

## Sermon: Matthew 10:34-42

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. My dear beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew the tenth chapter verses thirty-four through forty-two.

Boys and girls, I pray that you are doing well today. Have you ever had a conflict? Sharing a toy that you want to play with that someone else is playing with and you are tired of sharing and want it for yourself. That is conflict. When you want to read by yourself and someone else jumps up to read with you. That is conflict. There is a lot of conflict in our world today. All you must do is turn on the news and see how many of the headlines are about violence, hatred, death, conflict. And I cannot help but feel that somehow this is not how it is supposed to be. Just seven months ago, we celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. And yet here we are, surrounded by conflict. Didn't Jesus come to bring peace to all this mess? When do we get to stop fighting? Where is our peace? Ponder those questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

### **1. Peace, even if it is false**

Well, when you see all this conflict in the world and in our lives today. You cry out for peace, what exactly what are you asking for?

The reality is that we like peace, even when it is false. We like peace because peace is comfortable. No one likes to come home to a house where people are constantly arguing. Ask any child who has had the tragic experience of living in a house where the parents are in conflict. Conflict forces you to be constantly on edge, constantly ready for whenever the war and argument will start back up. It is exhausting.

We like peace because peace is safety. When things change, it unsettles us. We like our routines. We like knowing what to expect, what will happen next. No one enjoys change, especially not us Lutherans! This fear of change is what keeps the young woman trapped in the abusive relationship. She knows it is wrong, broken, and unhealthy, but it is familiar and safe in its own way. And so, we refuse to change, even when we know that false safety is slowly killing us.

Because after all, that's not really peace, is it? We can avoid talking about peace, thinking that we can just tiptoe around it. We do that all the time. We are going to deal with this issue by simply not talking about it. Have you ever had one of those meals when two of the people at the table have this relationship that is just broken and they are dealing with it by not dealing with it? It is miserable! You can cut the tension with a knife. Even if we tiptoe around the topic, this is not what real peace is supposed to be. It is no use pretending. When you do that, you live in fear. Things covered are eventually uncovered, and while we wait, they own us. They control us. It looks like peace, but it is false.

How much of us have settled for false peace? How many of us have that one relationship where we know things are not how they should be, but we do not know how to change it? How many of us have a family member with whom we have just agreed to disagree about those subjects that everyone knows not to bring them up? Like religion or politics on a first date or sitting around the Thanksgiving table with Uncle Bob? And so, we compromise; we "live and let live" in the name of peace. That is the cost of false peace, constant tension.

Even worse than that constant tension, false peace brings death. If we view life primarily as being about pursuing the appearance of peace, we live a lie. If our friendships are about getting along instead of loving discussion, they are mere shadows of what they are intended to be. If our relationship with God is primarily about concealing our sin from him, from others, and from ourselves, we cannot find real peace.

## **2. True Peace: Shalom**

Where do we find true peace? Many would say in Jesus. They are correct but why then does Jesus state that He came not to bring peace, but a sword? The word peace is the ancient Hebrew word shalom. Shalom? What is that mean? Shalom is usually translated as peace. It could also be translated as "make it good," "shall surely pay," "make full restitution" or to "restore." The ancient Hebrew meaning of shalom was "to make something whole." It is more than a mere feeling of contentment with everyone or everything. Shalom is about having restored relationships. Shalom is a wholeness in body, in mind

by being in a right relationship with other people, as well as a right relationship with God.

How do we get a right relationship with God? That is something that only God can do. He brings us true Shalom by dealing with the broken relationships that divide us from him and isolate us from one another.

This is why Jesus says, “Don’t think I’ve come to bring peace, but a sword.” He has come to cut through those broken relationships and our isolation. He cuts apart that false peace that we love to surround ourselves with. In its place, He gives us true Shalom using the sword of the truth against our lies and false peace. Speaking the truth brings us into direct conflict with the lies our world embraces.

Do not believe me? Just try it: Say that every life is precious and sacred, from conception to natural death . . . Say that human sexuality is a gift of God to be enjoyed in the context of marriage between a man and a woman . . . Proclaim in any sense that there is an absolute right and wrong to the universe and that some actions bring life and joy and that others bring death and destruction . . . And watch the sparks start flying. Our world is comfortable with its lies. Yet in order to get real peace, the lies must first be challenged and revealed for what they are.

When the lies are revealed, we see that things are not how they are supposed to be in our relationship with God. We have done things we should not have, and we have said things we know we should not have. And sometimes, the things that hold us captive to the false peace are because we did not act, did not do that thing we should have, or we had that moment when we should have spoken and we kept quiet. There is simply no peace in our world, our relationships, or in ourselves.

And we extend that to our thoughts about God. How could God love someone as broken as I am? And that is the greatest lie of all. That somehow, we have done too much or said too little for God to love us. That somehow, we have sinned one too many times, and this time there cannot be peace. That we are too fundamentally broken to even begin to make peace with God. And the real problem is that there’s truth in that. We cannot make peace with God. We try, and we fall so far short. And so, some of us settle for the false peace where we just ignore the whole thing, though underneath it all we know it is not really peace at all.

**But here is where the sword cuts:**

**God Loves Us Too Much to Leave Us with a False Peace.**

So instead, God makes real peace with us. He makes real peace by sending his Son to this world of skinned knees and broken hearts not just to bring a sword and cut through the false peace this world seeks, but to establish real shalom with us. The Son, Christ Jesus, fell on the sword, took the nails, the spear, the death of the cross, takes on Himself all those reasons preventing real peace with God and those around us. Now he calls us by name in Baptism, and week after week he feeds us with His very body broken and his very blood poured out. Good enough? Worthy enough? Able to do enough to make peace with God? It is real peace is not dependent on anything that we have or can do, because God has already made real peace with us by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*Conclusion:* So now when we confront the false peace of our lives, when we lovingly deal with the things that we previously would have brushed aside and hid from. We exchange a false peace for the true shalom Christ gives by His death and resurrection.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.