

Sent Ones: Courage for the Battlefield
From the Series, “The King and I – Matthew Tells Us About the King of the Universe”
By Phil Brainerd

Introduction

Today, we’re going to talk about courage. I ran into an article in Psychology Today that talks about this noble trait. Here’s what it says:

Courage is something that everybody wants—an attribute of good character that makes us worthy of respect...our culture is rich with exemplary tales of bravery and self-sacrifice for the greater good. From the cowardly lion in The Wizard of Oz who finds the courage to face the witch...to Star Wars and Harry Potter, children are raised on a diet of heroic and inspirational tales.

Look at that: “Courage is something that everybody wants.” Do you feel that way? Is courage something that you want?

We’ve been working our way through the book of Matthew. In chapter 10 we meet the apostles of Jesus - the “Sent Ones” - The twelve men that Jesus chose to take his gospel out into the world. We’ve been studying that chapter and learning about these men.

In the last two sessions, we’ve learned about the first mission that Jesus sent his apostles on. There were aspects of that mission that were local and time limited. However, there were aspects of the mission that would train the men for the time when Jesus departed, and they would have to go out into the world without him at their side. They were being sent out onto a battlefield. Jesus warned: There would be times involving pain and peril. There might be floggings and other mistreatment. There might even be death.

Well, if you’re going to send people out onto a battlefield – a place where they might face danger, one of the things you have to talk about is courage. Let’s read what Jesus has to say to his men.

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. (Matthew 10:24-33)

We're going to see that there are six things that followers of Jesus need to learn about finding courage.

I. Courage comes from understanding your goals.

First, courage comes from understanding your goals.

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. (Matthew 10:24-25)

There are many ways to describe the things that believers want to accomplish, and the ways that we do it. One very important goal for followers of Christ: ***We want to be like him.***

We learn in the first chapter of the Bible that human beings were created in the image of God. We are all little pictures of God. That image has two qualities which we've discussed over the years. The first is part of our nature - We simply are made in God's image. That never changes.

Another part is what I've called "dynamic". It involves things that we do. In particular, it involves our choices. The first choice given to Adam and Eve involved the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. God said not to eat the fruit of that tree. Adam and Eve could choose to obey or to disobey. Sadly, they chose to disobey. That disobedience, that sin, caused the image of God in each of us to be tarnished. From that day, God initiated a program to restore the image of God.

Here are the steps:

First, Jesus had to do it. Jesus had to die for our sins. There is nothing we can do to take away the stain of sin.

But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. (I John 3:5)

Next, we must choose to accept this.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (I John 1:7)

We have to choose to walk in the light.

Next, we must accept this goal of being like God.

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.
(Romans 8:29)

We don't have time to prove it here, but Jesus and God the Father are one.

Once we accept the goal, we have to understand our part. In our text today, Jesus offers us two pictures:

- Students and their teacher.
- Servants and their master.

First, the student/teacher. We all have to learn some things. Jesus tells us that in this passage: "The student is not above the teacher..." Jesus says one aspect of our relationship with him is that of students and teachers. Jesus teaches us. We listen and learn. In the days of Jesus, that meant physically following Jesus around and listening to him directly. Today, we have God's Word, the Bible. That's why in our church, we're committed to studying it together every Sunday. We start at the beginning of books in the Bible and work our way through. That way, we don't miss anything.

There's more, though. Some of what we learn involves **actions**. That's why Jesus mentions another aspect of our relationship with him: "...nor a servant above his master..." Another way to look at our relationship is a servant and his master. A master gives commands. Good servants obey. Jesus is the Master. Sometimes, he asks us to do things that are easy. At other times, Jesus asks us to do things that are hard.

This is where choice comes in. Remember, we said that part of the image of God is dynamic. It involves our choices. This is important: **When we choose to make decisions the way that God makes decisions, we become like him.** God makes decisions based on noble virtues - Things like Love, Humility, Wisdom, and Faith. He wants us to make decisions the same way he does.

