

July 24, 2011
Pentecost 6

"Your Peace in Jesus Will Bring You Conflict"

MATTHEW 10:34-42

"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--³⁶ a 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; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ⁴⁰ 'He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Her name was Peggy. At the age of 40 she became a Christian. One Sunday morning she received the blessing of baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It was the happiest day of her life. But then came Monday, one of the hardest days of her life. The day after her baptism her father, an ardent agnostic, persecuted her mercilessly. He belittled her for becoming dependent on Jesus for her salvation.

Our devotional booklet *Meditations* tell us of a woman from Japan who started listening to Lutheran sermons that were being broadcast on the radio. She started reading the Bible and was led by the Holy Spirit to believe in Jesus as her Savior. How would she tell her family of her new faith? Would they reject her for forsaking the religion of her family with its worship of ancestors?

In this 10th chapter of Matthew we hear how Jesus sent out his disciples on their first missionary work. He warns them about the conflicts that will come in their lives as they bring the message of peace in Jesus to people who do not want to hear that message.

The message of peace will bring conflict from those around you

Here is how Jesus describes the conflict that could come from within your own family as you seek to promote and proclaim the peace you have in Jesus. "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." At first glance these words seem to conflict with what the Bible says about Jesus bringing peace in our lives. Did not the prophet Isaiah give Jesus the glorious name, "Prince of Peace?" Didn't the elderly man Simeon speak about the peace he had in Jesus when he held the baby Jesus in his arms? "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to your Word, for my eyes have seen your salvation." Jesus tells us that he gives us a peace this world cannot give. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you

as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” Romans 5:1 tells us about the peace that comes with being justified or declared righteous before God. “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

As much as we love that peace that Jesus brings us we know that proclaiming this peace to others will bring conflict and struggle in our lives, even members of our own families. “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- a man’s enemies will be members of his own household.” If you were a new Christian coming from generations of Muslim people, then you know how you would be rejected even by your own parents because of the love you have for the peace you have been given in Jesus. A non practicing Muslim once told me he read the Bible through three times. He wanted nothing to do with a faith that has Jesus turning to a thief on the cross and offering him Paradise without demanding that he do something to atone for his sins.

The greatest blessing in the world is to know the peace that Jesus has gained for you. With that peace in Jesus you have an intense, personal love of your heavenly Father in this life and for all eternity. Martin Luther said that when this peace through Christ’s righteousness came into his life, all of heaven opened up to him. In his great hymn, “Dear Christians One and All Rejoice” he reflects on this blessing with the words, “But God beheld my wretched state Before the world’s foundation, And mindful of his mercies great, He planned my soul’s salvation. A Father’s heart he turned to me, Sought my redemption fervently; he gave his dearest treasure.”

Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker with the words “No Jesus No peace. Know Jesus, Know peace.” Without Jesus there is no peace with God for me or anyone else in the world. Listen to what the prophet Isaiah says in chapter 59. But your iniquities have separated you from God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” Then it goes on to describe the foolish ways people try to seek their own peace with God. “They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider’s web. Whoever eats their eggs will die, and when one is broken an adder is hatched. Their cobwebs are useless for clothing; they cannot cover themselves with what they make.” We cannot cover ourselves with what we make. We cannot get rid of the sins that separate us from God. Only in Jesus do we have the blood to wash us clean and the robe of righteousness to cover us.

What happens when people we know and love want nothing to do with this peace in Jesus that is their only hope of salvation? We may tend to think to ourselves that there is something wrong us or something wrong in the way we presented the message because they are rejecting us. But that is the way it is going to be. Jesus warned about the hardness of human hearts that will become even more glaring as the end approaches.

Perhaps you have been in situations where it is much easier to keep the peace in the family and just get along rather than bringing up any talk about the peace you have in Jesus. You just can’t handle the words, “Oh, mother, do we have to talk about that.” Then we think of how even Jesus’ brothers and sisters rejected him at first, but then later became believers. There is always the hope that message of the gospel will bring forth fruit at the time that God has determined.

During the time of the Roman Empire there was the thinking that if you wanted peace then you needed to prepare to fight to protect this peace. If you want to bring the peace of Jesus to other people than get ready for war, not just war from people around you but war from within your own heart.

The message of peace will bring conflict within you

Think of how hard it is to always keep Jesus first in your thoughts and actions. "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; and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." You love your parents. You love your children. You love your husband. You love your wife. You love your pets. You love your job and your material blessings. As much as you love these blessings they are all secondary to the blessings you in Jesus your Savior and the peace you have in him. We cannot let the love and feelings we have for all our blessings to become more important to us than the God's love that we have in Jesus. That is a daily struggle in life that creates conflict and tension.

Colossians 3 says of this beautiful tension and conflict that produces songs of joy in your life. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." Then this verse goes on to say: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts towards God." This past week we attended our WELS worship conference in St Peter, Minnesota. Over 1000 well trained voices sang of the peace we have in Jesus. We lifted the roof on the large Christ Chapel at Gustavus Adolphus College. We gathered one day at the new Chapel of the Christ at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. We sang to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. We sang of the peace and joy in our Savior.

Do you ever have days when you don't feel like singing or praising God or thanking him for all the blessings you have in Jesus? Then the Holy Spirit tightens the strings and tunes up your life, and from within the conflict you start praising God. You pick up the psalms and starting reading. For a moment Satan was able to take the Hallelujahs from your life, but then God restores them again as David sang, "Restore unto me the joy of your salvation."

This message of peace brings conflict in our lives because of the cross that it places upon us. If you want to keep that peace Jesus has given you, then be ready to go to war. Be ready to take up your cross and follow Jesus, and put to death the deeds of the sinful flesh. Jesus tells us, "Whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." There is a powerful force fighting inside of you to live your life the way Jesus wants you to live your life. It creates this tension, this struggle, this desire to get rid of the ugly fruits of sinful flesh. Here is how this struggle or this cross is described in Galatians. "So I say, live the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." According to Romans 8 the Spirit constantly bears witness that we are God's children. This new person wants to live like God's child. In Psalm 51 we pray, "Create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me." It is a war, but oh what a blessing it is to be engaged in this glorious war to hold on to the peace and joy that is ours.

The peace you have in Jesus will bring conflict in your life from those around you and also from inside of you. In the midst of these conflicts there is the added reward that comes when people appreciate what you do to bring the message of the gospel to them. Jesus said, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me, receives the one who sent me." When you bring this peace you have in Jesus some will receive you with open arms as if Jesus himself were actually speaking to them. If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the little ones, they will smile at you and thank you for bringing the blessings you have in Jesus and sharing it with them. Some day we will see these smiles in heaven as people thank us personally for helping them get close to the goodness and mercy of Jesus their Good Shepherd. This past week a WELS pastor told me how he had the opportunity to witness to his father and baptize him before he died. He loved his father, but his father resisted going to church and reading the Bible all his life, but then the Holy Spirit led him to believe before he died. Look at the smiles on that father's face as he sees his son again in heaven and says, "Thank you for not giving up on me and showing me the peace I have in Jesus." Amen.