



# MONDAY 06 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

## Read: Matthew 10:16-22

### **Plug In...**

Jesus explains that the call to be smart yet innocent sheep is because wolves exist. The wolves are defined through the rest of the chapter: people in the synagogue, the Sanhedrin, governors, kings. The opposition comes not just from those at the top of the food chain, but also people below that do the “handing over”. Jesus surprises His followers that even family members can do the handing over.

Jesus casts the battle in binary terms. Jesus versus the world – He says, it is “because of Me” (v.18) that you may get wounded in this battle.

### **Chew It Over...**

Jesus’ Christianity is not an accessory, nor a fashion statement. In some circles, Christianity can look hip and cool. However, seriously copying Jesus (in everything), repeating the things Jesus said (all of them) will bring trouble, confrontation, pain. Jesus is upfront with this. Allegiance to Jesus initially costs, but the cost is only temporary (v.22).

What situation confronts you this week which amounts to choosing sides? Take stock of the cost, be prepared for it. How can you approach the situation with Christian-street-smarts, maintain integrity and innocence, and not side-step doing and saying what Jesus would say and do?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Read Romans 5:8-11 and thank God that He did something that broke our personal entrenched opposition to Jesus. Ask the Lord to build up your confidence that you will be delivered in the end, to give you rock-solid resolve in the confronting situations on the horizon.



# TUESDAY 07 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

## Read: Matthew 10:21-25

### **Plug In...**

It is not just a philosophical battle between competing religious theories. Not just a political battle as nations and groups vie for power. The battle is utterly binary and cuts through everything. The contrast is razor sharp, it can break even the bonds of family.

### **Chew It Over...**

Why is it hard to invite someone to church? Why is it so difficult to speak with your neighbour? Why is it extremely difficult to escalate your relationship with friends – even just a little (dropping that you're a Christian; probing them, "Have you ever given thought to Jesus?"). It is because the default dynamic in every relationship is: "You will be hated by everyone because of My name" (v.22). Aligning with Jesus splits things apart. There is no sitting on the fence, no leg in each camp. The battle is binary. It is only for or against.

This truth shapes what is meant by "the harvest is plentiful". Yes it is plentiful, but only as God does a work in people's lives to turn them from enemies to worshippers of Jesus (Romans 5:6-10).

We are mad if we engage in evangelism without praying for God to do something. Be a smart sheep and pray.

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Help us Lord to remember that for our friends, family, neighbours, this battle for their lives is cosmic. They are helplessly stuck as an enemy of Jesus unless you do something in their heart. Release them please; free them. May they experience mercy like we experience.



# WEDNESDAY 08 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

## Read: Matthew 10:26-31

### **Plug In...**

After some stark realities and expectations for following and proclaiming Jesus, Jesus says don't be afraid of them. Jesus tells His followers to sort out their fears. Don't be afraid of those that can kill the body, but be afraid of the one who can throw both body and soul into hell.

### **Chew It Over...**

What we fear reveals a lot about where we think power truly lies. Sort out your fears. What exactly do you fear?

Don't only go to a scenario where an authority yells, "Renounce Jesus as Lord or die". What do you fear within everyday decisions? Example. You've been employed to work until 5pm, the crew you work with say, "We always knock off together at 4.30 and there is nothing they can do about it as long as we keep as a group". Do you work till 5pm? Why would you? What are you worried about? Who do you fear?

Our social fears reveal a lot.

Sort out your fears and know that in the right order you have a Father who is the power above all and cares totally for you. Is there a better understanding of the Father you need to grasp to drive out fear and have more confidence?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray that you fear God above all else. Ask God to show you that this is evident as you speak and live for Jesus. Think of a Christian brother or sister plagued with worries, flip-flopping about because of disordered fears. Pray that they will come to rest in confidence that God has their back!



# THURSDAY 09 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 10:32-36 & Micah 7

## **Plug In...**

There is no middle ground, no wriggle-room, no fence-sitting. Followers of Jesus acknowledge Jesus now before human beings and receive acknowledgement by the Father in Heaven. Conversely, denying results in being denied by the Father.

Allegiance to Jesus cuts. It can divide even close family ties. In the wake of family turmoil, this statement by Jesus is a strong incentive to keep aligning with Jesus publicly.

[NB: Micah said on the day God visits, there will be confusion even in the family. Micah says to the person suffering this family pressure to not panic for God will save you – Micah 7:7.]

## **Chew It Over...**

It sounds like Jesus is mean-hearted and cruel in this verse. It's helpful to remember the Bible's back-story. All humanity, even within our own families, are in wilful sinful rebellion against God. Even good families, goodish societies, moral institutions do the 'good' out

of self-interest. If they're good, moral, "peaceful" it is not from loving God, rather it is from loving themselves the most and they will only maintain these things as long as it serves their own interests and glorification.

Elsewhere we are told to love our parents, love our spouse, love others as ourselves. So clearly this is not prompting us to go and thoughtlessly be insensitive, sow chaos, or deliberately bust up our families. So, over what kind of things should this disharmony be reserved to?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray now for those family members who do not align with Christ. Commit to praying with some Christians you know isolated from their families because of their allegiance to Christ (either spatially, or emotionally). Ask for clever and innocent dealings with prickly families. Ask for God to bring peace to the household through Christ being Lord of the family.



## FRIDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### Read: Matthew 10:37-39

#### **Plug In...**

To take up your cross and follow Jesus is keyed to Jesus earlier saying, “A disciple is not above his teacher, or a slave above his master” – we are to be like Jesus (vv. 24-25).

#### **Chew It Over...**

Have you heard the saying, “We’ve got many crosses to bear”? Often the statement refers to suffering or pain we’re going through (e.g., rebellious teenager, chronic pain, lack of resources, etc). Unfortunately, that statement has morphed from how Jesus uses it here.

Read again 10:16-39. What is the cross being carried? What is Jesus saying to put to death and find life?

Are there things you’re invested in because you’ve thought life is to be found there? What have you been pursuing for happiness, contentment, satisfaction? How does “anyone finding his life will lose it, and anyone losing his life because of Me will find it” focus your next few steps?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask Jesus to enable us to kill off self-interest. Let us trust that we will gain all, and life to the full through allegiance to Jesus. Lord God, make us Jesus-interested.



## WEEKEND 11-12 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### Read: Matthew 10:40-42

#### **Plug In...**

Up until this point, Jesus has shown what allegiance to Him looks like largely in reactive scenes. How does the person following Jesus *react* when handed over to be hurt, when fear is wielded, when threat of family ostracising them or shaming is on the line. Now, *proactively*: what does a person following Jesus do that reveals their allegiance?

The welcoming is not merely being 'nice'. It is welcoming a person and helping them because they are Jesus-interested. In doing so, you identify with Jesus and His mission.

#### **Chew It Over...**

This passage isn't separating out two types of Christians. There is not the type who go witness and the type who stay back and just support. Being a Christian doesn't have that dichotomy. A Christian is disturbed by people's destiny, wants to and is willing to share the good news; they won't deny Jesus before other humans. However, there are differing life-circumstances, levels of intensity and opportunity. We need each other and we support each other. This is not merely being nice, but this is doing things in solidarity with them because they are aligned to Christ. Our actions show who we identify with.

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask the Lord to make you aware of how to support Christian mission from the little gestures through to the bigger ones.