Sometimes, when we make decisions the way he does, we will face pain. Understand this: **No pain is pointless.** Sometimes, when we hurt, it feels that way. However, pain is used by God to conform us to his image. Here's the point: **When we understand this, it gives us courage.** There is an eternal reward for obeying God - Even if it means facing pain and loss in the present.

The final step in restoring the image of God will happen one day when we reach heaven.

"He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'"
(Revelation 21:5)

On that day, we will be given new bodies, free from the stain of sin. When that happens, the image will be fully restored.

So, the first step to finding courage is to understand our goals. One of our goals is to be like God. In case, we want to be like our teacher, Jesus.

II. Courage comes from understanding privileges vs. responsibilities.

The next step to finding courage comes when we understand our privileges and our responsibilities.

If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! (Matthew 10:25(b))

We just said that we want to be like God. Why? There are many reasons, but here's a big one: The more we become like God, ***the more we enjoy him***. That's a privilege - A wonderful privilege. There are lots of privileges to knowing God and becoming like him.

However, there are also responsibilities. Jesus compares himself to the head of a house. If you choose to live in someone's house, eventually you will be associated with them. It's assumed that you approve of the head of the household on some level if you agree to live there.

Tragically, there are many people who don't like God - They hate him. What happens when you become like God, and you run into people who hate him? Bad things. Jesus says that he, the head of the house, has been called "Beelzebul". That's a nickname for Satan.

When did that happen? That happened in Matthew chapter 9. We discussed it when we studied that chapter, but let's just be reminded.

32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. 33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." (Matthew 9:32-33)

As he did on numerous occasions, Jesus performed an amazing miracle: He freed a man from demon possession. The crowds were amazed - They were about to be won over.

Some of the religious leaders, however, were evil and hard-hearted. They didn't like the idea of giving away any of their power. So, they had to discredit an amazing miracle that they saw with their own eyes. Here's how they did it:

But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."
(Matthew 9:34)

Although they didn't specifically call Jesus "Satan" or "Beelzebul", that's what they meant. This will come up again as we work our way through Matthew's book. For now, let's say that people who follow Jesus will be called many horrible things. And sadly, they will be called those things because there will be people who believe it. There are going to be a lot of misguided people out there who think that following God is evil. Or, they'll think that following God the way we're taught to do it is evil.

I'm beginning to see this quite a bit. There was a time when being a minister was respected in American culture. Today, if I tell people I'm a Christian minister, I sometimes get some strange looks. In some cases, angry looks. In some cases, frightened looks.

If you associate yourself with Jesus, you may get those looks. Jesus warns us about it. We may have to bear insults and injuries. That's the responsibility that Jesus gives to his followers.

However, he also gives a lot of privileges to his followers. If we can remember the privileges, we can find courage.

III. Courage comes from knowing that you're on the right side.

Next, Courage comes from knowing that you're on the right side.

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.
(Matthew 10:26-27)

Here, Jesus makes it very clear: Do not be afraid! Why not? Because if you follow Jesus, you're on the right side.

At the time Jesus said this, his followers were in classroom mode - They were learning. Jesus uses a series of pictures to illustrate that. If the apostles didn't understand something, if it was concealed to them, Jesus would help them to understand. Then, they could disclose it. If the meaning of something was hidden, Jesus would reveal it. Then, his followers could make it known to others. If they learned in a dark room by candlelight, they could go out in the daylight and proclaim it.

In those days, rabbis would sometimes teach their students about public speaking by whispering in their ears. Then, the students would repeat what they heard out loud. Once they got good at speaking, they could teach in public without the Rabbi standing at their side. Jesus

is telling his followers not just to proclaim what they know – They are to proclaim their message from the rooftops - From the most prominent places they can find.

There is nothing wrong with the teachings of Jesus. There's nothing secret. There's nothing to be ashamed of. So, be courageous! Be bold! Courage comes from knowing that you're on the right side.

