



44A LITURGY PENTECOST 3A

When the going gets tough

Abstract

“The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters.
Matthew 10:24-25 NIV

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44A Bible Study Pentecost 3A

When the going gets tough

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2020 | AFTER PENTECOST | YEAR A

PROPER 7

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Genesis 21:8–21

Psalm Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Jeremiah 20:7–13

Psalm Psalm 69:7–10 (11–15) 16–18

New Testament Romans 6:1b–11

Gospel Matthew 10:24–39

Welcome and opening prayer

A gathering prayer

Lord, help us to share the challenges of discipleship;
 help us to support each other;
 unite us in your steadfast goodness;
 strengthen and envision us to face the challenges ahead;
 and may we faithfully play our part in your mission to this world.

Introduction

Matthew continues Jesus' teaching on mission to the world. Jesus points out that the disciples must expect some opposition, including possibly from their own families, since Jesus himself has been opposed and called names. He reminds them that God loves and values them as a father.

This reading asks us to think about re-opening church, a world caught up in protest against Black lives matter/deaths in custody.

A prayer of approach

O Lord, we enter into your steadfast love, asking that you will respond to our prayers;
 we trust in your abundant mercy and ask that you will come to us.

O Lord, make your presence known to us;

draw near to us; redeem us, set us free;

for we seek to be your faithful disciples.

Amen.

Readings

Matthew 10:24–39

²⁴ “The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶ “So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ 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—

³⁶ ‘a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

³⁷ “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. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Explore and respond to the text

This reading continues Jesus’ teaching to the disciples about mission. The first section focuses on the identification of the disciples with their teacher – if he has been persecuted and maligned, then they must expect the same, especially to the degree that they emulate him. Beelzebul (Lord of the House) is derived from the Philistine Baal, and by Jesus’ time had come to be used to refer to a demonic force hostile to God. So the slander is effectively saying that Jesus was in league with God’s enemies.

Jesus goes on to reassure and encourage them. The gospel of the kingdom is being revealed so they should not be afraid, even of physical death. (It is unclear whether the one who can destroy both body and soul (v.28) refers to God or to demonic powers.) Sparrows being one of the cheapest things to buy, Jesus’ followers are obviously of much more value than sparrows. And yet, God knows when a sparrow falls and how many hairs there are on the disciples’ heads. So, they can be sure that God will watch over their lives.

In the culture of that time, one’s family was one’s primary unit of belonging – there was much less focus on individuals, and their wants and desires, and more on family honour and prestige. In light of that, Jesus’ acknowledgement of those who acknowledge him to the world can be seen as a statement of acceptance by Jesus’ Father into God’s family. Then we have further comments on the possibilities of the gospel bringing family strife (cf. Micah 7.6 and expectations that this would be a feature of the end of the age). Loyalty to Jesus is more important than the culturally important claims of blood relatives. Following Jesus is the primary call in life; whoever is not prepared to set aside anything else in life that interrupts the claim of Christ will not be worthy of the kingdom.

Picture Pointers

'How could you finish the sentence 'When the going gets tough...?'

- How would you feel about being presented with a challenge like this?
- How could you finish the sentence 'When the going gets tough...?'
- How can you support one another through the challenging realities of being a disciple of Jesus?



End the session

A sending out prayer

May you have discernment to see whom to serve.

May you have wisdom to know how to serve.

May you have strength to serve as a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Live your faith

Find out about some persecuted Christians (e.g. through the work of Open Doors, in over 70 countries). Consider how what you learn can inspire or help you in living out your faith – especially 'when the going gets tough'.

