Scripture introduction: context of passage…

Prayer for illumination: please join me in prayer…

Sermon introduction:

What is the most frequently repeated command in the Bible?

How many of you think it is the command to love?
How many of you think it is the command to pray?
How many of you think it is the command to give?
How many of you think it is the command to read your Bible?
How many of you think it is the command to reach out to lost people?

None of these commands are the most repeated command in the Bible.

The most repeated command in the Bible is the command to fear not! (I read this in two commentaries this week)

God commands us to fear not because he knows we are very fearful.

The most commonly underlined passage in all the different bible versions on Kindle is Phil 4:6-7.

This brings us to our passage this morning. Jesus tells his disciples that they must not be afraid of persecution.

Why would he tell them this? The answer is found in the context of our passage-

Matthew 10:16 (ESV) — 16 “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Then he explains the promise of persecution. Lets skip ahead to verse 24.

Matthew 10:24–25 (ESV) — 24 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

In other words if the bad guys falsely accused Jesus, saying that he was in league with Satan (Beelzebul) they will falsely accuse us. We should not expect better treatment than our savior.

This reminds of me of Matt 5:12-13 “utter all kinds of evil falsely” homophobe, intolerant, hater, narrow minded, bigoted, etc…

Hopefully you can see why the disciples were tempted to be afraid. Persecution will come. But Jesus gives them four reasons to not be afraid of persecution. These same four reasons apply to us.

Let's look at the four reasons we don't have to have persecution.
First, don’t fear persecution since all will be revealed.

Matthew 10:26–27 (ESV) — 26 “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.

According to verse 27 the gospel must be proclaimed publicly to all peoples. If your close friends and associates don’t know you are a Christian something is wrong.

I want to focus on verse 26. Jesus says, have no fear of your persecutors because all will be revealed on the day of final judgment. In other words, your persecutors will not get away with what they did to you.

On the flip side all the good things that you did in the midst of persecution will be rewarded before all.

1 Corinthians 4:5 (ESV) — 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

1 Timothy 5:24–25 (ESV) — 24 The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. 25 So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

Jesus says, “Don’t be afraid your tormentors will have their deeds exposed and you will be rewarded.”

All evil things will eventually be exposed…

Illustration:

Water gate-
Spy gate-
Deflate Gate-

LA Times-

“The New England Patriots are heading to another Super Bowl, and allegations are swirling that they might have bent the rules to get there.

This is not the first allegation of cheating by New England,…

In 2007, the Patriots were disciplined by the NFL for videotaping the hand signals of New York Jets coaches during a game, an incident that became known as Spygate. The league ultimately fined Patriots Coach Bill Belichick $500,000 — the maximum allowed by the league — the Patriots $250,000, and stripped the club of a first-round draft pick.

Multiple reports say the NFL has found the Patriots used underinflated footballs in their 45-7 rout of the Indianapolis Colts on Sunday in the AFC championship game. Slightly softer footballs are generally believed to be easier to throw and catch…

ESPN reported earlier Tuesday evening that 11 of the 12 balls were found to be underinflated by about two pounds each.”

Here is the point… eventually all of our bad deeds come to light…
Illustration- sneaking out with my cousins while in 6th grade.

Application:

There is a Day of Judgment coming. Jesus says don’t fear persecution because your persecutors will be exposed someday and all will be made right. Furthermore, all the good things you did in the midst of persecution will also be exposed and rewarded.

First, don’t fear persecution since all will be revealed.

Second, don’t fear persecution since they can only kill your body.

Matthew 10:28 (ESV) — 28 And 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.

Jesus says, “don’t fear those who have the power to kill your body but not your soul!” When saying this he implies that human beings are composed of two parts- body and soul. Our body is the physical side of our person and our soul is the immaterial side of our person. When we die our soul goes to heaven and our body goes to the grave. When Christ returns our bodies and our souls are reunited.

Here is Jesus point… don’t fear dying! Don’t fear losing your body. You will get it back someday. Rather fear God who has the power to destroy our bodies and our souls in hell.

