

## Matthew 10:5a, 21-33 – Pentecost 4 – The One Who Endures to the End – June 25, 2026

+In Nomine Jesu+

Last week, we introduced Jesus' Missionary Discourse as the second major teaching passage in Matthew's Gospel. And we learned the names of the Twelve Disciples. What I may not have made clear is that the Missionary Discourse was a private conversation.

In Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount was directed at Jesus' followers, with the crowds listening in. But this passage is different. It is private between Jesus and the Twelve. No one else is to hear—not just yet, anyway.

Jesus practices a Messianic stealth in the Gospels. Jesus has secrets. Not everyone gets to hear everything. It is about judgment. And it is about timing. He tells His own mother that His time has not yet come. The miracle of Cana in Galilee is quiet—very few knew what had actually happened. Jesus frequently tells those He heals to keep the message to themselves.

Here in our text, Jesus acknowledges the quiet conversations that He has had with the Disciples. He often speaks with them alone. He explains parables to them and not to others. We will get into the parables in the weeks to come. Much is veiled to the rest of the world.

But not anymore. Jesus is sending out the Disciples to reveal His identity to the world. The Missionary Discourse has the right title. This is a missional text. The secret is getting out. It's leaving the building.

And it is all about Jesus sending the Twelve to proclaim the kingdom of God coming in Jesus Christ. The Disciples become Apostles as Jesus commissions them to make known what He had taught them in the Sermon on the Mount.

They were to own Him as their Lord and Teacher. They were to reveal that He is the Son of God—the Christ come into the world. They were to call people out of darkness through repentance and faith. They were to be Disciples making disciples. And God confirmed their witness with signs.

But all of this will come with some difficulty—some hostility—some resistance. Not everyone welcomes the coming of the Son of Man. Some ignore Him. Some find His teachings old-fashioned, puritanical, or exclusive. They call Him the devil—*Beelzebul*—*Beelzebub*, elsewhere—the lord of the flies. Jesus speaks truth to power—and that is rarely well received.

Of course, this reveals something about the rebellious human heart. Jesus came to His own—and His own didn't receive Him. Those who should have most clearly recognized His coming, refused to see the truth.

It is as Augustine once said, "It is no advantage to be near the light if your eyes are closed." People preferred the darkness. And they often still do.

And in this cultural moment—in the face of such opposition—the Disciples were to be smart—shrewd. They were to be sophisticated in their thinking—as wise as serpents—as innocent as doves—making the best use of their time because it was an evil time—a dark time.

Jesus was met with opposition—and they would be too. They would face what their Teacher faced. Governors and kings would imprison them. Their own families would reject them. They just might end up isolated and alone.

It is as St. Athanasius famously said, "If the world is against the truth, then I am against the world." *Athanasius contra mundum*.

To be like the Teacher ensures they will be maligned. But this can be endured because Jesus goes before them. What He has told them in the dark—in secret—can now be proclaimed from the housetops. This is a ministry that cannot be defeated—even if the world rejects it entirely. This ministry cannot even be defeated by the death of the Apostles. And thus, the one who endures to the end will be saved.

The disciples witness in an apocalyptic time. You know this word. It is the proper name for John's *Revelation* at the end of our Bibles. It means *unveiling*. And here, Jesus tells the Disciples that they will “not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”

Much has been made of this line. It doesn't mean that Jesus expected His final return in the first century. It is first a reference to the cross. This is truly the coming of the Son of Man. And it is a reference to God's judgment poured out in the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century.

In apocalyptic statements, time references are often compressed or expanded. We often don't know when—but the certainty of the event is clear.

Thus, the Son of Man has come. And He is coming. His work and life will be consummated by the cross and resurrection. The time in between is to be constituted by the patient witness of the Apostles. They are to be about the Father's business in the time between the times.

The same remains true today. And I think Matthew intends this line for us as well. We also live in an apocalyptic time—a dark time—spiritually speaking. It is important to be able to discern the times in which we live.

And we also await the return of the Son of Man. So, the church is to witness to Jesus Christ between His comings. In our day, so many people know of Jesus in theory—rather than in actuality. They know of Jesus—but so much of what they know is misinformation. Or worse, He is simply what they feel about Him.

But we stand for the Jesus revealed in Scripture. We stand with everything the Prophets say about Him—everything the Apostles say about Him—everything He tells us.

