

**Third Sunday after Pentecost**  
**June 21, 2020**

**Psalm 91:1-10 (11-16) (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. <sup>2</sup>I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." <sup>3</sup>Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. <sup>4</sup>He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. <sup>5</sup>You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, <sup>6</sup>nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. <sup>7</sup>A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. <sup>8</sup>You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. <sup>9</sup>If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—<sup>10</sup>then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. <sup>11</sup>For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; <sup>12</sup>they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. <sup>13</sup>You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. <sup>14</sup>"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. <sup>15</sup>He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. <sup>16</sup>With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

**Jeremiah 20:7-13 (NIV)** <sup>7</sup>O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. <sup>8</sup>Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the LORD has brought me insult and reproach all day long. <sup>9</sup>But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. <sup>10</sup>I hear many whispering, "Terror on every side! Report him! Let's report him!" All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying, "Perhaps

he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him." <sup>11</sup>But the LORD is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonor will never be forgotten. <sup>12</sup>O LORD Almighty, you who examine the righteous and probe the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I have committed my cause. <sup>13</sup>Sing to the LORD! Give praise to the LORD! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked.

**Romans 6:12-23 (NIV)** <sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup>Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. <sup>15</sup>What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup>Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. <sup>18</sup>You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. <sup>19</sup>I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. <sup>20</sup>When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup>What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! <sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. <sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Matthew 10:5a, (16-20) 21-33 (NIV)** <sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions:

<sup>16</sup>I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

<sup>17</sup>"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.

<sup>18</sup>On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.

<sup>19</sup>But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, <sup>20</sup>for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

<sup>21</sup>"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>22</sup>All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

<sup>23</sup>When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. <sup>24</sup>"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

<sup>25</sup>It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household! <sup>26</sup>"So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. <sup>27</sup>What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. <sup>28</sup>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. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup>"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup>But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

## Prayer Notes

*"Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."*

This Father's Day we remember the many sacrifices fathers make for their children and families. We remember all those who have helped fill the void when fathers pass early or are absent – grandfathers and uncles, brothers and cousins, teachers, pastors and coaches.

Thank You for healing all diseases. Thank You for Your protection and for keeping our bodies healthy. Thank You for strengthening our immune systems and helping us to ward off infections and viruses.

Thank You for giving us opportunities each day to show love and forgiveness to others. Thank You for increasing Your presence, power, anointing and abundance in our lives.

Thank you that the Mbithi's house in Marysville has closed!

Watch over expectant mothers as they await the birth of their child during this pandemic.

We pray for Your hand of protection and healing hands on our friends and family members that are in treatment or in recovery from cancer and illness. Be with Ezra, David, and Angela.

We pray for comfort and peace for Phyllis and Sherri who are in hospice care. Be with their family and friends who are caring for them and supporting them.

We pray for peace for Geoff Hoggard as he waits for results from the biopsy that he had last Wednesday.

Continue to guide Nathaniel Hendrix and open up doors of employment.

We pray that God would open the hearts to friends and family who do not know you, to believe the gospel.

Be close to all that are grieving today, and flood their souls with hope – knowing that underneath are Your everlasting arms

## ***Opposition to the Kingdom***

Matthew 10:5a, 21-33

A blessed Father's Day to all of you Dad's that are watching today. Since, we follow the church calendar, I'll be continuing the messages from the Gospel of Matthew on the Good News of the Kingdom. So, this will not be a Father's Day message, but it will have relevance to Fathers, to families and to children (even adult children).

When I first looked at these texts, I thought, Oh no! The gospel lesson is probably the worst Scripture I could preach on for Father's Day. But as I further reflected on the text, I realized that Scripture never flinches from the harsh realities of life—and it always speaks of God's grace and love and comfort even into the worst of situations.

The gospel lesson speaks of family conflict, including fathers, in perhaps a worst-case scenario. But even then, it emphasizes the importance of family and fathers; the lesson also emphasizes throughout the care and concern of our heavenly Father.

Father's Day can be difficult for many people.

One newspaper that I receive email updates from sent out this message: "We understand how sensitive a time Father's Day can be for some of our readers.

We would never want to make it any more so, or cause any upset. That's why we wanted to check in advance - and make sure that you're happy to receive messages about our Father's Day offers."

