

“Faith: Peace or Division?”

08-14-16

Our world isn't perfect and our relationships aren't perfect! Often Jesus in the Gospels reminds of this to teach us that perfection and peace only come through Him. Today, in our Gospel lesson, this situation is brought to the forefront of our lives. By our repentance and being brought into God's family, divisions on earth arise between us and those who do not believe in Jesus Christ. It's those divisions that cause our lives to be a struggle!

Open to Luke 12. Jesus is looking forward to the end. He's trying to make His hearers understand that they will be judged at the end, by not only their faith, but also their deeds! But He's also speaking of so much more! VV. 49-51, *“I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.”*

The final judgment will be, not only final, but it will also be a time Jesus sees our wrongs, and then out of love shows us His grace. Because of what we say and do, we don't deserve anything good. We have a tendency to go our own way and not God's. Our human nature gets us into so much trouble.

Jesus came to earth! That was His plan of salvation! He came to go to the cross and suffer and die in our place. His commitment to the cross shows us what our commitment should be as well! But this won't match what the world wants!

Having Faith Causes Either Division or Peace. As we walk by faith, we will match some, but as we walk, our faith will also pit us against some others! Considering the difference between those who follow Jesus Christ and those who follow the sin in their lives, you have a choice: **Be At Peace with the World or Be At Peace with Jesus!** Even though we might think differently, the world and Jesus are totally opposed to each other. So that means it's either **Be in the Kingdom or Divided From It.**

Jesus' Kingdom is strikingly different and opposed to the one that has developed here on earth as the result of sin. The response to this is Jesus' suffering, dying and rising, for our salvation!. We join in by our own Baptisms into His death, and the Holy Spirit turning us to repentance.

Since all don't turn, contention arises, even in the closest of relationships, even families. The hope comes from our own salvation through Christ and the prayer that the Holy Spirit would work through us to reach those who have yet to come to faith, especially those closest to us!

Listen to these words from A.T. Pierson about this situation, *“To a true child of God, the invisible bond that unites all believers to Christ is far more tender, and lasting, and precious; and, as we come to recognize and realize that we are all dwelling in one sphere of life in Him, we learn to look on every believer as our brother, in a sense that is infinitely higher than all human relationships. This is the one and only way to bring disciples permanently together. All other plans for promoting the unity of the Church have failed.”*

This puts us in a very difficult situation. As we live by faith, not everyone will believe or agree with our position, even in our own families! Look at verses 52-53, *“For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”*

Even Jesus ran into this problem! Of His mother, brothers, and sisters, only His mother, Mary believed in Him as the Messiah and Savior! The rest of the family thought He was crazy and really nothing special! It was only after His crucifixion and resurrection that they believed!

Your faith may mean that you might be ridiculed for what you believe. It might mean that you might stand apart and alone for the convictions you hold. But your faith will also show in how you live your life, and how you treat others and how they treat you! There are three things the Christian Life takes.

The Christian Life takes Commitment. Jesus is telling us He demands a commitment that just might cut across family ties, and that might cut across at how others see us. It’s a commitment that says, as a Christian, you’re different in this world!

Christ over the last 2,000 years hasn’t watered down His demands upon our lives. The cost to follow Him is still, and will always be, full surrender of one’s life! The cost is a high, but the prize is life—abundant, free, and eternal!

The Christian Life takes Courage. By courage, I mean the inner strength one draws upon when the going gets tough. For a Christian living a life full of courage needs strength which comes from God through His Holy Spirit in our lives. It’s God who gives us the strength, the courage, the fortitude, to keep that trust and faith in Him strong!

The Bible says, *“No one who puts his trust in God will ever be disappointed!”* This inner strength is available for everyone who’s willing to call upon the resources of God to give them the courage to stand by his or her convictions!

The Christian Life takes Separation. This is really hard to hear, because it’s hard to separate yourself from others. But this separation isn’t for the purpose of hurting others or not getting along with others, the purpose is healing. Jesus calls us to take a stand that might separate us from others, or from what society holds dear. If something or someone is destroying your relationship to God, or dimming your vision of righteousness and goodness, it must be stopped! Sometimes we must separate ourselves from situations, or people in order to remain true to our convictions, true to our faith!

As the cover on the bulletin says, **“The Struggle Is Real!”** Jesus didn’t say the Christian life would be a breeze. There will be many who will try to stop your life in Christ, and the most powerful is Satan himself! But Jesus did say He would never leave you or forsake you! He was and is always going to be with you! You are never alone!

And that leads us to one final point, **Be Strong in the Lord!** Open to Ephesians 6. The most important thing you need to remember as you live the Christian life is that you need to rely on God first, second, and completely! As you walk with Him, you have everything you need as you live life to the fullest! Look at verses 10-13, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”*

May you live a strong Christian life of Faith in a world fallen away from Jesus Christ!