

# Life Defined by Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *Learning at Jesus' Side, 11*, August 12, 2012

**Matthew 10:32-42; 11:1-3** Jesus finishes instructing the Twelve

<sup>32</sup> “So everyone who **acknowledges me before people**, I also will acknowledge **before my Father who is in heaven**, <sup>33</sup> but whoever **denies me before people**, I also will deny **before my Father who is in heaven**.

<sup>34</sup> **Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth**. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> 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**.

<sup>36</sup> And a person's **enemies** will be those of his own **household**. [Micah 7:6]

<sup>37</sup> 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**.

<sup>38</sup> And whoever does **not take his cross and follow me** is **not worthy of me**.

<sup>39</sup> Whoever **finds his life** (psyche) will **lose it**, and whoever **loses his life** (psyche) for my sake (on account of me) will **find it**.

<sup>40</sup> **Whoever receives you receives me**, and whoever receives me **receives him who sent me**.

<sup>41</sup> The one who receives a **prophet** because he is a prophet will receive a **prophet's reward**, and the one who receives a **righteous person** because he is a righteous person will receive a **righteous person's reward**.

<sup>42</sup> And whoever gives one of these little ones even a **cup of cold water** because he is (in the name of) a **disciple**, truly, I say to you, **he will by no means lose his reward**.”

**11:**<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had finished **instructing his twelve disciples**, he went on from there to teach and **preach in their cities**. <sup>2</sup> Now when **John** heard in prison about the **deeds of the Messiah**, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, “**Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?**”

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**Matthew 6:25, 33** <sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, **do not be anxious about your life** (psyche), what you will eat or what you will **drink**, nor about your body, what you will put on.” ... <sup>33</sup> **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you**.

**Matthew 16:21-26**

<sup>21</sup> From that time **Jesus began to show his disciples** that he must **go to Jerusalem** and **suffer many things** from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and **be killed**, and on the **third day be raised**.

<sup>22</sup> And **Peter took him aside** and began to **rebuke** him, saying, “**Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you**.” <sup>23</sup> But he turned and said to Peter, “**Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block (skandalon) to me. For you are not thinking the things of God, but the things of humans**.”

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, “**If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me**. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would **save his life** (psyche) will **lose it**, but whoever **loses his life** (psyche) for my sake will **find it**. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and **forfeits his soul** (psyche)? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul (psyche)?”

**Matthew 26:51-52** <sup>51</sup> And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. <sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to him, “**Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword**.”

**Matthew 5:17** <sup>17</sup> “**Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them**.”

## Real Life in More Dimensions

Matthew is bringing us to the conclusion of Jesus' instructions to the Twelve as he sends them out into the Jewish towns and villages of Galilee and beyond. But there is much more at stake than a brief mission. This is the beginning of disciples announcing the inbreaking of God's kingdom – fulfillment of promises to Abraham, Moses, David, prophets. They go with a vision of God's heart and purposes in Jesus' sermon, without ordinary resources, but with Jesus' authority against sickness and the power of Satan. They go as sheep among wolves – fearless! The problem is that they live in the same world of thought, values, sin, frustration, hopes, dreams as the people around them. They're astonished at Jesus' authority, healing, forgiving, teaching like others. They love it but don't understand it. There's hardly a sentence of Jesus' sermon that they could have formulated on their own. It's easy for it all to swirl round and past them. Jesus hits the disciples with frightening scenes – the serious crisis unfolding in Jesus' mission. They need to see the everything differently. All other options for the 'lost sheep' were also lost: centering in ethnicity, law, temple, exclusion, violence, etc. Jesus embodies an emphatic No. God's purposes through Israel were always universal. But more: human sin, alienation, death. Jesus himself is the crucial focus: Son of David, Son of Man, Servant of the Lord, Messiah, one who embodies God's people and is the very presence of God visiting his people – "arm of the Lord." Jesus becomes the focus for the reality/character/heart of God's kingdom to break in. Thus "agree in me before people" ... "I will agree in him before my Father." Life lived in more dimensions. The disciple carries the presence of Jesus and the Father along with the prophets & righteous.

## Peace on Earth – Swords, Division, Crosses

Jesus knows his coming creates a crisis. He already spoke of flogging, trials, executions (10:17ff.). He came to fill up the prophets (5:17) who saw and foresaw crises: not just political, but running into the deepest, closest relationships of human life – even into one's own heart. The sword Jesus cast was not a weapon of conquest but was pointed at the throat of his own disciples: James, son of Zebedee; Stephen; Paul, Peter; Jesus' brother James. Jesus speaks of carrying a cross and following him long before his crucifixion. Life and death are at stake. This is not a feel-good game. Follow me, but know what's at stake – Who our creator is, what his self-revelation in scripture means, who we are as creatures – all brought to focus in Jesus. Love God at center of life, and life expands with love for parents, children, even for enemies. Put any other love in place of God, and life becomes smaller, distorted, "not worthy of me."

## Rewards of the Self-Giving / Self-Gaining Life

What does Jesus ultimately intend for his disciples? Conflict, division, suffering, losing your life? No. Jesus is showing his followers how to gain/find their life, their soul, their true self. He is pointing them to being acknowledged before the God of the universe. A life that receives the reward of the Prophet, the righteous. A life of ultimate fulfillment, love, meaning. The problem is where we start. We live in a world that tells us how to find ourselves, our life. But the reality is that the ways our world offers all center us on things other than God. They offer counterfeit security that seems to stave off physical death, while actually destroying our souls with counterfeit gods. Even disciples find it hard to break free. Jesus says God alone is the creator who holds our existence, soul, life in his hands. He is the God revealed in the Sermon on the Mount and in every act of healing, deliverance, forgiveness by Jesus. He is the God ultimately who will be revealed in the Cross and resurrection of Jesus. He is the God who loves even his enemies. He loves to reward fully – even a cup of cold water.