LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 10 (Part 4) :32-38

Taking Up Our Cross

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven, but whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 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. A man's enemies will be the members of his own household.

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Pray with me, please. Father God, open our hearts to the ministry of your word and allow it to speak to us where we're at and to give us understanding, Lord.

We ask you to bring application to this word into our lives and allow it to equip us for the work that you've called us to, and we ask this in Jesus' name, amen. You know, one of the downsides, I suppose, of taking the book of Matthew and even this chapter of Matthew, we've been in this chapter it seems like forever, but one of the downsides of taking it and kind of breaking it up into bite-sized pieces so that we can study it a little bit more thoroughly is that there is a tendency to lose a connection with the context of the focus of what is being done here. And so let me just review very quickly for you. This chapter is really all about Jesus telling his disciples what they can expect when they take his word out into the world, and he's basically telling them that they will be confronted in that world by great opposition. People who want nothing more than to shut them up and to shut them down.

In fact, Jesus even told us in another section of scripture that there would come a time when people would kill them and think they were doing God a favor, doing God a service. So this is the kind of stuff that Jesus felt the need to prepare them for. And although this first foray out into the world with the message of hope in Christ really didn't garner for them any opposition necessarily, it was coming. And Jesus knew it was coming, and it would not just happen to these disciples, but would happen to disciples

for many, many years to come, and in fact, it's still happening today. To think that this is something that is only happening in biblical times, you know, in the days of Jesus or shortly thereafter is a misnomer.

It's happening today. It's happening in countries where people find themselves in opposition to the law by simply living their Christian life out loud. And anyway, Jesus is talking about this very thing, and he knows, Jesus knows that there will come a time for these very men with whom he is spending time, that they will be questioned by authorities in the coming days, months, years, and in some cases, the answer to their question. Life and death will hinge upon that very answer. Are you a follower of Jesus Christ, and let me just tell you ahead of time, if you acknowledge that you are, we will kill you.

But if you are willing right now to renounce your faith in this person, to say that you are not a Christian, we will spare your life. Have you ever thought about what you would do in that situation? I have. And of course, we all want to think well of ourselves. We like to think that if we were faced with a life and death ultimatum related to either acknowledging Jesus or denying him, that we would, you know, say, yeah, I'm a Christian, do your worse.

I don't know that we could ever actually say how we would respond necessarily until we were actually facing that sort of a thing. You know, I've thought in the past about encouraging people even standing here in church, you know, hey, if you want to acknowledge Jesus, you know, stand, I'm not doing that right now. But I thought, you know, there's really no test to that necessarily. I mean, here you are in church, you know, I mean, you're among friends, you're among people who for the vast majority of us are very, very sympathetic to who Jesus is and what it means to be a follower of him and be devoted to him. And to say in church, hey, let's all stand if we're, if you want to acknowledge who, you know, Jesus in your life would be a pretty simplistic and, you know, sort of thing.

It's when we get out there and imagine somebody having a gun to your head or some other form of punishment and literally asking you, you know, so now what do you have to say? Are you going to continue to confess Christ? Jesus knew that these men were going to come up upon that very scenario. And so he says to them in this passage that if you acknowledge me before men and your Bible, if you have a different translation, may say confess if you confess me before men or he who confesses me, I will acknowledge or confess before my father in heaven. And by the way, the Greek word here that is translated acknowledge or confess depending on your Bible translation is an interesting Greek word that means to agree.

I find that quite interesting. The root of it means to agree. And essentially it means that you agree that Jesus is who he said or claimed to be. I agree. I agree.

Now that's saying something and I like actually what that means because it's more than just saying I believe in Jesus. You know, people do that all the time. I believe in Jesus or I believe in God or you're talking to them about, you know, the Bible or something like that. And they, they say, well, you know, I believe in God and they think that that's enough, you know, to believe in God. And you know, our response at least should be biblical based on what James says related to that.

He says, so you say you believe in God, wonderful. So did the demons and they shudder at the sound of his name. And so you see this whole idea of saying, I believe in God, who cares? I mean, it's like big deal, you know, Satan believes in God, you know, and he's his number one enemy. And you know what?

