Daily Discipleship

Sunday, June 19-25 (A) – Matthew 10:24-39

Tips of Discipleship: *Be Not Afraid*
Focus Question: *When do you need courage from God?*

word *of life*

"So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows." Matthew 10:31 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 10:24-39
Jesus continues his advice to his disciples concerning mission work. It is not going to be easy. Jesus says to his disciples, "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16 NRSV) Jesus clearly warns his disciples about being abused, betrayed, persecuted, hated, and killed.

1. *What makes his disciples continue following him despite these warnings?*
2. *Why should these disciples have it any easier than their teacher, Jesus?*

It is safe to assume that anyone connected to Jesus may experience problems – some of which might be life-threatening. The disciples and their loved ones have legitimate reasons to be afraid. Some people intend harm for the disciples. But Jesus overrules their fear with a command, "So have no fear of them." (Matthew 10:26 NRSV)

3. *What is the opposite of fear?*
4. *If you were afraid and someone told you to stop being afraid, would that work? Why or why not?*
5. *How effective are people when they are afraid?*

Jesus does more than speak words to counter the fear of the disciples. He reminds his disciples of the care and concern of God towards them. Although some may fall to bodily harm, God protects the spirit of those who believe in God. There is no doubt God values and cares for humans more than sparrows – especially those humans who acknowledge Jesus before others. Those who deny Jesus before God are right to be filled with fear – a fear of God.

6. *Paraphrase Matthew 10:26-33. What is Jesus trying to say?*
7. *How does God demonstrate care for humanity?*

It is one thing to be ostracized by strangers. It is something else to be rejected by family members. Jesus is most serious about this. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth: I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matthew 10:34 NRSV)

8. *How could the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, not bring peace?*
9. *Why might some family members reject a follower of Jesus?*
10. *What would it mean to be alienated from family due to faith in Jesus?*

Jesus understands discipleship as a series of choices made daily – to follow Jesus or to chase after something else. Jesus desires a sole allegiance. He even encourages followers to pick up a cross and to follow. Make no mistake; a cross made of wood is heavy. It cannot be casually thrown over a shoulder along with other things. Instead, carrying a cross takes a certain determination and persistence. In doing so, a person is able to find his or her life.

11. *What does it mean to find your life?*
12. *How might carrying a cross help you to find your life?*

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word *among us*

Monica's family didn't attend church very often when she was young. But when they did, Monica noticed the women sat in the back while the men served in leadership positions in the front. As a child, she was relieved when the family stopped attending worship.

While at college, Monica started to attend Sunday worship with her friends. They found a Lutheran church near the college campus. Over time, she became more involved, asking lots of questions about theology. Finally she admitted to her pastor her sense of call to serve as an ordained minister. The pastor, the church family, and her friends heartily endorsed that calling.

Her family at home was less than enthused about Monica's career choice. Her parents believed she was planning to go to seminary for attention or to find a husband. The entire family turned against her, announcing they would disown her if she pursued becoming a pastor. This made no sense to Monica. Her family rarely attended worship.

1. *What options does Monica have?*
2. *What are the long-term personal ramifications for Monica if she pursues ordination?*
3. *How might you counsel Monica?*
4. *Have you ever been disowned because of your faith in Jesus Christ? If so, what happened?*

It is not easy to have strangers turn against you because of your faith, but it even worse when it is your family. One of the commandments is to honor parents. It gets confusing to imagine parents rejecting their child due to the child's decision to follow Jesus.

5. *How does a decision to follow Jesus take priority over honoring your parents? Or, does it ever take priority? How so?*
6. *Is Jesus encouraging conflict within the family? If not, what is Jesus saying?*

Jesus expects rejection. He also expects his disciples to be rejected. No wonder the disciples became anxious and were filled with fear. Keep in mind, Jesus doesn't restrict this rejection to disciples of the first century. Instead, Jesus prepares disciples throughout the centuries to be rejected.

7. *How does it make you feel to know you might be rejected because of your faith?*
8. *When we are committed to Jesus Christ, how might rejection help strengthen faith?*

Have no fear. Prayerfully ponder the words of Martin Luther in his hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God":

Were they to take our house,
goods, honor, child, or spouse,
Though life be wrenched away.
They cannot win the day.
The Kingdom's ours forever!

Prayer

Jesus, give me courage to endure rejection, pick up my cross, and follow you. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Romans 5:1-8

last **word**

Pray for the times in your life
where you need courage to be faithful.

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