

Good morning!

*a man stands in a remote location and places a miniature tape in a cassette player and listens intently to a message from an unknown source.*

*It describes a world of right and wrong, a task of immense difficulty, a chance to do something that will make a difference in the world.*

*The tape always ends with these words “Your Mission Jim, should you decide to accept it.... Followed by “this tape will self-destruct in 60 seconds” and then that amazing music begins...*

It is the start to **Mission Impossible** –

A team of people are given the choice to fight huge odds, to risk immense sacrifice, to make a difference in people’s lives - and Nothing short of total commitment is called for.

This morning, as we listen to God’s word, Jesus lays before us the same choice, against huge odds, risking immense sacrifice: to make a difference in people’s lives.

This is our mission in life – should we decide to accept it...

And Jesus makes it clear that nothing short of total commitment is needed.

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As you know we’re working our way through the gospel of Matthew and today we come to Chapter 10 which contains some of the most challenging words that Jesus ever spoke.

The context begins in chapter 9 where

Jesus says ‘there is a world of need out there’.

He sees the crowds (with all their hurts and struggles and lostness) and he has compassion on them.

His Mission is motivated by compassion.

So in Chapter 10, Jesus calls his disciples to him and says

‘go to them’, ‘show them what I have given you’, ‘share with them the good news about the kingdom of God’.

And then he tells them what to expect...

to be frank, he describes ‘Mission Impossible’

It is one of the most extra-ordinary team briefings ever given.

He tells them that as they share what God has given them, they need to expect:

people to take offence at their message about him;

to have to trust Jesus with everything that they have; but also

to see salvation in people’s lives.

Jesus says the same to us this morning:

**our** mission (motivated by compassion, compelled by the difference makes in people’s lives is): to go to Lewes and beyond to share what God has given us...

we should expect people

to take offense at our message;

to have to trust Jesus with all that we have; and

to see salvation in people’s lives.

*I regret I have no theme music for you  
AND if you're hoping that I will self-destruct in 60 seconds then you will be  
disappointed...!*

So if you'd turn with me to Matthew 10, p975 of the Pew Bibles.

I want us to see, that Jesus tells us that we should

**1. Expect People to Take against our message.**

*v32 Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before  
my Father in heaven. v33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown  
him before my Father in heaven.*

Right from the start Jesus is saying that the choices we make in this world will  
be honoured by God.

If we act as if God has 'no call' on our life,  
if we live without reference to him,  
if we disown him as God – then he will honour that choice.

If we don't want to be owned by him – he will **not** own us.  
If we don't want him – then he will not force us, to have him.

Jesus is saying that the choices we make in this world will be honoured by God  
if we acknowledge him – he will acknowledge us  
if we won't own him – he won't own us.

And these choices divide people...

*v34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth.*

*I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*

*For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her  
mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- a man's enemies will be  
the members of his own household.'*

*I read yesterday that 71% of people in the UK would call themselves Christian*

I imagine there are a whole host of reasons for that

For some it will be

because they were born in this country; or

because they like what Jesus stands for; or

because they couldn't think of what else to put on the census form!

For others it may be more personal.

It may be because

they're hurting and they sense God can meet their need;

they've got questions and they believe that God can provide answers; or

they feel uncertain and God can provide meaning.

Fine.

But one day, people will hear the gospel message – and that's when things start  
becoming serious.

For they discover that Jesus doesn't just claim to be a religious teacher he claims  
to be God. THE God, the Lord, the boss of their lives.

They discover that repentance is not simply about being sorry for what we have  
done wrong – it's being 'sorry that we have lived without God as Sovereign in  
our life and that we want to change that'

They realise that to be a Christian is to give our life to Jesus so that he may be Lord, King, Boss, Sovereign, Director, Supreme – whatever word you choose – but basically, the one we live for.

And only a few people of that 71%, only a few, are willing to accept this.

And this divides people.

For either Jesus is King of our life or he is not

He is Lord of all, or not Lord at all (as the saying goes)

And therefore the reaction against the gospel

is not a reaction against Christ's teachings – it is against **Christ**

It is not against Jesus' moral code – it is about his **identity**

People won't say "love your neighbour???" – *I don't like the sound of that!*

"be good to those who persecute you?" – *I hate you for saying that!*

"share your possessions with the poor" – *What is this evil you are propagating!*

They won't say that!

No, people react against the gospel that says

You are either in or you are out,

for him as God of your life or against him as God of your life,

accept what he says is truth or believe he is in error

The gospel is an either / or proposition and

our response to the gospel turns on

whether we will have God as God of our life (lock, stock and barrel); and

whether we will put our faith in his forgiveness.

