

Matthew 10:34-39 July 20, 2014

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— 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.

Pastor Duncan shared during a chapel devotion at Luther Prep – 5-14-2014

He grew up in Nepal, North of India. Nepal is nearly 100% Hindu. At the time this took place a few years back, only 1/2 of 1% of the population was Christian (2001 census). So take the people here in church today, times say 4 (or 5), then... if that was representative of Nepal, only 1 among that many would be Christian.

He grew up in the home of a Hindu priest. His older brother became a Hindu priest like their father. His father died when he was still young. So he lived in his brother’s home. Being in the Brahmin class, he was destined to become a Hindu priest himself.

But in his high school years a friend gave him a New Testament. He read John 3:16. He thought: this is a strange God, an unusual God who would give his Son for us; I want to learn more. He took the New Testament home, hid it, and read it over the period of a year.

The moment came: his family found the New Testament. They confronted him. You must choose Jesus, or us. He was intimidated; without bravado, he said: “I choose Jesus.” His brother abruptly took him to the door, and said ... you’re out of here. He was not permitted to return. He had only the clothes on his back. No money. No food. It was night time. He walked the streets crying. He didn’t know what to do.

He saw a bus. He knew there was a Christian man in a far off village. “Maybe if I can get to him, he’d let me live with him.” So he tried to get on the bus. The bus driver stopped him and asked for the fee. He explained he didn’t have any money, and told the bus driver what had happened. And surprisingly, the bus driver let him ride.

He went to the home of the Christian man, stayed there, and they studied the Bible together.

How about in your family? You aren’t in the Brahmin class. You may not have as much to lose materially. But there is still potential for tremendous loss of a personal nature when you face “choose us, or Jesus” moments.

You may – for example – have a family member who tells you, “It’s not good enough to say you still love me, but you call my life style a sin. You’ve got to choose: either give your acceptance & approval to my way of life, or I don’t want you in my life.”

Consider the context for Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:34-39, which we heard last Sunday: Jesus had just talked about how his followers – [motion to indicate you & I] – face hated, even face the threat of death (some places greater than others). This is as we go out with his truth which is hated by the world. Now Jesus comes to the close of his talk with his disciples. He adds this news: you should expect to face

rejection even from within your own families. Think about that. Think about living with your own family treating you as an enemy. How often does this happen ... that someone's faith in Jesus costs them their family, or part of it, or peace between different members within it (even if they go on living side-by-side)?

Jesus presents us with what to expect, as long as we have 2 feet on this earth and His truth in our hands, as well as [His truth] living in our hearts and scattering from our lips.

Jesus says, in vs.34-36: 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— ³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.”*

What wouldn't you do to “keep the family peace”? “To keep the family peace” is a worthwhile goal. But it cannot be our top priority. One of the notions floated in our post-modern age is: peace at all costs. While peace between people is a wonderful blessing - and as far as it is possible we should live at peace with everyone - Romans 12:18 says just that ... Jesus gives us clear direction: desire for peace with those we love cannot take precedent over our Lord and his truth.

Martin Luther said: “Peace if possible; truth at all costs.” Peace whenever possible. Yes. But never at all costs. Never at the cost of truth. Because “peace at all costs” – at the sacrifice of God's truth – ends in no peace at all. That is to say: there would be no peace between God and any of us as individuals.

Jesus' words at the opening of vs.34 – at their root – express: “Don't hold to the custom or idea most people think true.” Jesus didn't come to impose [literally, “throw”] peace upon this earth.

That's an impossibility. Here's why. The Christian Church cannot grow in peace. The place the Church, the gathering of God's people, is built up & grows is the same landscape where the devil roams. And he doesn't want anyone in God's family. So there will always be conflict raging here on earth until Jesus' return on the Last Day.