It's impossible for a human being to believe in God and yet be his number one enemy. You know? So you say you believe in God. I don't care. Well, I care, but you know what I'm saying?

Just those words alone. They don't say it. Jesus didn't say, if you say that you believe in me in front of it, he said, if you acknowledge or confess me, if you say, I agree. Jesus is who he said he was. Now you might say, well, why is that such a big deal?

I mean, why would people get all lathered up? If I simply say, I agree, I agree that Jesus is who he said that he was. Well, if you start looking at the claims of Jesus, you realize he made some radical claims that carry huge implications. There's probably none that's more radical. Al, I don't know.

I should probably shouldn't say that. At least in my estimation, I liked this verse. It's John 14 six. Let me put it up on the screen for you. Goes like this.

Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. Now, the reason I like this verse so much is because it doesn't, you know, kind of Patsy around the whole issue of who is Jesus and what does he mean to us? Jesus kind of lays it out there and he says, and the implications by the way of this verse, just in case you were wondering, is that every other religious thought about how you might possibly reach God is a lie. Okay?

That's the implication here that this is, this is where Jesus brings us. He brings us to a place of, of saying, listen, it's me or nothing. And that's radical, you know? Oh, but I, I, I disagree. Someone might say, I think that there are many ways to God.

Well, then you are not going to confess Christ according to the Greek meaning of that word. You're going to disagree. You're going to disagree with who Jesus said he was. And so in other words, you're not confessing Christ. You are in fact denying Christ before men.

If you say, oh, I disagree. I don't think Jesus is the only way to heaven. Well, fact of the matter is that's what he said. And so, and by the way, if you disagree or if you're sharing that with someone and they disagree with you or somebody says, I disagree with you, you need to, you need to be careful to kind of just get that conversation on the right leg and let them know, oh no, no, no, no, no. You're disagreeing with me.

I, my opinion means nothing. You're disagreeing with Jesus. He's the one that said it, not me. I didn't go around just making it up, well, I think Jesus is the only way. In fact, I think He is the way, and the truth, and the life.

And you know what? I think nobody comes to the Father except by Him. Now, if that's what I did, you would be right in coming up and saying, yeah, well, I disagree with you. And I would say, well, then I disagree with you back. And I disagree with you infinity.

Or something stupid. You know, it becomes this stupid argument between two people. Right? What good does that do? Who cares what you and I think?

It's what Jesus said. I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no man comes to the Father except by me. Jesus said it. If you disagree, you're disagreeing with Him, not me.

And same thing when you're talking and sharing that with other people. The implications of these things are absolutely huge. And the statements and the claims of Jesus pack a punch. They really do. And you know what?

When you agree with who and what Jesus said He is, people are going to oppose you. Some of them strongly. There's just no two ways about it. But Jesus said this, if you confess or agree with who I said I am in front of men, I will confess you before my Father. I will acknowledge you before my Father.

However, there is a promise on the other side of this coin that is just as sure. And that is, if you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father. That's heavy duty. And by the way, that doesn't mean if you ever denied Him once upon a time, that's the unforgivable sin. I mean, we think of Peter when we think about this whole denying the Lord thing, don't we?

Peter did it three times. You might say, well, does that mean Jesus is going to deny Peter before the Father? No, it doesn't mean that. You know why? Because Peter's denials were followed up with a very, very passionate repentance, whereby he came before his Lord and confessed his sin.

It says he wept bitterly, and he repented, and he was ultimately restored, even from that place, and so forth. So understand this. But then Jesus goes on to make what some consider to be a rather troubling statement in verses 34 through 36. Look in your Bible there again. He says, do not suppose that I've come to bring peace on the earth.

Now this is great. We just went through Christmas, right, and about nine out of every ten Christmas cards says peace on earth, as if that's the whole purpose of Christmas. Peace on earth, peace on earth, peace on earth, and so forth. And then Jesus comes along and He goes, oh, I didn't come to bring peace. Oh, I came to bring a sword.

