be persecuted." And this was not one of those place that just for these guys at this time, because Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12, *"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."* This will be a reality for followers of Christ.

Again, that doesn't mean we seek persecution. Here's the picture and it says it in the next verse, verse 24, *"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 Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!"*

Here's the picture. Jesus was betrayed. Jesus was hated and Jesus was persecuted. If you are a disciple of Jesus and a student is like his teacher, and a servant like his master, a servant doesn't go above his master. A student doesn't go above his teacher. They become like their teacher; like their master. And the picture is if Jesus was all these things, then all of these things will be a reality for you if you follow Jesus.

And this is where a stark reality comes home. It's a reality I think that is largely unrealized, but it is thoroughly biblical, the reality we must face. The danger of our lives increases in proportion to the depth of our relationship with Christ. The danger of our lives increases in proportion to the depth of our relationship, our identification with Christ. This is unavoidable.

I'm not saying this. Jesus is saying this. To all who want to avoid danger and live a carefree, easy life, don't follow Christ. If you want to avoid being betrayed and avoid being hated and avoid being persecuted, then avoid Jesus. Because the reality is Jesus was betrayed and hated and persecuted, and the more His life becomes manifest in your life, the more His presence consumes you, then the more the world will respond to you, just like the world responded to Him.

People say, "Well if we'd all just become like Jesus the world would love us." On the contrary, if we all become like Jesus the Bible says the world will hate us, because the world hated Christ. The world betrayed and hated and persecuted Christ.

We find this so hard to get our minds around. Our brothers and sisters around this world say hardy "amens" at every point in here. They know this reality. They know it, and we miss it. We miss it because of the routine system of Christianity we've created. I'm convinced because I've been studying this passage. This is one of the reasons that we have created this comfortable subculture called Christianity in our region of this country where it is easy to be a Christian, and we've built a whole philosophy of church based around how we can best mimic the world in order to be appealing to the world. That's what our whole system is based on. And we think the more we mimic the world, the more we appeal to the world the better, and the reality is we do that and we do all that we can to do that, and in the process we completely lose our identification with Jesus Christ our Savior.

He didn't live to mimic the world, and He didn't live to appeal to the world. The world responded like this to Him. The reality is if we're appealing to the world then we are not identified with Christ. The Scripture is not saying, Jesus is not saying...Obviously the whole point is He wants to draw lost people, people who don't know Him, to Himself, but the reality is He says, "You will go out and there will be people who will be diametrically opposed to you, and the world and all of its system, and the ruler of this world will be diametrically opposed to you, and you will feel it."

The more we know Christ and become like Christ, don't miss this. The more you become like Christ, the more I become like Christ things will not get easier in our lives. The more this church becomes like Christ the more things will not get easier. They will get harder. They will get harder.

Listen to Luke 6:40. Listen to this verse. Jesus says, "Everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher." Does that frighten you? It does me. "Everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher." Jesus is our Teacher, and so we are going to be like the one who was mocked and beaten, and scourged and spit upon; had a crown of thorns thrust into His head.

This is the one we're wanting to be like, and it brings this question to the forefront. It begs this question that we must ask. Do we really want to be like Christ? I mean really want to be like Him, because if we are like Him, if our lives are identified with Him then our lives will not be the same as the world around us. Our lives will be radically different and it will not be easy. It will be dangerous.

This is what He is saying. It's not what I'm saying. I'm not trying to over-dramatize. This is what Jesus is saying here. It's a question we've got to ask. Do we really want to be like Christ? Because if we continue to feed our comfort and our pleasures, then we will not be like Christ. We will miss identification with Christ altogether and we will find ourselves enjoying the pleasures and the appeal of this world, but we will miss Christ, miss the whole point in the process.

The first 300 years of Christianity following this kind of commission involved terrible persecution of Christians, and Christians built miles and miles and miles and miles of catacombs under Rome, underground tombs, to bury Christians who lost their lives following Christ, countless tombs. Archeologists, as they have looked at those, have seen those tombs identified. And this is where this whole picture; the Greek word, *ichthus*, which is an acrostic, it stands for: Jesus, God's Son, our Savior. And that's the acrostic. It's the word that was put over these underground tombs of those who had trusted Christ and identified with Christ, and paid with their lives for it.

How far we have come that we take the same sign and put it on Lexuses and BMW's and say, "That's our identification with Christ," God help us. Do we really want Christ? Do we really want to be like Christ in this room? Do we really want to be like Him? If so, it will cost us everything. You will be betrayed. You will be hated. You will be persecuted.

And Jesus says along the way, the next verse, verse 26, "*So do not be afraid of them. 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*" (Matt. 10:26-28). Three times in those verses He says, "Don't be afraid."

What Jesus is saying is you follow this commission, fear will tempt you. You will be tempted by fear, guaranteed. It's a real temptation.

