

Reflection on the Scripture: Matthew 10:24-39

[[The video of the reflection.](#)]

Jesus says *he has not come to bring peace, but a sword* (Matthew 10:34). He says *not to fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul* (Matthew 10:28). He says *even the hairs of your head are all counted* (Matthew 10:30) by God. In the reading from Matthew today, Jesus was preparing his disciples for the fierce opposition they would face. I mean, if they call Jesus Beelzebul (Matthew 10:25), the devil himself, then they can't think highly of his followers.

When Jesus talks of taking up the cross (Matthew 10:38), it doesn't appear to be a reference to Jesus' own crucifixion which occurs chronologically much later. This doesn't appear to be foreshadowing, or someone writing in a hint of Jesus' own ending in the middle of the story. It appears that Jesus is speaking metaphorically, urging all his followers to be as ardent as the revolutionaries whom the Romans were making an example of by crucifying them throughout Israel.¹ Jesus is urging his disciples to be that passionate, that committed, as ready to face such violent resistance as those who were trying to toss the Romans out of Israel.

But we don't face that as Christians. We face indifference. We face "I'm spiritual but not religious." We face "I want my kids to be able to make their own decisions about religion when they're older." We'd love to tell in the light what Jesus told us in the dark and proclaim from the housetops, what we heard whispered (Matthew 10:27). It's just that we don't have anyone to listen to us.

We have important good news to tell. Yes, we have fears, but we don't fear death. We fear, we are in awe of, the one who has made it possible to live courageously in the face of death.² We fear betraying Jesus by denying him. Denying him means denying the one who makes it possible for us to confess our sin,³ our limitations and shortcoming that draw us away from the path he showed us. Our faith has taught us to recognize the façades of human power, even those rooted in the threat of death.⁴ We can share our conviction that God is

¹ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 117.

² Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, in *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 111.

³ Hauerwas, 111.

⁴ Stanley Saunders, "Commentary on the Gospel: Matthew 10:24-39" from "Lectionary Commentaries for June 22, 2014: Second Sunday after Pentecost", Working Preacher, https://www.workingpreacher.org/wp_print_all.aspx?lectionary_calendar_id=481&print_type=comm&is_spnish=0 (accessed December 18, 2019).

present in this crazy, broken world, present in mercy and compassion.⁵ We just can't find anyone to talk to.

You know who else fought indifference? Every parent ever. I don't know The Talk that parents give their black children, particularly their black sons. I know there are lots of versions of that Talk, depending on the kid's age. I know that black parents and children have The Talk more than once. I do know The Talk white, middle-class, teenage girls get about not getting pregnant. I know The Talk white girls get about how you should be treated if someone really loves you and it doesn't involve a fist. And I know that every parent was met with a teenager's indifference. Or seeming indifference.

So for every dad, on this Father's Day, every parent who has shared really good insight with their kids, every bit of advice you offered on standing up straight, and saving for a rainy day and changing the oil, and staying in school, and saying "yes, sir" and "no, ma'am" and making sure the cops can see your hands on the steering wheel, for all those parents who faced the indifference of their teenage kids who knew everything already, notice this. As George Floyd lay dying on that street in Minneapolis under Derek Chauvin's knee, he cried out twice for his momma. All those indifferent teenagers that we talked to. All those indifferent teenagers that we were. We heard The Talk.⁶ And we knew that whatever the content of The Talk, it meant that we were loved. Just by engaging with indifference, we show love. Whether it is our teenagers or the non-religious around us, engaging with indifference, even when it seems to make no difference, changes both parties engaged in The Talk. Even as we are losing our life, we call out for the people who spoke to us in love. Amen.

⁵ Saunders.

⁶ Sam Sanders, "Not Just Another Protest," *It's Been a Minute* podcast, June 5, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/04/869837008/not-just-another-protest> (accessed 17 June 2020)