

Matthew 10:16-42

The Call of the King to Persevere in your family

The Olympics has given us great stories
You get Emma McKeon who after today's 50 metre freestyle
Will most likely become Australia's most decorated Olympian
With 10 medals to her name
Whenever she swims, winning seems effortless
Of course it isn't effortless but
Then you get Patrick Tiernan
Who in his 10,000 metre race
Was the definition of perseverance
While in the mix for most of the race,
When the African runners took off for the finish
Tiernan had barely anything left in the tank
He stumbled out of sheer exhaustion with the finish line in view
Willed himself to get up
And to keep stumbling forward until he finished
When he was then rushed into a wheelchair
Patrick Tiernan finished in 19th place
And it was his best time this year.
The video of his finish has gone viral because this is perseverance personified
And as we're going to see this morning,
The Christian life looks more like this
Than winning 10 Olympic medals

Let me pray for us.

In the last two Sundays,
We've seen the compassion of Jesus
Compelling his disciples to pray for God
to raise workers for the harvest
But Jesus also prepares his disciples to go and proclaim the gospel
But now Jesus tells them
That they will have to persevere in the face of opposition

This morning we will be looking at
The Call of the King to persevere in our families

In particular we be looking at three things from Matthew 10

Jesus divides

Jesus demands

Jesus delivers

Before we look at that,
It's helpful for us to remember the bigger picture
Of what's happening in Jesus ministry
Jesus, God's King
Is bringing in a **kingdom that conflicts with the kingdom of man**

In Matthew 2

When the magi told King Herod that King Jesus was born we are told he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him.

Why? Here is a real threat to the Kingdom of man
Represented by Herod feeling very threatened by Jesus
who was a toddler at the time

How does Herod respond?

Later we are told this in Matthew 2 verse 13

¹³When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

Kingdoms are in conflict

The very young Jesus becomes a refugee because of persecution

A foretaste of the suffering that lay ahead for his followers

For those of us who are followers of Jesus

It's helpful to remember this

To adjust our expectations

Jesus is bringing in a kingdom that is crashing into another kingdom

And as Jesus prepares disciples

To go on their mission to proclaim the gospel to Israel

They need to adjust their expectations

The life of living for Jesus

And proclaiming the gospel of Jesus

Is going to be hard

Jesus doesn't mince words

He uses a graphic picture to describe just how hard it's going to be

In verse 16

"I am sending you like sheep among wolves"

It's a sobering picture

Jesus is the shepherd

Who care for the harassed and helpless sheep

But now the Shepherd is sending his sheep into real danger

That's how important it is for people to hear the gospel

And one of the least expected places you might find that danger

Is in your own family

Let's have a look at our first point
Jesus divides families

Verse 21

²¹ "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ²² You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Verse 34

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."

Now note here,

Jesus is not justifying violence

He is not saying that his kingdom comes through his followers picking up arms

Inflicting violence on their families

In fact, later in Matthew's gospel during his arrest

Jesus will prevent his disciples from drawing swords against their opponents

So what is he saying here?

He is saying that as a result of following Jesus

his followers will have swords drawn against them

Family members will turn against the followers of Jesus

Didn't Jesus say blessed are the peacemakers back in Matthew 5?

So why is he here saying that he did not come to bring peace?

Well Jesus did come to bring peace between God and people

But often that comes at a price between the followers of Jesus and people

To make peace you have to break peace.

To call people to repent and turn to Jesus

You have to tell people that they are sinners who deserve God's judgement

You have to tell them they're wrong

That they worship pretend Gods

And of course, this breaks peace

It's disconcerting to hear Jesus' words about family here

Parent turning against child

Sibling against sibling

Hated by your own family

Violence even death at the hands of those who are meant to love you

Jesus' words are as true today as they were when he first said them.
Here is a report a few weeks ago from the Barnabas Fund website:

A Christian widow in Odisha State, India, has been forced to re-convert to her old religion by villagers who threatened to prevent her husband's funeral.

The husband, from the Koya tribal group (which largely practises a traditional animistic Indian religion), along with other family members, had professed faith in Christ and started to attend church with his wife.

