



Empowering People to Change the World

Holy Violence

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“Holy Violence”

Matthew 11:1-24

Road Declaration:

I am growing to love Jesus with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength

I am growing to love people the way Jesus loves them

I am building up my faith with God’s Holy Word

I am coming alive in the power of the Holy Spirit

With Jesus, all things are possible

- Today we are looking at a very powerful verse, one of the most misunderstood in all of scripture.
- We are going to tackle this verse from the perspective of its context. In the study of scripture, context is everything.
 - Where, when and who Jesus spoke to is essential in not misunderstanding what He means.

Matthew 11:12

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

Another translation that I like reads:

“From the moment John stepped onto the scene until now, the realm of heaven’s kingdom is bursting forth, and passionate people have taken hold of its power.”

- Thomas Watson was a highly esteemed 17th century, nonconformist Puritan preacher and author, and his book Heaven Taken by Storm, published in 1669, has been used powerfully in my life. Watson’s book is based on this verse.
- The Noah Webster 1828 dictionary defines “violence” as “urged” or driven with force. As of a violent wind or violent stream. Vehement. Forceful. Extreme.

- The Greek word for violence, *biastis*, which means “energetic, forceful.” It is of the same root word as the “violent forceful wind” of the coming of the Spirit in Acts 2.
- But the idea here is that since the time of John, the Kingdom of God is a growing movement of the reign of God, among men that is creating opposition and it “suffers violence.”
- But it requires more than equally strong, earnest, zealous men and women to counter this violence with their own “holy violence.”
- The violent then “take it by force!” These are people of keen enthusiasm, commitment and passion; who are willing to respond to, proclaim and demonstrate the Kingdom of God against the violent opposition of the flesh, the world and the devil.
- It is a metaphor of a castle that holds out in war and cannot be taken but by storm. The earth is inherited by the meek, but heaven is taken by the violent.
 - Moses came with a rod
 - David came with a sling
 - John the Baptist will lose his head
 - Jesus will go to the cross

Let’s look at the context...

Matthew 11:1

Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.

- The main mission of Jesus is this. More than being a miracle worker, He is teacher and preacher!
- Every time Jesus heals the sick or casts out a demon, He is preaching and teaching.

- This is the main job of the church—preaching and teaching truth in Word and Deed. The deeds *flow out* of the Word preached!
- We are “the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
- “Holy violence” begins with preaching! The pulpit should be a place of holy violence for truth and righteousness.
 - John is a preacher; Jesus is a preacher.
 - George Whitfield on preaching “thunder and lightening!”
 - John was the vinegar of the Law; and Jesus was the wine of the Gospel.

Matthew 11:2-6

² And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples ³ and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: ⁵ The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”

- John, in prison and may have been discouraged, began to wonder if Jesus truly is the Messiah.
- And Jesus reassures him that the Kingdom is flowing through Him in ways that everyone can see. It’s Word and Power!
- But note what is happening here: John is in prison from the violence of the Pharisees.
- And then Jesus says something in verse 6; Jesus is recognizing the growing opposition against him.

Matthew 11:7

⁷ As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?”

- What were you looking for? A man of compromise? A man who is like a reed, who just sways with the wind? John was NOT that kind of man!
- Thomas Watson writes of this verse, “John the Baptist was no inconsistent man, fluctuating within his mind and being shaken as a reed from one opinion to another; he was no Reuben, unstable as water, but was fixed and resolute in religion and a prison could make no alteration in him.”

Matthew 11:8

⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses.

- A man clothed in soft clothing? Are you kidding me?! He was just the opposite—John is clothed in camel’s hair (I wonder if it was itchy?), leather belt (from skins) and he eats locusts and wild honey!
- Soft clothing? He’s no status quo teacher. John is a wild wilderness man! He is full of the Spirit and He is preaching a violent message of repentance!

Matthew 11:9-11

⁹ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.¹⁰ For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’¹¹ “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

- Yes, John is a prophet; a prophet who is setting things up with his violent message of truth and repentance, setting things up for Me.

- You think he is great? Well any of you, who think you are the least in the kingdom are greater than him. We can all be used by God this way.

Matthew 11:12

¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

- God uses men and women of:
 - Keen enthusiasm
 - Boldness
 - Vibrant faith
 - Dynamic Spirit anointed preaching
- They will be opposed, mistreated, persecuted and hated.
- But, they are unwilling to quit, hold grudges or give up.

Matthew 11:13-19

¹³ For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear!¹⁶ “But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, ¹⁷ and saying:

***‘We played the flute for you,
And you did not dance;
We mourned to you,
And you did not lament.’***

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.”

- John is not just any prophet, He is Elijah! He has that fire and passion like Elijah.

