

Matthew 10:24-39

5th Sunday after Pentecost

June 23, 2002

Here's the way I've got it figured out: Jesus is God. I belong to Jesus. Jesus has all power. Jesus loves me. The road ahead will be paved with gold for me. And all gentle slopes. Easy. No sweat.

I pray. My friend Jesus answers my prayers. Life is just the way I want it to be.

What do you think? Do I have it right?

Well, is your life easy? Everyone loves you? No trouble at home, at work, at school? It seems to me that's the way things ought to be for one who really belongs to Jesus.

If it is not like that maybe there is something wrong with you. Maybe your faith is not strong enough.
Maybe you do not love Jesus enough.

You will have to try harder, do better, if you want things to go well for you.

Paul: Hold it. Are you saying that if things are not going well for me, that there is something wrong with my faith in Jesus?

Lynn: Yes, that is what I am saying. Jesus is God. God has power. If there are problems in your life it is your fault.

P: My fault? Weren't you hearing what you were reading a moment ago? Jesus said, "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.

L: I don't get it. What's your point?

P: People attacked Jesus – they called him Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Jesus wants his followers to know that there will be some people who will attack us and oppose us, even hate us. The disciple will be like his teacher.

L: Well that may be true of terrorists – radicals. But it seems to me that most of the time people have trouble with other people it is because they did something wrong. It is their own fault.

P: Is that true of Jesus?

L: What do you mean?

P: When Jesus had trouble with people, was it because Jesus was doing things wrong?

L: No, of course not. Jesus is perfect.

P: I read in the Bible that Jesus own mother and brothers heard rumors that Jesus was beside himself – crazy – and that they came to take him home and keep him there.

L: They were wrong in wanting to do that.

P: Could the same thing happen to us? Could someone in my own family think that I am taking God too seriously? Giving too much of myself for others and not saving enough for my own family? Then I would be just like Jesus.

L: I get it. You are saying that sometimes following Jesus can create conflict in our own families.

P: That is what Jesus said. “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth, I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 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, and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

L: That’s really depressing. If Jesus is not going to make families closer, then what is the point?

P: What do you mean, “What’s the point?”

L: If Jesus is not going to make my life easier and make me happier and more successful, then why bother with him?

P: I am glad Jesus did not have that attitude about you and me.

L: Huh?

P: Think about it. What if Jesus had said, "I am going to do the things that will make my existence easier, happier"? I am not going to go down to earth for Lynn and Paul and deal with people who just want to use me for their own happiness. I am not going to put up with enemies who call me names, and disciples who betray me and deny me. I am certainly not going to go through the mocking and the flogging and the dying on the cross for them.

L: If it didn't make him happy, why did Jesus do it?

P: He loves you. And me. And all these others who are here today.

L: Love?

P: Love.

L: That's the point? Not my happiness but love?

P: Jesus would like to make you like himself in just that way.

L: Even if that love is costly?

P: Yes. And it will be costly. Love is always costly. But God will be with you. Jesus said, "Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. And even the hairs of your head are all counted.

L: God will be with me but God won't keep bad things from happening to me? I guess I am going to have to start thinking about God and my life in new ways. Jesus loves me. But when I am like him life will not be easy.

P: Love will be costly.

L: But I will not be afraid.

P: For God's love for you and for everyone will be greater than everything else.

L: *When God's love is greater than ~~any~~ anything else then life is just the way I really ^{do} want it to be.*