

No Pain, No Gain

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[0 : 00] So I think keep your Bibles open at Matthew 10, and we'll continue our time at the end of Jesus' discussion about commissioning the 12 disciples and apostles.

It's long chapter 10, and he's coming to the end, and he wants us to know a few more things that's waiting for us as his people. Now, we all know what it's like to go through pain and sacrifice to get something worth having.

Again, we've all done this. We know what it's like to go through pain and sacrifice to get something worth having. Maybe it was saving for your first bike, if you remember that as a kid.

Oh my goodness. If you were sort of unlucky enough that your parents didn't give you the bike, you had to save for that first cool bike you had. Or maybe you saved for that first computer game.

Later on, you're going to save for bigger things, kind of the same thing, just with more noughts behind them. A car or a house. It's got a lot of noughts behind it. Or maybe losing weight or getting fit.

[1 : 07] We say, being fit is fine, but getting fit can kill you. So you've got to be careful about that. But when you go through that sacrifice, you go through the pain of getting what you want, you get that cool feeling of achievement and satisfaction when you achieve that goal.

Nothing more special than the thing you've saved for and struggled for and have got. We don't get the good stuff without going through the bad stuff. And that is what Jesus helps us understand in our passage today.

To live as a Christian is to live a life of loss and sacrifice. But it's the only life that will be rewarded. And the rewards are so amazing.

The pain is worth way more than all the pain. So that's what we're going to look at today. No pain, no gain. And so the first thing that Jesus highlights for us is the pain of family conflict.

The pain of family conflict. Being a Christian doesn't come without consequences. Both positive and negative. Here, Jesus is warning that the pain that we will go through will be real.

[2 : 19] And it's going to involve those closest to us. So, verse 34 and 36. Jesus says, Don't assume that I have come to bring peace on the earth.

I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against his mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

This is actually a shocking statement by Jesus. Firstly, that his arrival will be the cause of the problem.

Notice the phrase, I have come, repeated three times. It's because he has come into the world that these things are going to happen. Secondly, that he comes to bring a sword.

You know, that doesn't sound like the Jesus we've been brought up to believe in. It should jar you. And thirdly, that all of this is going to cause deep divisions within families.

[3 : 28] Now, Jesus isn't saying he's come to kill people. The sword here isn't a literal sword. He's using it figuratively. Rather, Jesus' arrival is going to cause all kinds of disruptions, problems, divisions, difficulties in a person's life, particularly in their family life.

And Jesus isn't talking theory here. There are many of us, if not all of us here at St. Mark's, if you've served Jesus for any amount of time, can attest to what he's talking about here.

Many families have this uneasy dynamic in their homes. Maybe the mom is a Christian, and the dad is kind of dragged along. We often see that. You know, he's not really sure about this whole thing, but he's trying to support her and keep the peace.

But honestly, it creates really difficult situations and really difficult conversations at home. And so first thing you need to know is, if you find yourself in that situation, Jesus is saying that he knows

that it's hard.

He knows your pain. He's the one that said it would happen. It's not unexpected. But if you are going through this, realize that you're not alone.

[4 : 39] You're surrounded by people who have gone through similar things. Your new spiritual family can help you with a family that you're struggling with.

There is help, there's counsel, there's prayer, and there's very practical advice. What you need to do is just ask around and say, hey, listen, I'm really struggling with this. Could you maybe help me? Of course, that's difficult to do. No one wants to admit that they're struggling at home. So, if you are someone that have gone through those struggles yourself, and you can see someone else struggling with that, go and offer help and prayer.

Be for them the family that they need you to be. Ask them if they need help with anything. You may just be what they need, but are too shy to ask about. So, Jesus says we're going to struggle with, there's going to be the pain of family conflict, and we need to help each other because of what Jesus says next.

The next thing Jesus talks about is the pain of sacrifice. The pain of sacrifice. What Jesus says next is almost even more shocking.

[5 : 55] Jesus is going to push even harder. He's going to call Christians to the highest possible standards of allegiance that will test our loyalty to Him to the limit.

Have a look at verse 37 and 39. The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

The one who loves a son or a daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

You know, guys, Jesus is getting really heavy here. And this isn't some illustration, take up your cross. Like we talk about it in the modern Western world.

Oh, I had a cross to bear. You know, you go for your coffee latte with the sprinkles and they run out of cream. Oh! And you get to work and you're in a grumpy mood and they're like, what's the matter?

[7 : 00] Did something really bad? Oh, I had to bear my cross this morning because I didn't have the coffee that I needed. Okay, no. Every Jew living under Roman rule would know exactly what Jesus is talking about.