Now I want you to see how Jesus prepares them for the fear that's going to face them, the fear that will face any one of us when we begin to take radical steps in our lives in following Christ. Here's how you confront it: number one, see with an eternal perspective. "*There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known*" (Matt. 10:26). In other words, you see all around you the ways of this world, and the thoughts of this world, and the ideas of this world, and you're going against those. And He says, "Don't be afraid," because one day those thoughts and those ideas and those values in this world will be turned upside-down, and it will be shown what is true and what is right.

So you believe in what is true. You believe in what is right, even when it goes against the grain and the culture. Even when you desire to be vindicated in this world, don't fear, because God will vindicate you. His truth, what is right, justice, what is pure, what His Word says will be exposed as right. So cling to that. Even when you can't see it, even when everybody in the world says you're foolish, you cling to that. See with an eternal perspective.

Second, speak with a holy boldness. I love this imagery, *"What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs"* (Matt. 10:27). God whispers His Word in our ears and we proclaim it loudly from the rooftops. We speak with a holy boldness. We don't take a light and put it under a bowl. We take a light and we put it on its stand, so that it gives light to everyone in the house.

This is what Jesus talks about. He says, "Take my Word and speak it. Speak it with great boldness." It won't make sense to many around you, but know, know—going back to see with an eternal perspective—this is what matters in the end, not the stuff that everybody else talks about. It so consumes, this is what matters. So cling to that and speak about that, and trust that it matters.

And this is my favorite part. See with an eternal perspective, speak with a holy boldness, and sacrifice with reckless abandonment. I want you to listen to this. Jesus says you're going to face fear and He says these words. This is how He encourages them. Follow along. He says, verse 28, Guys, *"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."*

Did you catch that? Jesus says, "You'll be tempted to fear man," but He looks at them and He says, "Man is only able to kill the body. God..." He's not talking about Satan here. Satan does not have authority over life and death. "God is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." It's not man who holds your eternal destiny in his hands. It's God who does.

So don't be afraid of man and what man can do to you. Be afraid of God. Live with a fear of God.

Now put that together. Do you realize what Jesus just said? He just said to these guys, "You're going to go out and people are going to want to kill you." And He said, "Don't be afraid of that." He said, "The worst they can do," is what? "Kill you." I mean think about it. You have nothing to fear. When you go to this country, you go to this part of Birmingham, what's the worst thing that could happen to you? Die? That's a weird way to talk.

Does that comfort you? The only way that comforts us is if we have already died to ourselves. Because if we live in Christ, then we know that far worse than dying on this earth in the name of Jesus Christ would be in any way being disobedient to the Father who holds our life in His hands.

It was said of saints of old that they feared men so little because they feared God so much. They feared men so little because they feared God so much. And so I would say to you based on the authority of the Word of Christ today, as a church, let's give ourselves to the mission. What's the worst thing that could happen? They could kill all of us? *"To live is Christ and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21). This is very otherworldly way to think. It's a Christ like way to think. The worst they can do to you is kill you, so give yourself to the commission of Christ. It's a radical way to live. These are intense instructions.

But listen to what He says next, verse 29, *"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"* (Matt. 10:29-31). Fear will tempt you, but the Father will take care of you. This is His promise. The Father will take care of you.

And listen to the illustration He uses. He talks about a sparrow. A sparrow can't even fall to the ground without God, in His sovereignty, ruling that. So number one, He rules you

sovereignly. This is how He takes care of you. He rules every detail in your life sovereignly. There is nothing that will happen in your obedience to this commission, absolutely nothing, that is not under the sovereign guidance of Almighty God.

That's a good thing. He rules you sovereignly. Second, He knows you completely. He knows every single hair on your head. He knows, men how many hairs that used to be on your head. He knows every single one of them. He knows for some of us what the true color is of our hair. He knows every single detail about us. He knows more than we know about ourselves. Who in this room knows how many hairs are on their head? There are only a couple people that might actually be able to accomplish that feat.

But the reality is God knows us completely. He knows everything about us, better than we know ourselves. He rules us sovereignly. He put the hairs there, or took them away. He rules us completely, knows us completely.

And the third thing is He loves you deeply. Are you not much more valuable than all of these things? Sparrow, He knows everything about the sparrow. He knows everything about you. He rules you sovereignly and He loves you deeply. You are valuable before God.

The one who calls you to go like sheep in the middle of wolves is good. "He is the Father," Jesus says, "and He will take care of you. He will take care of you now and He will take care of you in all of eternity." This is why, why disciples respond in obedience to this kind of commission. Tough instructions.

Let me get to the next verses, verse 32, "*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*" (Matt. 10:32-33).

The next instruction, we confess Him publicly. We confess Him publicly. We publicly identify with Christ. So the people you work with, the people you go to school with, the people you live around—are you publicly identified with Christ before them? Are you confessing Him publicly? And it's an amazing thought to think that there is coming a day when we will stand before the Father in heaven, and Jesus will publicly identify with us for Him. I cannot wait for that day. An incredible picture.

Confess Him publicly and love Him supremely. We talked about this last week. Love for Jesus is superior to any love for parents, love for wife, love for children. All of these earthly relationships are ultimately temporary. Love for Christ is supreme, the eternal. He loves us sacrificially. We love Him supremely. Love Him supremely.

