

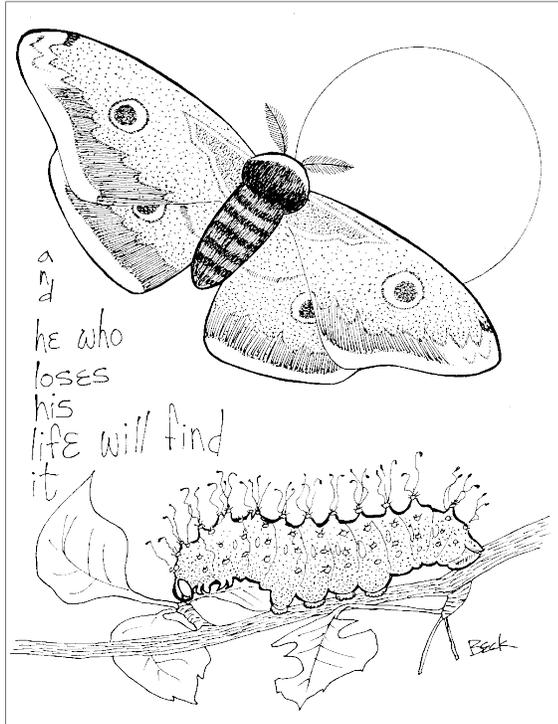
June 25, 2023 Mt. 10:24-39. Genesis 21:8-21

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Additional [Beck](#)



ENTERING THE SCENE

Like the caterpillar in this drawing, we are munching our way toward eternity. Every bite brings it closer and closer to the time when it will spin a cocoon and begin the process that will eventuate in a new form, that of the butterfly. Matthew, in this collection of teachings gives us bites of wisdom as we too move closer to the time when we will enter the transfiguring phase of our physical lives. Once again, we hear “don’t be afraid”. Don’t let anyone or anything try to convince you that this physical life is all you get. God’s process will bring each of us into our eternal life. When we seem to be losing life, we might really be gaining **LIFE**.

Mt. 10:24-39

24 A **student** is not above his **teacher**, nor a **servant** above his **master**. 25 It is enough for the **student** to be like his **teacher**, and the **servant** like his **master**. If the head of the house has been called **Beelzebub**, how much more the members of his household! 26 So do not be **afraid** of them. There is nothing **concealed** that will not be **disclosed** or **hidden** that will not be **made known**. 27 What I tell you in the **dark**, speak in the **daylight**; what is **whispered** in your ear, **proclaim** from the roofs. 28 Do not be **afraid** of those who kill the **body** but cannot **kill** the **soul**. Rather, be **afraid** of the One 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 the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all **numbered**. 31 So don't be **afraid**; you are worth more than many **sparrows**. 32 Whoever **acknowledges** me before men, I will also **acknowledge** him before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever **disowns** me before men, I will **disown** him before my Father in heaven. 34 Do not suppose that I have come to bring **peace** to the earth. I did not come to bring **peace**, but a **sword**. 35 For I have come to turn “a man **against** his father, a daughter **against** her mother, a daughter-in-law **against** her mother-in-law-- 36 a man's **enemies** will be the members of his own household.” 37 Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not **worthy** of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not **worthy** of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his **cross** and **follow** me is not **worthy** of me. 39 Whoever **finds** his life will **lose** it, and whoever **loses** his life for my sake will **find** it.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Every time we give of our self for another, we lose a bit of time or energy that we could spend on our own needs. In what way have you “lost” yourself for another recently?

PRAYER: Lord, your family and friends tried to talk you out of your intense need to bring your understanding of the Father. Every time you opened yourself to someone’s need, God’s power flowed through you to them. Those who thought only they had this prerogative, finally hung you on a cross. Help me as I try to resist the temptation to settle for anything less than your understanding of God’s love. Then I shall truly “find” life. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

STUDENT/ TEACHER: Jesus is the teacher; the disciples and we are the students. We encounter tough lessons in this scripture today.

When you first read this text, what feelings did you find in yourself?

SERVANT / MASTER: Keeping the proper perspective on all things helps to make things clear.

What ‘masters’ are you ‘serving’ these days?

BEELEZBUB / ENEMIES: The word Beelzebub means the Lord of the dwelling. When an enemy is the lord of our dwelling, we are in big trouble.

Has an enemy ever been “Lord of your dwelling”?

AFRAID: The word afraid is used four times in just a few sentences. Jesus is always telling you not to be afraid, but now he tells you what to fear.

How does knowing what to fear help you?

CONCEALED / HIDDEN: Things that are hidden or concealed have the power to take you by surprise.

How does this teaching help to warn you so as to not be taken by surprise?

DISCLOSED / MADE KNOWN / NUMBERED: Jesus puts in strong words what he wants to teach the disciples. Nothing is left unnoticed or hidden.

Is this a comforting thing for you? If not, why not?

DARK / DAYLIGHT: Jesus teaches the disciples in their ‘darkness’ and instructs them to speak in the ‘light’.

When will the disciples’ “darkness” dispel, so that they can speak in the “daylight”?

