

Midweek Lenten Vespers 4
St. Matthew 10:32-42
April 10th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Did Not Come to Bring Peace

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Iniquity creates strife. There can be no peace where sin and iniquity exist. By its very nature sin seeks to destroy. It destroys marriages. It destroys families. It destroys lives. Sin and iniquity seek to destroy us; to destroy our lives. Therefore, where sin and iniquity exist there can be no peace. Only in lives where sin and iniquity are welcomed can there even be an illusion of peace.

Therefore, our Lord + Jesus Christ does not come into this world—He does not enter into our flesh and lives—to bring peace. He comes to bring a sword. He comes to battle and destroy sin and iniquity, and its power over us. The English word that we translate in the text as “bring” literally means to “cast,” or “throw.” Our Lord did not come to cast peace over the Earth. He came to cast a sword over the Earth. He means to cast this sword of the truth—of His Word—over the whole world. So that, sin, death and the devil may be defeated wherever that sword is cast.

But wherever that sword of the truth of God’s Word is cast, the enemies of the truth rise up to defend their lies and their kingdom. This is why sin clings so tightly to us, so that we cannot shake it off through our own works and means. We must be declared righteous on account of our faith in the works and merits of our Lord + Jesus Christ. We must be declared righteous—justified—on account of our faith that the Lord + Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Law of God for us, and that He suffered and died our punishment on the tree of the holy cross; paying for our sins with His very life. He went to battle with sin, death and the devil, and gave His life, so that we might have life and have it abundantly, and that we might be free from the power of sin, death and the devil.

When we cling in faith to this promise of the Gospel, we are naturally going to face hardship and persecution. As our Lord + Jesus explains it in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew, when we confess before men that we believe on the Lord + Jesus, we will be given a cross—the cross of persecution. As we will hear in the coming week when we hear of our Lord’s Passion, it was the custom of those being crucified to carry their crosses to the place of their crucifixion. It was the beginning of their punishment. It was the first moment of shame that they would endure. When we cling in faith to the promises of our Lord + Jesus Christ, and confess with our mouths before men that we believe on Him, we will endure shame from those who refuse to believe. Our Lord in today’s Gospel reading encourages us to remain faithful during persecution and shame.

He even gives us an example of one way in which many people fail in this temptation to forego their crosses so that they do not have to endure persecution and shame. Our Lord uses the example of the people who are most dear to us. Is our affection for our family going to mean for us than our affection for our Lord? The Lord warns us that our enemies, literally, our “haters,” will be the ones of our own household. The temptation is to withhold our confession of our Lord + Jesus within our households for the sake of peace. We do not want to drive a wedge between that family relationship any more than we already have.

But peace cannot exist where sin and iniquity are welcomed. Peace cannot exist between unbelievers and believers. They are on opposite side of the battle. Sadly, we are all prone to holding our tongues when the situation calls for a confession of faith, especially among our family members, because we do not want to deal with the fallout that we know will occur. Certainly, we should be gentle and patient in our dealings with our unbelieving family members, but we should never think that our silence when the situation warrants it is a good thing.

The tongue confesses what is in the heart. Faith speaks what is in the heart. You cannot say you have faith, if you do not confess it with your lips. The same is true of those who only confess their lips, but do not have faith in the heart. This confession of the heart made with the lips casts a sword between unbelievers and believers; it destroys peace.

Destruction is what happens. The English word in our translations of “lose” is too weak. The word literally means “to be destroyed.” He who finds his life, that is, finds his earthly life peaceful from not confessing the Lord + Jesus, will destroy his life, that is, will destroy his soul eternally. The one who destroys his life, that is, his earthly life and reputation for the sake of confessing Christ, will find his life, that is, will find an eternal life in Heaven awaiting Him.

The Lord desires that we take up our cross and follow him. He desires that in the same way that He came to cast a sword over the Earth, we should not be afraid of the powers of this world so that we refrain from confessing our Lord + Jesus before men. When we confess our faith before men in this world, there will be persecutions heaped upon us. We will be shamed for our beliefs. The truth of God’s Word will divide families. It will challenge your affections for your family and your Lord. It may even challenge your affection and love for the thing that is most precious to you: your very own life. Do not let this hinder or frighten you, for know this, you will fail most miserably. Just like all the Apostles who forsook the Lord and fled when He was led away to be tried and crucified. St. Peter was even given the opportunity to confess the Lord + Jesus three times before the people camped outside the trial of our Lord, and he denied the Lord + Jesus three times before the rooster crowed.

But after the Apostles forsook him and fled, and after St. Peter denied the Lord three times, in repentance they all returned to Him. For they knew in their hearts, on account of the faith that dwelt there, that there was no salvation outside of the Lord + Jesus. They clung in faith to Him and the promises that He procured for them. They all eventually suffered many persecutions and trials on account of the Lord + Jesus. Their trials were so great that ours pale in comparison to them.

Iniquity creates strife. Sin brings conflict. Faith in Christ and the truth stops peace from existing between those who cling to the truth and those choose to remain in unbelief. We are called to gently and patiently confess our Lord + Jesus Christ and what He has done for us, before men. And when we are rebuffed for our confession, we should not let that deter us, for we have an eternal home in Heaven awaiting us that no persecution, trial or shame can be taken away from us if we cling to the truth in faith.

Our Lord + Jesus Christ came down from Heaven and was incarnate of the Virgin Mary in order that He might bring a sword upon this Earth. He came to battle with sin, death and the devil and defeat

them with His innocent life and precious Blood on the tree of the cross. He carried His cross to the place of crucifixion, enduring the shame, spitting, beatings, whippings and mockery that we deserved on account of our sinfulness. He was lifted up on the tree of the cross and died so that we might be free from the power of sin, death and the devil. We now have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation won for us by our Lord + Jesus, and receive those gifts in the means of grace through the work of the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord + Jesus came to bring a sword and battle sin and iniquity, so that we might have an eternal peace with Him and all the saints in Heaven for all eternity. We will endure a small portion of the cross that our Lord + Jesus endured, because we confess Him before men who do not want to hear it, or believe it. We will endure mocking and shame. We will endure family strife. Our lives may even be threatened. But what our earthly lives endure is nothing compared to the eternal joy and peace that we will enjoy with our Lord, and His saints for all eternity. And we can bring other people into this eternal peace in Heaven by sharing the good news of our Lord's suffering and death for the world with all those who would hear and believe. We can offer a cup of cold water—the refreshing water of life—to all those who are parched from sin in this life, and so bring them into Heaven, when they believe the same Gospel of our Lord that we believe and cling to. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!