

WHAT A STATEMENT!

Matthew 10:24-39 Text: vs. 32

We'll be studying in our lesson this morning a passage from the Gospel of Matthew: "*Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.*" That follows quite naturally after our lesson last week where Jesus sent His disciples out to tell the whole world about Him. He sent His disciples to heal. To preach. And He gave them power that when they laid their hands on people they were healed. And as the disciples did that, they received amazing power from the Holy Spirit.

In our lesson today, Jesus reminds us that we too, have a purpose. If you've ever wondered what your purpose is as a Christian, this will probably hit home. Maybe you've asked yourself something like, "Okay. I'm saved. What am I supposed to do now?" Well, you're supposed to tell everyone that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior.

When I was a Navy Chaplain serving aboard ships at sea, a Message Board was passed around to all the officers. It had all kinds of information on it. It even included secret information that was for "eyes only." I had a *Secret Clearance*. I could read what was on the board. And I learned the FBI had interviewed my family, my friends, my neighbors, and my acquaintances before I was cleared for *Secret*. It gave the FBI a sense of my personality. How everyone viewed me. Especially, if I was trustworthy. Was I capable of keeping secrets? Well, I was! But, when you become a Christian, you don't need an FBI background check. You don't sign up for the Secret Service, which is what the Navy calls submarine duty. *Silent service*. No one is to know your whereabouts or hear anything from you.

Now, let me ask you a question. If you were arrested today on suspicion of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence that you are a Christian to convict you? Usually, the only way anybody knows you're a Christian is if you have told them. You professed Christ to them. Now, let's say you *are* arrested. An investigator asks your friends, neighbors, and co-workers, "Did he ever reveal that he was a Christian?" Would they say, "Oh sure, we knew he was a Christian. He always talked about it." Or would they say, *they didn't know*? They never heard you talk about it. Well, the best evidence of being a Christian is if you are willing to admit that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. And you do it, naturally. Easily. You do it joyfully. You do it gladly. Because Jesus Christ is your life. And you love Jesus.

Remember the little chorus we sing: *O how I love Jesus*. Nowhere does the Bible say you have to be a secret and silent believer. It's just the opposite. Jesus told His disciples in verse 26 not to be afraid of the Pharisees. The Bible assumes telling others about Jesus is a natural outcome of your faith in Him. And it's God's way of reaching the unsaved with the Gospel.

Jesus told a parable story about this at a dinner He attended. He had just healed a man with dropsy and had taught a brief lesson on serving others. Then He said, those who serve others "*will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.*" (Luke 14:14) When the resurrection was mentioned, someone at the table with Jesus said, "*Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.*" (verse 15) In reply, Jesus told the parable of the Great Banquet. He said a man had planned a large banquet. He sent out invitations. When the banquet was ready, the man sent his servant out to contact each one of the invited guests to tell them all was ready. The meal was about to begin. One after another, the guests made excuses for not coming. One had just bought a piece of land and said he had to go see it. Another had just purchased some oxen and said he was on the way to yoke them up and try them out. Another said he had just gotten married and couldn't come. When the master of the house heard those excuses, he was angry and told his servant, "*Forget the guest list. Go out into the back streets and alleyways of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.*" The servant did. He brought back the down-and-out, the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. And there was still room in the banquet hall! So, the master told his servant to go further out. "*Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.*" Jesus ended the parable by telling them that the master was determined that "*not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.*"

But the man in verse 15 had been looking forward to dining in the Messianic kingdom. He held the idea that only Jews would be part of that kingdom. But the parable discredits that idea. In the parable the master of the house is *God*. And the great banquet is the *kingdom*. And the *invited guests* are the Jewish nation. The banquet and the kingdom were prepared for the Jews. And when Jesus told His disciples to preach that "*the kingdom of heaven is near*" (Matthew 4:17), He had already been rejected. "*He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.*" (John 1:11).

Well, if the parable means the master of the house is God, and the great banquet is the kingdom, and the invited guests means the Jewish nation, then yes, the kingdom was prepared for the Jews! But the parable Jesus told was to show that the kingdom is for *you*. You should be witnessing openly. Confessing Christ with your lips.

A non-believing man his whole life entered the hospital. He died two weeks later. But before he died, the hospital chaplain witnessed to him. And the man trusted Jesus as his savior. Now, this was the quietest man you'd ever meet, until

you got to know him. You would feel uncomfortable around him. He was so quiet. You didn't know what to say. You'd find yourself just babbling on and on, because while you are talking, he just listened. Rarely did he have anything to say. But after he found Jesus and was saved, a remarkable change took place in that man. He was still quiet about *some* things. But he became excited and joyful about the Lord and his newfound faith in Christ! In fact, he confessed Jesus Christ to every nurse, doctor, intern, candy striper and visitor who stepped foot into his hospital room. One time, he even called out to a stranger walking down the hall and said, "*Hey, I got saved this week. You need to be saved too!*" He couldn't help it! He was like that crippled man Jesus healed who was so excited about what Jesus had done for him that he told everyone. Paul said, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*" (Romans 1:16a)

So, don't *you* be afraid to confess Jesus Christ as your Savior! In the book of Acts, when people were converted, they immediately confessed Christ and were baptized the same day they were saved. They told of their confession of Jesus Christ immediately. And openly. And so should you! If you've been saved, but never have been baptized, declare your faith in Jesus openly. Become a baptized believer.

There's a story about a surgeon who performed a delicate operation on a patient who he thought to be incurable. Afterwards, the patient told the surgeon, "*As long as I have a tongue in my mouth, folks will hear of you, and what you've done for me.*" And friend, if your *sin-sick soul* has been healed by the Great Physician, you better feel the same way. Because when you confess Jesus before others, there's a joy within you that makes you want to spread your love for Him. Telling about Jesus is a blessing. And if you know Jesus as your Savior, be faithful to Him. Remember, if you "*acknowledge Him before others, He will acknowledge you before His Father in heaven.*"

Bill Faye, author of *Sharing Jesus without Fear*, was once a money-driven businessman tied into the Mafia. He ran a house of prostitution, until it was raided by police. While facing the threat of jail time, Bill Fay turned to Jesus Christ for redemption. Ever since then, he has been turning others to Jesus as well. Faye says, Americans have found a new way to deny Christ: "*They're keeping silent about Jesus.*" In his book he asks, "*Do you really believe when Jesus said that unless a person is saved, that person is damned? If you believe that, how do you allow people to stay in sin because of your silence? What excuse will you give at the judgment?*" He added, *I'm afraid we will be humbled to the dirt because of our pitiful witness.*" Furthermore, Faye warned, "*If you don't evangelize, you will fossilize. You will turn into stone.*"

Let's not let that happen to this church! Jesus said it very clearly. He made the message of the Parable of the Great Banquet to be the tragedy of the Jewish rejection of Christ. Those who ignored the invitation to the banquet chose their own punishment—they missed out. And that's what opened the door of salvation to Gentiles. TO YOU! The blessings of the Kingdom of God became available to all who would come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ. And "*Whoever acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.*"

What a statement! It should be a call to action for you. And for and this church. Admit it! Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. If you do that, it will come more easily every time you do it. You will do it joyfully. You will do it gladly. All because Jesus Christ is your life. And you love to tell about Jesus. AMEN