

Matthew 10:34-42

July 1, 2017

“Here’s Where the Sword Cuts”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God our Heavenly Father. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

There’s so much conflict in our world today.

The people of Maywood, a suburb of Chicago,

The Maywoodians are upset about taxes, about water prices,

about no grocery stores, about clean parks,

about crime and about shootings.

And some of them are leaving to escape.

I know, I talked to them this past week.

Door-to-door we went. **Knock. Knock.** And they told us their concerns.

But you don’t have to go around to know.

All you have to do is turn on the news

and see all the headlines about violence, hatred, death, conflict.

And I don’t know about you,

But I can’t help but feel that somehow

this isn’t how it’s supposed to be.

Just six months ago, we celebrated the birth of the Prince of Peace.

And yet here we are, surrounded by no-peace.

Conflict between nations.

Conflict between groups of people, between families.

And even conflict within our own families,

within our own lives.

Didn’t Jesus come to bring peace to all this mess?

Isn’t that what the angels said? Peace on earth...

When do I get to stop fighting? Stop struggling? Where is my peace?

Why can’t Calgon just take me away!

[False Peace]

Here’s where the sword cuts:

The reality is that we like peace, even when it’s false.

Some see peace as comfortable.

No one likes to come home to a house where people are constantly arguing.

If the parents are always fighting,
it forces you to be constantly be on edge,
ready for the war to start back up. It's just exhausting.

And so we chase after peace,
even if it means ignoring things we know we shouldn't.

Some see peace as safety.

When things change, it unsettles us.

This is what keeps the young woman trapped in the abusive relationship.

Afraid to stay, afraid to go,
She knows it's wrong and broken and unhealthy,
but it's familiar and safe in its own way.

And so we refuse to change, even knowing that what exists is killing us.

But that's not really peace, is it?

OH! It looks like peace, but it's fake.

And fake peace comes with a cost.

Fake peace even brings death.

So get this...

As long as our relationship with God is primarily about
concealing our sin from him,

from others, and

from ourselves,

we can't find real peace.

[***A Sword***] Jesus came NOT to bring peace, but a sword.

Real peace is the ancient Hebrew idea of shalom.

Shalom is about having restored relationships.

Shalom is about wholeness in body, in mind,

in relationships with other people,

and in our relationship with God.

And God knows that true shalom begins

by dealing with the broken relationships that

divide us from him and isolate us from one another.

That's why Jesus says, "***Don't think I've come to bring peace, but a sword.***"
He's coming to cut through that false peace, the lies, to give shalom.

Taking a stand brings a sword.
Speaking the truth will bring you into conflict with the lies of this world.

Don't believe me? Just try it:

- (1) Say that every life is precious and sacred,
from conception to natural death . . .
- (2) Say that human sexuality is a gift of God
to be enjoyed in the context of marriage
between one man and one woman . . .
- (3) Proclaim 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 . . .

Mention any one of these topics and watch the sparks start flying.

Our world is comfortable with its lies,
but for real peace to take root,
the lies must first be challenged and revealed for what they are.

Here's where the sword cuts:

that conflict, that sword...

Here's what it brings... it brings true peace, shalom.

We've done things we shouldn't have,
and we've said things we know we shouldn't have.
And sometimes, the things that own us
are because we didn't act, didn't do that thing we should have,
OR we had that moment when we should have spoken and yet, we kept quiet.

There is simply *NO* peace in our world, our relationships, or in ourselves.
And we – you and I – extend that to our thoughts about God.

How could God love someone as broken as I am?
You see... that's the greatest lie of all.

That somehow we've done too much or said too little for God to love us.
That somehow we've pushed it one too many times,
and this time there can't 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 can't 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,
And that's not really peace at all.

But here's 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 sent his Son Jesus into this world of skinned knees and broken hearts
not just to bring a sword and cut through the false peace that this world seeks,
but to establish real shalom with us.

The Son, Christ Jesus, fell on that sword,
took the nails, the spear, the death of the cross
to take on himself all those reasons we were at anything
but at peace with God.

NOW he calls us by name in Baptism,
and week after week he feeds us
with Christ's body broken and his blood poured out.

We do not have to be good enough,
worthy enough,
or able enough
to make peace with God,
because God has already made peace with us.

[Conclusion]

So now when we confront the lies, something remarkable happens.
We exchange a false peace for the true peace,
For the shalom that only Christ gives. Amen.