There are some who advocate that we should abandon any reference to God as Father, since abusive, absent and delinquent Dads have caused so much pain to so many, that, in their minds, it negates any positive qualities of relating to God as Father.

But God did not reveal Himself as Father to equate himself with any human qualities of a Dad, no matter

how exemplary. God revealed Himself as Father because that is who He is at the very core of His being.

God has been Father, in relationship with Jesus as Son, and in relationship with the Holy Spirit from all eternity past.

It is God who shows us what fatherhood really is, not fatherhood that shows us who God really is.

Even someone with an abusive or distant Dad, still has a clear idea of what a perfect father ought to be. And that picture of an ideal Dad comes from God himself.

With that in mind, let me focus our attention on the Gospel text.

Last week we began a series of messages on **The Good News of the Kingdom**. We discovered why the coming of God's Kingdom was indeed good news, and we heard the initial instructions Jesus gave to His apostles as He sent them out to proclaim that the Kingdom was near.

But in today's reading, we hear Jesus warning, that in proclaiming God's good news, they will encounter some pushback.

Jesus gave full disclosure to His followers and let them know there would be **Opposition to the Kingdom** (and that's the title of today's message).

The disciples were told that they would experience headwinds; they would encounter rejection and worse. But Jesus coaches them to see . . .

❑ **Opposition as opportunity** (Matthew 10:16-20; Luke 21:13)

*<sup>16</sup>I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. <sup>17</sup> "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. <sup>18</sup>On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup>But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say*

*it. At that time you will be given what to say, <sup>20</sup>for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

The apostles were to meet the challenges of opposition with shrewdness, that is discernment, and integrity. They are to *be on their guard, that is to keep appropriate boundaries, because they will face hostility to this good news of the Kingdom.*

But opposition will bring opportunity to share this good news

The apostles are to *not worry about what to say or how to say it.*

Jesus told them: *At that time you will be given what to say, <sup>20</sup>for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

God, our heavenly Father, will not abandon us in times of persecution, but will be there with us, speaking through us—to tell this good news to religious leaders, and even to governors and kings!

Luke 21:13 records Jesus saying: *This will be your opportunity to bear witness.* (ESV)

As disciples of Jesus, we also need to see opposition as opportunity to share the good news of the Kingdom.

Opposition from authorities is one thing, but Jesus warned his apostles even about the potential . . .

#### ❑ **Opposition of family and friends**

*<sup>21</sup>"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.*

Sadly, Christians around the world face just this threat.

Jesus warned that even their most fundamental relationships may be affected by allegiance to Him.

The family unit is the bedrock of society, and of social relationships, and this is a God-given blessing. But, in their new-found relationship with God as Father, the disciples were to expect potential conflict even within their human family.

In the country of Guinea, on the West Coast of Africa, to become a Christian most often means being beaten and rejected by your family.

When Mariam became a follower of Jesus, she was abused and threatened by her family, who eventually filed a legal document disowning her.

One pastor there reported recently that 13 church members were in need of a place to stay after being expelled from their homes; the pastor has gone to court several times in attempts to protect them from their own families.

This passage emphasizes that we cannot have a divided allegiance. God as our father takes precedence over every human relationship.

Now, this may seem an awkward thing to say for Father's Day. If it seems inappropriate, perhaps it is because we have failed to grasp the all-surpassing value of our relationship to God as our heavenly Father.

But we should not think that these verses suggest that our human family is not important to God. Family is still a fundamental way that God brings the good news of His kingdom to people.

Fatemah grew up in Iran where it is illegal to share the gospel, own a Bible, worship with other believers or convert from the religion of the family into which you were born.

From the time she was a young girl, Fatemah suffered unspeakable abuse within her family. She left home as a teenager to fend for herself. On the streets, she heard the gospel preached, and she trusted Jesus. In time, she married a Christian

man. As they were receiving training in evangelism and church planting, Fatemah felt called to go back home and witness to her family. As a Christian, she could have been killed by them or turned over to the authorities and face a possible death sentence. Instead, her entire family repented and gave their lives to the Lord. The first church Fatemah and her husband planted was in her childhood home.

