

## A Necessary Disruption

Matthew 10:16-42 on November 3, 2019

*Please be sure to read all of Matthew 10:16-42 before going further in this transcript.*

This morning we're continuing in our sermon series on "Enlarging His Kingdom." Last week we began this series by talking about, how when Jesus saw lost people, he responded with compassion. He was compelled by compassion. Before we jump into today's message, let's reflect on this idea of compassion just a little more. I've invited Karl Salscheider to share with us on what motivates him to share the gospel with people. Thanks Pastor Jerry. I think I am motivated in four different ways to share the gospel: (1st) by gratitude (he's saved me, given me eternal life, why shouldn't I be thankful?), (2nd) by duty ("if you love me, keep my commandments," that's pretty clear), (3rd) by compassion (people need the Lord), and (4th) by completing my joy (more on that later). It started in 1973 when I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior and became indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As I have grown in the Lord, I have intentionally tried to establish a culture of selflessness both in my mind and with the people I interact with. Since I am convinced of the reality of hell's wide path, I must be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within me. To assist me, I often utilize or provide Biblical literature. For example, we used the "Picture Bible" at home with our children. We gave out many copies to friends and families with small children. As BSU men's basketball coach, I included the "Four Spiritual Laws-the Plan of Salvation" in my basketball playbook and would pray with the team prior to each practice and game. As a BSU health professor, I would address the concept of spiritual health and provide students an opportunity to share their faith in class if they chose to do so. For students who wanted to know more, I would provide them with a copy of the booklet "Done" or for those already Christian, a copy of "How to stay Christian in college." Your sphere of influence may be different than mine, but you do have one. In the marketplace, we all have the attention of those we do business with. I keep a stash of gospel tracts in my truck, computer bag, Bible and even billfold. Whether at Lueken's, Valvoline Oil, Mi Rancho, or even the Seamless Gutter crew, I like to provide generous tips to those who are serving me. I tell them: "I like to promote Jesus. Please accept this gospel tract and tip." Most are gracious and smile. On occasion, some are very grateful and even told me, "I need to get back to church," or "I am having a bad day, this is just what I needed." Perhaps some take the money and throw the tract away. Regardless, I know God is working somehow. This helps me stay ready. Sometimes I engage in pre-evangelism. That's where I ask probing questions about what they believe and what barriers they have that keep them from Christ. I begin by asking if they have any spiritual beliefs? Or who is Jesus? I don't argue with them, just listen. If the person appears ready, I may ask them to read out loud the Bible verses from the Roman's Road and then ask them what it means to them. And finally, to complete my joy. Deer hunting with firearms begins next week. What if Ron Bouchie shot a world record 48-point buck. Would he be joyful? But what if he couldn't tell anyone or take any photos or worse yet, couldn't mount it in his house? That would be terrible. It would rob him of his joy. When we truly delight in something, the way we complete our joy is to tell others about it. Like many of you, my joy is complete when I tell others about my loving Savior.

Please open your Bible to Matthew 10:16. It may be particularly helpful with this sermon to keep your Bible open as you read. We have a lot of ground to cover and we won't have everything in print that you may want to see. What did you think of our Scripture Reading from Matthew 10:16-42? If you heard the sermon last Sunday, and heard the message on "Compelled by Compassion," you may be asking yourself if we're still talking about the "same Jesus." A compassionate Jesus fits nicely into our grid. Most of us could get along with a guy like that. But, "today's Jesus," seems a little more... I don't know. What is the word for it... ?Are you and I truly prepared to follow and fully support the Jesus that we just heard from in vv. 16-42? Here's one word we could use to describe "this Jesus:" disruptive. We might even go so far as to say divisive. How in the world did we go from a "compassionate Jesus" to a "divisive Jesus?" Telling other about Jesus causes disruption in our lives in at least 3 ways. First of all,

**1. Telling others about Jesus disrupts our peace and comfort.** D.A. Carson writes about this. That's actually where I got the idea for this sermon. He puts it to us this way: "The real Jesus, the authentic Jesus, the authoritative but compassionate Jesus, the Jesus who confronts the world, is quite frankly a divisive Jesus. This divisiveness is unavoidable... at the heart of his message and purpose is his bold insistence that men and women can be rightly related to God only if they know him and come to him on his terms.... [But] we reject him in favor of a tame Jesus, a domesticated Jesus who will not challenge us

or tells us we are wrong....”<sup>1</sup> In Matthew 10:16, the tone and the imagery change significantly from last week. But we’re still learning about evangelism. Last week, earlier in Matthew 10, Jesus’ focus was on having the 12 Apostles go out to the lost sheep of Israel. These were their fellow Jews. But verse 16 now signals a turning point in our text.