One commentator writes,

“Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the few German pastors who had the courage to oppose and speak openly against the regime of Adolf Hitler. For that, for helping Jews escape, and for plotting against Hitler, he was jailed, and then executed. From prison he wrote, ‘those who are still afraid of men have no fear of God, and those who have fear of God have ceased to be afraid of men.’” (Doriani, 441 quoting from the Cost of Discipleship)

Doriani, “Hugh Latimer was a leader of the English Reformation. On one occasion, he had the daunting privilege of preaching before the sometimes-violent King Henry VIII. Latimer was about to say something the king might dislike and fell into an audible dialogue with himself as he stood in the pulpit: “Latimer, Latimer! Be careful what you say. The king is here.” Then he paused and said, ‘Latimer, Latimer! Be careful what you say. The king of Kings is here.” (Boice, 181)

When we fear God we don’t have to fear death.

But many of us are still very fearful of death!

Illustration:

I found top ten-fear list that I think most of us could relate too.

10. Fear of losing our freedom
9. Fear of the unknown
8. Fear of pain
7. Fear of disappointment
6. Fear of misery
5. Fear of loneliness
4. Fear of ridicule
3. Fear of rejection  
2. Fear of death  
1. Fear of failure  

no. 2 is the fear of dying… why are we so afraid to die?  

For some it is the fear of the unknown.  
For others it is the fear that we will cease to exist.  
For others it is the fear of hell.  

*Application*:  

But Christians don’t have to fear dying.  We don’t have to fear having our bodies destroyed.  

Imagine that you had a beater car (a 1988 Volvo 240 Diesel).  If someone told you that they promised to give you a brand new Ferrari when you Volvo died would you be afraid to lose your Volvo?  Of course not…  

In a similar sense Christians know that when we lose our bodies we will eventually get much better ones (See Romans 8).  

We don’t have to fear what persecutors will do to our bodies… this requires faith.  

Maybe you’re thinking… I’m not afraid to die but I am afraid to suffer in this body.  If suffering comes we will need power.  Life is short eternity is forever.  

Don’t be afraid.  

*First, don’t fear persecution since all will be revealed.  Second, don’t fear persecution since they can only kill the body.*  

*Third, don’t fear persecution since God will take care of you.*  

**Matthew 10:29–31 (ESV)** — 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.  

Penny’s were the smallest coin and sparrows were the smallest birds… Sparrows were so insignificant that they were often roasted and served as cheap finger foods (appetizers).  Kind of like French Fries!  What is meant to shock us is the fact that Jesus cares for the Sparrows.  Not in general but specifically “not one of them will fall.”  In other words he cares about and controls the tiniest details of life.  

To drive the point home even further he brings up our hair.  The average person has 140,000 hairs on his or her head.  I’m not sure who counts these things but someone does.  

How often do you brush your hair or comb your hair and count up all the hairs that end up on the ground or in your brush?  Never… but God knows exactly how many hairs you have on your head right now, how long they are, how long they will last on your head, how long they will grow before they are cut, how thick they are, etc… He knows everything about everything and he controls all things.  

**Ephesians 1:11 (ESV)** — 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who *works all things according to the counsel of his will*,
Not only does God control all things (sparrows, hair, and our persecutors) he is good. This is the key. Notice that Jesus refers to God as “your father”. If we are Christians God is our father and he will use all things for our good. He can do this because he controls all things.

**Application:**

Don’t be afraid of persecution since your heavenly father will care for you…

God sometimes allows us to be persecuted but we must not fear because this will lead to our good and his glory. If persecution will not lead to our good and God’s glory we will not experience it. But if he knows that it will lead to our good and his glory we will experience it.

Notice that Jesus does not say that your heavenly father will never let the sparrow’s fall from the trees.

He is our father and he knows what’s best.

It is hard to imagine a better way to glorify God than by enduring persecution for his sake…

God uses persecution for good… when persecution started in China many years back there were anywhere from 1-3 million Christians 30 years later there are anywhere from 70-100 million. Many Chinese house church leaders attribute this explosive growth to persecution. (Osborne, 399)

Jesus only lets his children suffer if it is for their eternal benefit and His glory.

