

Sermon: 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 10:34-42

Theme: A sword in our lives

Goal: To follow Jesus is an issue related to the 1st Commandment, - it doesn't matter if there is a sword on the way.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: What a contrast we have in this text! The Prince of Peace affirms: “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword!” And then He speaks about struggles and division inside the families. And He is the key person of these struggles and hate! How can we understand that preaching of Christ?

I – The background

First of all we need to know the context when Jesus said these words and to whom. At the beginning of this chapter we read that He had just chosen His twelve disciples. He sent them on a mission trip. They shouldn't expect a warm welcome at all the places. Some would reject them. But they were ambassadors of Jesus, going ahead of Him to prepare His way and to prepare people for His coming. They were not going by themselves, but **on behalf** of Jesus.

Among several other warnings, Jesus said to them: “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves” (v.16). But in the same breath He promised: “Do not be afraid of them” (v.26). And Jesus prepares them to their future mission. It wouldn't be an easy mission, but a blessed mission. Jesus would cause a revolution in the behavior of people. Many would accept Him, but many would reject Him. And this would cause sword and divisions.

Now, we have come to our text, with more warnings, but with a blessed conclusion: Jesus promises rewards to His faithful people!

I – The warnings about the family

After talking about wolves and enemies around the world (outside enemies), Jesus comes closer and talks about problems inside the family: “man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.”

Jesus is not talking about common problems and struggles among the families members. There are well-known struggles between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, and lots of jokes are running about this relationship. No; it's not this kind of bad relationship that He is speaking about. He is speaking about a difficult relationship among the family members **because of** Jesus as a member of the family! For some, He is a friend, a very good friend! For others, He is a stranger, a stranger that bothers some of the members with His presence. And this causes discussions, arguments, and eventually hate and division in the family.

What is the role of Jesus in your family? Maybe everybody in your family has a good relationship with Jesus and this causes a sense of unity and peace in your home. But maybe not all of your family members accepted Jesus as his personal Friend and Saviour. And this causes some discomfort among you. I know that some of you have this challenge in your family and you are trying to manage it the best way you can.

Jesus goes further when He talks about relationship between Himself and the family members: “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.” Shall we not love our father, mother, son or daughter? Of course we shall! This is the Fourth Commandment of God's Law and this is fundamental for a good relationship inside our homes. - But Jesus is talking here about the First Commandment: Who has priority in our lives? The explanation of the First Commandment says: *“We should fear, love, and trust in God **above** all things”*; and this means: above our father and mother and son and daughter. Jesus shall

have the priority always! If we need to choose between Jesus and our father, let's choose Jesus! We need our father (and so all the other members of our family) and we love our father, but this is a temporary relationship. Once it will end. But the relationship with Jesus is forever! And we need to cultivate a good relationship with Him, ever!

This is a cross that many carry and try to manage for the sake of peace. Paul wrote about this in 1 Corinthians 7:13-14: “And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.” This supposed that the Christian mother/or father will take care of the Christian education of the children and will bring them to the Holy baptism. - And Peter wrote about the good behavior of the Christian wives at home and said: “...so that, if any of them (of the husbands) do not believe the word, they may be won without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives” (1 Peter 3:1-2).

But I know that this is not an easy matter to manage. Therefore Jesus warns us about this and asks to have priority in our lives for the sake of eternal live. If we turn from Jesus to follow our family or to follow other priorities like our job or our hobby, we will be alone at the end of our days. But if we give priority to Jesus in our lives, following Him by faith in spite of the cross, He will be always with us and will hold our hand at the end and guide us to the presence of God our Father. Therefore He came to the earth: To open the gate of the Father's home through His death and resurrection! He doesn't want us to despise these eternal blessings and exchange them for some temporary relationship.

Just another thought about the sword Jesus is talking about: Remember, how many wars happened because of the name of Jesus! The Crusades in the past; and “the holy war” that Muslims are still fighting against Christianity nowadays. How many converted to Jesus in Muslim and

Hindu countries are facing persecutions even from their own family! I receive a monthly report about the persecuted Christian Church in India. It's amazing to see what the Christians suffer there!

III – The rewards

On the other hand, God is so good that He promises rewards to His faithful people, even if we don't deserve them. In our text Jesus promises rewards to those who welcome His disciples, listening to them, receiving them in their homes, maintaining them with food and salary, and even giving them a cup of cold water. Jesus says: “I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his rewards.” Why? Because “he who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me” says Jesus. The disciples should not be worried about their future. God's people would take care of them and God will give His people a reward for this.

In another text, Jesus promises rewards to the disciples, when “Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

We shall not do our work in God's kingdom thinking about the reward, but out of love for Jesus. Everything we receive from God is by grace and free, and He says: “Freely you have received, freely give” (v. 8). Therefore I said: God is so good that He promises a reward, even if we don't deserve it. It's a reward by grace. Thanks our God!

Conclusion: Following Jesus is always secure and blessed. In spite of the sword, in spite of the problems, in spite of the persecution, the end will be glorious in the presence of God. Let us ask for wisdom to manage our challenges, and for faith to support everything with hope and faithfulness. Amen.