

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household! "So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 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. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. "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.

So what are YOU afraid of? Your fears can affect your life significantly. When I was nine years old a bully pushed me off the pier at the swimming beach into deep water, and I didn't know how to swim. I came up twice, but when I went down for the third time, I swallowed a gallon of water and stayed down. A lifeguard rescued me and pull me to shore. That experience scared the daylights out of me. I was so afraid of that happening again that every time I went swimming after that, I practiced and practiced until I learned how to swim. Of course, it could have gone the other way. I could have been so afraid of the water that I may have refused ever to get into water over my head again.

What are you afraid of? Can we all admit that deep down inside, somewhere down there where our sinful nature hides, that we are all afraid to talk about Jesus? Every time I go out canvassing and knock on a door, I am nervous about what I am going to say. Every time I go out and talk to an inactive member and speak to them about hearing God's Word more often, it makes me afraid. And I have been doing this for more years than most of you have been alive!

Why would we be afraid to talk about Jesus? Part of it comes from our sinful nature, and part if it comes from our experience. Sometimes when we talk to people about Jesus, we get a negative reaction. We get the feeling that we are stepping on someone's sacred ground and disturbing their inner peace of mind. A lot of people don't WANT to hear about Jesus! In fact, in some places in the world, talking about Jesus could get you killed! If you lived in Pakistan right now, and you went out on the street to talk about Jesus, you could be killed by an angry mob, or you may be arrested and put in prison by the police. The devil knows that if you talk about Jesus, that's going to do damage to his kingdom. So he will do anything he can to stop you.

In our text today, Jesus sent out his disciples on their first real mission trip. He's warning them ahead of time that it is not going to be easy. And he tells them three times in these few verses not to be afraid.

Don't Be Afraid To Talk About Jesus!

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called

Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!” They made fun of Jesus, too, didn’t they? They even called him a bad name. They called him Beelzebub. The name literally means “the Lord of the flies” or “the Lord of the dung heap.” They hated his teaching so much that they said it was a pile of manure, and he was the Lord of the manure pile.

And what did they hate about Jesus and his teaching? He taught them that they were saved by grace and by faith not by good works. He taught them that the Sabbath day wasn’t about keeping a bunch of silly rules that someone made up, but about finding rest in Jesus, who was the fulfillment of the Sabbath. He taught them that he was the Son of God who came down from heaven to save them, and he proved it by his miracles. They hated Jesus for this, and they nailed him to the cross for it.

We are Jesus’ students, too, and should we expect to be treated any differently from the world that Jesus was treated? A few years ago, the Assemblies’ church in town put an ad in the school newspaper that contained their logo, “Jesus.” Someone objected to the ad and the school paper refused to run that ad in their paper any more. What was so objectionable? It wasn’t the name “Jesus” but because it was “Jesus – period.” If you say that Jesus is the only way to heaven, you are being intolerant and unloving – according to the world.

We should nothing less. If they hated Jesus, they will hate us. In some places in the world today, persecution is more than just an inconvenience. In Pakistan, a twelve year old girl was kidnapped from her Christian parents and taken 120 miles away. She was raped and forced to sign a paper to marry someone of the Islam faith. When she refused to convert to Islam, she was raped and beaten for eight months before she managed to escape. When her parents reported this to the authorities, they refused to do anything about it. You can read stories like this from countries in the Middle East and Africa and in other places in the world if you google “Christian persecution” on the internet.

I doubt if anything like that will happen in our country. But don’t underestimate the power of passive persecution to petrify you. You know what the word “petrify” means, don’t you? It means you are so afraid you become like a stone and don’t do anything. Have you noticed that when you talk about Jesus to people, it is like you brought an elephant into the room? Suddenly the person you are talking to loses interest or changes the subject. In a subtle way they are communicating to you that Jesus is not something they want to talk about. What the devil can’t accomplish with a lynch mob or a bullet, he’ll try to accomplish silence, or with an accusation of being politically incorrect or intolerant. The devil knows he has to silence us!

Don’t let persecution catch you by surprise or keep you from talking about Jesus. Jesus is warning you ahead of time so you can be ready for the resistance. Listen to the apostles responded when they were arrested and put on trial by the Sanhedrin. **“The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41).** If they heaped disgrace on Jesus, isn’t it an honor when they treat us in the same way?

Jesus goes on to tell his disciples not to be afraid. **“So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 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.”** Jesus is telling his disciples not to be afraid to speak plainly about the things that he had taught them.