That is the good news of the Kingdom. Although that good news may, at times, fracture families, it can also heal and mend and unite them in Jesus.

Fatimah's story is not unusual. Iranian officials decry what they see as an uncontrolled spread of Christianity in their country. Recently, Iran's intelligence minister lamented that "whole families" are converting to Christianity.

Jesus goes on to say:

*22All will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. 23When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!*

When Jesus said: *All will hate you because of me*, He is, of course, using hyperbole. But I think Jesus means that we must be willing to go it alone if need be. I'm reminded of the song, *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*, and the verse: if none go with me, still I will follow.

Notice the promise here: verse 25 tells us that a disciple of Jesus is placed within a new family, a new household. We are *members of his household!* Even if we do face rejection by our human family, we are members of the forever family of God.

Next Jesus instructs His apostles about . . .

## ❑ **Opposition and fear**

*26"So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 27What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28Do 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.*

A convert to Christianity from a predominately non-Christian country recently reported how he came to Christ: "My friend told me he had found Jesus. I was aghast, and at first I wanted to kill him. But then I thought, he has just put his life in my hands to tell me this news, because if I reported him, I could gain all his property because the tribal elders would take it away from an apostate and give it to his denouncer. So I thought, *who is this Jesus that my friend would risk all to tell me about the joy of knowing him?*"

Fears operate in the dark and in secret or silence. What we fear in the darkness loses its power in the light of day. Fear, which festers in the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, vanishes in the bright light of truth.

Often, those who suffer abuse from family members are usually afraid of telling others, either out of deep shame or because of threats by their abuser.

Jesus said to bring everything into the light. Don't let secrets control you—shout it from the rooftops!

Overcome rejection and shame by boldly proclaiming the truth. You have good news to share.

Many years ago, I worked briefly in sales. In sales training they coach you on overcoming your natural fear of rejection—which is one of the greatest of human fears. They teach you that you will be rejected

three to five times (or more!) for every sale you get. The object is to push through the rejections, and get them out of the way, before you find the one person that wants, and will benefit from what you are selling.

But even more important, is that Jesus teaches us that a proper fear and reverence for God will drive out fear of opposition and even fear of death. Jesus said, <sup>32</sup>*"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup>But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.*

Jesus taught us that we ought to fear the rejection of our heavenly Father more than we fear the rejection of human beings.

The Christian organization, Open Doors, reports that there were only 500 known Christians in Iran when it became a theocracy in 1979. Today there are approximately 500,000 believers in Jesus. A thousand-fold increase! Some sources say there are up to 1 million secret believers—and this in spite of intense opposition. According to one Christian ministry, more Iranians have become Christians in the last 20 years than in the previous 13 centuries put together. It has been called the fastest-growing evangelical church in the world.

God is working through the faithfulness of courageous believers to expand His Kingdom.

And finally, Jesus assures His apostles (and us!) of

#### ❑ **The care and concern of our heavenly Father**

*<sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

You are incalculably valuable to your heavenly Father. He cares about the sparrows, and *you are worth more than many sparrows* (which is meant as an understatement).

God is sovereign over every event in the universe—even a sparrow's death. God is intimately concerned about every detail of your life, numbering even the hairs on your head.

God loves you and cares about you. Nothing is hidden from Him and nothing escapes His notice. There is nothing about your life that He doesn't care about. You are immeasurably valuable to Him.

And your family is valuable to God. Again, and again the Scriptures speak of whole households being saved. Almost always this happened when the father came to faith in Jesus, then the family believed also. (John 4:53; Acts 10:2; 16:15, 31-34; 18:18; 1 Corinthians 1:16).

In Acts 11:13-14 we hear how an angel of God appeared to Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, instructing him to send for Peter who *"will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household."* (NASB)

God is not in the business of fracturing families but of healing them. Jesus does not want to divide families but unite them in Him.

Yet, when that is rejected; when Jesus Christ becomes the dividing line; then the Lord provides us a new family of faith.

Jesus told His apostles, "As you go, proclaim" the good news of the kingdom. It is good news in spite of all opposition we may face. And even though all may hate us because of Jesus, we have His promise that whoever stands firm to the end, will be saved.

Let us pray . . . .

Benediction:

Ephesians 3:20-21 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.* (NIV)