

Faith in our divided world.
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – 21st June 2026
Sermon based on Gospel reading: Matthew 10:24–39
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In today's Gospel reading, inequality is the first thing that grabs our attention then quickly overtaken by fearlessness in God. Despite it being written in St Paul's letter to the Galatians in Chapter 3, verse 28 saying, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus", an ideology we'd all love to be fact. This verse emphasises that in the eyes of God, all individuals are equal and should be treated with love. I'm certain it will be when we get to Heaven but like most you I'm sure, it would be a nice world if we could achieve it in this day and age. Despite God's intention and Paul's words, I wondered if equality in our rather selfish world is achievable. Of course it is, as long as we ALL follow God's rules, facing the challenges, fighting the good fight of faith and above all staying loyal to God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks words that are unsettling to modern ears. He tells his disciples that they should expect opposition, misunderstanding, and even division because of their loyalty to him. He says, "Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me." These are challenging words, but they contain both a warning and a promise.

Matthew's Gospel was likely written around fifty years after Jesus' death and resurrection. The early Church was growing, but it was also facing hostility. The new Christians were often rejected by their neighbours, misunderstood by political authorities, and sometimes estranged from their own families. For many Jewish people of the day, the change from old ways to following Jesus and accepting him as the promised Messiah, could lead to painful divisions within households and communities.

When Matthew records Jesus speaking about families being divided and disciples facing persecution, he is not encouraging conflict. He is reassuring believers that suffering for their faith does not mean God has abandoned them. He warns us that the disciple is not above the teacher; therefore, if Jesus himself was rejected, his followers should not be surprised when they face rejection as well. Be prepared, Jesus warns.

Jesus' message to the people of his day is to have courage. He says three times in this short passage "Do not be afraid." He reminds his disciples that God knows them intimately, even numbering the hairs on their heads. In a world where they may feel vulnerable and insignificant, they are reminded they are precious in God's sight.

What does this mean for Anglicans today?

Thankfully in Australia today, most of us are unlikely to face the kind of persecution experienced by the first Christians. However, we still live in a culture where faith can be misunderstood, dismissed, or treated as a "private hobby" rather than a way of life. For us today, the temptation is to remain silent. We may hesitate to speak about our faith, but it is so important to live according to our convictions, standing with those whom Christ calls us to serve, and always ensuring our actions are accountable. Courageous and compassionate faith is the way of Christ.

Taking up the cross does not mean seeking suffering for its own sake. It means being willing to follow Christ even when it is costly. It means choosing forgiveness over resentment, choosing truth over convenience, choosing generosity over self-interest, and choosing love over fear.

The paradox at the end of the passage remains one of the deepest truths of the Gospel: "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." The world tells us to protect ourselves, accumulate more, and put our own interests first. However, Christ teaches that true life is discovered in self-giving love and faithful discipleship.

As Anglicans, we follow 15th Century Richard Hooker's Three Pillars: Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. This classic Anglican theological method is often described as a 'three-legged stool' and calls us to hold together these three elements. In today's Gospel we are reminded that these elements are not merely religious activities but marks of a life shaped by Christ. By following God's word, we need not be afraid of the future, afraid of disagreement, or afraid of the cost of discipleship, as our God who knows every sparrow, also knows and loves each one of us.

We are to hold tight to our morals, our ethics, and to follow Christ with confidence, trusting that whatever challenges we face, we do so in the care of our Lord, who calls us by name.

Amen.