

From the housetop

Matthew 10:24-39

June 21, 2020

Two men began to talk about world problems, high taxes, the cost of living, and finally, their families. "I have three boys," one of them said proudly. "That's a nice family," sighed the other man. "I wish to heaven I had three children."

"Don't you have any children?" the proud father asked with a touch of sympathy in his voice. "Oh, yes," sighed the second man, "I have six."

Today is Father's Day, a day we salute fathers. Now, we know every father is not a great father and no father is perfect. And we know that it is not easy being a father. One cynic, speaking from his own experience, noted that children go through four fascinating stages. First they call his father DaDa. Then they call him Daddy. As they get mature, they call him Dad. Finally, they call him collect to borrow money.

A Father's Day Card reads: "Being a father can be expensive, time-consuming, frustrating, confusing and emotionally draining, actually it's a lot like playing golf."

But let me tell you, we owe our fathers gratitude and respect. I am glad we do have the opportunity to express our gratitude and respect. We love you, Dad!

Some of you might raise your hands, saying, "Pastor Cho, did you hear what Jesus said this morning?"

He says, "For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 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." Let me hear your comments on this, Pastor Cho."

At first glance, we feel confused and puzzled.

What he says is that we cannot put family or any other relationship above our relationship with God through Christ. Jesus does not disparage family and family relationship. He just emphasized we need to put them in their proper place which is Second Place. God is in First Place in our lives. I heard someone say the word, JOY is a good way to remember who comes first. J for Jesus, O for Others and Y for You.

This morning we heard Jesus speaking to his disciples in the 10th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

Some of us read this chapter on Wed., June 10th with me. Beginning in June, we have been reading a chapter together every morning. How grateful I am. 40 of us, including the faith circle members have joined as of today. Please let Anne or me know if you would like to join this bible reading daily journey.

Today's passage is given to us this morning according to the Lectionary reading schedule.

Reading the passage several times slowly and meditatively, I heard Jesus saying very clearly and loudly the verse 27. "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs."

Yes, that is the verse of today, VOD. "Speak in the daylight. Proclaim from the housetops."

Keep in mind that the context of Matthew's gospel is the experience of persecution. The church that Matthew was addressing was being harassed by the Roman establishment. The Roman empire persecuted the Christians because they believed and praised and followed Jesus as the king of kings and the Messiah. Christians was seen as anti-Roman empire which regarded its emperor as the king of kings. So they were persecuted. They had to endure hardship and suffering because of their faith in Christ Jesus.

In the context of the persecutions and suffering, Matthew has Jesus offering comfort to his disciples. In verse 26, he comforts his disciples with words of

assurance, saying, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.” He said two times, “Do not be afraid of them.” Then, he wants them to stand up and speak boldly despite the persecution and the suffering that is all around. “What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.”

“Speak in the daylight. Proclaim from the housetops.” Wow. Can you hear Jesus firmly and clearly saying this command? Eugene Peterson translates this way, “Don’t be bluffed into silence by the threats of bullies. “Don’t be intimidated.” “Stand up for me against world opinion!” “Stand up!” What an encouraging command!

We, Christians in our nation are not being persecuted or suffering because of our Christian faith, are we? But Jesus’ command comes to us as the voice of God to hear and follow today.

1

We are in the painful and turbulent time. What happened to George Floyd in Minneapolis was terrible. And, the way George Floyd and many other Afro Americans died helplessly should not be happened.

We are awakened to face the issue of racial injustice and systemic racism in our country. It is about time to take a strong step together as a nation for racial equality and justice.

To us, the Lord says this morning, “Stand up and speak from the housetop!”

“We live in God’s world. Everyone is created in the image of God. All the livings are God’s precious masterpieces. All of us are created equal. We are sisters and brothers in God’s household. We are to respect and love one another. Period.”

Yes, Black lives matter! Yes, White lives matter! Yes, Brown lives matter. Yes, the disabled lives matter. LGBTQI lives matter. The poor lives matter. The lonely lives matter. Yes, all lives matter, for all lives are from God and belong to God.