- Elijah came against the status quo of Israel; he disrupted the religious world; he opposed Ahab and Jezebel and their immorality and corruption.
- And John is calling out the Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - He calls them ***“Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance and do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’”*** Matthew 3:7-9
 - ***And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*** Matthew 3:10-11
 - This is a man of holy violence!
 - John and Jesus are men of holy violence—they had to be. The forces of evil both religiously and politically were too strong! It would take such men.
 - Martin Luther was such a man against the Catholic Church in his time.
 - George Whitfield and John Wesley were such men against the Anglican Church of England.

Matthew 11:20-24

²⁰ Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I say

to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

- They have no excuse! Mighty works done in these cities and they would not repent.
- So many of these cities who never had the opportunities to see the miracles and the signs and wonders of God, they would have repented long ago.
- And I look around and see the opportunities afforded so many, coming out of Christian homes, and they are living lives of pleasure and compromise.
- But then I see these people even in this church who come out of abuse, sex trafficking, drugs and addictions and they are the ones who are pressing into the Kingdom.
 - They know the violence of evil men.
 - They know the violence of addictions.
 - And they have had to develop a holy violence just to survive.
 - They are pressing into the kingdom of God!

Luke 16:16

The law of Moses and the revelation of the prophets have prepared you for the arrival of the kingdom realm announced by John. And now, when this wonderful news of God’s kingdom realm is preached, people’s hearts burn with extreme passion to press in and receive it. (Matthew 16:16 TPT)

“Holy Violence” is:

- 1. A Heart that is Pressing in with Extreme Passion for Jesus and His Kingdom**
- A contending for answers from God. Like the woman with the hemorrhage in chapter 9 who would not settle for anything but a touch of healing from the Lord—12 years she has struggled but she will not quit, she will not give up. Holy Violence!

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Matthew 11:12)

- A contending for God to move in the life of others—such a deep passionate love for others. It’s Jairus crying out for his daughter to be healed; the four men carrying the paralytic to the top of the house and lowering him down.
- A contending of compassion. It’s Jesus being moved with compassion for all those around him for they are “like sheep without a shepherd.”

2. Holy Violence is a Violent Faith that Overcomes Obstacles

- **Ecclesiastes 9:10** ***“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”***
- Charles Spurgeon said of this passage, “Such a man [or woman] must be earnest and be violent, because there are so many adversaries to oppose us, that if we are not violent we shall never be able to overcome them.”
- Turning our intercession from just begging God for things, but battling with God for what He has placed upon your heart! It is a battle.
- Our prayer room is not a passive, hesitancy, marked with timidity, but the prayer room becomes a War Room marked by bold, assertive, believing faith!
 - Violent prayers against Satan and his demons.
 - Violent prayers crying out for ***“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”***
 - Violent prayers that take back your rightful territory!
- You will have obstacles! You will experience failure, brokenness and betrayal and you will need violent faith!

- Don't you think it took violent faith for William Wilberforce to not quit when bill after bill failed in Parliament? Over 25 years he warred politically and spiritually!!

Stick with your work.

Do not flinch because the lion roars.

Do not stop to stone the devil's dogs.

Do not fool away your time chasing the devil's rabbits.

Do your work.

Let liars lie.

Let sectarians quarrel.

Let critics malign.

Let enemies accuse.

Let the devil do his worst.

But see to it nothing hinders you from fulfilling with joy the work God has given you.

He has not commanded you to be admired or esteemed.

He has never bidden you defend your character.

He has not set you at work to contradict falsehood (about yourself) which Satan's or God's servants may start to peddle, or to track down every rumor that threatens your reputation.

If you do these things, you will do nothing else.

You will be at work for yourself and not for the Lord.

Keep at your work.

Let your aim be as steady as a star.

You may be assaulted, wronged, insulted, slandered, wounded and rejected, misunderstood, or assigned impure motives; You may be abused by foes, forsaken by friends, and despised and rejected of men.

But see to it with steadfast determination, with unflinching zeal,

that you pursue the great purpose of your life and object of your being until at last you can say, “I have finished the work which *Thou* gavest me to do.”

– *Anonymous*

3. Holy Violence is the True Character of a Worshipper and Warrior

- It is the growth of a soul, like David, that learned that life is beautiful and it is also dangerous.
- Like Aslan in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe: ““Aslan is a lion-the Lion, the great Lion.” “Ooh” said Susan. ... I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion”...“Safe?” said Mr Beaver ...“Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good.””
- Worship as power! Worship as the foundation of all war! The warrior must become a worshipper first. For then his motives are right.
- **Psalm 149**

Let’s move into worship with a holy violence! Come up. Give your heart and your focus to God!