

Terms, Conditions, Assurances (Matthew 10)

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Preacher: William HC

- [0 : 00] He called his 12 disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the 12 disciples.
- First, Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector, James, son of Alphaeus and Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.
- These 12 Jesus sent out with the following instructions. Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go, rather, to the lost sheep of Israel.
- As you go, preach this message. The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cleanse those who have leprosy.
- Drive out demons. Freely you have received. Freely give. Do not take long any gold or silver or copper in your belts.
- [1 : 07] Take no bag for the journey or extra tunic or sandals or a staff. For the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave.
- As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it. If it is not, let your peace return to you.
- If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth. It will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.
- I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Be on your guard against men.
- They will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account, you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.
- [2 : 14] But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time, you will be given what to say. For it will not be you speaking, but the spirit of your father speaking through you.
- Brother will betray brother to death and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.
- All men will hate you because of me. But he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.
- I tell you the truth. You will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.
- It is enough for the servant 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?
- [3 : 18] So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight.

What is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 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.

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. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

So don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth.

[4 : 19] I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 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.

A man's enemies will be the members of his own household. 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. And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Whoever finds his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. He who receives you receives me.

And he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he's a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. And anyone who receives a righteous man because he's a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.

[5 : 22] And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he's my disciple, I tell you the truth.

He will certainly not lose his reward. This is God's word. Thank you, Heidi. Yeah, we're welcome, Pastor William.

Good afternoon, PCBC. Can everyone hear me okay? That's good. Yeah, once again, thank you for joining us today.

And yeah, thank you so, so much for reading God's word for us. Yeah, and just your encouragement. I do want to pray as we dive into this challenging, but I think rewarding part of God's word.

So would you do that together with me as we pray now? Our great God and Father, you are the one who has sent workers into the harvest, your harvest field.

[6 : 25] You give us a beautiful picture of men and women who are ready to hear your good news and to come into your family. And you want to use us to take this beautiful message out, the message of Jesus Christ, who loves the world.

And Father, help us now as we hear how hard it can be and how rewarding it can be. Hear our call. Hear our fears. Hear our assurance.

I pray that you would speak to us today through this chapter. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. All right, everyone. It's day 19 of lockdown.

I know because that's how I've been keeping track, as you can tell. Not just me, but others who have been growing some facial hair. Perhaps, you know, the hair is plentiful, but the shave is a few.

I would like to say this, though. One thing that has been great about this week is that the rest of the country has moved to level three, right? And level three means, well, we're still on level four.

[7 : 28] We still can't leave our house. But at least we could order, I don't know, salmon from Twizel, oysters from Invercargill, a board game from Hamilton, and get them delivered to our door. So I want you to imagine, friends, if you decided to take the plunge, you're still in lockdown, and you're going to buy the latest, I don't know, earbuds, let's say.

All right. So imagine that, and it comes in the mail. Once you unwrap it, what would be the first thing you do? All right. Type one in the chat if you would just open it and turn it on straight away.

Type two if you do something sensible, like charge the thing. And then type three if you would open up the little slipper paper and read the warranty and the terms and conditions.

So have a go. Yeah. One, you turn on the device straight away. Two, charge it, baby. Quite sensible. Three, read the terms and conditions. Okay.

Mostly ones and twos, right? Okay. Jensen, well done. Anyone else? One. Okay. And I think I'm with you. I think the vast majority of us would just go straight into it, right?

[8 : 39] The unboxing experiences, and it's not complete until you try it on. The way I see it, Matthew chapter eight and nine was kind of like the unboxing experience, right?

The flashy front page of the product website, and you just get to feel and touch and see Jesus and his beautiful kingdom breaking through. And then when we get to chapter 10, it feels like you're reading the terms and conditions on apple.com, right?

What is going on here? It feels so different, right? Last week, Pastor Richard reminded us and gave us a beautiful picture, right? The harvest picture. The harvest picture.

