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Sermon Notes

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Christ's Messengers Sifted, Sustained, and Rewarded

Matthew 10:34-42

I. A Royal Lineage

- A. Ancestry and Heritage: Descended from Royal Blood
- B. Matthew's Genealogy: Christ's Human Ancestry in Matthew... the Kingly line through David
- C. Your Royal Heritage
 - 1. Paulus, a Christian who suffered in Soviet Union
 - 2. Saleema and Raheela, two Christian girls in Pakistan
 - 3. A young woman in Romania, leaving a fiancée behind

This is your true family, if you are a Christian... you live in a royal lineage of people of whom the world is not worthy!!

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Sermon's Main idea: God has ordained that it is only through suffering that the gospel advances in this world... that suffering is not a tragic accident but is the expressed purpose of God, that His glory may be put on display through His royal children. This suffering is severe and weeds out false believers, but God will sustain His children through the suffering, and will reward even the smallest action to advance His kingdom.

II. Christ's Purpose: Sword, Not Peace (vs. 34-36)

vs. 34-36 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 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-- 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

A. Clearing Away Misunderstandings

"Do not suppose..."

1. Christ constantly misunderstood

a. modern misunderstandings

Illus. "Search for historical Jesus"...

Post-Modern people say "I like to think of Jesus as a mild, gracious person, loving to all and forgiving to all." But... Revelation 19

b. misunderstandings during His life

i) person misunderstood

John 8:48 The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"

ii) words misunderstood

Disciples constantly misunderstood His teachings; Nicodemus misunderstood His statement "You must be born again"; crowds misunderstood His parables

iii) work misunderstood

Disciples misunderstood the miracles and the footwashing; everyone misunderstood the basic reason He had come... to die on the cross

c. let Christ speak for Himself and about Himself

2. Misunderstanding #1: Jesus came to bring peace to the earth

a. clarification: earthly harmony between people... everyone on earth getting along

b. clarification: without process, without history... IMMEDIATELY

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."

c. corollary: if someone comes in Christ's name to speak Christ's words, and there results great strife, division, and conflict... that person CANNOT be speaking for

Christ or acting according to Christ's will... there must be something wrong with the message or the messenger

- d. ANSWER: wrong, wrong, wrong
- e. Christ's life filled with opposition and division

John 7:43 Thus the people were divided because of Jesus.

John 9:16 So they were divided.

John 10:19 At these words the Jews were again divided.

Hebrews 12:3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- f. Christ's apostles also threw places into division everywhere they went

RSV Acts 17:6 "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also"

Wherever the Gospel and the word of God are faithfully and fully proclaimed, two things result: persecution and disciples! And that adds up to division

So it is even in churches: sometimes a church will be thrown into division simply by the faithful proclamation of the word... it doesn't mean there was anything wrong with the messenger or the message

3. Misunderstanding #2: This division is an accidental by-product that Christ regrets but cannot help
 - a. clarification: picture is of Christ sadly standing by while people reject His message as though there's nothing He can do about it
 - b. WRONG: Christ came to BRING the sword... He intended to bring it and He uses it; it is to His purpose and it glorifies Him and accomplishes His ends that the Gospel advances through constant opposition
 - c. Christ is the active agent in bringing about the division and opposition... He provokes it, does not avoid it

vs. 34-36 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35

"I have come to..." this is my purpose, this is why I have come! I came to set people against each other

It is not some accident, but the very thing Christ came to provoke and orchestrate

4. Misunderstanding #3: The “sword” Christ brought is wielded by Christians

Islam is the “convert or die” religion... but so-called Christian kings in Medieval Europe wielded the sword as an evangelistic tool

- a. prime example: the Crusades... conquering the Muslim world by bloodshed
- b. prime example #2: Clovis, King of Franks: convert or die
- c. the sword is not wielded BY Christians but AGAINST Christians

Standard principle: The Kingdom of Heaven advances by servants who are willing to die, not ready to kill; by those who suffer, not cause suffering

B. “Sword, Not Peace”

1. “Sword” =earthly suffering... alienation in relationships all the way to full blown martyrdom
2. “Peace” = harmonious, comfortable relationships
3. Christ came in part to ruin many earthly relationships... causing great suffering and distress even in families, among those closest to us

vs. 35-36 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-- 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

Constant testimonies of families all around the world... especially in the Muslim world

One person in family comes to Christ, seeks to witness to his/her loved ones, is immediately shunned and rejected... relationships are blown apart, and the young Christian may be left wondering how such a wonderful blessing could bring such a cursed outcome

C. This Age vs. Age to Come

1. Christ is the Prince of Peace
2. Brings perfect peace with God Himself

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

3. NOW: Christ's messengers proclaim a Gospel of peace

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

4. BUT in this present world age, Gospel messengers are hated by all, rejected by all, and experience great tribulation

So Christ actively brings a sword between His sheep and the surrounding world

5. Age to Come: Ultimately will bring peace in every relationship for the children of God

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Some call it the millennial kingdom, others merely the eternal state, New Heaven & New Earth

Isaiah 2:4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Just NOT YET!!!

Key question: Why? Why did Christ come to bring a sword, not peace? Why such division and suffering and even death? Why do families get ripped apart by the gospel?