WHISPERED / PROCLAIM: Something whispered is only for the ear of the one who hears it. Something that is proclaimed is for all the ears that can hear.

When will the disciples “hear” so that they can proclaim what they have heard?

BODY / SOUL: The physical body was thought to be the only reality. A person did whatever they could to keep the body alive. The concept of soul was much more difficult grasp and therefore took second place when facing danger.

Is this thinking still prevalent today? If so, in what ways do you experience/ see it?

KILL / DESTROY / FALL TO THE GROUND / CROSS: The ‘wisdom’ of the world worked to destroy Jesus’ wisdom, and Jesus knew that this would eventually happen to the disciples as well.

If you would have been there that day, do you think you would have had the courage to continue with Jesus?

SPARROWS: A sparrow was the offering of the poor person at the temple sacrifices. A couple of them would have been worth about a penny.

If God cares enough to notice such a simple creature, can you be strengthened by knowing how much more God cares for you?

ACKNOWLEDGE / DISOWN: This text is full of words that set up contrasts. It is one of the more either/or teachings in the gospel.

Do you ‘acknowledge’ the truths in it, or would you like to ‘disown’ them?

PEACE / SWORD: These words today act as a sword to cut us loose from all the people and things that promise us peace in this world of space and time.

How does your faith fortify you against all that promise security and comfort?

AGAINST: To be against something is to be in competition or in comparison with it.

How can a relationship in your life be in competition with your eternal life? In what way is Jesus comparing the ties of temporal connections with the sword?

WORTHY: Something is worthy when it has value or merit.

How do your choices reveal what you think is worthy?

FOLLOW: When you follow you go along with someone.

How is Jesus challenging you to follow him in this text today?

FIND / LOSE: This lesson helps you find that which you never want to lose, that is, the deep awareness of how much God loves you, and what that love is calling you into.

As a student of the master in this lesson, what is the most important revelation you gained by studying this text? What did you find? Did you lose any fear in the process?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 10:24f // Jn. 13:16; 15:20; Lk. 6:40; **Mt. 10:26-33** // Lk. 12:2-9; **Mt. 10:27** // Mk. 4:22; Lk. 8:17; 1 Tm. 5: 25; **Mt. 10: 28** // 1 Pt. 3:14; Rev. 2:10; **Mt. 10:32** // Lk. 12:8f; 9:26; Mk. 8:38; 2 Tim. 2:13; Rev. 3:5; **Mt. 10:34f** // Lk. 2:34; 12:51f; **Mt. 10: 35-6** // Lk. 12:53; Micah 7:6; **Mt. 10:37-8** // Lk. 14:26-7; 10:21; **Mt. 10:37f** // My. 16:24f; Lk. 14:26f; **Mt. 10:39** // Mk. 8:35; Lk. 9:24; Jn. 12:25;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Jer. 20:10-13; Ps. 69: 8-10, 14, 17, 33-35; Rom. 5:12-15; Mt. 10:26-33; Revised Common Lectionary: Gn. 21: 8-21; Ps. 86: 1-10, 16-17; Rom. 6:1-11; Mt. 10:24-39;

NOTE: (This week's gospel reading varies somewhat as it breaks at different points. I am using the RCL text this week, as it includes both readings, and will adjust next weeks reading accordingly)



SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

If Christians believe not just in a general providence, but also include in this a particular providence, for even “the hairs of your head are all numbered”, what does this imply for atoms, molecules, and all of matter: We cannot avoid this question if the preaching of Jesus and scientific research are not to part company. Unless this belief and the scientific way of looking at things are to stand side-by-side without any contact with each other, then this question confronts us with considerable challenges in conceptual terms. Belief in creation and the approach of natural science can best complement each other, without each trying to speak and decide on behalf of the other. But such a complementarity presupposes some intensive thinking.

Schonborn, Cardinal Christoph. [Chance or Purpose](#). San Francisco. Ignatius Press. 2007. Pgs. 76-7.

If we want to use the biblical teachings about the kingdom of God in the renewal of moral theology, we need to recognize the kingdom of God as the horizon against which we live our Christian lives. It is not something we bring about; rather, God beings it about. In the meantime we await it with hope for the fullness of that kingdom and try to act in a way that is appropriate to its claims. The kingdom is the horizon against which Christian life is to be lived, and it is the goal toward with all must point. Pg. 39.

Harrington, Daniel-Keenan, James [Jesus and Virtue Ethics](#). NY. Sheed & Ward Book. 2002.

Christ came as the *word* to do for us what our mother tongue does, namely, to shape us in such a way that we can move beyond the fear, darkness, and chaos that prevent us from entering the world of love, thought, and self-expression.

Rolheiser, Ronald. [Against an Infinite Horizon](#). NY. Crossroad Pub. 2001 Pg. 209

In Irenaeus: Against the Heresies (last of 2nd century) preface to Book 1 we find: “We will also offer suggestions, to the best of our limited capacity, for refuting this doctrine, by showing how utterly absurd, inconsistent, and incongruous with the truth their statements are. Not that we are accustomed to writing books, or practiced in the art of rhetoric; but it is love that prompts us to acquaint you and all your people with the teachings which up till now have been kept secret, which, however, by the grace of God have at last come to light. "For nothing is covered that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be known.” Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998.. Page 198.

