

**Sunday AM – February 16, 2003**  
**Patchogue Church of the Nazarene**

## **Help With Fear**

### **Matt. 10:5-33**

“During his years as premier of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev denounced many of the policies and atrocities of Joseph Stalin. Once, as he censured Stalin in a public meeting, Khrushchev was interrupted by a shout from a heckler in the audience. ‘You were one of Stalin’s colleagues. Why didn’t you stop him?’ ‘Who said that?’ roared Khrushchev. An agonizing silence followed as nobody in the room dared move a muscle. Then Khrushchev replied quietly, ‘Now you know why.’ The point was well taken.”

Fear can be a paralyzing force in human lives. It can be used as a powerful motivating factor, or it can frighten people into inaction. We all have fears, some more than others. We can keep some fears in check and under control, and there are some that control us. Even though we are Christians, there are still fears that grip us and stop us short of living out our Christian faith and our commitments to live for Christ.

The gospel of Matthew ingeniously works narrative and teaching into a powerful document for all time. It is said that this gospel is broken into five parts and is compared to the Pentateuch of the O.T. Just as the Torah or Pentateuch is set at the beginning of the O.T., so the gospel of Matthew kicks off the N.T. It was the basis of teaching and preaching of the early church, and prominently placed as the first writing of the N.T. We can even see some similarities with the Pentateuch writings. Genesis is the first writing and speaks about beginnings for the Hebrew people. The first discourse of Matthew contains the genealogy of Jesus and speaks of the beginnings of His mission and ministry. Exodus speaks of the persecution and rejection of the Hebrew people leading to them being sent out into the wilderness and face various situations by God’s divine direction. The second discourse of Matthew speaks of persecution and rejection that the followers of Jesus face, and He sends out the twelve with specific instructions that carry truth even for us today. Each of these five sections of Matthew’s gospel contains narrative and a carefully interwoven teaching. Our text today contains the profound teaching of this second portion of this gospel.

As Moses was given authority by God to perform signs and the boldness to speak to Pharaoh for the Hebrew people in the face of rejection and opposition, so the apostles here are given authority to carry out the mission that Jesus is sending them in the face of rejection and opposition. Even if the task seems overwhelming to us, there’s no need to fear. The Lord will never send us out to face failure.

Jesus sends out the twelve with specific “marching orders.” It doesn’t sound tough if you say it fast, but when you think about what they were told to do, it seems like a pretty tall order. Have you ever been given a mission or direction from God that seemed too much for you? Fear can enter the picture in a situation like this. Let’s look how Jesus instructs them in preparation for the task.

**READ: Matt. 10:5-10      FEAR OF FAILURE**

Jesus sets the scope of the successful mission, and tells them to go only to the lost sheep of Israel. Don’t take on more than you can handle. This was the apostles first solo mission. They didn’t have experience yet. A time would come when they would be commissioned to reach the Gentiles after the resurrection and Pentecost. Seek what God wants you to do and then stay within those parameters. He gave them a very simple yet profound message. The fulfillment of God’s kingdom promise was about to happen. “The Kingdom of heaven is near.”

They were to be motivated by compassion as Jesus himself was (see. Matt. 9:36 – “*When He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them ...*”). They were to pray for all those in need (heal the sick, raise the dead, deliver the possessed). Through this type of ministry, the Kingdom of God was now near to them. It is still the message for today. As we bring compassion to those in need, we are showing them that the Kingdom of God is near. It is within you, and you take it with you! What does God really expect of us?

Did you ever pray for someone who was “dead in his or her trespasses and sins” (as all of us were before accepting Jesus), and they accepted God’s gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Weren’t they raised from the dead? Were you ever moved by compassion to pray for a sick person and they were made well? Healing the sick is not our responsibility, only praying for the sick as we are moved by their need. The results are really God’s responsibility, not ours. Be filled with the compassion of Jesus and pray for those in need. When we are motivated into action and prayer by compassion, we are no longer fearful. Are you afraid to pray for others? Pray first for God to fill you with His compassion and you will experience a liberating freedom from fear. We have received this same grace freely and are being sent to give it to others. You can’t fail for God, so Do Not Fear!