That's inspiring. And then on the other hand, the terms and conditions can feel a little bit, I think, overwhelming. I wonder, as we heard chapter 10 read just now by our friend, did you notice the instruction, though, that Jesus repeats again and again?

Let me show to you verse 19. It says, when they arrest you, do not worry. Do not worry. How about verse 26? Do not be afraid of them. 28, don't fear those who kill the body.

[9 : 50] 31, fear not. I think Jesus knows our hearts, doesn't he? He knows that when it comes to going deeper into following him and evangelism and sharing the good news about Jesus with our friends and neighbors, with family or strangers, Jesus knows our hearts.

And our hearts have all kinds of doubts and fears. And so I think in Matthew 10, he prepares us with the terms and conditions.

He prepares us with warnings and assurances so that we, as his followers, are ready and willing to proclaim his kingdom to our hurting world.

Now, this is a fairly long passage, I know. But I think it's good that we look at it in one chunk because I think as we look at it as a whole, we see that Jesus covers three main themes in his terms and conditions talk.

I think in chapter 10 of Matthew's gospel, we see him talk about our call, which is clear. He addresses our fears, which are real. But then he also reminds us of our assurance, which is great.

[10 : 59] And these are all things we need to know so that we can be faithful followers of Jesus Christ, to be his disciples that share his good news. So firstly, I want to share, I want to talk about how Matthew 10 tells us that our call is clear.

We're called to be ordinary people proclaiming God's extraordinary kingdom in Jesus' name. I think that's what the first 15 verses kind of show us, give us a glimpse of.

Verses 1 to 4, if you can see that in front of you, we see the first and only time that Matthew names these 12 apostles. And notice that Jesus didn't choose the most powerful and influential.

There's no Beyonce here in this list. No all blacks, no prime ministers or health ministers. Instead, Jesus chooses very ordinary people.

It's Simon and Andrew from the fishing boats, right? It's James and John, those hot-headed blokes from down the road. It's Matthew from accounts. These are ordinary people, jars of clay.

[12 : 04] And I think he picks ordinary people so that it becomes so clear that any good works, any amazing results comes through Jesus' power, not our own talents.

And in time, Jesus will call others to service. In Luke's gospel, he talks about 70 being sent out, for example. And at Pentecost, it's hundreds and thousands. But for now, at this point in salvation history, Jesus calls these 12, and he sends them out into the nearby towns and villages in Galilee, the harvest field that Jesus has just prayed about last week.

And he tells them, proclaim this message. It says here, verse 7, the kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick. Raise the dead.

Cleanse those of leprosy. Drive out demons. Now, this is door-to-door evangelism with a bit of teeth, isn't it? Imagine if you and I could drive down Pack Highway.

Of course, we've got to stay local. But do it with the, go down and share the same bag of tricks, right? What if we could heal COVID? What if we could raise the dead?

[13 : 14] Wouldn't people take notice? Wouldn't people take notice? We need to remember, though, and I mentioned this a few weeks ago, remember what these miracles are intended for.

Jesus has done all these things before to authenticate, to certify his authority to bring in a new kingdom. He is showing, awaiting people what heaven's kingdom looks like.

The healings and the raise from the dead, they're kind of like sneak previews or movie trailers of what it looks like when Jesus rules again. No death, no uncleanness, no disease.

And here Jesus gives the 12 apostles for this particular short-term mission, these same extraordinary powers, to certify this message that they're going to bring out. The kingdom of heaven is near.

God has come. And look, every new Christian that joins PCBC, that comes along in the last few years, is also a miracle.

[14 : 19] And look, too, everyone who confesses their sin and turns to Jesus for forgiveness and new life is also a miracle. Every decision to follow Christ is also proof that God's spirit is still at work miraculously and that the kingdom of heaven is drawing near.

And look, I know you might not feel very supernatural right now, but you are. The Bible says that everyone who is in Christ receives the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

And Holy Spirit is working miracles right now, turning your heart of stone into flesh as you hear from his God-breathed word week after week.

Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 3. He says, you are a letter from Christ, the result of ministry, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God.

That's a miracle, isn't it? That's a miracle. And our call is just to be ordinary people and proclaiming God's extraordinary kingdom.

[15 : 25] You and I are asked to tell our friends and family that in Jesus, the kingdom of heaven has drawn near. We showed this miraculous work by our generous sacrificial lives.

There may be miraculous things that happen alongside, but we're here to proclaim this extraordinary message. And I love how verse 8 puts it as well.

Freely you have received. Freely give. We heard that in an interview, didn't we? The motivation for us to freely give is because we have freely received.

Grace is the best motivation for a lifetime of evangelism, not guilt. And I don't know. When I read 11 to 13, this little section about kind of missionary strategies, I think there's a bit of wisdom too.

In verses 11 to 13, Jesus tells us specifically to look for worthy. The word worthy appears several times in the section. Worthy or deserving people.

[16 : 29] Jesus says that in our community, within our friends and family, there's going to be people of peace. People who are keen to hear more. A survey a few years ago, 2018, of 600 non-Christians in New Zealand, said that one in four people would consider exploring religious faith.

Right? One in four. So let's seek them out. And I think it's interesting as well. I mean, in this section, in verse 5, it says, Jesus said, don't go among the Gentiles or into any town of Samaritans.

Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. What's he trying to do there? Does Jesus exclude Gentiles and Samaritans? Well, we know from other parts of the Bible, he doesn't.

Clearly not. Right? And actually, further on, he actually says that he wants them to be witnesses to the Gentiles in verse 18. So what's he saying here exactly? I think Matthew is kind of giving us a pattern of ministry or showing us one kind of ministry we can do.

And it's to go from cultures close to us first and then cultures further away. As you know, Matthew ends his gospel with Jesus' great commission, right? To make disciples of all nations.

[17 : 46] That's how Matthew's gospel ends. But I think for now, he's just saying there's lost sheep down the road in our friend groups. You don't have to look far to find people who will listen, who you can spend time with and hear their stories and share the hope of Jesus with them.

I think, friends, there are people in our lives who speak our language or the mix of languages we have. There are people who relate to our upbringing, right?

As first or second generation Kiwi Asians. There are people out there among our friends and family who share our hobbies and interests. And yes, some of us will be called to cross cultures to reach the unreached.

But there are also easy gains when it comes to sharing the gospel, right? If you're an architect or designer, for example, you already know how to point other creative types, creative people to the beauty of the cross.

I don't know if you're a gamer, maybe you have the language to tell other gamers of God's victory in Christ. And a missionary friend told me this, that people who lived in different cultures, bicultural people or third culture people, when they make sense of their identity and ground it truly in Jesus Christ, they make some of the best missionaries wherever God places them.

[19 : 10] So there's so much wisdom in here. But all in all, our call is clear. Jesus, as part of the terms and conditions of following him, calls us to be ordinary people to proclaim God's extraordinary kingdom in Jesus' name.

Jesus calls us, doesn't he? He also acknowledges and acknowledges our fears. Jesus, once I was struck by the fact that one of the reasons I'm never good at playing soccer, for example, is because I actually fear what I do, you know, if I kick the ball in the wrong way or made the wrong move.

Half the times that when I was playing soccer with my friends, that I would make a mistake was because I feared following through with the tackle.

I feared having a go and seeing where the ball would lead me. And often these situations are what led me to dropping the pass or missing the shot. And so sometimes it's not my fault.

But sometimes it is. Sometimes behind the reasons I don't do well, right, for in a sport, for example, there are some fears that I haven't dealt with. And Jesus, I think, knows this.

[20 : 34] He's just called his 12 disciples to go out and see the gospel. But he knows and acknowledges that they have fears. And I think that's what the rest of chapter 10 is about. He addresses some of their fears.