Now wait a minute, aren't there a bunch of other passages that talk about the peace that He comes to bring? Isn't He called the Prince of Peace? Then He come and say to us, peace I give you, not as this world gives, but my peace I give you, and so forth. So there is a reality to the peace that He comes to bring, but remember where that peace comes. It comes to those who agree, who confess, who have opened their heart.

But you know, again, when there is a radical statement made by Jesus, and some in the room say I agree, and others in the room say I disagree, there is not going to be peace as it relates to those people in that room. And sometimes the people in that room are people in your own home. And that's when it gets really tough. Nobody loves disagreement, nobody loves division. But Jesus told us in no uncertain terms that when people take, let me back up, when people make a decision about the claims of Christ, it's going to affect families, even families.

And some of you who are here today know exactly what I'm talking about because you've experienced the division that comes with simply making a decision to agree with Christ when other family members disagree. Whether they say they disagree or not verbally, you can see from their life that they disagree. And that disagreement causes a rift, doesn't it? And Jesus said it's going to happen. He says in fact, what's going to end up being the result of this is a man is going to turn against his father, He says in these verses.

He says a daughter is actually going to turn against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. In fact, he says in verse 36, a man's enemies will be the members of his own family, his own household. Why? Because Jesus doesn't leave us any choice when it comes to either believing or not. And when you come to that place of saying, I believe, it demands a lifestyle that follows suit.

You see, when Jesus makes radical claims about himself, and he does, the response for you and I is equally radical. I say radical, and I need to be careful using that word because some people really are kind

of, when they hear the word radical, they're like, well, I don't think we need to be radicals, you know. You know, really what I'm talking about isn't a radical Christianity, it's just Christianity. It's just what it means to follow Jesus. If you're going to follow Jesus, I mean to be a follower of Jesus, you really need to believe everything he said about himself.

If you don't, then you really don't confess him, you don't agree with him, and you are in fact denying him, see? So to believe is to truly believe and to believe everything about him that he said about himself. Otherwise, you're just playing games, you know? And when it really is made, when people find themselves on opposing sides of these issues, there's always going to be division, there's always going to be tension, there's always going to be, you know, that kind of stuff, and you can't help it because Jesus doesn't leave us any options. And you know, I shared that verse here just a minute ago, John 14, 6, that we put up on the screen, I'm the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father except by me.

Although it's a radical verse, I like it because it removes that middle ground of somebody who might want to say, well, you know, I think Jesus is a good guy. I'm not sure I believe everything he said, but I think he's a good guy. Do you know that that is a ridiculous statement? It was probably nowhere said clearer than in the book, Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis.

I don't know how many of you read that book, great, great book. C.S. Lewis was what you would call a deep thinker. I mean, the guy gives me a brain cramp, you know? First time I read his book, I read a couple of chapters and I put it down because I thought, this guy is way over my head.

And I was in my 20s at the time, I was a fairly new believer, and I put it down for a few years and I kept hearing people going, Mere Christianity, wow, Mere Christianity, what a great book, Mere Christianity, so I thought, I better pick it up again. So this time I persevered, you know, put on my hip waders, you know, because it's really, you're going through thick stuff. And then I loved it so much, it became one of my favorite books of all time. He addresses this issue of people who want to kind of take a middle ground when it comes to Jesus. They want to believe what they want to believe about him, but they want to also disbelieve certain things about him because maybe they're uncomfortable or they just disagree.

And he basically says in the book, you can't get away with that. I'm going to, let me put a little portion of his, what he says on here, a couple of slides worth. He says, here's what C.S. Lewis says, I'm trying here to prevent anyone from saying the very foolish thing people often say about him, Jesus quote, I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. He says, this is the

one thing we must not say a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.

He would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he's a poached egg or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool. You can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.

But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great moral teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. Isn't that a great quote? This doesn't leave us that gray area of saying he's a good guy, but because good guys, great moral teachers don't go around claiming to be God.

Great moral teachers don't go around saying things like, I am the only way you can ever know God. If it isn't me, it ain't going to happen. Great moral teachers don't do that unless they're telling the truth. If they're just a great moral teacher and that's all they are, and they make statements like that, that disqualifies them from being a great moral teacher. That makes them a great big liar or a great big deceiver.

