

Sermon / 21 June 2026 / Matthew 10:24-39 / Be Not Afraid

There's work to be done. Don't be afraid. Do it.

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus tells us there is work to do. He tells us how to do it. And Jesus says, "Do not be afraid."

Today's Gospel lesson from Matthew is a continuation of what we heard last week. Last Sunday Fr. Christopher preached about getting work done. About getting down into the dirt. About making things happen. How it is the call of each one of us.

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Don't be afraid.

Let's start by wondering why we should be afraid. Listening to the Gospel from last week continuing into this week, Jesus tells his friends to go out and spread good news of the kingdom of God to his lost sheep. But he warns them.

Chapter 10, vers 16: I'm sending out like sheep among wolves.

Verse 17: Beware of the bad people, they'll put you before the leaders and give you a hard time.

Verse 22: You'll be hated because you follow me

Verse 25: They'll call me, your leader, horrible names. They will ridicule and discredit you as well.

Of course, Jesus is talking to his disciples who are trying to swim against the current of history and begin a new religion. There will definitely be opposition against these new, radical ways of thinking.

But what do we have to be afraid of today? We are constantly told we live in a Christian Nation. Let's just go out and tell everyone we meet about Jesus and salvation. What's the problem? We're surrounded by a population that completely agrees with us in this Christian Nation.

Unfortunately, I fear WE are also swimming against the current of what's happening right now.

I know what I'm afraid of. I'm scared I'll be lumped into the same group of people who call the United States of America a Christian Nation. When people learn I'm a Christian that they'll think I belong to a church with some pastor spewing hate against anyone who isn't white and straight like he is.

I'm afraid people will think I belong to a church that doesn't give women equal and full opportunities to preach the gospel of Jesus.

I'm afraid people will think I don't believe women have the right to choose what is best for their own bodies....that children should be hidden away from worship....that those who identify as queer have something wrong with them...that I must believe each and every doctrine of their church without questions or I won't be accepted....that some people are illegal...that anyone who isn't Caucasian and "documented" is somehow less than.

I'm afraid that when I proclaim to the world that I am a Christian someone might think that I do not believe every human being is a beloved child of God.

I'm afraid people won't listen to me if I proudly proclaim I follow the teachings of Jesus....because the scripture has been perverted countless times to oppress and tell people they are not worthy.

I'm afraid because the true message of the Gospel is being co-opted by people wanting power and not concerned about love

Three times today, THREE TIMES, Jesus says "don't be afraid." In verse 26, 28, and 31 Jesus tell us not to fear.

Why Jesus? Why shouldn't I be afraid. Jesus gives us four reasons.

Number One: Jesus tells us that we are his equal when it comes to spreading the Good News. The disciple is like the teacher. The servant is like the master. We have just as much authority and to spread the Gospel as Jesus himself. I think Jesus is telling us this, "Look, If I can do it, you can do it. I've given you all you need."

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Number Two: God will reveal the truth. Jesus says that there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be known. God tells of

the ways of love, forgiveness, grace, and acceptance. And God uses us to reveal these truths.

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Number Three: God has greater authority than Man. Jesus says to beware of the person who can kill your soul. We cannot let the outside pressures of the world deter us from the core beliefs that everyone is a beloved child of God. When we stray from our calling to let the world know this, when we are tempted to give up or be persuaded to keep our mouths shut instead of cause a commotion....that will kill our souls. God will not let that happen.

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Number Four: God values us. Jesus talks about sparrows being sold for very little money. But God protects them. If God takes care of something the world doesn't find valuable, we have to know that God will watch over us – protect us – and gives us what we need to do the work at hand.

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Now just because we're told not to be afraid, doesn't mean our fear disappears. But that does not excuse us from the call God gives us. Christian missionary and author, Elisabeth Elliot tells us, "Sometimes fear does not subside and you must do the work afraid."

There's work to be done. Do it. Work through...work with...work in spite of that fear. Do it.

The work to be done is to make sure the love, grace, acceptance, and forgiveness of God is made known to all people.

The work to be done is to feed the hungry, give something to drink to the thirsty, to visit the sick and those in trouble.

The work to be done is welcoming the stranger.

The work to be done is loving our neighbor just as we love ourselves.

Jesus tells us not to be afraid and gives the reasons why we need not fear.

But how, then, are we supposed to get the work done? As Fr. Christopher told us last week, we have to get out there, get down in the mud, and get our hands dirty.

This week, Jesus says, “What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.”

What we talk about here at church....what we learn and study about here....does no good to a world in desperate need of help if it stays behind in the building after we leave.

While I don't want to equate this beautiful space with “the dark”....and I'm certainly not whispering....this building might as well be an underground bunker and I might as well quietly mumble if we don't go out into the light and share the good news. It's been a waste of time if we don't shout the Gospel from the rooftops.

That's what we're doing this afternoon when we go on Central Avenue, hold a liturgy of Eucharist and feed our neighbors who suffer from housing and food insecurity. Church Unbound takes what we talk about here and carries it into the world.

That's what we did last week as many members of St. Mark's marched in the Pride Parade carrying a banner telling world that everyone is welcome here. That they are a beloved child of God.

That's what we did earlier this year when many pilgrims from St. Mark's went down to the Mexican border and learned about ministries there, helped with organizations assisting migrants and refugees, and got into the Rio Grande to share communion with people who are often told they are less than.

That what we do when we tell people we are a Christians....when we wear a cross....when we wear a button supporting immigrant rights, LGBTQ+ rights, women's rights....

And then you love your neighbor as yourself....you take communion to someone who can't come to church....you help and work and talk with people who live on the streets...when you visibly support organizations that help people who are marginalized...you treat everyone you encounter as a beloved child of God.

Do these things in the light. Shout these things from the rooftops.

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