And perhaps some of these fears you might relate with as well. So I want to say that our second point is this. Our fears are real. Serving Jesus can bring different things to our lives.

It can bring poverty. It can bring persecution. And it can bring rejection. Have a look at verse 9 again. It says here, Don't take any gold or silver or copper in your belts.

Take no bag for the journey or extra tunic or sandals or a staff for the workers worth his keep. And whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house till you leave.

I don't know. What did you make? What did you make? What did you make of that verse? What did you make of those verses? That's a pretty tough ask, isn't it? It's a pretty tough ask to leave your wallet at home.

[21 : 38] And not only that, verse 10 to 11, Jesus tells them to rely on the hospitality of strangers. You can't check into a nicer motel.

You have to sleep on the dirt floor if you have to. You might have to eat whatever they give you. You're really going by faith. Imagine if you were Matthew, the tax collector. Imagine how hard that would have been to do that.

And Jesus knows. Just like the Son of Man had no place to lay his head, Jesus calls his followers to follow him in this way.

And look, we might not be in the exact same situation, but Jesus warns us that going deeper into following him often means material sacrifice. Doesn't it?

Think of friends who feel a cause of ministry, but they're so worried how they might provide for their family if they followed through. Or how they provide for their aging grandparents if they followed through.

[22 : 39] Or a friend I prayed with last week, he told me how he chose to pastor a less resourced church in a Vietnamese community. And he does it while keeping a part-time job to make it work.

But all of us have made financial sacrifices too, haven't we? Each week when we give financially to fund the work of the church or to serve the poor and needy among us, that's a sacrifice too.

Or maybe you didn't take a promotion or a job offer so that you could be freer to serve your church family. Or maybe you just pay big rent to stay local.

Or maybe you could be freer to serve your church family. Serving Jesus, even here in East Auckland, comes at a financial cost. And I think sometimes that fear can grip us. Maybe that fear means that we might live on less.

We might not have as much as we would like. And so it becomes tempting to grow stingy or materialistic, worldly, to start storing our treasures on earth instead of investing for eternity.

[23 : 41] So poverty, I think, is one fear that Jesus acknowledges. I think another fear that comes up, and it's a big one, is persecution, right? Did you see that?

I'm sending you out, it says in verse 16, like sheep among wolves. And while here in Aotearoa we are not locked up yet for trusting Jesus as Lord, we still get anxious, don't we, about persecution.

In this chapter, he points it out. He actually says there will be direct persecution his disciples will face. Verse 17, it says they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.

You'll be forced before rulers to testify for my sake. Verse 21, you'll be betrayed even by your family. If you read it carefully, you probably notice that Jesus is describing the kinds of things that will happen to him, right?

It foreshadows his own persecution. After all, he will be betrayed by Judas, humiliated before the courts, forced to testify before Pilate, betrayed to die on a cross.

[24 : 50] But I think the clincher, the key word, I think, is in verse 23. It says, when you are persecuted in one place.

Not if, but when persecution strikes. And so, have you thought that following Jesus means you could avoid the first two fears, right? The first fear, sorry, money, right?

Well, Jesus says, if you're a Christian, you cannot escape some kind of persecution. You and I may never experience the same kinds of trials our brothers and sisters are facing in Afghanistan right now.

Or in China. Or in North Korea. Or elsewhere. But we do face pressure, don't we? From our friends and family. To keep our beliefs to ourselves, for example. We're pressured by relatives to really prioritize our blood relationships over our church family relationships.

And perhaps our beliefs on life, on sex and gender and marriage, they're no longer just old-fashioned. They're now hateful. They're now an attack on who people truly are.

[25 : 59] So we can't be naive, PCBC. Jesus says it will be when they persecute you, not if. And verse 24, Jesus kind of says it in a roundabout way.

But he says, look, whatever I got, you should get too. Whatever the teacher gets, the students should expect no less. If Jesus' opponents called him the son of the devil, we should expect no better when we actually proclaim his message from the roofs.