In Matthew 10:16-18, Jesus says, “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.” So, Jesus is no longer just describing their mission to the Jewish people. He is now including the Gentiles, and hostile Gentiles at that. Notice the inclusion of Gentiles in their mission in Matthew 10:18, “On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.” Many of you will recall, that last week, Jesus was explicit about his strategy, to go only to the lost sheep of Israel first. That is, in v. 6, He sends them to the Jews ONLY. But NOW, the sending broadens to include witnessing to the Gentiles as well. Therefore, beginning at v. 16, Jesus expands beyond the current and immediate mission of the 12 Apostles to that of the entire Early Church.<sup>2</sup> We aren’t given a new chapter heading, so here we need to pay attention to several clues within the text itself. It helps to notice things, like v. 16 repeating the mention of Jesus sending them out. In other words, Matthew 10:5 mentions Jesus sending them out on their current mission and Matthew 10:16 mentions Him sending them out on their lifelong calling. Jesus is referring ultimately to the soon-coming mission of the church.<sup>3</sup> That’s why v. 20 mentions the empowerment of the HS. The HS who came with power at Pentecost. Therefore, today’s passage is more immediately applicable to you and me. It’s not merely descriptive for the 12 Apostles, but it is also somewhat prescriptive for all Christ-followers; for those in the 1<sup>st</sup> century right up until today. Let’s keep this in mind, as we consider a 2<sup>nd</sup> way that telling others about Jesus causes disruption in our lives.

**2. Telling others about Jesus disrupts our relationships.** As their evangelistic audience broadened, so also would their level of rejection. That rejection is described in some very vivid ways throughout vv. 16-42. We won’t have time to look at all of them, but let’s highlight just a few. In verse 16, Jesus begins by warning them: “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves....” Let’s take a moment and really think about what Jesus is actually saying here. He is turning the sheep metaphor upside down. His instructions went from being sent out TO sheep in v. 6 to being sent out AS sheep in verse 16. Picture this: a pleasant grassy field filled with plump little sheep. They are just lazily grazing on their afternoon meal. All is quiet; all is well. The Good Shepherd has led them here and He is watching over them as they enjoy their afternoon snack. Then, the shepherd walks up to the sheep and says something like, “Hey guys, I’m sending you out to tell others about me. Oh yeah, just want you to know, along the way, you’re going to run into some wolves. So, you’ll want to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. And, if you get in a tough spot and you aren’t sure what to say, the Holy Spirit will help you. Lean into Him for the empowerment you’ll need.” Can you imagine the average sheep’s response? “Um... Jesus. Um... Good Shepherd, don’t you think it might be better if we just stayed here with you in this safe, grassy field? Wolves have sharp fangs and they can run really fast. And we... well, I mean, look at us, we’re sheep. We don’t waaaaaana go out there.” “What a metaphor! The shepherd sends his sheep among the wolves!”<sup>4</sup> This is pretty disruptive to the otherwise comfortable lives of the sheep. Nonetheless, Jesus sends them out. He goes on to give them a few other warnings...<sup>5</sup>

In verse 21, Jesus warns them, your family members may betray you; some will even have you put to death. This idea is foreign to many of us who live in the west. But there are certain eastern cultures that are more honor-based than we are in the west. Sometimes a family member’s conversion to Christianity brings shame on the rest of the family. And sometimes, the best way of removing that shame and restoring the entire family’s honor, is to kill the relative who converted to Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Of course, Jesus does not mean that His primary goal is to split up families. He means rather, that “calling sinners to repentance... inevitably results in lives so transformed... that they will clash with [people who are of this world].... [Jesus] does not mean that those he wins as his disciples will turn against their family members,

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson *Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> See D. A. Carson *Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 332-333.

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson *Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson *Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 334.

<sup>5</sup> In verse 17 He warns them, some of you will be handed over and flogged (as in beaten w/ whips). In verse 19, He warns them, “when they arrest you.” NOT “if” but “when.”

<sup>6</sup> See D. A. Carson *Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 335.

but [rather] that by winning men and women to himself their family members will turn against them.”<sup>7</sup> In verse 22, Jesus warns them, you will be hated because of Me. On account of Jesus, because you follow Him, some people are NOT going to like you! Note the powerful contrast between this week’s passage and last’s week passage. Jesus began by urging them to be compassionate toward the spiritually lost. But NOW, He warns them NOT to expect the lost to return this compassion!<sup>8</sup>

