

Sermon Wesley Box Hill 21 Jun 2026

Saying no to fear and yes to speaking the truth – Matthew 10:24-39

Greetings once again in the precious name of our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Mathew 10:24-39 lectionary reading is often read as a collection of disconnected sayings, but it can also be viewed as a “string of beads,” each one of these sayings offering wisdom to the disciples of Jesus for the difficult task ahead. Three times Jesus says 'do not be afraid'. He does not tell the disciples that there is nothing to fear. It's not a word of personal reassurance. It's not a 'pat on the head' all will be well statement. There is plenty to fear.

Opposition is real. Rejection is real. Violence is real. The disciples are about to be sent into a world where speaking truth carries consequences. He is commissioning disciples to speak publicly about God's reign in a world structured by fear.

The command 'do not be afraid' is not based on optimism. It is grounded in trust. The disciples are called to locate their ultimate loyalty not in the powers of the day but in the God whose justice and mercy endure. When our lives are anchored in God's love, we are freed to speak, to act, and to stand alongside others even when there is a cost.

The courage Jesus calls for is not self-confidence but trust that God's truth is ultimately more enduring than any empire's threats. In context, 'do not be afraid' is profoundly political and communal. The powers of Jesus' day relied on fear to maintain control. The Roman Empire projected its authority through public displays of force, intimidation, and cruel punishment. Crucifixion itself was designed not only to kill but to terrify. Fear was a political tool. If people were afraid enough, they would remain silent.

There are so many modern parallels, where fear is exploited to silence and subdue people. Eg Iran, Gaza/West Bank, Afghanistan, Iran

Against this backdrop, Jesus' words are astonishing: *“What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.”*

Jesus invites his followers to become people of public truth. The good news of God's reign is not a private spirituality hidden away from the world. Faith is personal but not private. Faith is a truth that must be spoken openly, especially when injustice depends upon silence. The image of proclaiming from the housetops evokes courage, visibility, and accountability. What rulers seek to conceal, what systems prefer to keep hidden, what fear tells us not to mention - these things must be brought into the light.

Throughout history, societies have depended upon courageous truth-tellers. journalists, prophets, reformers, whistle-blowers, human rights defenders, and ordinary citizens have risked much to expose corruption, challenge oppression, and advocate for those whose voices are ignored. Their witness reminds us that truth is not merely information; it is a moral act.

In our own time, fear continues to shape public life. Fear of the stranger. Fear of difference. Fear of economic insecurity. Fear of speaking out. Across the world, some leaders cultivate

fear because fearful people are easier to divide and easier to control. Fear narrows our vision and shrinks our compassion.

In a fearful world, perhaps one of the most radical Christian acts is simply this: to tell the truth, to stand with those who are silenced, and to trust that the light is stronger than the darkness.

The call to “fear no one” is not a call to recklessness. It is a call to faithful courage. It is an invitation to refuse the politics of intimidation and to embrace the practices of truth, compassion, and hope. In times when fear is directed toward refugees, minority faith communities, First Peoples, or other vulnerable groups, the church’s vocation is not simply to comfort those who are afraid, but to resist the narratives that create fear in the first place. Proclaiming from the housetops may today look like advocating for justice, defending human dignity, building bridges across difference, and refusing to remain silent when others are excluded or dehumanised.

A good example: Pope Leo IV, the leader of the 1.4 billion Catholic Christians speaking out against fear and reaching out to people of different faiths. He recently was the first Catholic Pope in history to enter barefoot (according to Islamic tradition) and prayed with Muslims in a mosque. He courageously has rebuked political figures for pursuing war and not peace and urged compassion for refugees fleeing war and suffering.

Prayer

God of truth and courage, when fear tempts us to silence, give us voices to speak.

When power seeks to divide, give us hearts that remain open.

When truth is hidden, give us courage to bring it into the light.

Help us to trust not in the powers of this world, but in your enduring justice and mercy.

May we be people of hope, who speak truth with love, and who follow Christ with courage.

Amen.

Robert Humphreys 21 June 2026.