

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

6/28/20

Immanuel Lutheran Macomb IL

Tom Baker

**Peace**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The text is Matthew 10, verse 34.

<sup>34</sup> "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Mat 10:34 ESV)

A couple of years ago we preached a memorial service for a beloved sister on a congregation. The verse her husband chose was from John 14: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.* Who here would disagree that the purpose for which Jesus came was to give peace as the angels said to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"? (Lk 2:14)

Then how do you understand what was read in the Gospel for today from Matthew 10 where Jesus says, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Perhaps there are two words for "peace" in the Greek which helps us to understand these two apparently contradictory statements. But no, the Greek word used is the only word for peace.

You can understand why there are those who will not be Christian because it appears that the Bible is at odds with itself. On the one hand Jesus is coming to bring peace; then He Himself says that He has not come to bring peace but a sword. Maybe He is bringing peace to those who obey Him and a sword to those who do not obey Him. But we are aware of the fact that for many Christians during their last days here on earth they are not at peace.

How many times have you thought that the sufferings and lack of peace you have in your own life are the result of not leading an obedient life for Jesus? Does not Satan give us the impression that we are not worthy of going to heaven especially when Scripture reveals that only the righteous will get there?

As we have told you many a time, the Bible often seems to contradict itself but in reality never does. Sometimes the problems are solved by examining the original languages or by understanding the culture in which Jesus spoke these words. But most of the time the problem is solved by examining the context of the passage which means by looking at the surrounding verses to clarify what at first appears confusing.

Now Jesus does explain what he means that He has not brought peace to the earth but a sword. For Jesus said in whole:

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (Joh 14:27 ESV)*

Did you hear that. The peace Jesus gives is not the kind of peace that the world gives to you. For the world's peace is often dependent on our experiences at the time.

The crops are bountiful and the farmer is at peace. But then the crops are flooded or hail destroys the fields and the farmer is not at peace. The Law of this sermon is to warn each of us not to understand whether God is keeping His promise to us about peace on the basis of the experience of our lives. As is often the case, the Christian may not be experiencing the peace from the world but through faith is well aware of the peace from Jesus. But what peace?

We learn of that peace from another time Jesus spoke of peace on the night of the resurrection when He visited the apostles in the upper room. What were His first words?

*Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*

<sup>22</sup> *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

<sup>23</sup> *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; (Joh 20:21-23 ESV)*

The peace from the world is dependent on how good a life we live with possessions we desire, money we earn, work that is successful, a family that is united and the list goes on and on. However, the peace from Jesus to the Church and every believer regardless of your experience is the full forgiveness of sins at no cost, free of charge. That's the peace that every Christian has during the final hours until the angel takes us to be with Jesus. These thoughts help us to understand what Jesus meant when He said:

*"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."*

For what individuals is the sword of the LORD applied. Again, the context of the verse gives us three reasons for whom the sword is meant. First, it is meant to those who love others more than they love Jesus; second, it is meant for those who do not take the cross and follow Jesus, and third, it is meant for those who want to find life rather than lose it. What does this mean?

To love a member of the family more than Jesus would have meant that after seeing the suffering a loved one is going through that we would want our loved one to commit suicide rather than let Jesus make the call of her death. Not taking up our cross means that we refuse to confess our sin thinking that we don't really need a carpenter from Nazareth to pay for our sin. And finding life means that we break the first commandment in all that we do replacing the God's will for our own selfish goals and ambitions.

Now these are just a few examples of where the sword of God does its work. But what exactly is the sword. Two passages come to mind. The first is Ephesians 6:

*<sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, (Eph 6:16-17 ESV)*

And the second is Hebrews 4 which applies the sword to the use of Law and Gospel:

*<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

*<sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Heb 4:12-13 ESV)*

Proverbs 9:10 reminds us:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. (Pro 9:10 ESV)*

And that insight which is the peace for the believer in the Church is that regardless of how your feelings are making you think, look instead to the promises as found in the Gospel and know especially this day that you are at peace with God the Father through the Holy Spirit Who has given you the faith to trust the promises from Jesus in light of His death and His resurrection. Amen.

**Prayer of the Church****Fourth Sunday after Pentecost****28 June 2020**

Let us pray:

Father, we thank You that You have released us from the curse of the Law and that we now have peace because of our Savior Jesus Christ. Help us always to serve You in the new life of the Spirit and bear fruit for You. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we thank You for all You do to provide us with our daily bread. Be with all who work to grow the fruits of the earth that You have given us for food. Give them favorable weather and a successful harvest. Bless also all involved in the commerce and industry of our land. Allow the fruits of their labor to provide for the material needs of the many who rely on them. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we thank You for the freedom from sin, sickness and death that will come with the full manifestation of Your Son's Kingdom. Give comfort, healing, patience and endurance to all who suffer from illness, injury or chronic affliction. Strengthen their faith so that they know that despite their suffering, they have not lost their reward. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we thank You for the great cloud of witnesses that surrounds us. Join our praise with theirs and bring us at last with them into the full freedom of Your Kingdom. All this we pray through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**