III. Christ's Reason: Servants Worthy of the Lamb (vs. 37-39)

A. Two Possible Paths: A Campaign of War vs. a Stroll in Peace

1. Imagine a world where the Gospel produced no strife or conflict... how could faith ever be tested?

Illus. Imagine a world in which Christ did not come to bring divisions between people... everyone who heard the gospel would immediately accept it; or at least, not oppose it. The advance of the

Kingdom would be like the glide of a clipper ship on glassy seas under the steady push of a westerly zephyr

No suffering, no martyrs, no courage, no "more than conquerors", no "To him who overcomes, I will give a crown of victory", no royal blood, no lineage of great faith... just comfort and ease as everyone in the world happily accepts the message. God chose a different path

2. Three great reasons for the sword, for strife, conflicts, divisions:

- a. **proof** of faith
- b. **purification** of faith
- c. **platform** for faith's proclamation

B. Proof of Faith

1. Faith must be TESTED to be proved genuine

1 Peter 1:7 [Trials] have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine

- a. God wants to demonstrate that your faith is genuine
- b. test of loyalty

"Do you love me more than your family?"

vs. 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me

Illus. That Pakistani girl Raheela had to make that choice... and it was a life or death choice!!

"Do you love me more than your life itself?"

vs. 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Shocking image to first century people... the cross was the instrument of certain death by long, slow torture!!

If you are not willing to follow me to the death, you are not worthy of me, Jesus said!!

2. Astonishing statement

Only if Christ were God Himself could He make such claims on people... you must love me more than any earthly relationship, more than your life itself

Illus. Pastor Florescu, Communist Romania; arrested, beaten and starved... fourteen year-old son, Alexander

"Alexander, I must tell them what they want to know! I can't bear your beatings anymore!" His body bruised, blood running from his nose and mouth, Alexander looked his father in the eye: "Father, don't do me the injustice of having a traitor as a parent. Stand strong!! If they kill me, I will die with the word 'Jesus' on my lips."

Lesson: loyalty to Christ comes above any other earthly loyalty!! Alexander would have considered his father a TRAITOR if he had handed over church members to save his own son's life.

C. Purification of Faith

1. Learning a whole new way of thinking about rest of life on earth

vs. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

2. Stop "looking out for number one" (if number one is you!!)

Every day, in every way, we naturally think, "What's in it for me?!"

Every moment, we adjust our circumstances for our personal pleasure: Do you have an itch, you scratch it... are you too cold? You put on a sweater! Do you hate your job? You quit and find one you like!

Constantly people are searching for their lives... what they like, what they will live for

Jesus says you must die to your earthly ambitions and desires, and live only to advance this Kingdom

That is why He ordains the sword in relationships... to teach you to value the Kingdom of God above all earthly treasures!!

3. Faith must be exercised in atmosphere of conflict to be strengthened

D. Platform for Proclamation

1. By suffering and dying we conquer
2. Christ's lights a lamp and puts it high

Matthew 5:14-15 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

3. Stunning testimonies of martyrs... powerful effect on crowds

Illus. William Tyndale, as he dies, cries out "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

Summary: Because He knows you already have eternal life and a resurrection body waiting for you, Christ is gladly willing to trade your earthly life and body, and at the cost of some momentary but intense suffering buy salvation for some lost, needy onlookers!!

E. Result: Servants Worthy of the Lamb

1. Worthy is the Lamb: Revelation 5

Revelation 5:1-5 *Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."*

vs. 9 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."*

2. Worthy of the Lamb: Revelation 3

Could a sinful human being really be "worthy of Jesus"?

John the Baptist:

Mark 1:7 *And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."*

Yet, the Book of Revelation says:

Revelation 3:4 *Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.*

3. Not worthy here: those who cling to earthly benefits

vs. 37-39 *"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and*

anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

“Worthy of the Lamb” means living a life worthy of Christ, especially in His example as suffering servant of God

Illus. C.T.Studd, famous British cricketer, son of a wealthy British businessman who had made his fortune in India, laid down his wealth, his career, his family, his health, eventually his life in service to Christ in China, India, Africa

“If Christ be God and died for me, no sacrifice I can make would be too great for Him.”

F. False Servants Weeded Out

1. Some people start with Christ... but abandon Him because the cost is too high
2. Common issue: earthly benefits lost because of Christ
 - a. comfortable relationships with family members, neighbors, co-workers
 - b. material possessions
 - c. earthly position, prestige, power
3. “Finding your life” in this world means caring more about these things than Christ

G. True Servants Purified

1. Earthly costs start coming... the true servants of Christ don't fall away
2. They just lose their concern for these things... God uses the trials to purify their hearts
3. Then they can live lives worthy of Christ

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God

Next week... rewards for even the slightest assistance given to Gospel Messengers

IV. Application

Sermon's Main idea: God has ordained that it is only through suffering that the gospel advances in this world... that suffering is not a tragic accident but is the expressed purpose of God, that His glory may be put on display through His royal children. This suffering is severe and weeds out

false believers, but God will sustain His children through the suffering, and will reward even the smallest action to advance His kingdom.

A. You Are of Royal Blood... So Act Like It!!

1. Don't live for this world and its comforts!!
2. Don't cling to earthly things
3. Be like Christ... be willing to be poured out to advance the Kingdom of Heaven

B. Don't Expect Earthly Praise from a Generation that Hates God

1. Christ means to test your confession
2. Even your own family members will turn their backs on you
3. Will you turn your back on Christ to win their approval? MAY IT NEVER BE!!!

C. Don't Love ANY Earthly Thing More Than Christ

1. Not your family, not your spouse, not your children
2. Not your possessions, position, prestige
3. Not even your life... these are given to you to be poured out for the Kingdom

D. Live for Heavenly Rewards... Even a Cup of Cold Water Will Be Eternally Rewarded!!