Our Lord pulls no punches. When we are faithful to his great commission, we will at times face poverty. And we will at times face persecution. But maybe money or persecution isn't your biggest fear at the moment.

And yet what paralyzes you from telling others about Jesus is not money. It's not persecution, but the fear of rejection. The fear of rejection.

And that is another big thing that Jesus talks about here. I mean, why do some of us feel ashamed when a brother is standing on Queen Street, say, preaching from the Bible?

[27 : 07] Why would we, part of us, want to just walk away and not acknowledge that he's part of us? We're on the same team. Or if someone is being pummeled by atheists on social media, why would we just kind of just quietly stick to ourselves?

I think there's a fear of rejection in all of us to some extent. I know there wasn't me, right? I want to be the nice guy. I want to be liked. And yet Jesus lays out terms and conditions.

And it includes this. Some people will welcome you, verse 13. Verse 14, some people will reject you. And further down, right, I think these are the most striking words in verse 34.

Don't suppose I've come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I've come to turn man against father, daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.

So that's an awkward verse to think about on Father's Day, isn't it? But it's true. It's true for many of us. I remember one of my parents' reaction when I told them I decided to become a Christian.

[28 : 16] And the reply I got was this. Why that one? Why did you pick that one? There was a bit of hurt and betrayal, I think, that tripped from their words.

It seemed as if I shattered their hopes of a son who'd follow in their footsteps, who would show that piety and loyalty to the ancestors. And I still die a little bit each time, I think, when I talk to them, when I say something to a family member and it's pushed back or ignored.

Friends, the true gospel can divide and you can be rejected. When you call people to take up your cross, verse 38, and follow Jesus, it will draw some people in and it will repel others.

And if you struggle with people pleasing, this fear of rejection can often paralyze us to stay silent. It can. So these are some of the fears that Jesus, he lays out clearly and plainly.

Let me tell you about a friend. I'll call him M. When M put his faith in Jesus, he did so knowing that actually it was illegal for someone of his ethnic groups to do so.

[29 : 32] When M's dad found out, he disowned him. And yet M obeyed his new master. He began sharing the gospel with others of his same ethnicity. And word got out and the secret police got involved.

They abducted his pastor, still missing to this day, actually a graduate of lay law. M was next on the list, but somehow he managed to escape and the country while still being on a wanted list.

The last time I saw M was pre-COVID. It was at an airport. And just before he was about to reenter his country. Seemed like a suicide mission, right?

He knew the risks. He had fears. You see, he had a family to care for now. And yet he wanted a chance, one more chance, to go and speak to his unsaved family in person, to plead with them, to turn to Jesus.

All those fears we read about M knew each of them, poverty, persecution, rejection. He felt them. And he counted the cost. And yet he had a deep, settled assurance when I talked with him that this was the right thing to do.

[30 : 45] And so how can we here in PCBC have the same assurance as he did? How can we follow Jesus' call? How can we deal with all our worries?

Well, Jesus calls us to share and proclaim his extraordinary kingdom. He tells us our fears are real, but he reminds us right through this chapter that our assurance is great.

Our assurance is great. And let me leave you with three things I think he reminds us of. He tells us, firstly, right? He assures us that God will judge the wicked. Have a look at verse 26 again.

It says, Don't be afraid of them. There's nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight. What is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the ruse.

Verse 28. Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who could destroy both body and soul in hell. Hell is part of the terms and conditions many of us avoid, isn't it?

[31 : 50] And look, too often we say it in hurtful ways. We should share it how Jesus would. Truthfully, but compassionately.

And maybe you're thinking, why on earth would this be assurance? This is assurance because Jesus wants us to put our fears into perspective. Whatever loss or hurt or pain we face in this life, whatever rejection that we might get, if we have Christ, what we face in this life are the worst things we will face.