Next, take the ultimate risk. This is when we get down to verse 39, "*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*" Take the ultimate risk. What Jesus is saying to His disciples is, "Lose your life. Pick up your cross," He said at the end of verse 38, "and die." Lose your life. Take this risk. Take the risk of losing your life today.

A figurative sense here, losing your life to Christ, completely and totally. Take that risk, and in taking that risk you will find the ultimate reward. You will find life in Christ.

This is where we came back to last week. This is where we'll come back to every single week in this series. This is not a call to gloom. It is not a call to misery. It is a call to satisfaction. It is a call to reward. And it's a call as much to be sacrificial as much as it is a call to be smart. Try to find your life in this world; you'll end up losing it for all of eternity.

Not smart. Lose your life in this world, you'll find it now and in all eternity. That's smart. Find the ultimate reward.

The beauty of it is, what He talks about in verses 40-42 is that this reward is not just for us, but all who will receive us, all who will see our identification with Christ, who will hear our proclamation, public proclamation of Christ, and who receive us. In other words, "receive Christ" is the language there. This is the reward that is invisible and that we cannot see in this life. This is the reward of finding Christ in all His fullness, and not just you finding Christ in all His fullness, but others finding Christ in all His fullness.

Radical Compassion...

And now Matthew 9:35-38 comes full circle here at the end of Chapter 10. Matthew Chapter 10, let's be honest. Those are hard instructions. And obviously, like we talked about, there are specifics here that were specifically geared to those disciples at that time. But like we talked about, these are general truths that are applicable to all disciples of all times. This is the Jesus who commissions you and me, so frightening in some cases, all across this passage.

Why is it so hard? Why are these words so tough? Here's why. Because in that day there were three million people, and today there are 4.5-plus billion people who do not know this reward, and they need to see Christ. And they will not see Christ in lives that are not identified with Him. They will not see Christ in earthly pleasure and worldly comfort. They won't see Christ in that and they will go to a Christless eternity as a result.

They need to see Christ. They need to see people who are identified with Christ, and it's worth it. Matthew Chapter 10 is worth it for the sake of people who do not know Christ.

These words seem so foreign to us today, don't they—this kind of language in contemporary Christianity? We ask questions in our lives, "Well what's best for me?" We ask questions in the church, "What's best for me? What's best for my family? What's most safe for me and my family? What's most secure? What best appeals to me and my family?" These are the questions that consume us in our lives, in our families, and in the church. These consume us.

And the reality is if this is true, then those questions make no sense anymore, not one of them. What about me does not make sense at all, because our lives are dead? We are living in Christ and Christ wants the harvest. It changes everything about the way we live, we schedule our time, we plan our lives and our families and the church. It changes everything because we have a gospel that demands radical compassion.

He has given us orders. We are not living for selfish reward and earthly pleasure. We are not living for self-soothing desires or self-saturated Christianity. We have put these things aside. We don't live in those. We die to those things. How can we live in them any longer? We live to Christ, to Christ reward, to eternal pleasure, to God honoring desires and plans for our lives.

Jonathan Edwards said this. He said,

"I claim no right to myself, no right to this understanding, this will, these affections that are in me. Neither do I have any right to this body or its

members, no right to this tongue, to these hands, feet, ears or eyes. I have given myself clearly away and not retained anything of my own. I have been to God this morning and told Him I have given myself wholly to Him. I have given every power, so that for the future I claim no right to myself in any respect. I have expressly promised Him, for by His grace I will not fail. I take Him as my whole portion and facility, looking upon nothing else as any part of my happiness. His law is the constant rule of my obedience. I will fight with all my might against the world, the flesh, and the devil till the end of my life. I will adhere to the faith of the gospel, however hazardous and difficult the profession and practice of it may be. I pray that God, for the sake of others, would cause them to look upon this as self-dedication for His sake. Henceforth, I am not to act in any respect as my own. I purpose to be absolutely His."

Christian, you are not your own. For the sake of billions of people who are headed to an eternal hell, you are not your own. Whatever this means for our lives, it means this. The gospel demands that we sacrifice our lives for the sake of people who do not know Christ.

Do we believe what this Book says about those who are lost? If so, we sacrifice our schedule and our time and our money, our resources, this church, and everything we are for the sake of people who do not know Christ. We pray and we go.

I want to invite you to begin right now to do Matthew 9:37-38. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest, but I want to give you an opportunity to see the crowds, to feel their suffering and to realize their separation, and as a result, to cry out to God. God, make me, make my family, make this church a church of radical compassion, a family of radical compassion who sacrifices everything for the sake of the lost. I want us to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers from this base of ministry to the world. I want us to pray for ourselves that God would make us this kind of people. And then we are going to pray and surrender ourselves that we are going to go into the harvest field with these instructions. I invite you to plead, to ask God to help us to see the condition of the lost, to realize their suffering, separation, and to consider what this means for the way we spend our time and our money and our lives and our church.

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