



Kingdom of Heaven

5 – A Prophet Without Honor

Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today we finish up our series, *Kingdom of Heaven*. If you have your Bibles with you or you want to turn on your app, your iPad, your phone to Matthew 13, we are going to be finishing up this text. Matthew 13 starts with Jesus sitting by a lake. The crowd gets so large, he ends up getting on a boat and speaks to the crowd that's gathered on the shore. He begins speaking in parables about the kingdom of heaven. Then from there, he goes to his home town and that's where we are going to pick up today as we talk about rejection.

We've all experienced rejection on some level. You've experienced rejection by not being picked for the team. You've experienced rejection being asked to leave the team. You've experienced rejection by being asked to keep score for the team. We could just give my whole life story right now. You've been rejected from a job. You've been overlooked for a promotion. You may have just had a friend that walked away after years of time together.

Today, we are talking about when you are rejected for your faith. We're going to see today in the Holy Week text that we can be rejected by the world, and we understand that even though that is still painful, we shouldn't be shocked. But what happens when you're rejected by family and friends? Who here has led a family member or a friend to Christ? I love those stories. I hear those stories all the time at our church. Those who have shared for years with a family member. I was with a buddy this week at Panera Bread who shared for years with a family member and his brother came to know Christ late in life.

I love hearing those stories and I love hearing about someone in their senior years with major life change and all that comes with placing faith in Christ. But then the stories... I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand on this one, but some of you have family members and friends who yeah, you still go to the gatherings, but there is kind of a hand put up, like *we don't want to hear it anymore. We know what you believe, we know what you share, and I'm just done with it.* But some of you go to the gathering, your message has been rejected, but you're still there. But there are those in here that have had family and friends say, "I want nothing to do with you."

Today, as we talk about this level of rejection, we want to guard ourselves when rejected. Because when we're rejected, we tend to close our hearts. This is unresolved anger. We can become bitter, we can let resentment build within us. And when we close our hearts, we stop caring for others. After the last service, somebody said, "Just take the last two words off and put, "I just stopped caring altogether."

With a closed heart, you're not looking to meet the needs of other people. This is where we must be careful, follower of Jesus. We close our hearts, we stop caring for others and then we can lose sight of our calling. In this series, we've been looking at these parables, these word pictures, great stories about the kingdom of heaven, and you and I are called, as we treasure Christ and his kingdom. As we see that the kingdom is powerful, as we know what it means to be a believer in Christ Jesus, this is the good news that we are called to take out from here and out from our home.

We start today in Isaiah 53:3 as we look at the coming Messiah, as we look at Jesus. Isaiah says this. ***He was despised and rejected by mankind... Jesus understands rejection. ...a man of suffering... Your translation may read, "a man of sorrows." In other words, he understands suffering. He knows your suffering. Hebrews says he is our high priest, and he enters into that with us. ...and familiar with pain like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.***

If you are brand new to investigating the faith, you don't have any church experience, and you've been coming for some time, we start today with this understanding of Jesus. **Jesus knows our suffering and comforts us in it.** Here's what you need to know. "He comforts us in it" does not mean that he removes it from us. Paul says to the Corinthians, "He is the God of all comfort. He comforts us in our tribulation, in our struggle, in our difficulties." And that doesn't necessarily mean that the storm is going to be removed, but Jesus is the Comforter, and he goes through this with you.

Maybe you saw it during the Superbowl. It's an ad campaign that donors are bringing together called, "He Gets Us." There is some debate in the church about this and how much should be spent. This one says, "Jesus was fed up with politics too." Are there any amens on that one? Jesus agonized over his future too. Christians are debating this, and I think donors are bringing like 100 million dollars to just this campaign.

I was recently in a city, and I saw one of these on a billboard. I want to share their words so you understand the purpose of the campaign. It says, "Studies indicate that 64% of the respondents to this one poll believe that cancel culture is a direct threat to their freedom." For Jesus, cancel culture did not put his freedom at risk; it put his life at risk. However, such threats did not deter him from delivering his radical truth. This willingness to take a stand is a conviction that we wanted to permeate into the visuals for this topic, speaking of "He Gets Us." We selected imagery that reflected the strain of standing up for your beliefs even when the masses aim to vanquish your voice, a feeling that Jesus knew all too well.

So, yes, Jesus gets us, but I think sometimes we want a Jesus who gets us but does not confront us. We want a Jesus that understands us but does not challenge us. We want a Jesus that heals and a Jesus that walks alongside us, but calling me to repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near? Jesus gets us and he challenges us. He comforts and he confronts.