Remember those three words that people like to come up with related to Jesus, liar, lunatic, or Lord. It's one of the three. Jesus was either a liar or he was just loopy and literally didn't know himself, between himself and a potato, I mean literally out of his mind, or he was Lord. And he doesn't leave us any middle ground, you know, oh, but I like Jesus, you know. Jesus takes away that middle ground.

Now, as Jesus talks about this, these radical statements that he makes about himself, he knows that there's going to be a cost to you and I when we either accept or reject what he says about himself. He goes on in verse 37, look with me in your Bible, verse 37. He says, anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Did you just read what I read? I mean, that's pretty bold, isn't it? That's a very bold thing for anyone to say. If you don't love me, most of all, above everything, above everyone, you are not worthy of me. Wow.

Well, you need to know something about this statement. First of all, Jesus isn't attempting in any way to minimize, oversimplify, or degrade the love between family members. In other words, I'll go as far as to say the Bible actually obligates us, commands us to love one another, especially in families. What does it say to husbands? Husbands, love your wives.

Because Christ loved the church, we're to love our wives to the point of laying down our lives for them. That's a huge, that's a big love. So see, Jesus isn't minimizing the love that we're to have for one another in family. And you know, who has to tell you to love your children? Good grief.

It comes naturally. I adore my kids, all four of them. And my wife, I love her to death. You know, I mean, that's just, it's part of being a family, you know, you love each other. And Jesus isn't minimizing that kind of love at all.

What he's saying to you and I is when you take a position about me and someone in your family takes a different position about me, it's going to cause a rift in your family. And you need to understand, even though no one likes those kinds of things, no one wants those kinds of things to happen in their family. It's going to happen. And if that rift, if that division, if that tension, which comes naturally as the result of you deciding you agree, and this person over here saying, I disagree. If that division creates a situation where you pull back from your devotion and your love for me, Jesus makes this bold, blunt statement that you are not worthy of him.

And you know, that statement is, it hits you, doesn't it? It's like a smack in the face. Have you ever read that verse and kind of thought, boy, Jesus, couldn't you have toned that down just a little bit? I mean, because it kind of repulses us a little bit for someone to come along and to lay out kind of almost like an ultimatum. If you don't love me, the most of everything and everyone, you are not worthy of me.

And you're kind of like, ooh, it grates on you a little bit, kind of like, ah, Jesus, I think you could have been a little more diplomatic about how you said that. I mean, don't you know that that's just going to kind of ruffle some feathers, you know? But Jesus, again, is not telling us not to love and honor one another in families. He's talking about those times when push comes to shove, and he basically says when you are being told that you're going to need to choose me or maybe even the love of a family member, what are you going to choose? And if your choice is something or someone other than me, again, blunt in your face, you are not worthy of me.

Let me ask a question. This is, again, a very, very bold statement for Jesus to make. Who deserves to make this kind of a demand of our lives? Does a boyfriend? Does a girlfriend deserve to make that kind of a demand?

How about a husband? How about a wife? How about one of your children or some other extended family member or something like that? Who deserves to make that kind of a statement to you? Do you know it is made from time to time?

Maybe some of you women in here have a past of dating some person who was very clingy, very possessive, and maybe some young man once said to some of you ladies at one time in your life, if you don't love me more than everybody else, you don't deserve me. You know what? That person didn't deserve to say that. Nobody deserves to say that except Jesus. You see, it's not the same thing as me saying it to you, you saying it to me, or someone else saying it to you, because he is God over all.

He is the creator and he is the one who gave his life on the cross to purchase you from death. And he did that. He paid with his own blood, and you know what? He deserves you. And not just some of you.

He deserves all of you. Jesus Christ deserves your love and the quality of your love in an unequaled way. He deserves the totality of your attention, of your time, of your effort and energy. He deserves you. Every part of you.

Not just some of you. More than relationships. More than money. More than our love of sports. More than our love of pleasure, whatever that may be.

