

Sunday Sermon: July 16, 2017

Sermon Text: Matthew 10:34-42

Sermon Theme: You Can't Have it Both Ways

³⁴ *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*
³⁵ *For I have come to turn*

“ ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—³⁶a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

³⁷ *“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

When I was little, my mom would settle arguments about the last dessert with a choice: the knife or the first choice. She would get the knife out, and have one child cut the dessert or goodie into 2 pieces. Then, the other child would get to pick which piece they wanted first.

This method attempted to solve the argument in two ways. The one who was cutting the dessert or goodie would do everything they could to cut the piece into 2 perfect halves. The second child would spend minutes staring at the two pieces trying to decide which piece was marginally bigger than the other. In the end, both children got a piece of desert that was almost exactly the same size.

The solution was simple, you can't cut and have the first decision. If mom allowed one child to cut and choose first, you can guess what would have happened. There would be one giant piece and one little sliver left. Mom knew we couldn't have it both ways. She couldn't allow us to cut the piece and choose first, it was either one or the other.

Many times in our lives we want it both ways. We want a job that we love and a job that pays well. We want the house that is big enough for family to visit and small enough to clean in an hour. We want to live in a place that is warm and has nice weather, but not too hot where it gets uncomfortable. We want the children that are independent, but we don't want them to speak their minds at inappropriate times. In our lives, we want the best of both worlds.

In our sermon text and our readings for this morning Jesus tells us that there is a time in our lives when we cannot have it both ways, it must be one way or the other. He tells us that we can't have it both ways when it comes to our life of faith. We can't follow the way of the world and still call ourselves Christians. We will either live as the world lives, and try to make life as easy as possible, or we will live as Christians realizing that the life we lead bearing the name of Jesus will have troubles in it because of him and his Word.

You may remember from our Gospel readings in previous weeks that in Matthew 10 Jesus is sending his disciples out for some early field experience in preaching and teaching his Word. The disciples are going to get some practice at being the missionaries and ministers that Jesus wants them to be.

Yet, as Jesus speaks to them, he does not promise them that they will have amazing results. He tells them that their results will at best be mixed. Some will believe and others will not. He tells them not to be afraid, but to continue in their work no matter what they experience.

Jesus tells the disciples and us that while we live the Word of God in our life, we will be a blessing to some, but others will reject that Word and will cause troubles and problems for us because we believe. ³⁴**“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to turn “ ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— ³⁶a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’**

³⁷**“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**

These sound like very strange words from the Savior who brings peace, love and forgiveness. To understand what Jesus is saying, we must understand the Jewish teaching about the Messiah. The people had

been taught that when the Messiah appeared he would bring peace to the earth. He would make a blissful paradise from which he ruled for eternity. The Jews would rule with him from his earthly throne in Israel and all would be well.

The disciples may very well have thought that their message that the Messiah was here would be accepted by everyone. That faith in this Savior would spread like wild fire and they would see that peace blossom right in front of them in real ways.

This is why Jesus speaks the way he does to them. He warns them that instead of bringing peace to the world, this message of the Messiah, this Savior, would cause them trouble. It would not be Jesus who would cause these problems, but the people's sinful reaction to the news of a Savior.

Jesus is speaking not only to his disciples, but to all people who would call themselves Christians. He is speaking to people like you and me so that we do not lose faith when troubles come because of what we believe. He wants us to be ready to bear the cross of trouble and trial when it comes because of what we believe.

But, we don't want trouble in our lives do we? We strive to make our life easy and comfortable. What happens when trouble or problem challenges our ease and comfort? What do we do? We try to avoid it in any way we can. How often do we find ourselves thinking, "I will not say that, or do that, because I know if I confront this, it will just make them angry"?

Is life supposed to be easy and comfortable or not? Jesus tells us that if we are a Christian, if we are truly living our faith, we can't have it both ways. We can't be living our faith and have an easy comfortable life.

The truth of our Savior is a message which has brought hope, comfort, and peace to millions of people who have heard of the free and full forgiveness of Jesus and have believed in him. However, there are many other circumstances where the truth of the Savior has brought a sinful reaction of hatred, conflict and even death.

Sin causes the wonderful saving message of Jesus to be a sword that slices to the heart of all sinful people. Jesus said his Word will cut to the heart of many people and cause problems even for those who might be closest to us.

For some, it is the mention of sin. Talking about sin causes a reaction of guilt and anger. "How can you tell me that I am sinning? You are no better than I am." Many people would rather continue to live in their sin, than admit that what they are doing, or how they are living is a sin. They would rather be right with the world and wrong with God, than right with God and on the wrong side of the world.

Others become angry because we make the claim, as Jesus himself did, that only those who believe in him will be in heaven. They call this pretentious and egotistical to think that some would go to heaven and not others. They are angered by a God who sets the rules for his heaven.

Sin causes these reactions in other people's lives, but it also causes them in our own lives too. We don't want to follow God's way, if it is not our own. We don't want to follow God's Laws if they interfere with our own desires or pleasures. We don't want God's way to get in the way of the life we want to live.

Often the life we want is one of comfort and peace and that means walking in the way of the world and fitting in with the rules of the world. The closer we walk with the world the less conflicts and struggles we will have. If the world does not want to hear about Jesus, we will never speak of him, or allow ourselves to be drawn into religious discussions, we will never call someone to repentance or offer them the news of a Savior.

We can't have it both ways. We can't love the world and walk hand-in-hand with it in its sinful ways and love the Lord and walk in his way at the same time. The way of the world and the way of the Lord are two separate things.

In our readings for this morning we are reminded three times that we are to love one thing above all others. We are not to love ourselves and our feelings, not our families, our children, our employers, our money, our luxuries, or our sins. John says, "**Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** We are to love our God above all and follow him in all things.

So often we think of walking with the Lord as negative because of the troubles and trials that will go with it. Have we ever taken a moment to think about the eternal blessings that have come from our Savior? Do we take a moment to think how we can thank him for what he has given to us?

The Apostle Paul says in Romans, **“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”**

Who is it that has saved us? Can we say that our father or mother, our children, our employer, our money, or luxuries have taken away our sins? Can we say that any of these worldly things have rescued us from the dungeons of hell and raised us to the glory of the Father in heaven?

It is only Jesus who shows us a way of life that leads to true peace. It is Jesus who offers to us free and full forgiveness of sins, through his death and resurrection, even when we don't live according to his way. It is Jesus who tells us that he has a peaceful place already prepared for us in heaven where we will live a new life with Him.

We can't have it both ways. We can't call ourselves Christians and then want a peaceful, easy life. The Word of God will cause troubles. Yet, being a child of God, bought by the blood of Jesus, and having a home in heaven are pretty amazing things that Jesus has done for us. Even if it causes some problems, we live thanking him for the eternal blessings which are much greater than the world. Amen.