Living in a fear-based culture inevitably affects your state of mind and the decisions you make. As a citizen you may become more compliant, more willing to surrender your rights for vague promises of safety. As an employee you are less demanding, less willing to take risks. And in your personal life you are more security oriented, and thus less open to new possibilities. Fear narrows your vision, shuts down intuition as well as common-sense reflection, and promotes violent actions. Phillip Moffit (Joga Journal 3-4/03)

I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life, and I've never let it keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do. Georgia O'Keefe

GOSPEL OF THOMAS

5 Jesus said, “Know what is in front of your face and what is concealed from you will be revealed to you. For there is nothing concealed which will not be manifest. 6 His disciples asked him, “Do you want us to fast, and how shall we pray, and shall we give alms, and what food regulations shall we keep?” Jesus said, do not lie, and do not do what you hate, because all is revealed before Heaven. For nothing is hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing is covered that shall remain without being revealed.”

16 Jesus said, "People might think I have come to throw peace on the world, and they do not know that I have come to throw dissolution on the earth: fire, sword, war. For there shall be five in a house: three shall be against two and two against three, the father against the son and the son against the father, and they shall stand as solitary ones."

55 Jesus said, "He who does not hate his father and his mother cannot be my disciple, and (he who) does not hate his brothers and sisters and (does not) carry his cross in my way will not be worthy of me."

101 "He who does not hate his (father) and his mother in my way will not be able to be my (disciple), and he who does (not) love his father and his mother in my way, will not be able to be my (disciple), for my mother...but (my) true (mother) gave me life."

SECOND CLEMENT (mid 2nd cent.)

3:2 He himself says, "He who acknowledges me before people, I will acknowledge before my Father."

Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pages 238-9, 241, 244, 364.

5:2-4 For the Lord said, "You will be as lambs in the midst of wolves." But Peter answered him, "Suppose, then, the wolves tear the lambs?" Jesus answered Peter, "Let not the lambs fear the wolves after their death; and you, fear not those who kill you and can do no more to you. But fear him who, after your death, has power over soul and body, to cast them into the hell of fire."

Throckmorton, Burton, Jr. Ed. [Gospel Parallels](#). NY. Thomas Nelson Pub. 1949. . Pg. 42.

Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 654, Logion 4: Jesus said, Everything that is not before you, and what is hid from you will be revealed to you. For there is nothing hid which will not be revealed; nor buried, which will not be raised. . Pg. 44.

Throckmorton, Burton, Jr. Ed. [Gospel Parallels](#). NY. Thomas Nelson Pub. 1949

Not only does love's weakness, with inexhaustible strength, overcome its opposite, and triumph through that opposition; the lover's own selfhood is itself affirmed and realized in its very self-negation....Now I am more truly and securely "I" than before I died to self in love.; for I have learned to "be", without "having," have learned that in giving up what I have I am free to simply to be, to love with truthfulness and realism without the illusions that possessions conjure up.

Lewis, Alan E. [Between Cross and Resurrection](#). Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001.

To follow the vocation does not mean happiness; but once it has been heard, there is no happiness for those who do not follow. C. S. Lewis

Threats of violence are everywhere on our news, our television dramas and the movies we entertain ourselves with. Cancer, drive by shootings, anthrax, gangs, high cholesterol, obesity, cancer, toxic waste, weapons of mass destruction, cancer, terrorists, Enron—you name it. It's frightening. It's everywhere we turn. Combine this with the clamor to buy this and buy that as an antidote to the fear. The air we breathe is laced with toxins of fear. We need to make a deliberate decision to opt out of the world of fear. Limit the amount of toxic air we breathe. Limit all media. Examine our spending habits and the reasons we buy. Cultivate the peace of Christ Let it rule in our hearts and push out the fear that lives there now. Be transformed. Rev. Fritz Mellberg

"What would Jesus Do?" remains a problematic question because it implies that it is Jesus' role to enter into our world and become the solution to our problems, when we are meant to live as bravely and as fully in our world and time as Jesus lived in his. Pg. 78.

Gomes, Peter J. [The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus](#). NY. Harper Collins. 2007.

When it seems humanly impossible to do more in a difficult situation, surrender yourself to the inner silence and thereafter wait for a sign of obvious guidance or for a renewal of inner strength.- Paul Brunton, "Meditations for People in Crisis"

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Shea, John. [The God Who Fell From Heaven](#). Argus Communications, Allen, TX. 1979. **A PRAYER TO THE TRUE MAN:** Page 84.

William R. White. [Stories for the Journey](#). Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1988. **WITHOUT BATTING AN EYE:** Page 95.

Mitchell, Stephen. [The Enlightened Heart](#). Harper & Row, NY. 1989. **ANCIENT MASTERS:** Page 14.

White, William R [Stories for the Gathering](#). Augsburg Pub. House. Minneapolis, MN. 1997. **THE SOUL TAKER** : Pages153-4.