Verse 31 “You are worth more than many sparrows.” Jesus reminds the disciples and us that we are valuable to God.

In fact, Jesus claims, God the Father even knows how many hairs are on our head. He's counted them. That is how valuable you are to God! That is how valuable everyone is to God. What a liberating word.

Now is the time for us to speak from the housetop, “Let us love our neighbors as we love ourselves.” Now is the time for us to speak in the daylight, “Let’s respect and honor one another!” Now is the time to proclaim from the roof, “We are here to live together in harmony.”

2

This Friday is a special day to me. This Friday is my 42nd year anniversary of coming to America from South Korea. Wow. 42 years. I was 19 when I landed in Los Angeles International Airport in 1978. What a new world I encountered. New language, new culture. This country was too foreign to me for a long time.

When I applied in-person for a job in an insurance company in Arcadia, CA right after I got married, I had the first racial discrimination experience. I still remember vividly what happened. The receptionist asked me to leave my resume and wait in the lobby. So I waited as directed. No calling in almost for an hour. So I went to see her to check what was going on. She was not in her desk but I found my resume on her desk with “Reject” in red ink on it. I was not given a chance to interview for a job. I was 26 years old and it was too much for me to bear. I was not able to hold my tears for a long time because of pain.

At age 36, I was appointed to serve at Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church in Ridgefield, CT. I was the first Asian pastor serving in the church history and in town. There were only 3 Asian Americans, my wife, Kyong Hee and Senior Pastor’s wife and me and one Afro American couple in the predominantly white congregation.

One morning I was on the way to the church office when I was pulled over by a police. “Good morning! What’s matter, officer?” He did not reply me and simply asked me my drive license and car registration. “Where are you going?” “I am going to work. I am a pastor at Jesse Lee.” He did not seem to believe what I said. “Okay.” And he let me go. I can tell right away why he stopped me. He must have wondered and must have been suspicious of why I, a Asian man drove around in town. For the record, I was stopped more than several times during my staying in Ridgefield, CT.

Once again, I would like to say loud and clear, “Black Lives matter. White lives matter. Brown lives matter. All lives matter. We are to honor one another and see God’s image in each other’s face and life.

I have been wrestling over one thought these days. I have been in America for 42 years as Asian American. I ask myself, “how many white friends, how many black friends, how many Latino amigos and Latina amigas do I have, if any?” I am not saying those white, black and Latin Americans whose names I know and can say hi and how are you. I am saying close black, white and Latino and Latina friends I can talk to and have meal with and share my hearts with. None. I have a long way to go.

How about you?

I am very thankful that I do have you and serve with you at Fairfield Grace church. I give my thanks to the Lord for giving me an opportunity to serve with you who have different skin color and culture and build the Body of Christ together for the glory of God. We are different but one in Jesus Christ.

I am also thankful that we do have Korean speaking Faith Circle members in our midst. We are blessed to journey together and have an opportunity to learn from one another and loving one another. We are together to learn to live in harmony. I believe this is a wonderful part of God’s providential plan for you and me.

John the apostle writes, “19 We love because God first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love

their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.” (1 John 4:19-21)

3

Martin Luther, a protestant reformer once wrote: “God wants us to be cheerful and he hates sadness. For had he wanted us to be sad, he would not have given us the sun, the moon, and the various fruits of the earth. All these he gave for our good cheer.”

I agree. On top of that, God wants us to be cheerful, so God has given us Jesus, as well. God wants us to be happy, so God has given us the Holy Spirit. God wants us to have an abundant life, so God speaks every morning when we open the Bible. God wants us to live this life with cheer and confidence, so God has given us a community of faith.

There is one more God has given to us, because God wants us to live with joy and peace and harmony. That is, beautifully diverse people in this world.

Speak in the day light. Proclaim from the housetops! “Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister!” (1 John 4:21)

Amen. Amen. Amen .