First, don’t fear persecution since all will be revealed.
Second, don’t fear persecution since they can only kill the body.
Third, don’t fear persecution since God will take care of you.

**Fourth, don’t fear persecution since Jesus will acknowledge you.**

**Matthew 10:32–33 (ESV) — 32** So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, **33** but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Verse 32 is very encouraging… if we acknowledge Jesus publically before men, Jesus promises to acknowledge us before his father in heaven.

Imagine being in heaven right before final judgment… you know that all the things you did in life are about to be revealed to all. Your record will surely condemn you. You are terrified… but then Jesus looks at the Father and looks at you and says that one is with me. He acknowledged me so I’m acknowledging him.

Again, there is no such thing as a secret disciple. We must acknowledge Jesus before men.

**Illustration:**

Emperor Nero had a group of soldiers similar to our modern day special forces. “The soldiers were often sent out on special militarily campaigns. On a certain mission in Gaul (Modern France), many of the soldiers were converted to Christ. Upon hearing the news, Nero ordered the commander, Vespasian, to execute any soldier who refused to renounce Christ and swear religious as well as military allegiance to the emperor. The emperors’ orders were received in the dead of winter, as the men were encamped on the shore of a frozen lake. When Vespasian assembled the soldiers an asked how many were Christians forty men stepped forward. Hoping not to lose any of these fine men, many of whom were his friends, he gave them until sundown the next
day to reconsider. But at the given hour, all of them still refused to renounce Christ. In order that they not die at the hands of their comrades, the commander ordered the forty men to disrobe and walk naked out onto the ice. Through the night the soldiers on shore could hear the forty sentenced men singing triumphantly to Christ. The singing grew fainter as morning neared, and at dawn a lone figure walked back and approached the fire. He confessed that this faith was not strong enough to face death. When Vespasian then hear the faint strains of the men singing again to Christ he was so moved that he threw off his armor and clothes and marched out to join the others…” (Macarthur, 224, Matthew Vol. 2)

Jesus will acknowledge these men on the day of final judgment.

How encouraging…

On the other hand verse 33 is meant to put the fear of God in us. If we deny knowing Jesus he will deny knowing us on the day of final judgment.

So how do we explain the story of Peter? Peter denied Jesus three times but then he was restored by Jesus before Jesus ascended to Heaven.

The only way to explain this is mercy and grace. God knows that his children are weak. He knows that we can give into fear in moments of weakness. He forgives. At the same time if someone is truly a Christian they will find the grace to acknowledge God or vigorously repent when they don’t.

We must also affirm at this point that our actions (acknowledging Jesus or not) are not the basis of our salvation. We are saved by faith alone plus nothing…. But if that faith is real it will lead to a confession of faith.

Don’t fear persecution, since Jesus promises to acknowledge you.

Application!

We need to start small. If we can’t acknowledge Jesus at the office, in the locker room, or after class why do we think we will acknowledge him when the pressure really gets turned up???

We should not look for persecution but we should look for opportunities to reach out boldly in order to proclaim the incredibly good news that Jesus has made a way to be reconciled to God.

Conclusion:

*First,* don’t fear persecution since all will be revealed.
*Second,* don’t fear persecution since they can only kill the body.
*Third,* don’t fear persecution since God will take care of you.
*Fourth,* don’t fear persecution since Jesus will acknowledge you.

There are many things we are tempted to fear in this life…

We may fear failure
We may fear loneliness
We may fear not living up to someone else’s expectations
We may fear losing our jobs
We may fear losing our health…

According to Matthew 10:24-33 we must never fear persecution.
We need supernatural power to put to death the fear of persecution. Thankfully Jesus secured this for us. He died and rose from the grave and poured out the spirit at Pentecost.

Jesus tells the disciples not to go out until he fills them with the spirit. When the spirit is poured out on the early church cowards were turned into lions in an instant. Read the book of Acts to get all the details.

We must not fear persecution. Thankfully we have the Spirit to help us! If you are afraid ask the Spirit of God to give you courage. Lets pray…

*Lets pray*…