It gets better. Jesus reminds us, don't fear what others do to you in this life, right? Verse 28. Rather, fear the one who can destroy body and soul in hell.

And if you're not sure you're a Christian, maybe you're listening in on the Zoom call, maybe you grew up in church and you've been doing things all your life, but you've never experienced grace, you need to know this.

One day your life will be up. And you'll be faced with either eternity in Christ's love or eternity under God's judgment for your sins, which you have not paid for yourself.

[33 : 01] And I would plead with you, if you haven't done so, give it up trying to pretend you can run your own life better than Jesus can.

Turn from your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is faithful and kind. He is rich in mercy and forgiveness.

His road is narrow and costly. We have seen this, but it leads to a kingdom far richer, far better than our lost will. Listen to Jesus's challenge in verse 39.

If you find your life, you'll lose it. But if you lose your life for my sake, you'll find it. That is assurance one for us, I think, that God will judge.

The second assurance I think Jesus gives us is that God will provide for our needs. Because straight after that verse about hell, Jesus talks about a beautiful thing.

[34 : 06] 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. Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid.

You are so worth more than many sparrows. Here's the context of this very well-known verse. To calm our fears.

Every sparrow is fed and cared for by God, the creator. And so therefore, each of us, whatever he calls us to do, wherever he calls us to do, go. We are fed and cared for by his hand.

And so we don't have to be afraid to put our flag up at work or to pray for our meal and for our family or to even just talk to our friends about Jesus. He'll care for you.

Our father will care for you. He will provide you everything you need, the words you have to say. And just as Jesus will one day count us in his family, because he provides for us, let's then go out there and count him as the king of our lives.

[35 : 14] Hudson Taylor, who started OMF, he used to put it this way. God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply. Jesus, he assures us, right, that even in the difficulties of following him in evangelism and being his disciple, he assures us that he will judge the wicked and he'll provide for our needs.

And finally, in these last three verses, he says he will reward the faithful. Right. This little snippet at the end, it's a beautiful snapshot, right, in verse 40 to 42 of how these disciples are able to carry out God's call, even with their fears, because we see all this time that they do not work alone.

God has already appointed a bigger team to go with these 12 disciples, to serve these 12 disciples, men and women who receive these evangelists and support them. It could be a cup of water, could be financial help, could be encouragement, a place to stay, a car to borrow while they're on furlough, whatever it is.

The Bible is full of stories of ministry as a team. Ministry as a team. I think of some of you who have teamed up many times before to explain the gospel with a high school friend.

Or others of you who have shared how you've been serving faithfully in kids ministry together. Or maybe you're a group leader. You've been quietly buying books and Bibles and snacks and meals for your group week after week.

[36 : 48] Ministry is done as a team, isn't it? And when we do it as a team, the Lord says in this end section, rest assured, your service will not go unrewarded.

There is the reward, of course, of the joy of serving him. But there is a final reward too. Because I think one day, when we get to the new heavens and earth, we will be blown away by all the people who were impacted by our service for Jesus, by your service for Jesus.

There will be so much catching up to do, so much to sing and celebrate about. And even that is an ultimate reward, isn't it? So, friends, let's press deeper into following Jesus.

It's a call to be just ordinary people, proclaiming his extraordinary kingdom. And it is scary. It might be poor.

It might be persecuted. It might be rejected. But take heart. Be assured. God will judge the wicked. He will provide for everything we need.

[37 : 55] And he will reward the faithful. Let's pray. Father, in Revelation chapter 7, verse 9, we get a beautiful picture of a gathering, a mass gathering, not socially distanced, all together.

We're praising you, people from every tribe and tongue and people and language. We thank you for every one of them. And we thank you that you have appointed us to reach out to them.

Lord, we know that we are fearful. So be with us. Send us out. Help us be your willing followers who share and proclaim that your kingdom is coming near.

And assure us that whatever fears we face, you will provide for our needs. You will judge. And you will reward. I pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.