And we endure in Christ—to the end. We are about the Father's business—bringing His guidance and renewal into our lives and community. And really, endurance turns out to be fundamental to our witness to His kingdom. We stick with Christ, no matter what the world thinks of Him. We remain in the kingdom He comes to bring. We don't let the fear of man—social pressure—intimidate us into retreat.

Jesus says something significant about fear in our text. I think that this is really important for us to hear. Christians should fear. But our fear is in God alone. He alone has eternal power over our souls. But we do not fear opposition to the message of Jesus Christ. We aren't afraid of making Christ known. We are not afraid of the consequences our confession might bring.

As Paul says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

But really, what can the world do us for our witness to Christ? What can they do as we proclaim the life that Jesus has for His followers? They might say that we are too narrow—too strict. They might call us names. We might get called boring—legalistic—or puritanical—or

judgmental—or old-fashioned—or out of touch. Maybe someone will unfriend us on Facebook because we talk about Jesus too much. Maybe a family member will shun us.

Now, one important clarification is necessary. This persecution is not because we are rude—but because of the faith. If we are just constantly harping on the same issue—with unnecessarily offensive language—that’s not what Jesus has in mind here.

I like the way Peter says it in 1 Peter 3, “Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”

Now, that being said, I want to make a comment about our reading from Jeremiah today. It is troublesome. And it does seem to be personal and private between Jeremiah and God. It makes you wonder whether he ever wanted this read. Personally, I am glad we have it. Jeremiah is especially insightful to me.

We see a little of Jeremiah’s discouragement in our reading. And maybe we have felt this way, as well. We have tried to talk about the true Christian faith with those we love who wouldn’t darken the door of the church. We have talked to those who have left the church because of the lifestyle they prefer to lead.

Admittedly, Jeremiah’s time is difficult. The nation is coming unraveled. Exile is right around the corner. The people are obsessed with idolatry and immorality. There is this cognitive dissidence between the Word of the Prophet Jeremiah—and the word the people want to hear.

And so, they criticize the Prophet. They attack God’s messenger. And not just parking lot gossip. People mock him. They hope for his downfall. They denounce him. They imprison him. They look for an opportunity for revenge.

This is a tough place to be. But it is important to know that—even if the worst of all possible outcomes happens—they kill Jeremiah—they still have no power over his soul. I like the way Jeremiah says it, “But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.”

Listen to the sweet words of hope that Jesus offers to us in this context. God’s special providence regarding Christ’s disciples keeps us from being fearful in our confession. We are far more valuable than sparrows. And the care and awareness that He offers them shows us how much more He cares for us.

And here, Jesus calls the Father, “your Father.” And the Father even knows the number of hairs on our heads. These comments hint at the far higher and more intimate relationship that is here offered to the Disciples.

These illustrations show the infinite extent of God’s providential care for us as we confess Christ in the world. We are far more valuable to God than many sparrows. And this gets us talking about Jesus—His Word—His ways—all that He has commanded—without fear. We are loved and protected in every way that matters.

There is one last comment from Jesus here. And like much of what Jesus says, it comes as a two-edged sword. There is great hope and great concern offered in this one statement. And I think I will just let it stand without any extra comment. Both statements are true.

Jesus says, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

One of the Puritan preachers once said, “The Christian’s life should put the minister’s sermon in print.” Of all the sermons that I have preached, I hope that this is one you will put to work in your life. Confess Jesus—aloud—use words. And not just in the church building, but at home, at work, online, in the community. Live the kind of life that Jesus speaks about here. The rewards will be eternal.

We will talk about the Mission Discourse more next week. It would be interesting to know how the Disciples fared in their mission to the lost sheep of Israel. Instead, as Matthew moves on to the next chapter, we merely hear that Jesus followed His disciples into the same cities in which they had witnessed to His coming. He went to the same places He had sent His Disciples. I think this suggests that their work was incomplete and ongoing—as is ours as well.

That we don’t learn how successful or unsuccessful the Disciples were is super important here. It indicates the task they were given wasn’t to be measured outwardly. Rather, it merely mattered that they did what they were told. And it mattered that they used the means Jesus assigned.

And from this we can learn that our responsibility is to be faithful to the task God has given. We cannot be quiet anymore. Word and Sacrament. Faith and life. Grace and obedience. Word and deed. Philosophy and theology. All from Jesus.

We must endure in these things to the end. We must confess Jesus before the world. But the *results* are always—and only—God’s doing. I am with Jesus here. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And the one who endures to the end will be saved. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

+*Soli Deo Gloria*+