October 25, 2026
Pursuing the Kingdom: The Servant Who Brings Hope
Matthew 12:15-21
Vernon Advent Christian Church

When we think about authority and leadership, we often think about strength, influence and the ability to get things done. We respect and look up to leaders who command attention, speak with confidence and demonstrate the ability to overcome opposition. But in a world where people compete to be heard, the loudest voice can seem like the strongest one. And we tend to think that real authority must be forceful and that success must be seen by everyone.

But what if the greatest King, who ever lived, is different from the leaders we usually hold in high regard? What if His strength is revealed through gentleness and His authority through compassion? What if His victory was won through His willingness to serve? What if the King who has all the power chooses not to crush the weak but to restore them? That is the surprising picture of Jesus we encounter in Matthew 12:15–21.

In the previous passage, Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. But rather than rejoicing over the man's restoration, the Pharisees began plotting against Jesus. And their opposition revealed how far pride can carry someone from the heart of God. For they were more concerned about defending their rules and traditions than they were celebrating the mercy of God at work.

Now, this passage we're going to look at today helps us understand something essential about the kingdom Jesus came to establish. He does not pursue His mission by adopting the world's methods of power and self-promotion. No, He fulfills God's purposes through humble obedience, compassionate service and unwavering faithfulness to the Father. And we, as we pursue His kingdom, are to follow His example.

And these verses are not just more information about Jesus. They show us whom we can trust, how we should follow Him and why the gospel remains good news for people who are weary, wounded and searching for hope. So, if you are able, please stand with me as I read the word of God found in Matthew 12:15-21. [Read Passage]

Our first point this morning is that Jesus continues His mission despite opposition. And Matthew begins by telling us that Jesus, aware of the Pharisees' plans against Him, withdrew from that place. And at first glance, this withdrawal might appear to be a retreat. But Matthew immediately makes it clear that Jesus continued His work where great crowds were following Him and He healed all who were in need.

And, so, Jesus was not abandoning His mission. He was refusing to allow those who were opposed to Him to dictate the timing or direction of His mission. He understood the growing hostility against Him, but He remained committed to the work His Father had given Him.

And this is an important distinction. There is a difference between abandoning what we've been called to do and using wisdom about how we fulfill that call. Sometimes faithfulness requires us to stand firm in the face of opposition. Think of the story of Daniel from the OT. The decree had gone out from the King not to pray to anyone but him. And so

Daniel had a choice to make, defy the law of the King or the law of God. He rightly chose to make a stand for God and was thrown into the lion's den for his efforts, only to be miraculously delivered. Even this type of deliverance is not guaranteed, there are times when we must take a stand.

But other times, it is wise for us to step away from an unnecessary conflict so that we can continue doing the work God has given us. And that's what we see Jesus doing here in the passage. You see, Jesus did not need to prove His courage by remaining in a confrontation. There was no moral law being broken and He was completely secure in what God had called Him to do. And He knew that His time had not yet come, which He states numerous times throughout the gospels, and so He continued serving those who came to Him.

Notice, too, what happens when Jesus withdraws. The crowds follow Him, and He heals them. You see, the opposition does not discourage His compassion. The hostility of the religious leaders does not make Him indifferent to the suffering of the people. And that's a powerful picture of the faithfulness of Jesus. People may oppose Him, misunderstand Him, or reject His message, but they cannot ultimately defeat God's saving purpose being worked out through Him.

And we see this same principle throughout all of Scripture. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, David faced enemies who sought his life and the apostle Paul encountered opposition throughout his ministry. And even though their experiences were different, they remind us that opposition does not necessarily mean we have stepped outside God's purposes.

However, we should be careful not to assume that every opposition we face proves that we are right or that every disagreement is a direct attack on our faith. Sometimes we need to examine our own attitudes and correct our mistakes. We can't act like a jerk, in the name of Jesus, and then claim any opposition as persecution. No, sometimes we're just being a jerk and we need to be called on it. But when we are genuinely seeking to obey Christ, we can trust that when actual opposition comes it doesn't have the final word.

Perhaps you are experiencing resistance because you are trying to live faithfully at work, or serve your family by speaking the truth with grace. Maybe your efforts are misunderstood, or you feel discouraged because doing the right thing has not made life easier. Well, Jesus' own example reminds us that faithfulness is not measured by the absence of opposition. It is measured by our continued trust in God and our willingness to do what He has called us to do in spite of the opposition we might face.

You see, we do not have to win every argument or defend ourselves against every accusation. Sometimes the most faithful response is to refuse to engage, walk away, entrust ourselves to God and continue serving the people He has placed before us. And, again, that's what we see Jesus doing here.

Now, the next verses show us that Jesus does not seek attention through self-promotion. Instead, He fulfills His mission through humility.

Matthew tells us in vs. 16 that Jesus instructed those He healed not to make Him known. Then he explains that this happened to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. Now, as we've said before, this might seem a little surprising. I mean, if Jesus is the

promised Messiah, why would He tell people not to tell anyone about it? Shouldn't He want everyone to know who He is?

