

# **Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**

## **INVITE A SINNER TO SUPPER**

**Matthew 10:24-39**

**Fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 7)**

**Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer**

24 'A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! 26 'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him 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 apart from your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 'Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. 34 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and one's foes will be members of one's own household. 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Those who find their

life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

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## **DIAGNOSIS: DO I RECOGNIZE YOU?**

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** –*“Nice Face. You’re Hired!”*

To look for a job and hear “experience required” is frustrating. When you’re a novice, you can’t get a job because you have no experience, but you can’t get experience because you can’t get a job. Other jobs require an apprenticeship before a license is granted—such as being an electrician or a plumber or a psychologist or a pastor. The followers of Jesus had been doing their apprenticeship as his disciples. He was now sending them out and “gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness” (Matthew 10:1). Their instructions were to “cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons” (Matthew 10:8). That was exciting for the disciples! Imagine being told that your assignment was to raise the dead and to cure the sick! Think of the lives you could save and the gratitude of the people you healed! But Jesus warned them that he was sending them out “like sheep into the midst of wolves”; and that “they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles” (Matthew 10:16-18). Even more, Jesus advised them that “you will be hated by all because of my name”; and “when they persecute you in one town, flee to the next” (Matthew 10:22-23). Suddenly the disciples were not so excited.

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** –*“I Wish They, Not You, Would Recognize Me”*

The disciples did not want to be sheep amongst wolves or to be hated or be persecuted for what they did. How could they be persecuted for healing the sick and raising the dead and helping people? Jesus told them that they would be treated no differently than he was treated. They could not expect anything better than that, for “A disciple is not above the teacher nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master” (Matthew 10:24). However, the disciples wanted to be treated with respect and thanks and honor. They wanted people to regard them as special because of the special things they did. Unfortunately, they were no longer interested in what Jesus thought of them. They only worried about how others would treat them. They felt that they should not be treated so badly. They were doing good things for others. They should be welcomed with joy for what they did. They no longer cared about what Jesus thought of them. They only wanted others to recognize them on their own merit.

### **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem)** –*God Does Not Recognize You*

To not care what Jesus thinks of you is to not have faith in Jesus as the one who counts, whose opinion of you means everything to God. In fact, Jesus says, “Whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:33). To be denied by Jesus before God means that God will not act towards you in the same way that God acts towards Jesus. Instead, God will act towards you according to the opinion of God’s law about you. There is no “kingdom of God” that “has come near” (Matthew 10:7). The disciples were no longer worthy of Jesus. To be no longer worthy of Jesus means one has lost one’s life, completely and forever (Matthew 10:39).

## **PROGNOSIS: I KNOW YOU!**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** –*Jesus Is Not*

### *Recognized Except by God*

Jesus was sent to call (invite) sinners (Matthew 9:7), and to eat with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:10). He brought the kingdom of heaven, the new kingdom in which he ruled with forgiveness and mercy. He took no gold, or silver, or copper in his belt (Matthew 10:9). He was dragged before councils and flogged. People hated him because he forgave sinners. He was sent as a lamb among wolves, sacrificed on a cross. He lost his life for the sake of all who did not love or trust God or trust him. But, because he lost his life for the sake of the gospel-God forgiving sinners because of his death on a cross-he found his life. For God raised him from the dead! God raised him to establish the kingdom of heaven for sinners who trusted Christ as the only one whose opinion on sinners mattered to God.

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution)** *—We Recognize Jesus*

Christ dying and rising for sinners, giving them his promise of forgiveness and eternal life, turns his disciples around from being concerned about other peoples' opinions to being concerned only about Jesus' opinion of them. For Jesus' opinion-forgiveness-is promised to be God's own opinion about sinners-an opinion that gives life. God's opinion of them through the law is changed into God's opinion of them through Christ. Those who lose their life (who trust Christ) will have their life saved (Matthew 10:39). No longer is it doing great miracles of healing, or casting out demons, or raising the dead that impresses the disciples. They are impressed by Jesus rising from the dead for them! They have faith that Jesus on the cross is how Jesus will acknowledge them before his Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32). Doing miracles of healing and raising the dead are not deeds of glory for them anymore. Instead, they are works of faith that serve others, the same as the cross of Christ.

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** *—Let Me Introduce*

## *You to Jesus*

Trusting Christ, the disciples are ready to be sent to tax collectors and sinners, to be sheep among the wolves. If they are to be hated, persecuted, because of their witness to Jesus, well, Jesus promises them that they will be given the Spirit of their Father who will speak through them when they testify in the synagogue and before councils. He assures them that they will be treated just as he had been treated, not just by their neighbors, but by God. God will treat them with forgiveness and eternal life. They do not have to fear the one who can kill the body but not the soul. They get to fear the one "who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). They fear God because he can raise them from the dead! They are given assurance by Jesus that to him they are worth more than sparrows, and even sparrows have God always with them. And as the disciples acknowledge Jesus before other, they can be confident (with faith) that Jesus has acknowledged them before God by his death and resurrection. So when those in the present hear that they are sent to invite sinners and tax collectors because the laborers are few (Matthew 9:37-38), they are assured that, even though they are sheep amongst wolves and that they are hated by everyone, that this is what happens to those who lose their life to Christ. And Christ is with them, acknowledging them to God. They have their lives saved by Christ, that is, they are given eternal life because Christ invited them.