I want to start today before we look at the crowd. I don't know if you know this about crowds, but crowds can be fickle. Where I was this week, as the week went on, it was a heavy week to watch not just the events unfold, but how people processed it. I found myself watching the news a couple of times which I don't know why I do that. I'm watching the screen going, "You've lost the story. You've completely lost the story and what's happened. Why aren't we talking about the event that's

unfolding.” Then I was reminded of the words in Isaiah 5 - ***Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter...***

Here's what we know about crowds – they are fickle. They will change in a moment. I think this is why our parents often told us, “Don’t follow the crowd.” “Bad company corrupts good character.” Our parents were always concerned about the crowd we were hanging with. If I were to say to my parents, “I’m leaving today, I’m going to do this and I was maybe 13 or 14, the first question my mom would ask is, “Who are you going to be with?” So she knew how to pray. Can I get an amen from the moms in the room? Crowds change. This is why we don’t go with public opinion; we go with the scripture. We don’t go with the crowd because the crowd will change in a moment and they will turn on you, as we are going to see today, they did with Jesus.

Here's what we have to guard against. We don’t need closed hearts. Some of you have a closed heart right now toward public opinion, toward the mob mentality. You're like me. You watch the news and the inside of you gets angry. What did Jesus think about the crowd. How was Jesus moved by the crowd?

Matthew 9: 36 - ***When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them...*** Do you have compassion on the crowds, whatever crowd it may be? ***...because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.***

In Matthew 15, we see that the great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others and laid them at his feet and he healed them. We like the Jesus who gets us and the Jesus who heals us.

Today, what we are seeing is many want a loving Jesus who stays out of their business. I want Jesus to love and care for me and provide for me and walk alongside with me through the trials and the tribulations that I’m going through, but repentance? I’m not a big fan of that message. Changed life? Don’t know. I know how I want to live.

Now, Jesus finishes up all these parables and we read in Matthew 13... This is where we get the prophet without honor in his own hometown. ***53 When Jesus had finished these parables (there by the lake) he moved on from there. 54 Coming to his hometown...*** We need to add a detail from Mark 6. Mark gives this same account with some different details added. One very important detail in this story is that he went to his hometown with his disciples. Why is that important that his disciples accompanied him? According to Mark 6, it’s because in a few days after this, Jesus is going to send the disciples out two by two. We read it in Mark 6, it’s the very next story. He’s going to send them out two by two to share the good news of the kingdom of heaven.

He’s going to instruct them what they are to do if they go someplace, to a town or to a home that rejects the message. But before he gives them the instructions, this is so beautiful, he gives them a lesson. He gives them a hands-on lesson. They are going to watch Jesus be rejected in his own hometown. They are going to see it and then they are going to be told, “This is what you do...” And they watch how Jesus responds in this moment. ***...he began teaching the people in their synagogue...***

Hold onto this for a second because you are going to see how the crowd changes. ...**and they were amazed.** *Amazed* can mean caught off guard, surprised, we use the word *astonished*, and then they begin asking. **“Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked.** So, they were amazed at what Jesus was saying and what he was doing. With the next verse come all these questions. And these questions are not questions of discovery, they are disparaging remarks. **55 “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? 56 Aren’t all his sisters with us?** In other words, we know him. We know boy Jesus.

My brother goes to our first gathering. I called him out in the last gathering. I said, “I just want you to know if there is one person in here listening to me who is not impressed with me. It’s that guy sitting right back there, my brother who is four years older than me. Why is my brother, who hears me now as his pastor, sometimes just going “oh, brother”? Do you know why? He knows things. He has stories. Stories you’ll never hear. Shall you hear them, he shall surely die, buried in a shallow grave. Can I get an amen? That’s harsh, isn’t it? That sounds really harsh. I love my brother.

You really have to understand what’s going on in this text because Jesus comes and they are amazed at his teaching, but then they remember his upbringing. They’re like, “You’re just an ordinary guy.”

I don’t know if you watch American Idol. Anybody here watch American Idol and care to admit it? They are like on season 87. This show has been going on for a long time. I’ve always enjoyed the end... It’s kind of like sports. I don’t watch opening day, I watch playoffs. That’s a long season to get to the playoffs. So, at the end, when they are down to a few contestants, they go for the hometown visit. I love the hometown visit. I absolutely love the hometown visit because they go in and there’s a parade. Jesus didn’t get no parade.