And it is this 'either/or nature' of the person of Jesus

either Jesus is God or not

either we need forgiveness or not; and

either we will live with God as God or not

that people will react against.

People will seek to fudge, to compromise, to renegotiate on this...

but our gospel is very straight-forward

either Jesus is God or not

either we need (and are lost without) his forgiveness or not;

either God is the one calling the shots in our life... or not.

This is what people will react against... and

Sometimes it'll cost us our home

*This happened to Ibahim Bello our Care Force worker.*

*His Father said to him, when he became a Christian at 17 "You are no longer my son. You are never welcome in this home. I consider you dead."*

Sometimes it'll cost us our friends

*The day after I became a Christian, some of my friends just pretty much stopped hanging around with me because I was officially "uncool".*

Sometimes it'll cost us our freedom

*Hani Nazeer is 31 and a school social worker. He was arrested in Egypt 2 year ago for having a website that linked to Christian literature that was called Anti-Islamic.*

*He spent one year and nine months in prison where he was beaten, exposed to deprivation and violently pressured to convert to Islam.*

*He was released only last month.*

*He was told 'If you convert to Islam, you will be out in two days,'"*

Sometimes it'll cost us our life

*On the 27<sup>th</sup> July four Christian orphanage workers (Fatima Sultan, Ali Ma'ow, Sheik Mohammed Abdi, and Maddy Diil) were beheaded in Somalia because they refused to renounce their faith in Jesus.*

If we choose Jesus to be our Lord and to ask for his forgiveness then as we share his friendship, his love, his presence with others so that they may find it too (*because we have compassion on them, because Jesus IS the difference in life*)

then we can expect people to be divided against us

And then we need to

## **2. Trust Jesus with all that we have.**

*v37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; v38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*

I would be surprised if, at first glance, anyone found these words particularly easy.

The reason why, is because we are used to thinking of God as just something else in our life, to place alongside our family, our friends, our careers, ourselves.

But that's not the way to think about him.

The point is this, that there can be no competition between: those we love and God, the things in our life and God, between our own wants and God.

### **There can be no competition.**

Our lives are full of things that compete for our priorities.

There are thousands of leisure activities, hundreds of hobbies, countless needs, hosts of friends and far too many things that ALL want a slice of our time.

The truth is that we will **never** have enough time to do everything we want, everything we should and everything we need to do!

So God doesn't play that game.

He is not trying to compete for our time, our affection, our finances, our priorities.

To be a Christian is to say "God I am yours, all yours, IT'S all yours".

I trust you with it all.

Christianity is NOT about putting God first in our life and arranging everything else in second, third and fourth place after him.

That would be a competition – and there IS no competition!

God is not a husband who is happy as long as his wife's doesn't spend *too much time in bed with other lovers*.

God will not be the NUMBER ONE God in your life

*Any more than I would accept being Amanda's number 1 husband, ahead of number 2, number 3 and number 4!*

*Amanda can't have any other husbands – she's got me!*

*(Now that may not be particularly good news for Amanda – but that's just how it is!).*

Jesus is saying “there ARE to be no other husbands”,  
there are to be “no other God’s”  
There IS to be “no competition”.

*There is an Australian commercial with a man sitting in the chair of a tattoo parlour.*

*He has decided to express his love to his girl-friend Donna by getting her name tattooed on his arm.*

*Halfway through the procedure he asks how much it will cost - \$50.00 is the answer.*

*He pulls out his cash, and says, “Oh, I only have \$31”*

*Cut to the couple on the street having an argument.*

*Donna is storming off.*

*The guy shouts after her, “But I’ll get it fixed”.*

*He only had enough money to buy 8 letters.*

*Zoom in on the tattoo.*

*It reads, “I love Don!”*

*She doesn’t care – she’s leaving*

There can be no Don’s or Denise’s in our life.

Christianity is an “all or nothing affair”.

So Christianity is a choice to put God first and for there to be no competing second or third or fourth things in our life.

I am God of all – trust me with everything!

This is how Jesus lived.

So we cannot put others ahead of God

because there CAN BE no other competition and

because in reality there is no conflict between loving them and loving God.

because loving God will always be loving them too.

By choosing to love God we are also choosing to love our parents,  
by choosing to love God we are choosing to love our brothers and sisters,  
by choosing to love God we are choosing to love our husbands, wives, children,  
friends and even enemies.