But we need to remember that many people had expectations about what the Messiah would do. Some expected a military leader who would overthrow Israel's enemies, namely the Romans. And if Jesus had allowed every healing to become an occasion to broadcast His fame, people could have misunderstood His mission and tried to define Him according to their own expectations. In fact, we read that on several occasions during His ministry the people were ready to make Him king because of what they had heard and seen.

But, Jesus did not come simply to attract a crowd or become a military leader. He came to accomplish the Father's will. His miracles revealed His authority and compassion, but they were not a substitute for understanding who He was and the mission that would, ultimately, lead Him to the cross.

And, so, to show his readers who Jesus really is, Matthew points us to a prophecy found in the Book of Isaiah as he points to Jesus as God's chosen Servant, the One whom God delights in and upon whom He places His Spirit.

And the quote is from Isaiah 42, one of the passages in Isaiah that are often called the Servant Songs. And in this prophecy, the Servant is chosen by God to bring justice to the nations. And notice his mission is not limited to one community or one people but, through Him, God's purposes will reach all the nations of the world.

And this is a remarkable picture of the Messiah. Jesus is God's chosen King, but Matthew describes Him in the language of a servant. He possesses divine authority, yet He does not build His ministry on the applause of the crowds or what others think of Him. He is perfectly secure in His Father's approval and He is committed to the Father's will.

Now, contrast this attitude with the attitude of our world today. Our world often encourages people to build a name for themselves. We are told to promote our achievements, protect our image and make sure others recognize our importance. Even pastors and churches can fall into the trap of these temptations. We may begin to measure success by being recognized, or by attendance numbers or public praise rather than by our faithfulness to Christ.

But Jesus shows us a different way. He does not need to manufacture importance or constantly draw attention to Himself. He simply continues the work He has been sent to do. And this should shape our understanding of serving Jesus. You see, faithfulness is not always dramatic or seen by others. Some of the most important ministry happens quietly. A parent praying consistently for their children, discipling a younger Christian or offering help to someone without expecting recognition. These acts may never attract a crowd or get publically recognized, but they all matter to God.

And, so, Jesus is presented here as the chosen Servant of God. His humility does not diminish His authority. It reveals the character of His kingdom. He is not driven by the need to impress people. He is driven by love for the Father and compassion for those He came to save.

And as we go further into Isaiah’s prophecy, Matthew now points to Jesus as the One who brings justice to the nations through the power of God’s Spirit.

Towards the end of vs. 18, Matthew quotes Isaiah [read] Matthew points out that God has placed His Spirit upon Him, Jesus, and His mission extends beyond the boundaries of Israel. This is significant because the kingdom of God is not simply a movement to improve the fortunes of one group or establish the supremacy of one nation. But, through Jesus, God is carrying forward His saving purposes for the whole world through Israel, fulfilling the promise that God made to Abraham in Gen. 12:3 that "...through you (your descendent) all the nations will be blessed." Therefore, the gospel is for people from every tribe, nation and tongue, and effective for all who will come to Him in faith.

Now, the word "justice" here carries the idea of God's righteous purposes being established. It includes the making right of what is wrong and the fulfillment of God's will. You see, Jesus does not simply offer comfort and healing to people, although His compassion for people is clear and unmistakable. But, more accurately, Jesus comes as God's Servant to bring the whole plan to fulfillment, namely, the redemption of fallen humanity through His atoning work on the cross.

And notice that Jesus accomplishes this mission through the power of the Spirit. His ministry is not a self-appointed project. He is the chosen Servant, sent by the Father and empowered by the Spirit. The passage reveals the harmony of God's saving work. The Father chooses and delights in the Servant, who is the Son, the Spirit rests upon Him, and the Servant Son brings justice to the nations.

But, look at vs. 19 to see how it was said that the Servant would accomplish his mission. It is said that He will not quarrel or cry aloud...in the streets. His ministry will not be characterized by the kind of aggressive self-promotion that often defines worldly power as we know it. He does not need to dominate every conversation or intimidate everyone who disagrees with Him. He speaks truth with authority while remaining perfectly faithful to the Father's character.

And, brothers and sisters, our witness should be the same. We must not compromise the gospel to avoid discomfort, but neither should we treat people harshly in the name of defending it. We can speak with conviction without being arrogant or disrespectful. We can stand for biblical truth while showing patience toward people who are confused, wounded or unconvinced.

For the church does not advance the kingdom of God by copying the world's methods of intimidation, manipulation or self-promotion. We bear witness to Christ through the truth of the gospel, the power of the Spirit and lives that demonstrate the character of Jesus.

What's also important to note here is that Jesus' mission is a reminder that God's justice will not be thwarted forever. We live in a world where injustice, violence, exploitation and suffering remain painfully real. And sometimes evil appears to prosper while the innocent suffer. Sometimes our efforts to bring about what is right seem small and ineffective and we're left to cry out with the Psalmist, "How long, O Lord?"