After his death the Koya villagers forcibly took money from the widow, coerced her into re-joining their community (effectively forcing her to re-convert), and conducted her husband's funeral in the traditional, non-Christian way.

"Today, I have no other way and so accepted their custom," the widow told her pastor. "But I will not leave the Lord Jesus. I will come back again."
The Christian woman, under tremendous pressure as well as grief from the loss of her husband, was also physically attacked by her husband's brother, who during a dispute over the situation attempted to beat her.

Jesus divides families

But like any good Master

Jesus is not asking us to go through something he didn't first

Jesus was misunderstood by his own family.

We see this in Mark chapter 3 verse 20

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

Jesus' family thought he was nuts

And to be honest, if my older brother started saying he was the Messiah

I would probably think he was nuts too

Now think honour-shame culture

That's the culture of Jesus

Where family is everything

And what other people in your society think about your family is everything

Of course Jesus' family would want to put a stop to the antics of Jesus

Because it would bring such shame to their family name

And they try and do that

And now listen to what Jesus says to them later in chapter 3 of Mark

Verse 33

³³ “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

In other words, Jesus relegates his own family
His flesh and blood family
To second place compared with the family of God
That’s hard enough to hear in our culture
But in the honour-shame culture that Jesus lived in
This would have been incredibly offensive and shameful to Jesus’ family

Now Jesus is not shoving it to his family
As if they mean nothing to him
Jesus loved his family dearly
How do we know this?
Let me show you from John 19
Note the context of Jesus’ words
He is dying on the cross
Naked and humiliated
And here he is, carrying out the responsibility of the oldest son
Taking care of his mother Mary
By having her live with the disciple John

Verse 26

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” ²⁷ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Followers of Jesus are to love their families
With love and compassion
But don’t expect that love to be reciprocated
If you follow Jesus
Prepare to be misunderstood
Prepare to be mocked
To be hated
Kicked out of home,
Threatened, assaulted
And even killed

This brings us to the first application

Count the cost of following Jesus for yourself and others

Following Jesus brings incredible joy and lasting peace
But it's not all sunshine and flowers
And we need to be real about this
It may cost you everything
And a genuine disciple of Jesus knows this

In verse 38 Jesus says

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

Following Jesus means walking the path of the cross
Being willing to die to self for Jesus
And that might mean dying like Jesus
Poor imitations of the gospel promise prosperity without suffering
But the real gospel
Involves real suffering for the sake of Jesus

For many here in Australia
This means being a bit odd in our families
Maybe we're seen as a bit strange
A bit out of step with the rest of our culture
Our values are a bit antiquated
We feel misunderstood in our families
Sometimes we feel very alone

But for others in our congregation
It means daily conflict
Where coming to church is a challenge to negotiate with a spouse
Being involved in Christian activity,
Seen as act of betrayal
And teaching children about Jesus completely off limits
It means disappointing parents
And bringing shame to them

And we also have brothers and sisters in our congregation
who have lost everything to follow Jesus
Hated and threatened by their families
Never being able to return to their countries of birth

My mother was the first believer in our family
At aged 14, in Malaysia
My mum's school friend invited her to hear a visiting preacher
And when mum heard the gospel
It was as though Jesus himself was calling her to give her life to follow him
My grandparents opposed my mum's newfound faith in Jesus
You see they worshipped idols and their ancestors
My mum, their oldest daughter,
had the responsibility of preparing daily offerings for the shrine at home
but now they accused mum of bringing a foreign God into the house
They told her she couldn't get baptised
And stopped her from going to church
But mum would dress in her school uniform pretending that there was
something on at school and go to church anyway
My grandmother would throw out mum's Christian books and her bible
And every time someone got sick at home
My grandparents would blame mum's God.

Jesus divides families.

For those of us who have come from Christian families
Who have known only love and support for our faith in Jesus
We need to count the cost for others without that blessing
We need to mourn with those who mourn
Stand with them as brothers and sisters in Christ
Ask them about their grief over their families
I'm sure not a day goes by without them thinking about their families
And grieving over what they've lost
We need to pray with them for their families.