But then they start interviewing people. My favorite is when they interview the now 85-year-old music teacher who is completely and totally unimpressed, who begins taking credit for this American Idol. “Carrie Underwood?” I did that. I love documentaries. One of my favorite documentaries... I love biographies. One of my favorite is Alan Jackson’s. It’s on Netflix. I just love when you get the story behind the music. I love Alan Jackson’s music because it’s just stories. The whole thing is about his hometown. The documentary is called Small Town Southern Man. My favorite part in the documentary is when they interview Alan Jackson’s sisters. They are completely and totally unimpressed. A country music legend. I know they shared stories that when Alan was going through the final edits, went, “No, that one is out.”

We’re trying to figure out who Jesus is. These questions are somebody hearing Jesus teach going, “I played with you down the street when you were 10. I live down the street from you.” And then Jesus says this.

“Where then did this man get all these things?” Just a couple of verses up they were amazed and now they begin figuring that this ordinary guy that grew up around here... **57 And they took offense at him.** That’s a crowd. They can be amazed one minute and offended the next. Let’s talk about this, Woodland Hills, for just a second. “That was so good until that one point.” “I really liked the teaching and then I didn’t care for that.” Isn’t it something how quickly we can go from amazing to offended?

This is the Jesus we want, “But you start telling me to repent and build my life upon you and upon your teachings, Jesus?” “This is how I’m living, this is why I’m living this way. Just be the loving Jesus.” We want a loving Jesus who stays out of our business. After they take offense to his teaching, **But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town...** Now watch. This is even more important. Not just in his town where friends and people familiar with him know him, know stories of him, but also in his own home. Family members rejected him. And this is painful when family members and friends reject you. **...and in his own home.” 58 And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.**

I have to give you one more detail from Mark 6:6. It says after this that he did perform some miracles. He healed some people, but in Mark 6: 6 it says, **He was amazed at their lack of faith.** Have you ever thought about that? What amazes Jesus? Twice in the gospels say Jesus is amazed. One time is here. He is amazed at their lack of faith. And then in Luke, we read he was amazed at the faith of the Centurion. So, in one case, he is amazed at someone’s faith, and in another case, here, he’s amazed at their lack of faith.

I processed it a lot this week because there are many... And some are in here. Some are at this church. You’ve come here for a long time. You have heard the good news proclaimed from here, in small group, at Ready to Wed, in Marriage 911, whatever it is that brought you here, you’ve heard the good news proclaimed from multiple voices and you still reject the message. You still choose to live life your own way. I can say those are moments that I’m amazed. I’m shocked, you’re shocked. You’ve sat around a family gathering where things were being debated and discussed and you shared the good news and you’re like, “This is the message that brings great joy, and you don’t want it?” You sat there amazed, astonished, shocked that this good news would be rejected. But, followers of Jesus, some insight we have, and the disciples would have had watching all of this go down.

We should not be shocked when rejected by friends and family. Painful? Yes. Hurtful? Yes. Putting us in distress and hurting relationships? Yes. But we shouldn’t be shocked. And the disciples are going to be rejected, but now they have seen Jesus himself rejected for the good news of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus prepared us for this. We have his words in Matthew 10: 36 – **A man’s enemies will be members of his own household.** And what does Jesus say in Matthew 10? **Do not suppose that I have come to earth to bring peace. I didn’t come to bring peace; I came to bring a sword.** We don’t talk about this verse a lot at Christmas. He says, “When you place faith in me, I want undivided allegiance. What that means is when you choose me, some family members are going to say no to you and reject you. You will have family members that will turn from you, but remember, I am your first love.”

A couple of things Jesus is not saying in Matthew 10 – he is not saying dishonor parents, family members. I want to remind some of my very conservative type friends that are just ready to pounce at a moment’s notice, this is not a goal. Jesus isn’t saying go be as obnoxious as you can at the next family gathering. He is not saying making that uncle an enemy. He is saying, “You stand for me, you love me, you let your faith lead out in your life and watch, people will reject you. Be prepared for it. Your enemies will be in your own household. And this is painful, but we’ve been prepared for it.

We are in Holy Week, and in Holy Week, you know what happens in a matter of days. Not even a full week later, the crowd goes from “Hosannah” to “Crucify Him!” Let’s talk about that for just a moments.

