

I fought the Law

Matthew 16

Reformation 2017

I fought the law, and the law won. It's a song written by a band called the Crickets in the late 50s; it became a top ten hit when it was covered by the Bobby Fuller Four in the 60s, recorded again by a little band called the Clash in the late 70s and even by Green Day in 2004. Almost every decade this song pops up, with this little catchy refrain: I fought the law, and the law won. It's an excellent refrain for music, especially for teenage pop music. Fighting back against the man- I gave it my best shot, but well, I was beaten. Popular music has that rebellious spirit to it. And that rebellion it appeals to many of us. We want to rebel against the law. It's not just because UNLV is the running rebels. There is something inside of us that says, I want to fight against the law, but I don't want to lose.

Our text for today is a message of Jesus to his disciples. He says to them. I am sending you out as sheep among the wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged by the synagogues. On my account, you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, how would you like to end the service like that today? Rather than saying the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face smile upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Rather than saying that I said. Brothers and sister, I am sending you out as sheep among the wolves. Be as shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves Be on your guard you will be handed over to the local government and flogged. You will be arrested. Amen.

You might think what just happened?! I thought the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. What kind of shepherd sends his sheep to the wolves. I thought this church taught me that God is our refuge and strength and Pastor Kolander is talking about prison time and being flogged. I don't like that very much!

I don't know when the best time to bring this up is, or how to break it to you, so I'll just be blunt. The world hates you. Not only you, the world hates me too. It hates all of who believe in Jesus because the world is ruled by sin. It is full of death, and people who hate God, and hate the love and comfort that he brings to us because they were born that way. They were born with this adversity and hatred toward a God who loves them and wanted just to give them everlasting life. For us who know God and everything he has done for us that doesn't make a lot of sense. But the world because of sin has been clouded with darkness, and it hates God. And since the world has no weapon to attack God, it attacks you and me, God's children.

That's why brother will betray brother, father his children; men will hate you because you love Jesus. Don't take it personally. It's not because this generation is any more corrupt than any other generation. It's not Crickets fault or the Beatles or the Stones, or Ozzy, the world has always hated God. The problem is not the millennial, or Generation X, or the baby boomers. It is the way the world has always been

Look at our Old Testament lesson for today. It is the account of Daniel. Daniel is living in a nation that worships a false God. His country had been conquered. He and many of his fellow Israelites are living in exile. But Daniel is healthy, and he is smart and chosen to be part of a special council to the king. The king likes David. And the native Babylonians hate that. They hate Daniel because he is smart. They hate that God is blessing Daniel's efforts. So they decide to figure out some way to take Daniel out. They hatch this plan to make a law that no one can pray to anyone but the king for 30 days. And if you do you pray to someone else you will be thrown into a den of hungry lions. Daniel hears the new law. He goes home. He opens up his windows. And he prays to God, just as he had done before. What a Rebel! You ever been seriously threatened to be thrown into a den of lions because you are praying at McDonald's before you eat your big mac? Things could be worse in the world. Daniel fought the law, and he was thrown into a lion's den. And if that was the end of the story, Daniel might have been thinking I fought the law, and the law won.

Jesus' disciples, if you read about their lives in history books. The words that Jesus said to them came true. They were tried in front of the government. Church tradition says all but one of Jesus' disciples died in some terrible way, the one exception was John, but he is said to have died on an island in exile. So someone might be able to look at those men and say well disciples you fought the law, but the law won.

This is Reformation Sunday. And Luther is known as being a bit of a Rebel. And there are plenty of examples that Luther fought the law, or the man, or the church or whoever it was. And 500 years later we can say that he was successful in his rebellion, but during his life, it wasn't that easy. He was in real danger of being killed. He was forced out of his monastery; he was forced out of his job. He was in hiding in a castle for almost two years under the alias of Junker Jorge, or Knight George. And during that time Luther might have thought to himself, I fought the law, and the law won.

There are some good reasons to fight the law. Daniel had a good reason to fight the law. Because someone told him that he couldn't worship his God. Jesus' disciples had a good reason to fight the law because someone told them they couldn't talk to people about Jesus. Luther had a good reason to fight the law because the church at the time was teaching something that is different than the message of the Bible. But sometimes when you fight the law, the laws win. That's why they are the laws. They are the rules. Laws are what happens when something else happens, aren't they? The law of gravity is if you jump in the air, you are going to come down. The laws of the country are if you rob a bank you go to jail. The law for Daniel, and the disciples, and Luther were if you speak out against the establishment, you are going to be punished.

And those laws won. Daniel was thrown to the lions; the apostles were martyred, Luther was thrown out of his church. So if the law always wins, why fight?

It's because Jesus fought the law, but Jesus won. See the law says that if you sin once. If you break a single law that God has made. If you slip up once in your entire life, you deserve eternal death in hell. God created you to be perfect. He made humanity to be perfect. God made mankind to be without sin, and we are sinners, so yeah we deserve punishment. That's the law; you sin you die. And I don't like that. Neither did God. So Jesus beat that law. He did it not by

just removing the law; he did it by fulfilling the law. He kept the law that we couldn't. And then he gave us his perfect record so that we would be found not guilty before our God. He did that not because you are unique, or a good person, or based on your wealth, or race or anything about you, he did that because he loves you. And he wanted you to be with him forever.

That's why Daniel was willing to be thrown into a den of hungry lions. It is because he knew that God would take care of him. Even if those lions got to him, heaven would be waiting forever. That is why the disciples stayed strong and witnessed in front of governors and kings who persecuted and killed them. It is because what is the worse they can do, hurt the body? They can't touch their soul. That is why Luther rebelled against the church; it is because he wanted to stay true to the word of God, rather than to the power of man.

Rebelling against your parents because you are mad that they have a curfew is not wise things to do. Your parents have that curfew because they love you and they want to keep you safe. Rebelling against the government by not registering your car or paying your taxes is not wise because as a citizen of this country we are obligated to pay our taxes. But rebelling against those who seek the relationship that you have with Jesus. That's worth fighting for. That's worth standing up for. And you don't have to fight violently. You don't have to fight obnoxiously. Daniel just prayed his room. That was fighting for the Lord. The apostles they just told about what they had seen. That was fighting for the Lord. Luther put 95 statements on a church door that he wanted to debate with the leadership of the church, that was fighting for the Lord. What are you going to do?

Come to church when it's easy to sleep in. That is fighting for the Lord. Make church a priority in your children's lives. That is fighting for the Lord. Read a couple of chapters of the Bible at night, before you binge watch some Netflix. That can be fighting for the Lord. Trust that the Lord is going to provide for you, and give what you can to him. That is fighting for the Lord. Let people know what you do on Sunday mornings or Monday nights. That is fighting for the Lord. Tell those who mock God; they are wrong. That is fighting for the Lord.

When you are fighting for the Lord, there is no one that is going to beat you. Not man, not this world, not the law. When you are fighting for the Lord, you will win in the end.