



Things to Ponder

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Reflections – Gospel of Matthew 10:26-33

Introduction: The Cost of Discipleship

This Gospel passage should be read in the context of Matthew's intended audience: a Jewish-Christian community. The Gospel alludes to the dangers and persecutions that this community has most likely already faced in the Early Church and will continue to face. To reassure this community, Matthew recalls for them the encouraging words of Jesus that we read today: "Do not be afraid!"

Jesus has predicted that his followers—especially those in the Jewish community who have left that tradition and embraced the Christian Way—will face difficulties in their way of life and worship. Many people will not receive them well, even within the land of Israel. Even family members and relatives will turn away from these new Christians because of their commitment to Jesus and His values. Today's Gospel offers these new followers consolation against this difficult living situation.

In this Gospel passage, Jesus might be understood as putting persecution in perspective. Followers of Jesus—and His New Way—are called upon to keep their focus on God. Those who can harm the body do not have ultimate power; God does.

Today, you and I might not face the same type of persecution, but we can often experience painful difficulties as we endeavor to live a Christian life in an increasingly secular society that often ignores, denies, or even rejects the teachings and values of the One we follow: the Risen Christ.

There is a cost of discipleship, for it's not always easy or convenient to say or do what is right in our society. In this Gospel passage, Jesus does not "sugar-coat" His teachings or Way of Life. We can expect difficulties, ridicule, rejection in following Jesus, even from family, friends, co-workers. Our practice of the Gospel puts us on a collision course with the world's priorities and values. Painful as this might be, Jesus' promise still holds: "Do not be afraid!" And there is consolation in those words!

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the *Gospel of Matthew 10:26-33*.

What word or words caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

How does my way of living reflect what I believe?

Further Reflections and Questions

We can understand why early Christians would see themselves as a vulnerable minority in a hostile culture. Jewish followers of Jesus, such as those envisioned by Matthew, would likely find comfort in the reminder of God's care for them. ("You are worth more than two sparrows.") We can understand these things, but we do not relate to them. Or do we?

Name a situation where you have felt like a vulnerable minority or as a lonely voice? Can you identify those feelings? How did you handle it?

Jesus says over and over again in the Gospels: "Do not be afraid!" Jesus encourages us to live beyond fear. But let's be honest. You and I are often afraid. Fear should no longer be the determining factor in our lives. But it often is.

What frightens you?

The Gospel can call us forth into uncharted territories, into situations unknown to us, even places of some risk.

Name those places where the Gospel calls you beyond the zone of your comfort into the realm of risk?

"Do not be afraid! I am always with you!"

Do you really believe this promise?

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