

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 7)
Matthew 10:24-39
June 21, 2026



Some Sundays, the lectionary seems to have a wicked sense of humor. Father's Day and Matthew 10:37 is one of them: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." I expect to be forgiven for immediately checking Genesis reading.

But Jesus is not asking his followers to despise their families. Nor is he dismissing the beauty, complexity and responsibility of kinship. This passage belongs to a longer speech in Matthew 10, where Jesus prepares the disciples to go out in mission. It is, in many ways, their field manual. Jesus is telling them what to expect when they carry the good news beyond the safety of his immediate presence.

And what they should expect, apparently, is trouble.

In this moment, Jesus is not yet sending them to "all nations." That expansive commission will come at the end of Matthew's Gospel. They are going to their own people, their religious community, their faith family.

But it is often within our own circles that a new word is hardest to receive. The sharpest resistance to change doesn't always come from strangers or enemies. It comes from people who know us, love us, taught us, raised us or sat beside us in the pew. In these conversations, we are not simply debating ideas. We are touching family systems, inherited assumptions and beloved traditions. "The way we've always done it" can also mean, "The way my grandmother taught me to believe." And for many people, challenging an inherited belief can feel like dishonoring the people who handed it down.

Jesus knows that the gospel will disturb households. He knows that allegiance to God's kin-dom can unsettle the bonds that have shaped us most deeply. When Jesus says he has come not to bring peace but a sword, he is not glorifying violence or celebrating division. He is telling the truth: the gospel cuts through our loyalties and reveals what we love most.

The “good news,” ironically, exposes the places where family, tradition, comfort or approval have become more authoritative than God.

This is not abstract. Many Christians know what it feels like to follow Jesus into convictions that create tension at the dinner table. Someone begins to speak differently about racial justice, poverty, immigration, war, gender, or sexuality, and suddenly the room changes temperature. A child tells the truth a family has long avoided. At best, a parent repents of inherited prejudice. A congregation begins to welcome people it once excluded. A believer says, “I know what I was taught, but I have come to see Christ’s way differently now.”

But these moments are rarely tidy. These acts of faithfulness can feel like betrayal.

On Father’s Day, this passage invites us to honor fathers and father figures without pretending that family love is simple or ultimate. Good fathers help us grow in courage, compassion and truth. Faithful parents do not demand that children preserve every inherited belief unchanged; they bless them to follow Christ more fully than previous generations could imagine. The best family love does not compete with discipleship. It prepares us for it.

But not every family system does this. Some families punish honesty; some traditions confuse loyalty with silence. Jesus’ words offer a hard mercy: even the most sacred human bonds cannot take the place of God. We are called to love our families, but not to make idols of them.

The comfort in this passage is easy to miss, but it is there. “Do not be afraid,” Jesus says again and again. Do not fear those who malign you. Do not fear those who misunderstand you. Do not fear those who can harm the body but cannot destroy the soul.

The disciples are not sent into conflict alone. Neither are we.

To take up the cross is not to seek suffering for its own sake, but to stay faithful when love of Christ leads us into costly truth. It is to trust that the life

we lose in service to God's kin-dom is not wasted. It is found again, held in the hands of the One who counts sparrows, numbers hairs and sends us out with courage.

Questions for reflection on Matthew 10:24-39

1. Where have you experienced resistance from within your own "faith family" when trying to speak or live a new truth?
2. How can we honor parents, elders and inherited traditions without allowing them to become more authoritative than Christ?
3. What might it mean, this week, to take up the cross not as needless suffering, but as costly faithfulness to love, justice and truth?