

Sermon: 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 12:49 – 56 (v.51)

Theme: Not peace but division

Goal: Peace and prosperity are not mandatory for a Christian, but Jesus gives the true peace with God.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: I know that some of you have relatives who are not convinced Christians, even among the closest family as husband/wife, or parents/children. Some are just lukewarm and don't cause big problems for the Christian part; but some are always trying to hinder and to put obstacles to the Christian part in his/her Christian way of life and to service in the church of God. Some are even aggressive! – This was the situation Jesus had in mind when He spoke the words of our text: Not peace, but division among the family because of Christ. What is the solution? What can we do to solve this difficult issue?

I – False peace

Many churches are preaching peace, health and prosperity as mandatory attachment for a Christian. They say: *If you still don't have them, you have to complain to God and 'force' Him to give them to you. And if you still don't have them, your faith is not strong enough...*

Of course each of us dreams of good health, of a stable financial situation, and of good relationship among family and friends. If we have these, we have to recognize them as special blessings of our God, we have to enjoy them, and serve our Lord with our life and goods. But we know by experience and from the history that this is not always as good for Christians as we wish it.

God warned through Jeremiah against false prophets. We heard in the Old Testament reading: “This is what the Lord Almighty says: Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak vision from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They keep saying to those who despise me: The Lord says: You will have peace. And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say: No harm will come to you” ...

(Jeremiah 23:16-17)...“Peace, peace, they say, when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:11).

## II – Peace but division

Those churches forget that the first disciples suffered lots of persecution and Jesus Himself didn't have His own place to recline His head (Luke 9:58). All disciples but John suffered death of martyrs. Many Christians from the first centuries lost everything they had and had to flee to other countries because of their faith. And not few lost their lives, as it is happening again in the Middle East.

The reading from Hebrew 11 reports several Heroes of Faith of the Old Testament. At the end of the chapter it summarizes: “There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith (Hebrews 11:35-39).

No one of us is suffering in such a difficult way because of our faith. But even nowadays many Christians suffer persecution. I read a report which said that more Christians were killed because of their faith in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century than in all the previous centuries. And even in our country if someone from a non-Christian religion converts to

Christianity, he/she is rejected by their own family and loses all the family rights and ties.

As Jesus Himself was confronted and rejected by His own people, as it happened in Nazareth and in other cities (Luke 4:1ff); as He was not accepted by some members of His own family who didn't believe in Him (John 7:5); and as He was put to death by His own church body (Mark 14:63); (Igreja Luterana, Vol 69,1, p. 103)- we, His followers need to be aware that the Christian life is not always easy. Persecution doesn't mean only stones and prison in our case, but opposition and temptations inside our own family to not follow faithfully Jesus as He requires it from His followers.

### III – True peace

*Didn't Jesus come to bring 'peace on earth', as the angels had announced it when He was born in Bethlehem? (Luke 2:14). Didn't He send His disciples to preach 'Peace to this house?' (Luke 10:5-6). Didn't He bring 'Peace to Jerusalem' at the Triumphal Entry? (Luke 19:42). Doesn't the resurrected Lord say to His disciples 'Peace be with you'? (Luke 24:36). Isn't He the 'Prince of Peace'? (Isaiah 9:6). Yes, indeed He is; but it is God's 'peace', not a worldly 'peace', that He brings... It is not a political and economic peace among people and nations that Jesus brings. (Series C p. 216).*

*Jesus doesn't want to create division. He 'came to seek and to save the lost' (Luke 19:10). Division happens because people don't accept His offering of peace. We read in Acts 28:24: "Some were convinced by what he (Paul) had said, while others disbelieved." It is the tragic saga of history that some "refused to love the truth and so be saved". (2 Thessalonians 2:10). (Series C p. 217).*

The peace He brings is the result of His death on the cross and the consequent resurrection. This is the 'Baptism' He had to undergo, as He speaks in our text. The Father was reconciled to humankind and we have peace with God through faith in Jesus. Jesus says: "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart I have overcome the world." (John

16:33). 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." (John 14:27).

Our Baptism identifies and unites us with Christ in such a manner that everything that belongs to Christ is given to us, and everything that we inherited in our sinful nature is given to Christ. Paul write in Romans 6:3-5: "...don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Conclusion: We are in peace with God but we still suffer divisions because of our faith in Jesus. What can we do? We must not "*add fuel to the fire*", but the light of our faith shall shine brightly among our beloved ones and around us as a good testimony of the peace we enjoy with God. We shall pray for those who are lukewarm and even for those who oppose openly our Christian faith, and never give up. We shall not fall into temptation and follow their wrong paths of life just to have peace with them. NO! Peace with God has an eternal reward!

*Jesus and His Word and work result in division among people, even division within the family. V.53 alludes to Micah 7:6, and v. 7 says: "But for me, I watch in hope for the Lord. I wait for God, my Saviour; My God will hear me." Jesus' call to discipleship is a call to follow Jesus above all else (Luke 9:23-26; 12:29-31; 16:13:17-31-33; 21:34). It is a matter of priority, as we preached about some Sundays ago. It is a call to put Jesus above even the family (Luke 9:59-62; 14:25-33; 18:28-30). His disciples must be prepared to follow Him even if it means resistance from their families (Luke 21:16). (Series C 216). Amen.*

(Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle –Cape Town, 14 August 2016- Adapted)