### **READ: Matt. 10:11-15      FEAR OF REJECTION**

We all want to be accepted, but how do we deal with rejection? Is rejection something that you fear? We are to simply speak of God’s peace and love to those we are in contact with. If they accept the conversation, great! If they reject our words, God will take ownership of the situation. We haven’t failed! Don’t fear rejection! We are Christ’s emissaries and acceptance of us, and our message of hope, is acceptance of Him. Similarly, rejection of us is rejection of Him. This should motivate us to have compassion toward those who reject the gospel. Their rejection bares eternal consequences. Don’t fear presenting the reason we have this hope because of possible rejection. God is concerned about the eternal. The rejection we face is merely temporary for us. We will never face rejection by our eternal Father if we are His children through Jesus Christ.

The Twelve were instructed to stay wherever they were welcomed. They were not to “shop around” for the best accommodations. If someone offered them a place to stay, then stay there and bless that person’s household with God’s peace. If things went sour, and the home turned against him and refused his message of God’s peace, then leave and don’t stay there. They are rejecting Jesus. A pious Jew would shake off the dust from his clothes and feet when leaving a Gentile area in those days. They would be leaving the pagan dirt behind, so the instruction to treat a rejecting house or town the same way is given to the twelve. It will be better for the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than it will be for those who reject the Messiah, Jesus. Focusing on the eternal, not on the temporary, can help us overcome fear of rejection.

### **READ: Matt. 10:16-25      FEAR OF PERSECUTION**

They were to be wise or shrewd and yet innocent. Their shrewdness must not cause them to be overly suspicious so that there immerses paranoia or fear, but they are to be aware of the craftiness of men. It is Jesus who is sending them into this situation. We are on His mission and under His protection and care. Persecution will come to those who are carrying out God’s plan, but we are not alone in it. It is understandable to respect authorities, but not to fear authorities.

**Moshe, the owner of a small Kosher New York deli, was being questioned by an IRS agent about his tax return. He had reported a net profit of \$80,000 for the year.**

**Why don't you people leave me alone?" the deli owner said. "I work like a dog, everyone in my family helps out, the place is only closed three days a year. And you want to know how I made \$80,000?"**

**"It's not your income that bothers us," the agent said. "It's these travel deductions. You listed ten trips to Israel for you and your wife."**

**"Oh, that?" the owner said smiling. "Well... we also deliver."**

They would be arrested and flogged. This is an indication of a judicial punishment rather than a beating from an angry mob. Even if we are called to account before the authorities and persecuted at that level, God has placed us there as a witness for Him to our persecutors. How would you handle this kind of opposition? Would you fear? Jesus told the Twelve, “Do not be afraid ...” Don’t even worry about what you will say. There’s no need to plan, rehearse, panic, or fear ... (v. 20) “for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” Was this promise only for the Twelve on this first solo mission? I don’t think so. This section of the text is speaking to the apostles and to disciples that would follow after them. As of this point the Spirit had not yet been given. Matthew is writing this after the fact and knows that at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon all believers in power and as a witness for Jesus to all people. If we are persecuted like this, He will bring us through it for His good purposes. That same Spirit, the Spirit of your Father, will provide Jesus’ followers with the help we need under persecution when facing hostile officials. We don’t welcome persecution and hatred, but God can use adverse circumstances to advance His Kingdom. Persecution may even come from within our own families because of our faith and the message of Jesus. Stand firm in your faith and in the knowledge of God’s promises to you with patient endurance. Jesus even instructed the Twelve that if they are persecuted in one city, flee to another. Continue on the mission, regardless.

This teaching chapter is placed in the gospel between narrative chapters that show Jesus being rejected and persecuted. As vs. 24&25 teaches, if they did this to the Teacher, you can be sure they will also treat the students the same way. Yet, He says, we are like Him, in persecutions, but do not be afraid!

#### **READ: Matt. 10:26-27      FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN**

This portion is directly linked to the previous passage on persecution. In light of the fact that we should expect persecution, we need to know how to handle fear. With the understanding that we have a master who suffers ahead of His disciples, therefore, Do Not Fear!

Nothing will remain hidden forever. A time will eventually come when all things will be known. It is wise for the followers of Jesus to declare the truth fully and boldly now. Flat rooftops were used as a platform for public addresses in this time period. Jesus spoke many things to the Twelve privately. Their ministry would actually be more public than His. Their declarations would be the beginning of Christianity, as we know it. This was the beginning of fulfilling His words that they would do even greater things than He did. Some of the things He taught them they would not understand until after the Resurrection.

We have knowledge of many things with the help of the Bible and the Holy Spirit who guides, teaches, and reveals all the things of God we need for life and peace. There is no need to fear the unknown since everything we need to know is revealed to us.

