Sermon: **Do not be afraid of people** (Matthew 10.26)

Last week I talked about bucket lists, and in particular Jesus’ bucket list, that of doing those things which would prove that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. Most bucket lists do not affect other people – seeing the Great Wall of China, writing a book, or sky-diving. But Jesus bucket list directly affected others – in fact it made no sense unless others were affected.

This week, in a reading that follows last, we see the consequences of our joining Jesus – opposition, because people do not like being affected. See Matthew 10 vv25, 26, 32, 34 & 39. These all infer opposition.

Early Church was opposed – Jews who disagreed about status of Jesus; Romans who sporadically persecuted; heretics who twisted faith in unrecognisable ways.

Years ago going to church was the norm, now there is unpopularity, if not opposition.

[1] Some look for a kind of scientific proof for God;

[2] Some look at the tarnished reputation of the church;

[3] Some do not want to be confronted with their ‘sin’.

This opposition hurts us who do believe.

Some reactions to opposition:

[a] Do nothing, keep heads down.

[b] When at the interface with the world, be as inoffensive as possible.

[c] Expect it to happen, but carry on Jesus’ ministry nevertheless.

Think of times when our interface with society has led to aggression – was this related to [1-3] above?

Rather than appeasement, or compromise (at this point) we can support each other in continuing to proclaim that in Jesus we see the Kingdom of Heaven present. This is not about being deliberately provocative, but about not backing down on what was Jesus’ bucket list – which has become ours too.

In the news was a US family of 5 living in Iraq to show the love of God.

Yes, this is hard, it is not the wishy-washy Christianity that TV often portrays. Sticking our necks out makes them liable to be chopped off. The Church is free to join, but can cost everything. TEXT. Are you ready to serve the purpose of God?