

**Devotional – June 21, 2020**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 10: 24-39**



### **About Matthew**

The style of the book is exactly what would be expected of a man who was once a tax collector. Matthew has a keen interest in accounting (18:23-24; 25:14-15). The Gospel of Matthew is very orderly and concise. Rather than write in chronological order, Matthew arranges this Gospel through six discussions. As an apostle, Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew in the early period of the church, probably in A.D. 55-65. This was a time when most Christians were Jewish converts, so Matthew's focus on Jewish perspective in this Gospel is understandable. *(Excerpts from <https://www.gotquestions.org/Gospel-of-Matthew.html>)*

### **Summary**

Moving out into the world, empowered by the Spirit of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples encounter division and conflict. Jesus knew that following God's leading would not prevent such situations; it may bring them on. But scripture proclaims this good news: God hears voices raised in need and responds. Daring disciples, then and now, move forward with courage. *(Excerpts from [Spiritseasons.com](http://Spiritseasons.com))*

### **Gospel Reading**

"A student doesn't get a better desk than her teacher. A laborer doesn't make more money than his boss. Be content—pleased, even—when you, my students, my harvest hands, get the same treatment I get. If they call me, the Master, 'Dungface,' what can the workers expect? "Don't be intimidated. Eventually everything is going to be out in the open, and everyone will know how things really are. So don't hesitate to go public now.

Don't be bluffed into silence by the threats of bullies. There's nothing they can do to your soul, your core being. Save your fear for God, who holds your entire life—body and soul—in his hands.

"What's the price of a pet canary? Some loose change, right? And God cares what happens to it even more than you do. He pays even greater attention to you, down to the last detail—even numbering the hairs on your head! So don't be intimidated by all this bully talk. You're worth more than a million canaries. Stand up for me against world opinion and I'll stand up for you before my Father in heaven. If you turn tail and run, do you think I'll cover for you? Don't think I've come to make life cozy. I've come to cut—make a sharp knife-cut between son and father, daughter and mother, bride and mother-in-law—cut through these cozy domestic arrangements and free you for God. Well-meaning family members can be your worst enemies. If you prefer father or mother over me, you don't deserve me. If you prefer son or daughter over me, you don't deserve me. If you don't go all the way with me, through thick and thin, you don't deserve me. If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you'll find both yourself and me." *The Message (MSG)*

### **What It Could Mean?**

There are two words here, both important for our people to hear. Division and discord are an inescapable part of our life in this world. So what do we do with this element – in many ways the central element – of the passage? Just now, I think our culture has enough division and discord and that there are enough people who have decided that those who disagree with them are not just opponents but the enemy. So, recognizing that our situation is different than the one Matthew addresses, I'd suggest that we encourage our folks – and ourselves! – to

speaking the truth as we *believe we've received it* and to advocate for justice as we *perceive it*. But precisely because we know that truth is something we can confess but never possess (that is, I think, part of the reality of human sin), to do so in a way that doesn't shut down other voices, refuse to listen to other opinions, or cut off folks who believe differently. Well, that's the first word. Not easy. But who said trying to be faithful was supposed to be easy!

The second word Jesus offers is more straightforward: amid this discord – whether necessary or not, whether noble or self-inflicted – Jesus is with us. Still. Jesus was with those disciples in his day and among Matthew's community who suffered for their faith. Jesus is with those disciples today who live in parts of the country where they continue to suffer for their faith in ways we will likely never experience and can scarce imagine. And Jesus is with us amid the discords in our personal lives, families, communities, congregations, nation, and world.

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.” “Do not be afraid” – the hallmark of the Gospel and words we cannot say too frequently in a world so marked by fear. “You are of great value” – the promise of God in Jesus and words we need to say and hear again and again in a world that values us more for what we can buy than almost anything else. If we could measure how many of our folks live in fear – of being alone, of not having a job, of being judged for their skin color rather than character, of losing their health – or who do not feel valued (by friends, family, even their church), I think it would take our breath away.

So let folks know that there is discord in this world, some of which is unnecessary, some of which is unavoidable, and some

of which is in the cause of truth, and that in all these situations we are called to live with the kind of integrity that values both truth and the person with whom we are debating truth. And then tell folks that God knows about that discord, that Jesus is with them through it, and that God will not give up on them because God values them, each and every one, more than we can imagine. (*Excerpts from <http://www.davidlose.net/2017/06/pentecost-3-a-two-timely-truths/>*)

### Readings for Further Study

- [Psalm 69: 7-10; 11-15; 16-18](#)  
*“Now answer me God, because you love me...”*
- [Jeremiah 20:7-13](#)  
*“But God, a fierce warrior is at my side”*
- [Romans 6:1-11](#)  
*“Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father...”*

### Thought for the Day

“My sin will never outweigh God's love...that the Prodigal can never outrun the Father. That I am not measured by the good I do but by the grace I accept.” (*“All is Grace” by Brennan Manning – Reader Testimony Robert Benson*)

### A Prayer

*The Prayer of St. Theresa:* May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you were meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received and pass on the love that has been freely given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let the presence settle into your bones and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love. **Amen.**