God's Word is at work. By God's power and grace, people are cut away from the dark prison of unbelief and the chains of sin that held them. They are brought into the Light – they stand in God's grace. They – we – are no longer divided from our God. We have peace with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. But there is a divide. The divide now exists between us & all who have been brought to faith in Jesus, and those who reject God's truth. This divide is often expressed by them in hostility toward Christ and toward us who love Him and speak of Him.

How many of you have a personality that would just-as-soon avoid conflict? I'm with you. I know that's a personality trait that many of us have – some more than others. I've learned – as I've grown in spiritual maturity – how to better deal with hostility, as opposed to avoiding it. More than that, I've gotten better at stepping into situations where conflict looks imminent. I'm talking about instances where stepping in – speaking up – is in the interest of God's truth. Love for the Lord, in those cases, rises above all else.

You see then, this is about the 1st commandment: revere & honor, love and trust the Lord above all else. There's a reason Jesus warns us: 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; ... ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

When I said a moment ago “I’ve learned... I’ve grown... I’ve gotten better,” I’m admitting the many times I’ve failed. Have you been thinking of your own history? I’m talking specifically about ways we’ve each failed to honor, love and trust God above anyone or anything else.

That’s why Jesus means everything to us. Jesus did come to bring peace. But not a peace between nations, not a peace to blanket the earth with an end of wars. He gives peace to every individual soul that trusts in him. *“He was pierced for our sins... the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds – we are healed”* (Isaiah 53). *“Through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5). *“For he himself is our peace”* (Ephesians 2). To have Jesus is to have everything you – I – need.

To this point we’ve applied Jesus’ words primarily with a view to our individual relationships with God. But never too far out of view has been this consideration: how does placing our Lord above all else “connect with” our relationship to others? Specifically, recall: Jesus spoke these words as he sent out his disciples to share His truth. That is our God-given role too, a purpose and privilege given to us: to share with others God’s truth.

Now listen to this conclusion we come to: better to go through life experiencing conflict and division, calling out with God’s truth, than to let people of the world go on quietly, “peacefully” toward their eternal doom. [Go back and read that one more time.]

That doesn’t mean we go hunting for a fight – we don’t seek out rejection. But in love we do want to actively go to others with God’s truth – come what may for us, we want others to learn of God’s peace in Jesus. In Isaiah 55:10-11 the Lord says: *“as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, yielding seed for the sower and bread for the eater – so is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

We left off the real life account from our sermon opening when the son of the Hindu priest made it to the home of the Christian man.

As the two studied the Bible together, the young man / new Christian shared with his host that it was his dream to bring the gospel to the nation of Nepal. The host, who was a man with a strong faith himself, said: your dreams are too big.

Well, the young man ended up meeting a WELS member from WI on a bus, who had a catechism – one that presented God’s message in a simple format for the developmentally disabled. Joshi read it. He said this is good. Do you have more? The member from WI went home, and his pastor sent a catechism to him. He became connected with our World Missions. And so...

He, who was destined to become a Hindu priest, has instead become the director of our church’s work in Nepal. People will travel for days - they will sit on the floor for days - to learn the Bible. And they rejoice. There are now over 4,000 in the church, who are in 1/3 of country’s 75 provinces – in a country where the Christian population is still only just above 1% (2011 census). This all in a few year’s time. **[Pastor Duncan – 5-14-2014 LPS chapel]**

Yes, this man had to give up his elite Brahmin status, with its lucrative life. Instead, he experienced his family's utter and total rejection. One might say: look at all he lost. I have no doubt from what I've heard of him, he'd encourage you: look at what he gained! God carried him to a home where he grew in understanding of our Lord's love and truth. God placed him on another bus where he gained a tool for sharing God's truth, leading to more resources and more support. And look at what God has accomplished: a gathering of souls – can you imagine, in Nepal! – that have been brought to know the only news that brings peace between God and sinners, like us.

The Lord says in Isaiah 52:7: *“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news – who proclaim peace – who bring good tidings – who proclaim salvation.”* Come what may for us, may the Lord fill our hearts with a desire for others to know God's peace in Jesus. Amen.