In verse 37, Jesus explains that they must love Him over/above ALL others.<sup>9</sup> He says in Matthew 10:37, “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>10</sup> This is an incredibly bold requirement; and yet it gets right to the very heart of genuine Lordship.<sup>11</sup> This leads into Jesus’ final warning in Matthew 10:38-39, “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.” Jesus doesn’t call us to simple moral obedience; He calls us to become fully devoted followers. We are required to take up our cross & to lose our lives for Jesus’ sake. There is no other option or middle ground. With no caveats or equivocation, Jesus calls us to make Him Lord of our lives. Taking up our cross means taking up our death. For some of us, this may mean literally going on to martyrdom for Jesus’ sake. But, for most of us, taking up our cross more likely means dying to our own self-interest. And, in some ways, that can be the more difficult of the two. Especially when we realize that “dying to self” is something we must do day, after day, after day.<sup>12</sup> Here’s the great irony in all of this: “when self-interest dies for Jesus’ sake and is replaced by enthusiastic loyalty to him,” we find that life which is truly life!<sup>13</sup> The key to an abundant, fulfilling life begins by dying to our old life. Our old life was busy with all kinds of distraction but the gospel breaks in with a necessary disruption. It aligns us with God’s love for this world and His mission to rescue lost sinners.<sup>14</sup> Warnings like these are not the best way to boost church attendance. If we want to grow a big church, we probably shouldn’t paint such a difficult picture of what it means to follow Jesus. I’m pretty sure that the spiritual consultants of Jesus’ day would have urged Him to consider making His message a little more “palatable.”<sup>15</sup>

Even though most Christians in America don’t yet face these more intense kinds of persecution, we do need to be mindful of our fellow believers around the world who do. As some of you are probably well aware, today happens to be the “International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.” Some research estimates that as many as 245 million Christians are being persecuted today.<sup>16</sup> Every day, Christians in certain parts of the world are being persecuted, imprisoned, and sometimes even tortured and killed for their faith. You can find information for how to pray for them, simply by googling “Persecuted Church.” Those links will give you not only ways to pray but also inspiring stories of Christians who are remaining faithful to Jesus and suffering for His sake. They need our prayers.<sup>17</sup> A 3<sup>rd</sup> way that telling others about Jesus causes disruption in our lives is that...

**3. Telling others about Jesus disrupts our culture’s demand for tolerance.** Living in the U.S., we have grown accustomed to the idea of tolerance. In fact, in many ways, tolerance is valued more highly than many other virtues. “Live and let live” is pretty much forced on us as a required mantra for peace-loving people.<sup>18</sup> During our sermon series on “Enlarging His Kingdom,” we are recommending that everyone consider reading a book by Randy Newman, called “Bringing the Gospel Home.”<sup>19</sup> (pic) It’s

<sup>7</sup> D. A. Carson *Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 336-337.

<sup>8</sup> Consider 1 Peter 3:15 and 4:4.

<sup>9</sup> Consider Joshua 24:14-15.

<sup>10</sup> D. A. Carson summarizes it well, “final allegiance, ultimate confidence, and heart loyalty are devoted to Jesus and his gospel.” *Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 338-339.

<sup>11</sup> C.S. Lewis has said, “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/6979-i-am-trying-here-to-prevent-anyone-saying-the-really>

<sup>12</sup> Note Luke’s use of the word “daily” in Luke 9:23. Also consider the call to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice in Romans 12:1.

<sup>13</sup> Note 1 Timothy 6:19 and surrounding context. D. A. Carson *Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 340.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus modelled this for us by laying down his life each and every day that He walked on this earth. Now He invites us, as His followers, to do the same, to whatever end that may lead us. Consider John 10:10-11.

<sup>15</sup> This makes me think of a story I once heard about a pastor who took on a challenging ministry at a church struggling with racism. The Anglos and the African-Americans were not getting along in this particular town. So, one of the first priorities for this new pastor was to try to bring peace and racial reconciliation. According to reports, after just 6 months, he was able to get every member of the church to agree to the importance of loving all peoples. That God is the Creator of us all and has called us to love one another deeply, from the heart, regardless of our skin color, ethnicity, etc. Here’s how he did it: He began with a church of about 150 people. After preaching for 6 months, he preached it down to 16 people, just 16. But all 16 of them loved God wholeheartedly and they loved people of all races sincerely. Then, the church rebuilt from there.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/international-day-of-prayer>

<sup>17</sup> Some of you may remember praying for a woman named “Asia Bibi” last year. Early in 2019 she was safely moved to Canada and reunited with her family. Read more at

<https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c8qpdz3qxynt/asia-bibi-blasphemy-case>

<sup>18</sup> Followed closely by, “Don’t you judge me!”