We need to count the cost when we share the gospel with others
While we must talk about the wonderful gifts that Jesus offers
Forgiveness
Eternal life
The gift of the Holy Spirit
But we also need to be honest about the cost of following Jesus

**Why does Jesus divide families because of our second point
Jesus demands loyalty**

Verse 32

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.

Verse 37

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.

Jesus demands loyalty in the lives of his followers
A loyalty that comes before that of your closest family member
A loyalty that you must be prepared to acknowledge before others
Regardless of the consequences.
Because disloyalty to Jesus in the end
Means rejection before God in heaven for eternity

These are strong words.
Words that are so very hard to comprehend in our culture
What we value here in the west above all else
Is autonomy
Loyalty to self above everything
So talk of loyalty to Jesus sounds alien to our ears
And in cultures that value family more than anything else
What Jesus is saying is also counter cultural
Jesus says, “I must come first”
“First above self”
“First above family”

Jeff Robinson puts it well when he writes

Jesus is telling his followers: “If you would be a Christian, I must have it all.”
...There will be rivals warring for supremacy over the throne of our hearts, but
our love for King Jesus must defeat every one.

Just as a knight bows before His king
Or a samurai before his master
We must bow before Jesus in undying loyalty

We are told in the Bible
That all authority under heaven and earth
Has been given to Jesus
He has every right to lay claim to everyone and everything
After all Jesus is Lord
Yes, the gospel tells me that Jesus is Saviour
Who gave his life for me
But the gospel also tells me that Jesus is Lord
The only one who is worthy of my life’s worship, adoration and service

And the question that each and every person must engage with is this
Is Jesus my Lord?

Even Jesus own' family members had to grapple with this
Will I acknowledge Jesus as Lord?
Even if it comes at great cost

In Matthew chapter 13 we learn the names of Jesus' brothers
James, Joseph, Simon and Judas
Jesus also had sisters, whose names are not mentioned

We're told in John 7 that during his ministry
His brothers did not believe his claims
The ones who grew up with Jesus
And spent the most time with him
Thought he was nuts
And did not acknowledge him to be Lord
But it did not remain this way

In Acts chapter 1
After the resurrection of Jesus
We read of His brothers and Mary worshipping Jesus as Lord

And eventually we read in Galatians 1
James, the brother of Jesus became one of the key apostles in the early church
in Jerusalem

James also became one of the early martyrs of the church
He was thrown from the Temple Tower in Jerusalem to his death
In other words,
James the brother of Jesus
Came to worship Jesus as His Saviour and Lord
Dedicated himself to serving Jesus
Even at the cost of his own life
Jesus demands loyalty

Here's another application

Love Jesus more than your family

Jesus comes before your husband, your wife
He comes before your children
He comes before your parents
He comes before your siblings
He must be the love of your life
A love that is better than life itself

Don't live your life trying to please your family members
And win their approval
The one that you should seek to please is the Lord Jesus

And if it comes down to a choice between Jesus and your family
Choose Jesus

**But here's the thing right
Loving Jesus more than your family
Is actually better for your family**

You see loyalty to Jesus is not just for the benefit of Jesus
It is also for the benefit of you and your family
Jesus wants more for your family than they could ever imagine.

The apostle Peter writes this to Christian wives
married to husbands who don't believe in Jesus

1 Peter 3 verse 1

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any
of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the
behaviour of their wives

And in the context of this letter

Back in chapter 2,

Peter says that

All Christians are to live out their relationships for the Lord's sake

So Christian wives, for the sake of their Lord Jesus,

Are to submit to their husbands,

And you see the reason why

So that if their husbands don't believe the word of Jesus

They might be won over to Jesus,

How?

By the beautiful, Christ-like godliness of their wives.

Can you see what's happening here?

Christians wives are to be devoted in their loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ

Over and above their loyalty to their husbands

But what does loyalty to Jesus entail?