And they would know exactly what it means to bear your cross. They know that you don't have long to live. You're not long for this world if you're carrying your cross and you're surrounded by Roman soldiers. In a matter of minutes and hours, you're going to be nailed naked to a tree.

You're going to bleed out. The birds are going to peck your eyeballs out because you can't do anything about it. And you stand there transfixed to this wooden cross, nails through your eyes and for hours, bleeding to death, slowly asphyxating and you're going to die a most horrible death.

Why is Jesus talking about this? Well, you can just imagine the kind of conversation between Jesus and the disciples here. In the start of our chapter, Jesus says, hey, you guys, you know, well, the whole book of Matthew is Jesus is the new king.

The kingdom of heaven has arrived. The new king is here. And then we see him walking around with all this power and he's healing everyone. And then he commissions the 12. He says, listen, guys, join me. And they go like, yes, that's going to be cool. And he says, go out and you're going to do miracles.

[8 : 19] You're going to heal people. Everyone's going to love you. But you're going to at least do miracles. And we're like, yes, that's cool. And then also now you're going to end up on a cross. Whoa, sorry. Just the, what's that middle bit again about the cross?

Are you, are you serious, Jesus? Yeah. Deadly serious. You know, they could be saying, a little bit more than we bargained for.

You know, you know, we were happy. We used to be fishermen. You know, then you called us to be the Messiah and the kingdom of God and the miracles but the cross thing, you know.

Jesus is like, well, that's, that's the way of life. This is the way to quote a modern TV show. This is the way. Hmm.

You know, Peter and the disciples are like, listen, we're just going to talk quickly. the fish seem like a better proposition at this point in time. We, we're just, we're kind of thinking about it.

[9 : 20] The fish. Oh, well, you know, people like fish. Dude, people are dying. The kingdom of God is here. Look, if you really want the fish, go back to your fish.

Don't, don't you want us to join you? We thought you wanted to join you. If you think the fish are more worth than the kingdom of God, then go back to your fish.

Kind of puts it in stark contrast. There really isn't a lot of room to play with with Jesus here. He's, he's uncompromising in his call to allegiance.

Friends, Jesus is saying the same thing to us today. You need to do the same thing that those disciples did at that point. They're going to have to make a choice.

You can either have Jesus in your life. Now, who is Jesus? We've seen some amazing things he's doing in the book of Matthew. He is amazing. Among other things, the Bible tells us he's the author of life.

[10 : 24] He's the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, the king of kings and the Lord of lords. You can either have that person as your friend, or you can go back to your fish or whatever you think is more important.

In comparison to the glories of Jesus, everything else is to be regarded as secondary and of less importance.

Even our family relationships, even our own lives. To illustrate this, the life of Lee Strobel could help us.

Lee Strobel. Lee Strobel was a hardened criminal journalist working for the Chicago Tribune in the 80s. It was a very rough time. He was a rough guy.

His wife suddenly became a Christian and it led to their marriage almost breaking apart. He was initially dead set against his wife being a Christian.

[11 : 25] He was worried that she was going to mess up their perfect life. They would be invited to parties all the time. They'd be talking to interesting people. The last thing he needed is someone acting like a Christian prude or so he thought.

But over time, she changed and he could see it. He saw that she was more loving to the kids, more present in the family than either of them had been up to that point.

She was less stressful, less reactive to things around her, more supportive of the whole family working together. And the whole family worked better because of her Christianity.

and because of this, Strobel was compelled to investigate the claims of Christ himself. A two-year investigation expecting, hoping to disprove that this Jesus is a real deal led to his conversion and the best-selling book *The Case for Christ*.

Very worth reading if you haven't read it or worth watching the movie. There's a movie out called *The Case for Christ*. So where does that leave us? Well, some applications for us to think through.

[12 : 41] Firstly, Jesus is saying don't compromise your new family for your old family. Don't compromise your new family for your old family. When you become a Christian, we belong to Christ, but we don't just belong to him individually, we belong to his household.

Jesus is a king and he's got a household. That's us. We are his people. So we get, when we join Jesus, we get a new family thrown in with a deal. Don't compromise your new family for your old family.

Now, be careful how we tease that out, but for us, it might look something like, be careful about skipping off church because there's a family lunch or a birthday due or whatever.

there are many of us that skip fairly regularly Sundays because of the family due and they feel the pressure because now, why are you going to church? Don't you care for your family?

Well, you say, yeah, I do care for my family, but I've got another family. Of course, they don't understand what that means, but you know what? Just throw it in there and I'll join you after church. The more consistent you are in this, the more they will accept it.