<sup>19</sup> Randy Newman, *Bringing the Gospel Home*, Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2011.

focus is on how to witness to family members, close friends, and other people who know us well. And, how NOT to witness to them. It's a really interesting read as it shares real stories of successful as well as failed attempts to witness to the people around us. It combines these heartfelt, true stories with good Bible teaching. The author, Randy Newman, is a Messianic Jew. He doesn't offer simplistic answers or formulas, but rather insightful ideas on how we should and should not approach telling others about Jesus. The introduction alone is worth reading just on its own merit. He tells an amusing and beautiful story of his 20-year journey of encouraging his Jewish mother to become a Christian. I'd urge you to pick up a copy from the Fellowship Hall today. One of the chapters that Randy writes is about how the Christian Truth is a narrow truth. He says, "In this age of pluralism, exclusivity remains the only cardinal sin you must not commit.... Into this atmosphere of... relativism... Christians dare to believe and proclaim that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life."<sup>20 21</sup>

For thousands of years, God has warned His people not to "sell out" on their own beliefs, to the ungodly beliefs of those who surround them. All throughout Old Testament history, there are examples of rooting out from among them, any kind of compromise or syncretism. There are some startling examples of this throughout the Old Testament. One of the most memorable for me is the example in 2 Chronicles 15:16, "King Asa<sup>22</sup> also deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. Asa cut it down, broke it up and burned it in the Kidron Valley."<sup>23</sup> Can any of us even imagine having the boldness and audacity to go over to our grandmother's house and cut something down in her front yard that she didn't want cut down? And then to break it into pieces and burn it up! But that's what King Asa did. Asherah poles were sinful, so Asa got rid of it!<sup>24</sup> For King Asa, this was in keeping with the Lord's command back in Exodus 34:12-14, "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." Now, just to be clear, I am not suggesting nor sanctioning anyone to go over to someone else's house today and start cutting things down or breaking and smashing someone else's stuff. But, all of us can certainly take that last part, verse 14, to heart: We should not worship any other God, including the God of pluralism. Our LORD is a jealous God. He will have no rival in the lives of those who are fully devoted to Him.

Telling people about Jesus creates a necessary disruption in our lives. Not only in our lives, but in the lives of those around us. The Gospel doesn't allow us to just float along in blissful ignorance, pretending everything is fine.<sup>25</sup> As long as we remain in this world, we're called to represent Jesus. We're called to BOLDLY declare the Good News about Jesus; but we are also called to declare it COMPASSIONATELY.<sup>26</sup> In fact, that's a good phrase for us to contemplate: "compassionate boldness." With "compassionate boldness," we need to declare Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord that this world needs!<sup>27</sup> The gospel will cost us everything we have.<sup>28</sup> It will require our very lives; right up until the end, to our last breath. It will cost us our peace and our comfort. It will cost us some relationships. But the gospel is not meant to be kept secret; it is not meant to be kept safe. It is a necessary disruptive force in this world.<sup>29</sup>

*This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji  
on November 3, 2019 by Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson*

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<sup>20</sup> Randy Newman, *Bringing the Gospel Home*, Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2011, pp. 78-79.

<sup>21</sup> D. A. Carson also picks up on this idea of pluralism, "If there is one underlying, deeply rooted position that is treated as of transcendental importance in Western societies, I suspect it is the notion of pluralism. This does not simply adopt the stance that diversity is a good thing, but that in the religious and philosophical arenas no position has the right to declare another position wrong." A little way further down the same page, Carson notes that pluralism, "is surprisingly intolerant. All positions except its own are negotiable.... Others are dismissed as fanatics, bigots, narrow-minded hate-mongers, and so forth." *Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 328.

<sup>22</sup> "ACE ah"

<sup>23</sup> See also Deuteronomy 7:5-6; 2 Kings 18:4; and 2 Chron. 14:3, 31:1.

<sup>24</sup> Consider what Gideon did to his father's Asherah pole in Judges 6:25.

<sup>25</sup> This makes me think of the story of the Titanic when some people refused to believe that the ship was sinking. Or, the Matrix movie trilogy. Some people didn't want to know the truth about their existence. They were content to remain in bondage to the computers that had taken over the world.

<sup>26</sup> D. A. Carson *Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 350.

<sup>27</sup> One of my favorite quotes from the book, *The Hobbit*, is some advice that Bilbo Baggins gives to his nephew, Frodo: "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door." It sure seems a lot easier in this life to just stay in our own homes and mind our own business. After all, who am I to go out and tell someone else how they should live!? Brother or Sister in Christ, it can be a dangerous thing to tell others about Jesus. But the intrinsic nature of the gospel demands that we go out and proclaim it! One of my favorite quotes is this: "A ship is safe in harbor... but that's not what ships are for."

<sup>28</sup> When we face resistance and persecution, we need to maintain the Christ-like attitude of the 1st Christian martyr: Stephen. He echoed the words of Christ on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Luke 23:34. As people were throwing rocks at him in order to kill him, Stephen prays in Acts 7:60, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

<sup>29</sup> Consider Matthew 11:12. Especially the *NIV1984* translation.