

Living for Jesus in a hostile world:

Wise Imitators

We've been working our way through Matthew 9&10 in our morning meetings, thinking about what it means to faithfully follow Jesus in a hostile world.



Matthew 10:16-25

Peter began by outlining the increasing hostility Christians currently face within our culture and society, however we saw this should not be surprising to us as it has always been the case. That is clear from the passage this morning.

The verses are something of a dry run of an evangelistic mission. Previously we've seen evangelism is not quite as intimidating as it might seem; simply ordinary people reaching out in word & deed, living simple lives and acting wisely.

And yet in these verses the tone intensifies – as Jesus clarifies simply that Christians will be hated. This hatred will come in the form of opposition within a variety of arenas:

- Religious opposition v17.
- Political opposition v18.
- Family opposition v21.

The question arises then, but how do we conduct ourselves?

v16. To be defenseless like sheep. He ought to send out the dogs for protection, but in fact he sends out the sheep. Our danger is we can be more of a sheepdog, rather than sheep.

Jesus also combines pairs of descriptions as to what we are to be like.

1. v16 – shrewd & innocent. Careful thinking & transparent innocence.
2. v17 & v19 – alert & trusting. Be on your guard – you will be handed over, be ready, but also be trusting & at rest. Don't worry.
3. v22 & 23 – stand & flee. Stand-firm & face it, but also be ready to flee... It's a judgment call in all these things.

As Christians we can't expect anything other than what Jesus was called to. In the midst of the opposition though, crucially we can have contentment (v25). When I'm reviled & hated – it's enough to think – we're here with Jesus.

The church grew & grew – our nation will not hear Christ because of silver-tongued evangelists but because of ordinary disciples prepared to live for Jesus.

Here are some possible thoughts and questions.
Please be selective and adapt them for your group:

Possible Questions

Where do you suffer opposition for being a Christian?

What do you remember from previous studies?

What has struck you most so far?

What does the passage say about the opposition the disciples will face? What might they look like today in our context?

Pick out what Jesus says it means in the way we are to conduct ourselves.

How can we be both shrewd & innocent? Alert & trusting? Stand & flee? Again, what might these actually look like in the way you live?

What are we to remember from v24–25? How is this an encouragement? What emotions do these verses stir within us?

What 2 things can you take away from this study? Share them with the group and pray for each other.