[13 : 51] It might cause a bit of waves at first, but just be straight up, no, I'm going to be going to church and I'll do anything I can after church. However, don't be weird about this, okay?

Don't be rude or unkind or unloving to your non-Christian family. Don't use it as an excuse to you've always wanted to better them and be better than them and now you can show them and that's not the way to deal with them.

Loving Jesus doesn't mean stopping loving your partner or your extended family. In fact, being a Christian means you need to be more long-suffering, more patient, more kind.

Go the extra mile. In my own family, my mom became a Christian. She was looking for help with the marriage. The Christian counselor said, listen, I can't help you, you need to go to church.

It's the strangest counselor advice she had ever received and she didn't know what else to do, so she did. And she became a Christian and that caused even more problems in our family. up to the point where she, it caused my parents to divorce.

[14:57] They just couldn't reconcile and these things happen. These things happen. Don't compromise your new family for your old.

Don't be weird about it. Be more loving, as much loving as you can. My mom will say that she was still a very immature Christian and put her foot down where she didn't need to. These days she talks about being much more patient and kind and keeping the door open as long as you can.

And then, be the new family to each other that we need. I've kind of mentioned this already. Be the new family to each other that we need. So if someone is struggling with their old family, they need their new family.

That means you. That means us. Okay? Now to be a family, you can only really be a family by spending time with each other. Not just once a week on a Sunday for roughly an hour.

That's not how you build family relationships. Imagine you spent that same amount of time with your own, with your non-Christian family. Now we're only going to spend one hour a week together one day.

[16:10] You can't run a family like that. No family will survive that kind of minimal contact.

So, we need to build up our shared experiences of being in a church family. A good way to do that, check our church calendar, block out those dates, do that sacrificing.

I don't really want to go and clean up the church. Yeah. Who does? But I can attest this, everyone else, I promise you, feels the same way. You don't really want to go, call it a prayer meeting, even Sunday church.

You go, you are always glad you went. Am I right? It's always worth it. So, don't talk yourself out of spending time with Christians, talk yourself into spending time with Christians, you won't be sorry. So, so far, Jesus is talking about pain, where's the gain? These sacrifices are more than worth making because of the final point that Jesus makes, that the rewards far outweigh any sacrifice that we can make for Him or for His people.

[17:30] And so, we're going to look at the ultimate reward of life, the ultimate reward of life, the ultimate gain. Jesus calls Christians to life of pain and sacrifice, but these are a means to an end.

They serve a purpose, and that purpose is the greatest good we can hope for, the promise of eternal life. So, verse 39, Jesus says, anyone who finds his life will lose it.

and anyone who loses his life because of me will find it. You can find real life.

This is such an important saying, just this little verse, it is the most repeated saying of Jesus in the Bible. It is repeated six times throughout the Gospels.

It's the most repeated phrase that Jesus talks about. Anyone who finds his life will lose it. That means anyone who makes their life the most important thing, we all know people who go on a journey to find themselves, you're making yourself the most important thing in your life, you never come out of that being happy, you always come out of that being miserable, but if you lose your life, if you take yourself, take a step backward from your own life, you'll find it because you'll find Jesus.

[18:59] Now, let's take Jesus' word seriously when he's talking about life. This is not life with a capital L, but capital L-I-F-E. It's life to the full.

It's the life that God originally planned for us in Genesis 1. A life overflowing. Overflowing with goodness and blessing and life.

Everything that makes life worth living. A life of abundance, of connection and freedom. It's difficult for us to comprehend how cool that would have been.

But of course, you can just let your imagination run around that for a bit. We get tastes of goodness and blessing and life if we're honest.

Very few of us can say that our lives are overflowing with these things. depends, I guess, what we mean by that. Because your life can be overflowing.

[20:01] Depends on what you see and how you view Jesus. In John 10.10, Jesus says, I have come to give life and give it to the full.

It's a full and total restoration of everything that makes life worth living. an abundance of relationships, of fun, of joy, of openness and trust, of not having any shame or any regrets.

Just looking forward to eagerness with eager expectation to the next adventure you're going to have. that doesn't just wait for us in the future.

It can start now. But you've got to be willing to take yourself off the throne of your own life and acknowledge that Jesus is the rightful ruler over you.

But we know that he is because of who we see he is in the scriptures. That's what the gospel is all about. It's written to convince you that Jesus is the best thing for you.

[21 : 12] You're not the best thing for you. So do yourself a favor. Stop putting yourself first and put Jesus first if you can. Just go and help there please.