In Matthew 21: 8 – 11, On Sunday, the beginning of the week, **8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” 10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred** The whole city was rejoicing with Jesus, **and asked, “Who is this?” 11 The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from (hometown) Nazareth in Galilee.”**

Not even a week later, days later, Matthew 27: 23 says, **But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”**

Now, scholars debate this. I just want to share the debate, what the evidence we have in scripture actually teaches us. Some scholars would say these were two completely different groups. There was a group that yelled “Hosanna” and another group that yelled “Crucify him!” Sometimes you’ve heard it preached that some from within this group found their way over to the other group so there were people... Some believe there were people that shouted “Hosanna” but then turned their voices and shouted “Crucify him.” The evidence we have, that we can rest on, from the scripture and understanding the narrative of Holy Week is this. Public opinion shifted in Jerusalem, period. And it went from a celebratory moment to a dark crucify-him moment that we will be remembering on Friday.

One pastor, Dave Miller, I thought put it in perfect perspective. “At the triumphal entry, Jerusalem rejoiced. But then Jesus failed their expectations.”

There are many leaders in here that understand this. The crowd was with you until you didn’t meet their expectations. I don’t want to ask elected officials to raise their hand, but you are low hanging fruit on this point right here. The crowd was with you until you made one decision they didn’t like and then they turned on you. Please don’t forget this. Don’t go with the crowd because the crowd will not always fit what you believe from scripture and when you stand up for this, they will turn on you. And the crowd... Just like the disciples, we have to understand what is going on in this day. Just like the disciples, the crowd wanted a powerful, immediate, physical kingdom to wipe out Rome. Jesus didn’t meet that expectation.

“He had come to defeat sin and death, not Rome.”

I know who I’m talking to right now. There are some of you in here that are like, ‘We need to know. We are going to be followers of Jesus and it’s time to take some people out.’ Bring it down a notch and remember sharing the good news of the kingdom is that Jesus came to defeat sin and death. Next week at Easter, we will celebrate the resurrected Jesus and we will celebrate victory over the grave. Please don’t get so caught up in fighting Rome that you forget what the good news is all about. Some of you just turned right there. You’re like, ‘I loved everything until...’

“His kingdom was in hearts,”

We already saw this in this series. He said, 'It's in your midst.' Remember he said, 'You're not going to be able to point and say there it is, here it is. It's in our midst.'

"...not on a throne (at least not yet). (Cont.)"

Remember, we saw this that the kingdom of heaven is a present reality in our midst, but it's also a future expectation.

"They began to reject Jesus as the campaign of lies by the religious leaders had its effect. Finally, by the time Jesus stood before Pilate..."

If you are brand new to scripture, you need to understand this is days from "Hosanna, Hosanna." This is not weeks or months; this is days. This is how fast a crowd turns. "

...there had been a dramatic shift in public opinion."

Follower of Jesus, if ever there was a time in my life in ministry... I am convinced of this. There has never been a time when public opinion is one day over here and then over here and then over there. I don't go with public opinion, and you shouldn't either. We stick with Jesus. We just sang about it. We build our life on Jesus and his teachings. Everything else is sinking sand. And it is not the foundation for our life. Followers of Jesus should not expect public opinion to swing in our direction. Again, it's painful. I don't think we can deny the emotion. It's difficult and it's painful. But we shouldn't be surprised. Why? Jesus, again. Just as he prepared us for this within friends and family, he prepares us for this from the world. This is what he says in John 15: 18 - "If the world hates you, please keep in mind it hated me first."

I want to remind all of us. This is not a challenge. Again, it's not a challenge to see if you can get people to hate you. It's just, take your stand for Christ. And when you do, the world will hate you. I have to be prepared when I watch or hear or listen to other voices and public opinion to not be swayed by it. follower of Jesus, let's not be swayed by it. let's be reminded that the world hated Jesus and what he stood for.

So, what do you do? What do we do? When rejected by friends, family, and the world, I just want to leave you with three encouraging thoughts hopefully. I promise, if you bring your friends and family next week, I'm going to calm down a little bit. I know this is a little harsh, as we are celebrating the resurrected Jesus, but this is just... last week was a heavy week and I'm telling you we are entering into another heavy week. Don't just sit with the events of Holy Week, enter into them. Sit in them for a little bit and feel these events.

