

Bible Study for Sunday 21/06/20

This week's material is quite challenging again.
Take it slowly.

Matthew 10:24-39

24 "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

26 "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. 27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 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. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

34 "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.

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. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."

- Read the scripture passage aloud slowly, letting yourself hear the words.
- Pause and see if some word or phrase stood out. Were these words comforting, a surprise or something else? Allow, if you can, that thought or feeling to linger.
- Go back and read the passage again, seeing if a fuller meaning emerges. Pause again and note what happened.
- If you want to talk with God in response to this, do so.
- Seek to listen to what God may be saying to you or simply rest in God's presence.
- Share with the group anything that you wish to.

Here are some of the questions that came to my mind as I prepared this week's passage.....

Do you find anything comforting about this passage?
Is it confusing or even distressing?

Have you ever been afraid to proclaim your faith or do you sing it from the rooftops? (V27)

What does it mean to you to take up your cross and follow Jesus? (V38)

This picture of Jesus with a sword is unexpected, challenging even and probably inspired by V3: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. If you would like to, share your thoughts on the picture and verse.



Icon of Jesus with sword, 14th century, Katholikon of the Sacred Monastery of the Ascension of Christ, Kosovo. Photograph by Thanasis Christodoulou – Own work, CC BY-SA

Is Jesus the prince of peace or did he come to divide families? (V35) The following may help:

D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*: 'As many Jews in Jesus day thought the coming of the Messiah would bring them political peace and material prosperity, so today many in the church think Jesus' presence will bring them a kind of tranquility. But Jesus insisted that his mission entailed strife and division. Prince of peace though he is, the world will so violently reject him and his reign that men and women will divide over him. Before the consummation of the kingdom, even the peace Jesus bequeaths his disciples will have its setting in the midst of a hostile world.'

Tom Wright: 'Jesus' challenge here is not that his followers should be anti-social for the sake of it, but that they should live out of a new identity, in comparison with which the normal Jewish identity, based tightly upon kinship, is to be set aside.' Where are our deepest loyalties and how might Jesus be calling us to adopt a new identity?

Do either of these quotes add to your understanding of the passage?