There IS no conflict, for to love God is to love others too

**And we have to trust God in this, because there may well be times that in loving them God’s way - they may hate us.**

*Think of a Father who makes his son go to the teacher and admit that he doesn’t deserve an A\* in the exam because he cheated.*

*Or a the Mother who accompanies her son to the Police station to confess to some thieving.*

*Or the girl who will not sleep with her boyfriend because they are not married*

*Or the friend who will not let the group slip away from the restaurant without paying*

*Or the parents who say “we go to church as a family and so you can’t play football, rugby, cricket on a Sunday morning because we are modelling what it is to love God”.*

One of the hardest things to do as a Christians is to model for others just how important God is to us.

Sometimes it will seem like a choice to do what 'God wants' or 'what they want'.

But the most loving thing we can ever do is show people that God is God.

If we compromise our commitment then we are basically telling those around us that God isn't **that** important to us.

He isn't God in our life.

And if he is not that important to us –

then why should he be of *any* importance to **them**

If he is not God to us – then why should he be God to them?

This is tough love.

When Jesus committed to following his Father's way,  
he loved people and said some tough things that they didn't want to hear,  
but he trusted his Father,  
it cost him his life on the cross.

But by loving us God's way he showed us  
the most supreme statement of faith in God, and the most powerful evidence of  
his love for us.

And it changed the world

When we commit ourselves to following God we will end up loving people and  
saying some tough things that they don't want to hear

so we need to trust God,

and it may cost us

sometimes it is fraught with tears,

sometimes we are the lightening rod of other people's anger,

sometimes we are the sacrifice that shows people that God is God.

But when we love them like this –

we too will change the world.

expect people to take against Jesus

expect to have to trust God and thereby

### **3. Expect to see salvation in others.**

*v39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

*v40 "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. v41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. v42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.*

There is an obvious principle that says:

when we feel we have little we want to hang on to what we have.

when we feel we have an abundance we are happy to give some away.

When we feel this life is all we have, most people's instincts will be to play safe  
and to play **self**, first.

Jesus is telling us that when we know we are safe in his love,

when we know this world is not all there is,

when we realise we have an abundance of eternal life waiting for us.

Then we will hold our time, our money, our priorities way less tightly and we will use them, give them, invest them in others so that they may find what we have found.

Here is how Salvation in our life works badly...  
The less we share our faith... <pause> the less we need to trust  
The less we need to trust... the less our experience of God,  
the less our experience of God... the less we share our faith.  
This is a vicious circle that leads to a dead and empty and lukewarm Christianity. It affects us all.

Here is how Salvation in our life works **with glory**...  
The **more** we share our faith, the more we need to trust in God ('cos sometimes its scary!)  
The more we need to trust, the more *our experience of God*,  
the more our experience of God the more we have to share!

It is a virtuous circle that leads to a living and dynamic and growing relationship with Jesus.  
And it is this relationship that people will see and want.

The truth is, the more we give our life to serve others for the kingdom the more we receive.  
The more we invest in God the richer we become.  
*Ibrahim's said 'it made his faith when his Father threw him out!'*  
*I reckon I became stronger when my friends jeered and challenged me.*  
*Hani Nazeer testifies to the richest experiences of God in prison.*  
*None of us would trade those things for a moment*

The more we live the life the more clearly Christ will be seen in us  
And the more clearly Christ is seen  
the more people will find him and his salvation in their life!

If we want to find life..., if we want others to find life - give it away!

I heard a parable about a man who was *driving along in a two-seater sports car on a wild stormy night.*  
*He passed by a bus stop, and saw three people waiting for the bus:*  
*1. An woman who is going into labour.*  
*2. An old friend who once saved his life.*  
*3. And the perfect woman of his dreams.*

*The question was who should he give a lift to and why?*  
*The woman who urgently needs to give birth in hospital?*  
*His friend to whom he owes an enormous favour?*  
*or the girl of his dreams?*

*Well what would Jesus say to do?"*  
*How can you give yourself in this situation?"*

*The answer is simple "give you car keys to your old friend and let him take the pregnant woman to hospital, while you, now the hero, stay behind and wait for the bus with the woman of your dreams!"*  
There's the principle.

To be a follower of Jesus seems like Mission Impossible.

It's not always easy,  
It means making God, God.  
It means trusting him with everything  
But it means seeing salvation in others!

Give yourself to God and you will receive a prophet's reward  
– to know why you were made and how to live and where you are going.

Give yourself to God and you will receive a righteous man's reward  
– he will lead you in ways that are true and just and that work.

Give yourself to God and you will receive the reward of someone who has  
helped another see God  
– a friendship with God that starts now and goes on forever.

Let us pray!