But this passage doesn't promise that every injustice will be corrected immediately in this present age. But this prophecy assures us that God's purpose will prevail through His Servant. Jesus has come to establish God's righteous reign and His work will ultimately reach its appointed fulfillment.

And that truth frees us from both despair and self-righteousness. We do not have to pretend that the world is right as it is, and we do not have to believe that everything depends upon our own ability to fix it. We are called to pursue what is good, speak truth, serve our neighbors and trust in Jesus who will bring God's purposes to completion.

Now, Matthew has shown us the reach of Jesus' mission and the power by which He fulfills it. But Isaiah's prophecy now gives us one of the most tender descriptions of His character. The King who brings justice to the nations is also the Servant who brings hope.

Matthew's quote of Isaiah's prophecy ends with two striking images. Isaiah describes a bruised reed that the Servant will not break and a smoldering wick that He will not extinguish. Imagine a reed, or a tall stalk of grass, that has been bent and damaged. It is fragile, perhaps nearly broken. It would be easy to snap it completely. Now picture a wick that is barely burning, giving off more smoke than light. It would be easy to extinguish it altogether.

These images describe people who are vulnerable, discouraged and close to giving up. They may be weak in faith, burdened by suffering, overwhelmed by guilt or exhausted by the difficulties of life. Maybe you feel like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick this morning. But the promise, found here in God's word, is that Jesus will not treat such people with harshness. He does not crush the bruised or extinguish the faint. His strength is expressed through patience and compassion.

Think of the difference between a regular person who sees a struggling plant and immediately discards it because it looks damaged, and an experienced gardener who carefully tends it, knowing that with the right care it may grow again. The gardener does not deny the damage, but neither does the gardener assume that damage is the end of the story.

Jesus is the Savior who sees what others might overlook. He recognizes the person whose faith is struggling, the sinner who is ashamed, the grieving person who cannot find words and the one who feels too weak to take another step. He does not mistake weakness for worthlessness.

And this is good news for anyone who feels bruised by life. Perhaps you have endured disappointment or loss. Perhaps you are carrying a burden that few people understand. Perhaps you have failed in ways that have left you ashamed, or your faith feels weaker than it once did.

The message of this passage is not that you must make yourself strong enough to approach Jesus. It is that the Servant of the Lord is compassionate toward the weak. You can come to Him honestly, confess your need and ask Him to sustain you.

Matthew ends the quotation by declaring that the nations (Gentiles) will hope in Jesus' name. The Servant who cares for the bruised and faint is also the hope of the world. In the Bible, hope is a confident, certain expectation and assurance of future good anchored in God's character and promises, unlike modern everyday hope which means wishful thinking or "fingers crossed" uncertainty.

Jesus brings the hope of God's kingdom to all who turn to Him. This hope persists even when visible circumstances look bleak, because it looks back to historical redemption to look forward with certainty. And, ultimately, this hope rests not in our strength but in His faithfulness.

Jesus will not abandon His mission. He will bring God's purposes to completion and everyone who trusts in Him has reason to hope. For the same One who gently restores the weak will one day establish God's justice fully. His gentleness does not prevent His victory. It is part of the character of the King whose victory God has promised.

This passage shows us a King unlike the rulers of this world. Jesus continues His mission despite opposition. He serves with humility rather than self-promotion. He brings God's justice through the power of the Spirit. And He treats the weak with a compassion that gives hope to the nations. This is the King we need. Strong enough to accomplish God's purposes, righteous enough to confront our sin and merciful enough to receive those who come to Him in faith.

And the greatest expression of His servant-hearted mission is the cross. Jesus did not come simply to heal physical suffering or offer temporary relief. He came to deal with our deepest problem, our sin and separation from God. At the cross, He gave His life for us and through His resurrection He conquered death and opened the way to eternal life.

If you have never put your faith and trust in Jesus, you do not need to make yourself worthy before coming to Him. Turn from your sin and place your faith in the One who died and rose again to save you. He is the hope of the nations and the Savior of all who trust in Him.

And if you already in Christ, let His example of humility shape your life. Continue faithfully when opposition comes. Serve without seeking applause. Speak truth with compassion. Treat the bruised and the faint with tenderness. And keep your hope fixed on Jesus, the Servant King who will faithfully complete His Father’s work.

And may we continue to pursue His kingdom by following the One who does not crush the bruised reed or extinguish the smoldering wick, but brings the hope of God to a world in need of His grace. Let’s pray.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus, Your chosen Servant and the hope of the nations. Help us remain faithful when we face opposition, serve without seeking recognition and speak Your truth with gentleness and courage.

Teach us to care for those who are discouraged and to reflect the mercy of Jesus in our homes and communities. Strengthen those who feel bruised by life, renew those whose hope is fading and draw those who do not yet know You to repentance and faith in Jesus.

May our lives bring honor to the King as we pursue Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction:

May the Lord strengthen you when you face opposition, make you humble in service and teach you to treat the weary and wounded with the compassion of Christ. May your hope rest in Jesus, the Servant King who brings justice and hope to the nations and never abandons His saving purpose. Go in His grace. Amen.