Have you ever been in a situation where you were afraid to speak the truth and tell someone what they needed to hear? That happens to me all the time. It happens almost every time I knock on the door of an inactive member to talk about their relationship with Jesus and his Word. It feels much more comfortable to talk about the weather or about the family or about anything else. There have been times, I must confess, that I have walked away from a home thinking, "Pastor, you were really a nice, friendly guy just now. That person is probably telling himself right now that his pastor is a nice guy. But you really didn't help that person grow in their relationship to Jesus." "O well, I guess there is always next time," the devil says comfortingly.

Friends, don't be afraid to talk about Jesus. Jesus says, "**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.**" I don't think that's the threat that it might sound like. Jesus is saying, "Why should we be afraid of those who can kill our body when we already have a place in heaven?" Paul said it this way. "**As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**" Romans 8: 36-37

That's why Christians are so dangerous. You never want to get in a fight with someone who has nothing to lose. Someone who has nothing to lose has no reason for quitting. They will just keep coming after you and coming after you until they can't anymore. That's why the devil is afraid of us. As Christians, we have nothing to lose. We have nothing to lose. Luther said it this way in his famous hymn. "**And do what they will – hate, steal, hurt, or kill – though all may be gone, our victory is one; the kingdom ours forever!**"

Friends, don't be afraid to talk about Jesus because you have nothing to lose! Jesus says, "**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.**" What does it matter what the world thinks of us? Does it hurt when the scientist calls us "flat-earth" people because we believe in creation? Sure it does. Does it hurt when even Christians in other churches call us intolerant because we believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven? Sure it does. Does it hurt when a friend or family member becomes angry with us because we talk to them about their faith and Jesus? Sure it does. But what's important is that Jesus is on our side – when the last day comes, and even now.

He gives his disciples these comforting words. "**Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.**" Jesus isn't exaggerating here. How many sparrows and songbirds are out there in the world? Have you ever seen one fly against your window and fall to the ground dead? Or have you seen a pile of feathers on your lawn because some cat caught one of those sparrows? We hardly notice those things. God does. Not a single sparrow falls to the ground unless God knows it and allows it to happen.

And how many hairs do you have on your head? Some of us have more than others. You wash your hair and there are a few strands in the sink. Or maybe there is a snag full of strands in your hairbrush when you finish brushing your hair. Imagine that God knows how many hairs you have on top of your head!

You are worth more than sparrows! God didn't send his Son, Jesus, to die for the sparrows. He cares for every little bird that flies through the skies and he provides for their needs. But you are worth

much more than that! Jesus didn't become a sparrow. Jesus became a human being like one of us. He faced rejection by his people. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver by one of his disciples. He let himself be nailed to the cross and punished with the pain of hell so that God could claim us as his dear children.

You are worth more than sparrows! That's why Jesus is so serious about you hearing his Word and receiving his Supper. God doesn't preach his Gospel to sparrows. They don't have sins that need to be forgiven – souls that need to be saved. If God sees the sparrows that fall to the ground, don't you think that God sees the hardships in your life, especially those you experience when you share the gospel? God will not let you fail or fall, so don't be afraid to talk about Jesus!

During a confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia in 1964 a group of soldiers from Nepal known as Gurkhas were asked if they would be willing to jump from planes into combat if the need arose. The Gurkhas usually agreed to anything. They are renowned for their courage and fierceness in combat. But this time they refused. However, the next day they sought out the British officer who made the request and said they had reconsidered and were prepared to jump under one condition: they had to jump from no higher than 100 feet. The British officer told the Gurkhas that jumping from only 100 feet was impossible, because the parachutes would not open in time from that height. Then the Gurkhas said, "Oh, will we be wearing parachutes? You didn't mention parachutes before. In that case we'll jump anywhere with parachutes!"

Don't be afraid to talk about Jesus. This week make an effort to talk about Jesus with someone. Start with someone easy. Talk to your spouse about Jesus. Tell them what faith in Jesus means to you. Talk to your children, or your grandchildren. Maybe talk to a friend – especially a friend who is hurting and needs a friend like Jesus. **Jesus is not asking you to jump without a parachute.** Talking about Jesus is not easy and the world is not going to make it easy for us. We expect that. It wasn't easy for Jesus, either. But we have nothing to lose. We have Jesus on our side and we have a place waiting for us in heaven. So don't be afraid to talk about Jesus. Amen.