IV. Courage comes from knowing who has the power.

Next, courage comes from knowing who has the power.

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. (Matthew 10:28)

There's that command again: Do not be afraid.

Jesus teaches us that there are two categories of things that we need to be concerned about. The first is temporal, or things bound in time. This includes things like our bodies and our possessions. The other is eternal: Things that last forever - Things like your soul.

Jesus tells us to be concerned only for eternal things like our souls. Anything temporal will disappear someday. Our bodies will die. Our property will rust away. But our souls – They last forever. So Jesus tells us: There are plenty of people and things that can attack us on the temporal level. But only one being has control over eternity - That's God.

For purposes of this discussion, only two **places** are eternal: Heaven and hell. Hell is very much a real place, just as heaven is. Jesus tells us that there is only one individual in the whole universe that we need to fear. That's the one who has **the power** to decide which of these places we go to for eternity. If you're on the side of this individual, the one with real, eternal power, you can find courage.

V. Courage comes from knowing your value

Next, courage comes from knowing your value.

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. (Matthew 10:29-30)

Jesus says you are valuable. In ancient Israel, the smallest coin had a name that we translate as a penny. But it was worth something more than our modern pennies. For example, if you

wanted a snack, you could use this coin to buy two roasted sparrows. Sparrows were small and abundant and cheap. Even though they are small and abundant and cheap, the heavenly Father knows where each one is. Whether they land or whether they take off, God knows about it.

And notice the choice of words. God doesn't just know about these little creatures- He cares. He knows and cares about intricate details of the universe. The very hairs of your head are numbered, we are told. According to the online health magazine "Healthline", the average head has 100,000 hairs. Jesus is saying that God is aware of intricate details of the universe. That means he's aware of intricate details of your life. And he's not just aware, he cares.

So, there's that phrase again: "Don't be afraid." Why not? Because "...you are worth more than many sparrows."

You are special. You are valuable to God. You are loved. If you've been exposed to messages from our church, you know what we say: The modern word "love" doesn't quite make it anymore. In fact, God *cherishes* you.

Courage comes from knowing your value.

VI. Courage comes from knowing who's on your side.

Finally, courage comes from knowing who's on your side.

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. (Matthew 10:23-33)

Jesus is sending his apostles into battle. In many battles, you have to take sides. There are some times when you can be neutral, but not often. We are in the midst of a battle that has lasted centuries and millennia. In this battle, you can not choose to be neutral- You must take a side. Sooner or later the question will come up for us: Do we know Jesus? Are we on his side? On that day, remember. Acknowledging Jesus means a place with him in his eternal kingdom. Denying him means you do not have a place.

If you acknowledge that you know Jesus – If you admit that you are on his side – You may meet opposition. People may disapprove. They may sneer. They may call you names. They may even have the power to hurt you in some way. But when you understand the results of your decision, you can find courage. If you tell people that you're on the side of Jesus, then he's on your side. And he's on your side when it matters. So you can take courage, because courage comes from knowing who's on your side

Let's pull this all together.

Conclusion

We started by reading an article from Psychology today. That article started by saying that everyone wants courage. If you read the article, it goes on to tell you how they think you should find it. Let's just say that their way has nothing to do with the way that Jesus taught his followers.

Today, we've learned more about the sent ones. We've learned that when Jesus sent them out onto the battlefield, he took the time to tell them where to find courage. They listened. They went out into the battlefield. They served faithfully, in spite of pain and opposition, because they found courage.

What does this mean for us today? As we've said, we're in a battle. In this battle, you cannot be neutral. You must take a side, and you must enter the battlefield. When you do, you can find courage. Jesus tells us how.

So, let's ask Jesus to give us the courage that he gave to his sent ones.

Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church
www.TrinityTeaneck.org

Phil's Site
PhilBrainerd.com

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's site:
PeaceWithGod.net