Just make sure he goes through to the, I'm just worried he doesn't know where to go. Mind you, Michiel is just going to illustrate the last point that Jesus makes.

Have a look at verse 42. Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, truly I tell you, he will by no means lose his reward.

So Jesus promises us life, but he doesn't just promise us life, he also promises us a life of rewards. And that reward is for those who take their new Christian family relationships to heart.

So before you get to verse 42, there's a few other verses. Verse 40. Jesus says, the one who welcomes you welcomes me, and the one who welcomes me welcomes him who sent me.

[22 : 20] Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. Anyone who welcomes a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.

And then that last verse we've just read. Now, in our evangelical tradition, talk of rewards generally makes us uneasy.

It's actually quite simple. The best way to look at what Jesus is talking about here is to look at it from a human point of view. Jesus is a king. Like all kings, he's got enemies and friends.

Jesus doesn't come into a vacuum. He came into the world and immediately gets kicked back. So now there's a clash of kingdoms. There's a war going on. There's a cosmic war going on because Jesus has arrived. And people need to take sides.

And like any other king, if you do nice things for him and the people that are on his side, he's going to be nice to you. If you don't do nice things for him and his side, but you do nice things for his enemy, and then eventually he comes into power, what they do in the olden days is they line all the people up, all their enemies, and they just start chopping their heads off one by one.

[23 : 45] It's not about earning salvation. Salvation only comes from Christ and has nothing to do with our good works or not our good works, but we can and do earn rewards.

Jesus is actually emphatic about this. Have a look at verse 42 again. Whoever gives even a cup of cold water, so the smallest little thing that you can do, to one of these little ones, the little ones are us, because he's a disciple, that's a Christian, we're the little ones, we're not strong, we need Jesus' help.

Truly I tell you, I tell you the truth, he will by no means lose reward. Jesus doesn't say he will get a reward, as is so by the way. Truly, I am telling you, I'm telling you the truth, it's an emphatic statement, he will by no means lose that reward.

He's making a serious promise here. It takes us, we've got to trust Jesus, but also just think in normal human terms about how rewards happen when you help one side versus the other side and that side comes in power, they're going to pour rewards on you.

For us, that means everything that we do for another Christian is rewarded by Jesus. So now, that's cool, just think about that.

[25 : 15] Everything we do for another Christian will be rewarded by Jesus. Everything from phone calls, to visits, to text messages, to meals, to lifts, to gifts, seeing things that they need, or just being nice because they don't need it, but it'll be nice for them to have it.

Just bless someone because it's nice for them to have it. We see the cost to us, yeah, there's a cost, but just compare that with the reward that you're going to get from the king who's got the whole world in his hand.

So, friends, don't be shy in spending money to help a fellow Christian. Don't be stingy. Be open-handed and generous. Here's a challenge. Before you leave church today, choose someone from your new St. Mark's family, for which you're going to do something good.

Do it in your head. Don't be like, don't just stand up now, okay, Sandy, you're going to get this. Remember what Jesus said about giving. We did it in Matthew 5 or 6. Do it quietly.

Don't try and get you a reward now in front of everyone, but do it. Because God who sees what you do in secret will give you a reward. We either believe that or we don't.

[26 : 41] I don't think we do. I think we struggle with that. trust. So what's going to change us? Well, as always, it comes down to faith.

This takes trust. Are you going to believe what Jesus says here or are you not? not? If you believe it, you may as well do it. Back to my challenge. In your head, choose someone from your new St. Mark's family, because that's as close as we got each other here, for which you're going to do something good.

Put a time limit on it before the end of February. to end, later in the story of Matthew, the disciples were getting worried about the cost of following Jesus, and they were beginning to wonder if it was worth it.

And Jesus says this. Jesus says, truly, I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or fields, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much, and will inherit eternal life.

There's no gain without the pain, but the gain is worth far more than all the pain that we go through. Let me pray for us.

[28 : 36] Lord Jesus, you say some really difficult things to us, Lord, calling us to a life of sacrifice and pain.

Lord, many of us struggle with divided family loyalties. It's hard for us, Jesus. Please have mercy and save our unchristian or non-christian families, Lord.

Help us to be continually in prayer for them. Lord, help us as the new family of believers to help each other if we see people struggling. There's a lot of wisdom and experience that we can share.

Help us to do that, Lord. Lord, help us to make the sacrifices we need to for you and for your people, knowing that you do not lie and speak the truth, that we will by no means lose the smallest bit of our reward, even if we do the smallest things for our fellow Christians.

Help us to trust you and then to do these things, not for our sake, but for yours and your kingdom. Amen.