When rejected by family, friends, and the world:

1. Keep an open heart. I just keep coming back to this verse. Jesus had experienced beatings, betrayal, suffering, rejection. At the end of the week in the midst of all this, while you and I are getting fired up with public opinion, going against him,

Jesus is able to say this from the cross. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” That is the heart of our savior. That is the heart of Jesus, and it is the heart all of us are called to have as followers of Christ. Pastor Jared Wilson said this, and I think it’s a great reminder for us, “*An upside to getting older is that you start to care less what people think.*”

I’m looking at my senior adult friends in here who are on fixed incomes because they are retired. In the first gathering today at 8:15, they were cheering. I asked them when did your give-a-dang break? They were like, “Man, the day of my retirement, when I got the sheet cake, I couldn’t care less what people thought of me!” I’m like, “Okay, but be careful because you may be at that place you couldn’t care less what people think, but a potential downside is that you can start to care less how people feel. Probably a good sign of a heart closing towards those that Jesus loves and those who you are called to love.

2. When rejected by friends, family, and the world, stay on mission. I am preaching to myself right now. It is easy for me to dream of a sheet cake. You know I’m a big fan of sheet cakes right now. But I’m never going to leave the mission until the Lord returns or calls me home. Stay on mission. Here’s where we get Jesus after the parables he shares at the lake. After he goes to his hometown, he sends his disciples out two by two, to share the good news of the kingdom of heaven. And here’s what he instructs them: As they just witnessed now in Jesus own home town, if anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Leave that as a sign for the mission continues. The good news continues. A lesson we have to stay on mission. Some of you are around toxic people right now and toxic people are bringing you down and keeping you from your mission. Shake the dust off your boots and move on, continuing to share the good news of the kingdom of heaven. Don’t quit.

3. Take your stand. We’ve been saying this for a long time now since our armor series. Ephesians 4: 14 – ***then they will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching that comes from the crowd.*** There’s going to be a new teaching tomorrow. There is going to be something new and exciting when someone tells you we should be believing this or that. That stuff is going to come in and out of your life by the cunning and craftiness of people and their deceitful scheming. Take your stand for Jesus’ kingdom and his Word. And build your life and your foundation there. Ephesians 6: 10 – 11, we read ***Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.***

The devil is brilliant, and the devil hates you. He doesn’t want you on mission. Take your stand.

Yesterday, I was very blessed by a pastor. We were having a great conversation over coffee. I asked him, “When did you first start drinking coffee?”

He said, “At four.”

I said, “four years old?”

He said, "Yeah, I would go over to my grandma's house, and she would put some milk in the cup, a little bit of sugar, and a little bit of coffee. Then we would go out on the front porch and smoke Virginia Slims. She smoked. I just weaned myself off the milk."

I asked, "When did you start drinking black coffee?" He said, "In my early teens." I go, "Man, you are a hard-core coffee drinker."

We were having a great conversation, as pastors do, over coffee. He just blessed me with the words, and I just want to bless you with the same words. He said, "You know, we're living in the times, Ted, that we know about, we are prepared for. I'm going to encourage you as I'm encouraging every other pastor and believer I know. Take your stand. Just stand. Don't back up, don't sit down, just keep it up."

It was just simple. It was what I needed to hear, and I know it's what you need to hear.

Take your stand with an open heart, caring for people and have compassion on the crowd.

We are going to enter into the Lord's Supper. I want to tell you that everyone is invited to the Lord's table, but to receive the Lord's Supper, you must receive Christ to take the Lord's supper in a worthy manner. I take you to John 1: 9-12 They kind of sum up everything we've talked about this morning, sums it up beautifully. **9 The true light that gives light (Jesus) to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him... He is the Creator and Sustainer of all life. ...the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**

That's you and that's me. For those who place faith in Jesus, the Lord's Supper is for you to be reminded of what Jesus did when he went to the cross for you and for me, for the forgiveness of sins. I'm going to ask that you bow your head with me, and you prepare your heart so you can take the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. Thank the Lord for his sacrifice, for his blood and his body, confess sin, prepare to reconcile relationships,

Father, we take this meal as those who have received Jesus and believe in his name and are children of God. Thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus, for the forgiveness of our sins. We thank you for our salvation. And every time we take of this cup and eat of this bread, we are reminded of his sacrifice for us. As we enter into this Holy Week, that we would do so with hearts and minds tuned to all that Jesus went through this week and the lessons and in insights that we gain from it, knowing that he cares for us and he confronts us. He loves us and he challenges us. We pray this in the authority of the name of Jesus.

In Matthew 26: 26- 29, it reads, **26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**

29 I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

And all God's people said... Amen