#### **READ: Matt. 10:28-31      FEAR OF DEATH**

We are not to fear what other people might do to us. There is a lot of talk right now of war, and attacks, terrorism, and death. This is an instant cause of fear. Our culture is particularly death avoiding. We don’t want to talk about it, consider it, find out about it, or deal with it. We are mostly just plain afraid of death. No one should want to die, but we are instructed as children of God, that He has our future well in hand. The enemy uses fear as a tool to get the upper hand and squash our faith. My sister told me that duct tape is all sold out in Roanoke, Va. because of the reports of a possible biological or chemical attack. I’m not saying people should not take safety precautions, but we should not be in a panic and filled with fear. Ultimately we know that the worst the enemy can do to us does not even compare to the worst God can do. Eternity is a long time to spend in hell. If God is truly feared, nothing else need be. In fact a healthy fear of God, will actually bring a liberty to our lives. Eternal life exists, according to this and other passages, for both the unjust and the just. It’s just a matter of where we spend it.

If we have accepted the gift of salvation through receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have nothing to fear in death, and we have nothing to fear in others who might threaten our lives. Rather, they are the ones who should fear Him who is able to destroy eternally.

Jesus gives two illustrations. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground apart from the will of God. A sparrow is a pretty insignificant bird yet is of concern to God. The next illustration speaks to us about the details of life. Even the hairs of our head are number to God. God's sovereignty over even the tiniest details of our lives should give us relief from fear. If we think God is only concerned about the major issues of life, then there would be room for fear, but God is concerned about the smallest inconceivable details of our lives. There is no reason to fear death or life or people or authorities or anything we can come up with.

## **READ: Matt. 10:32-33      CONCLUSION**

A necessary criterion of being a follower of Jesus is to acknowledge Him publicly. He makes this point pretty clear here. Acknowledge Jesus before humans and be acknowledged by God, His Father. This will happen uniquely for each individual. Notice now it says "His Father" where earlier it said "your Father." This passage is addressed to all readers, not just the disciples. He is not "your Father" unless you acknowledge Jesus, but He is always Jesus' Father, and so He says, "My Father." Disown Jesus and be disowned by the Father. The only criterion to all these benefits that counteract fear in our lives is that we are followers of Jesus and acknowledged children of God.

As children of God then, there are several things we must know and understand so fear no longer motivates us to inactivity or inaction:

- First – acknowledge Jesus as your only Savior and Lord of your life (know you are saved)
- Next – be filled with the Holy Spirit – sanctified – sold-out – set apart for God's use - He will be your helper, comforter, teacher, and the power in you to obey God's direction
- Know that you have passed from death to life in Christ (and you will not fear death)
- Know the Word and it's revelatory truth (and you will not fear the unknown)
- Know that God has you where you are for a reason (and you will not fear authority, people, or persecution)
- Know that you are Christ's ambassador (they do not reject you, but Jesus which bares an eternal penalty)
- Know that God sends and equips you for whatever He asks of you – (and you will not fear failure)
- Focus on the eternal and you will not fear the temporal.
- Let compassion motivate you to follow God's lead and always pray for those in need.
- Nothing can happen to you apart from the will of God

I have briefly shared with you once about being someone who lived a life paralyzed by fear. Fear is still right there with me and is the first attack of the enemy in various situations that I face. I have to purposely step back and realize all the things I spoke about today in order to overcome fear and move forward with God. A wise teacher once told me, Nick, you are bound by fear. I said that I was working on it. She came back with something that has made all the difference in my life. It's similar to the advice we have been hearing for all these "Help with" messages. I had to acknowledge to God that I have a problem with fear, and that it is bigger than I can handle or control. I had to and still have to pray for God to step in and reinforce the things that I know are true in Him and forgive me for being afraid. I go through the checklist recognizing His love for me, His providence and sovereignty, His hand leading me to where I am, and that I am following His plan, so He is there with me to sustain me, and even if the worst were to happen I would be in His presence forever. God does not want us to live in fear. If we really understand our place in Him, fear would diminish, and His love and compassion for others would motivate to action without fear.

What do you fear? Failure? Rejection? Persecution? The Unknown? Death? There is an answer for your dilemma. Jesus taught it to His disciples over 2000 years ago and it is still true today. I can even attest to the victory from my own life. What will you do with this teaching? It is only a help if you receive it and apply it. God offers you "Help with FEAR." So, Do Not Be Afraid!