I want you to remember something that Jesus said when he was asked about the quality of our love for God. It's actually going to come up later on in our study of Matthew. On the screen from Matthew chapter 22, it says an expert in the law tested him with this question, teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the law? And Jesus replied, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, even your thoughts. Wow.

Your heart is what you desire. Your soul is what you feel. Your mind is what you think about. And Jesus said that the greatest commandment of all was that we would so give ourselves to him in the totality of our being that anything else or anyone else is a distant second to our love for him. And once again, Jesus is the only one who deserves that.

after we come to terms with that, that he's not asking something of us that is wrong or inappropriate and he in fact deserves the totality of our lives. Of course, the very next and natural question for us to ask ourselves is, do I love him most of all? Do I think of him most of all? Do I desire him most of all? And if we're going to be honest with ourselves, the answer is probably going to be no.

You know, it's funny, sometimes I actually feel a little uncomfortable when we sing certain songs on a Sunday morning because they're so lofty. And we sing songs that say things to the effect of, I've given my entire life to you and I have a hard time getting those words out of my mouth. I'll be totally honest with you because you know what? God knows and so do I, it's true. And you know, when I'm praying, I try to be as honest as I can when I'm praying to God because I know he sees into my life, like I look through a

pane of glass, he just sees everything and when I'm praying, I'm kind of like, Lord, you know, you know that there are compartments in my heart, in my life where I still have retained soul ownership, you know?

There are areas of my heart where I've just not let you in and I know that. And sometimes it's because of fear, I'm afraid to let him into those areas for fear of what he might do with them. Sometimes it just tells me I just, I'm not trusting him the way I should. Sometimes it's just because I really enjoy the pleasure of that particular little compartment in my heart and I'm not really sure I want to give it up, you know? But haven't you found, Christians, that our life in Christ is really just kind of a step by step walk with him whereby he exposes those areas of our lives that need his lordship, those areas of our lives where we are not giving ourselves completely to him and he convicts us so gently and so lovingly through his word and through other people and circumstances and basically kind of communicates to us and says, my child, I love you with an everlasting love but I've come upon this door of your heart that seems to be closed to my entrance.

And I know why, even if you don't, but I'm calling out to you today and I'm knocking upon the door of your heart and I'm saying open it wide to me because I want to be lord of all of your heart, not just some. And eventually we respond to some degree to the Holy Spirit and we either respond by opening that area and surrendering it to him or we respond by stubbornly refusing and closing that even tighter to the invasion of the Holy Spirit. But that's kind of our walk with the Lord in a nutshell, you know, giving over ourselves little by little more and more to the lordship of Jesus Christ. But make no mistake about it, people, this whole issue of giving up our heart to him is what Jesus talked about in the very last section of what we read here in these verses here in Matthew chapter 10 in verse 38 when he says, and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Anyone who doesn't take his cross, see that's why we don't like to open those areas of our heart very much because it means dying.

It means dying to self or dying to desire or dying to those things that please us, but that we know take us away from our absolute devotion to Christ. And dying is never a fun thing, never. It's a big, fat, painful, bloody mess. But that's what the Holy Spirit is challenging us to do. Die to self.

I read the words of Paul in Galatians and I want it so much to be a cry of my own heart where he says, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live. The life I live in this old broken down body is living by faith. By faith in the son of man who loved me and gave himself for me. But as for the desires of this old sinful life, they have been crucified. And the life that they used to demand of me, the control they used to have over me has now been broken.

I want that to be the cry of my heart. And I'm willing to bet it probably reverberates in your heart, too, if you're a born again Christian today. And I think that the most important thing for us to do is just be honest with God and just say, you know what, Lord, I know that the issue of Lordship is not a complete one in my heart. I know that it hasn't been finished by any stretch of the imagination, but I just give myself to you. I give myself to you.

Lord, help me to love you in a way you deserve. Because you deserve all of me. You deserve all of my heart, all of my time, all of my attention, all of my effort, all of my energy, all of my love. You deserve it. And I know that I don't give you what you deserve, but I know I need to.

And I know that with your help, you're going to bring me to that place.