

## What about Peace, Jesus?

### Matthew 10:34-42 (CSB)

<sup>34</sup> Don't assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I came to turn **a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;** <sup>36</sup> **and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.** <sup>37</sup> The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life because of me will find it. <sup>40</sup> "The one who welcomes you welcomes me, and the one who welcomes me welcomes him who sent me. <sup>41</sup> Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. And anyone who welcomes a righteous person because he's righteous will receive a righteous person's reward. <sup>42</sup> And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, truly I tell you, he will never lose his reward."

Long ago, Isaiah prophesied that a child would come to break the darkness of this world. That child's name would be "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6b) When that child arrived born of a virgin named Mary in a little town called Bethlehem, angels announced his birth to shepherds working in the fields nearby. Their chorus rang out about this child, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:14) Jesus is a God Man of peace.

But then he says in our Bible reading from Matthew, "Don't assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (verse 34) Wait, what? Aren't you supposed to be the Prince of Peace? Aren't you the one who is supposed to bring peace to people on earth? Isn't that what the angels sang about you? What's this sword that you are bringing? Why would you ever divide people? We have enough of that going on. Why don't you bring people together instead? What about peace, Jesus?

It's always jarring to hear Jesus say, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (verse 34) It may not have been so jarring for the disciples. This whole chapter of Matthew has been dedicated to Jesus preparing his Twelve to go out into the area as an answer to the prayer of Matthew 9:38, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Jesus tells them what to preach, where they are to go, who they are to go to, how they will be provided for, and what to expect. Interestingly, Jesus spends three to four times longer telling them about the persecution that they should expect over all the other things. He warned them, "Look, I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves." (Matthew 10:16) "You will be hated by everyone because of my name." (Matthew 10:22) "A disciple is not above his teacher...If they called the head of the house 'Beelzebul,' how much more the members of his household!" (Matthew 10:24,25)

So, it kind of makes sense when Jesus tells them that their preaching of him will "turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household." (verses 35-36) Families will be divided and even torn apart as the disciples go out and preach that the kingdom of heaven has come near. There is no neutral territory with Jesus, no fence riding. You are either with him and for him or against him.

What about peace, Jesus? You are still the Prince of Peace, right? Because I want my family to peacefully come together under you. Thankfully for us who want our families peacefully worshiping under Jesus, a majority of the time, children follow the faith of their parents. That's a majority of the time, but that's not all the time. There are exceptions, many exceptions, especially if you are an adult convert.

As an adult convert, you have come to appreciate this faith. You have come to serve Jesus, to be fed by his Word. This is important to you. Jesus has given you a peace that the world cannot give. He has made you right with God by removing your sins and making you instantly, totally, and completely worthy of standing in his perfection because he has made you perfect. In this way, you have peace on earth. You are enjoying it right now as you worship God, but this peace and this relationship may very well be new to your family.

In that peace of forgiveness and reconciliation with God that you have received, you have a true desire to give this peace to the rest of your family. You want them to have what you have. You want them to have the forgiveness of sins. You want them to know what God has done for them, that he has made them right with him, that he has given them an inheritance of heaven. You want them to have the greatest gift any person could possibly have. So, you share that message and become one of those workers for the Lord of the harvest in his harvest field, just like one of his Twelve Disciples he was sending out.

Yet by doing so the sword was unsheathed. Maybe you have had your family, your son, your daughter, your husband, your wife, your Mom, your Dad, split on Jesus. Jesus became a source of contention, of tears. You want so desperately that they have this peace with God that you have knowing that your sins are washed away and forgiven, but they are resistant, hostile even.

When this happens, you are challenged. Who do you love more? Who will you serve? Who will you choose: your family or God? What a lousy decision to have to make. As you are faced with this decision, you have learned firsthand that the Prince of Peace does not mean that everyone responds to him peacefully. Jesus brought a sword. He is divisive.

But what about peace, Jesus? We just want peace. So, maybe we decide that we are not going to bring Jesus up in order to keep peace. Is this really peace, though? If you choose to not bring up Jesus to your family, have you chosen peace with them while giving up peace with God? Have you chosen them instead of God? Jesus said, "The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (verses 37-38) That desire to have peace with my family by not sharing Jesus takes away my peace with God. Instead of shouldering the burden of the cross that I receive for being one who welcomes Jesus, I decide to ditch it on the side of the road like a piece of trash. I don't want to bear a cross; I just want peace and quiet in my household. Am I tempted to give up peace with God for peace with my family? Do I have the right kind of peace?

What about peace, Jesus? If we think following Jesus will give us peaceful relationships with others, especially our own family, that's not what we should expect. He did not come to earth so that world wars would stop and all anger and violence would cease – not this side of heaven. Jesus divides people, and he always will because some will always refuse him. This was going to happen to the disciples as Jesus sent them out to proclaim him and his message. It happens to us when we do the same.

At the same time, though, Jesus makes it clear that some will welcome his disciples. They will welcome them and hear their message, and the Holy Spirit will cause them to welcome God into their lives and their hearts. People will come together in the name of Jesus. They will be reconciled to God and find peace with him because he removes their sins, he removes their unworthiness that would bar them from dwelling forever with him. They will know Jesus as their Prince of Peace.

You know Jesus as the Prince of Peace. You have welcomed a righteous person to talk to you about God. You have welcomed a preacher to tell you more and explain the spiritual peace that God has given to you through the perfect life and sacrifice given by Jesus. You know that no one can take this peace you have with God away because he won it for you. He is your Prince of Peace.

You welcomed God's Word into your life. You have chosen him over a father or mother, a son or daughter. You have stuck with this faith in Christ even when the sword came out and you were divided against family members, your own household. Now, how will you continue to show that your relationship with God, this peace you have with him, is the most important relationship that you or anyone can have?

We might think that this would require some grand, showy display, but no. Jesus gives us the expectation that it's small things. It's welcoming that person who wants to share more God with you. It's giving a cup of cold water to a brother or sister in Christ no matter how great or small they seem within the Church. It is taking that deliberate time to enjoy the fellowship you share here with other Christians, rejoicing that you have been brought together by the Prince of Peace enjoying this peace that only God gives. You're not enemies here. You have been brought together by God and his peace for you that has taken away your unworthiness and has taken away your sin. You are family because have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

God-willing, your family will not experience this sword, this divide, because of Jesus. Rejoice if you can be here with your whole family. Thank God for that gift from him. But we know that others are and will be divided. Pray for them. Pray that God's message of peace, of forgiveness, enters their hearts, that the Holy Spirit would cause them to receive and welcome that message. God has ripped down our dividing wall of hostility put up by our sins and instead made peace between us and him. This is why we choose him, even when it comes to a choice between him or family. May God use us to share that peace with others so that they can experience peace with God from the one and only Prince of Peace and find family with him. Amen.