Trying to win their husbands over to Jesus

Because that is the most loving thing that can happen to their husband

That he comes to know Jesus as His Lord and Saviour

Here's the upside down nature of God's kingdom

You lose your life in order to save it
You love Jesus more than your family
And you will end up loving them more than you did before

Once my mum did well on an exam at school
And my grandmother told her to go to the local temple
and crawl in front of the idols to show her gratitude
But my feisty mother replied to her
It was my God who helped me with my results not your gods
And so my grandmother had to pay someone to go and crawl at the temple
One by one, over the years
God brought other members of my family to believe in Jesus
And after much prayer and invitation
In 1984, my grandmother came to follow Jesus
When she started attending a Chinese Baptist Church in Sydney
The Jesus she hated, now became the Jesus she loved
I remember hearing her singing "Jesus loves me" in broken English
When she was looking after us
That same week, in a church in Melbourne
My aunty took my grandfather to a Chinese church
And my grandfather also came to believe in Jesus
My grandmother died suddenly less than a year later at age 59
And she went home to be with her Lord Jesus

You see in the end
My mother's love of Jesus over her love for her parents
Was actually better for her parents
And it has been better for me and my children
Because we have grown up hearing the gospel of Jesus

I know that for some of you listening to this
You are the only believer in your family
And you feel alone
Misunderstood
Rejected
But how good it is for your family that Jesus has come
Light has entered your family
And there is at least one person praying for the rest of your family

Jesus divides families
Jesus demands loyalty
And lastly
Jesus delivers from fear

Jesus makes a number of promises in the verses that allay our fears.

In verse 22

²² You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Verse 28

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.

Our fears are often concerned for the short term.

If our best life is now then we are right to have those fears.

But Jesus says our best life, is yet to come.

The Bible promises a coming judgement at the return of Christ

When all must give account for the way they have treated God and others

And this judgement for those who oppose Christ

Means eternal destruction of both body and soul

But for those who have suffered for Christ

It means salvation

It means vindication

It means God wiping away tears from our eyes

As we glory in the presence of Jesus for all eternity

You see the best is yet to come

But this eternal perspective helps us in the present

It helps us to realise that our Father in heaven

has got our lives under His control

Verse 29

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.

God in all His sovereignty

Knows the intricate details of things that don't seem particularly valuable

Sparrows and hairs

And so when you suffer opposition and persecution

When you are tempted to think that you are all alone in your family

And you dread to think how many years of torment and lonely struggle

Lay ahead of you

Jesus says, it's okay

Your Father's got this

Don't be scared

He knows you

You are not alone

He's in control
And He will see you through to the end.

How do we know this?
We look to the cross of Christ
Where people lost in their sin are found by Jesus
And found people are willing to lose their lives for their Saviour
The cross tells me that my suffering for Jesus is not meaningless
Because his suffering was not meaningless
The cross tells me that even if this life is bleak
There is certain hope in the life come.
I need not fear anymore

Here's the final application

Count the benefits

It is costly to follow Jesus
But it's worth it

Peter once said what all the disciples were thinking
We have left everything to follow you.
And Jesus replied with these words in Mark 10
²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

We can count the benefit in this life
In this life your blood family
Will be replaced with a family that is bound by the blood of Jesus
You will have brothers and sisters in Christ
that are closer than those who you share DNA with
Your heavenly Father will be a parent like no other parent
Easier to please than earthly parents
And more steadfast and loyal in love

And we count the benefit in the life to come
The promise of eternal life with Jesus
Without fear
Without crippling doubt.

My grandfather came to believe in Jesus because the preacher
Posed the question
Do you know where you will be after you die?

After years of superstition
And false worship
And basically fear
My grandfather couldn't answer the question
And so he gave his life to Jesus and found the answer to that question
He would be with Jesus after he died
And every morning he would wake up
Read his bible at his bedroom window and pray
Eventually he got dementia
And after years of my mum and her sisters looking after him at home
He died at my mum's house, ten years ago
And that final day of his life
Was a gift from God
It was a day of incredible peace and joy
His pastor came over and led us in the Lord's supper
A choir of ladies from his church sang hymns in Chinese
All of his seven children were gathered together and his grandchildren
And his great grandchildren
Something that hadn't happened in years
And then he died peacefully
I think it was a gift from God to my mum
After those years of perseverance