

Peace and a Sword

(Matthew 10:34-39)

Yearly Theme: *“Peace is...”*

Series Title: *“Difficult Peace”*

August 29th, 2021

Something to think about:

The decisions you make in life have eternal consequences.

We come to a passage today in the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament that seems contradictory in nature. As we explored the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount last week (Matthew 5), we read, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of GOD.” Today, we read the words of Jesus that seem completely the opposite. Let’s take a look...

Matthew 10:34-39 (NLT),

³⁴ *“Don’t imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword.*

³⁵ *‘I have come to set a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.*

³⁶ *Your enemies will be right in your own household!’*

³⁷ *“If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁸ If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁹ If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it. ¹*

Far from intentionally trying to divide people, what Jesus is saying here is that the unintended consequences of complete loyalty to Him would bring division in relationships. Even familial relationships would not be spared when loyalty to Christ was on the line. And here’s the key point this morning:

Key Point: *“Jesus did not come to bring division; His coming demands a decision.”*

So how are we to understand the intent of this passage without grossly misinterpreting it and coming to the wrong conclusion? There are two things to consider:

- A decision to do what is right can often lead to division.

Matthew 10:34-36 (NLT), Don’t imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your household.

When Jesus says that He did not come to bring peace, but a sword, what He is saying is that a complete surrender of our lives to Him will oftentimes put us squarely in conflict with others – even those closest to us.

- A person’s love must be rooted in Christ above all else.

Matthew 10:37-39 (NLT), ³⁷ “If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁸ If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁹ If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

Jesus is saying that our love for Him should so outshine our love for anyone else, that it makes all other love look like hatred.

Something to take home:

There are countless stories of how faith in Christ often puts a person in a tense and precarious situation with family and friends. The humble turning to Christ of an individual often stirs the ire and anger of those closest to us that are not believers in Christ themselves. Though most of us may not experience rejection from family or friends, there is a definitive shift that often happens in relationships when a person makes a decision to make Jesus the most important person in their life.

There is no middle road to following Jesus. You’re either all-in, or you’re all out. Being all-in requires complete commitment to Christ in all things even when it puts us in contradiction to the world. Following Jesus and doing things His way not only makes a Christian a peculiar sort of person, but also makes them an object of ridicule and rejection. A true believer in Christ must be willing to lose everything if it hinders their relationship with Christ. Truly, what does it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your soul? Each moment, and each decision you make, has an eternal ripple effect. Are the decisions you’re making in life honoring Christ or honoring yourself? The decision is yours, and the hardest and most important decision you’ll ever make, but it requires complete surrender to GOD.

Key Point: *“Jesus did not come to bring division; His coming demands a decision.”*

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Mt 10:34–39). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.