

Matthew 10:34-42

³⁴ "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' ³⁷ "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. ⁴⁰ "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

Introduction

If you're a big shopper maybe you noted the Herberger's and Kohl's ads this week. They even offered me some coupons for extra savings. The Herberger's one offers 25 % off on some things, 15% on others, and 10% on still others plus there's a \$10 off coupon on purchases of \$10 or more. At Kohl's I get 20% off if I use my Kohl's card. They sound like good deals if you need to do some shopping. But I find that it's good to read the fine print. There's usually a "cannot be used with..." statement or an "offer not valid in" or "excludes." It pays to read the fine print. The same is true of those credit card offers, insurance policies, and contracts. It's the small print that sometimes gets you.

In today's gospel reading, Matthew 10:34-42, Jesus makes it clear that "There's No Fine Print in Following Jesus." He makes clear that there will be ... family divisions to deal with; ... personal sacrifices to make; ... God's rewards to receive.

... There will be family divisions to deal with

Recall the setting from last week's sermon on the verses preceding our text. Jesus is sending the 12 apostles out on their internship. They were to go to the towns and villages of Israel and proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven is near because the Messiah had come. Jesus also directed them to do miracles by the power of God to lend credence to the message of Christ they proclaimed.

There was no "fine print" in the message he gave them to prepare them for their work. He held nothing back. He told them that there will be ... family divisions to deal with. **"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'" (34-36)**

Doesn't this seem to contradict the fact that the Bible connects Jesus with bringing peace? Think about the prophecy of Isaiah 9 called the Messiah "Prince of Peace", or the angel's message of peace on earth as a result of the birth of the Savior, or even Jesus's words in John 14:27, **"Peace I leave you; my peace I give you"**? Think about 2 Corinthians 5:19, **"God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's sins against them."** Jesus brought peace between God and us.

What Jesus is alluding to with his statement to his disciples is that while he came to bring peace and wants everyone to have peace, not everyone wants him or the peace he has to give. They may not like the truth that Jesus is a person of the one true, Trine God. They may not accept the message of the law that comes before the gospel message of peace. They don't want to hear that they are accountable to anyone except themselves, that they have sin, that they deserve to go to hell, that they can't save themselves, that they need a Savior, or that Jesus is the only Savior and way to eternal life. These can be members of a Christian's own family.

Sometimes family members get caught up in a sinful lifestyle. If in love and concern Christian family members confront them, there's conflict, harsh and hurtful words, avoidance, not letting family see grandchildren, nieces of nephews.

For people in Jesus's day, following him may have resulted in being disowned by family.

Today when one family member is Christian and another one is not there are all kinds of possibilities for strife and conflict, hurt and unhappiness. I think that we all have experienced some element of family division because of our Christian faith and other's lack of it. We know the disappointment, frustration, anger and hurt that comes out of these relationships.

When we experience these things because of family strife over our faith, turn to God for the comfort of his word. He loves you. He is with you. He will strengthen you. Also pray. Pray for God's comfort and strength. Pray for patience, wisdom and guidance. Pray for your family who aren't of the faith that God would bring them in. Love them and as far as possible, as Paul wrote in Romans 12, strive to live in peace with them. **"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."**

Jesus makes it clear that there is no fine print in following him. There will be divisions in families to deal with. There will also be personal sacrifices to make.

...There will also be personal sacrifices to make

³⁷ **"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."**

These sacrifices have to do with love for family and one's own life.

Jesus isn't saying that we shouldn't love the members of our family. The Fourth Commandment directing us to honor our parents includes loving them. In Ephesians 5 husbands are directed to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. In 1 John 2:10 God tells us, **"Whoever loves his brother lives in the light."**

But Jesus doesn't want us to love family more than the Father, the Holy Spirit, or him. He wants us to love him with our all – heart, soul, strength and mind. In Luke 14:26 Jesus even contrasted the love we are to have for him and the love we have for our family as the difference between love and hate. We are to love our families but we are to love God tons more.

But that doesn't always happen. People will compromise their faith to get into or remain in a relationship with someone they really like or love. Spouses may at times compromise their faith to keep peace at home. Parents may turn their back on the obvious sin of their children because they love them and don't want to make waves.

In his book *Crazy Busy* author Kevin DeYoung makes the observation that we live in a "kindergarchy" where parents live for their children and assume that their whole well-being depends on them and anxiously strive to live up to the myth of being the perfect parent. While parents who do this may do it out of both love for Jesus and love for children, couldn't the balance easily be children first, Jesus second?

Why love Jesus more than family? Your family can be the source of great blessing, but they can't save you from sin's curse. They can't get you to heaven. They can enable you to overcome death. Only Jesus can and has. Jesus loves you more than your family ever will. He has given you his righteousness in your baptism. He took away the curse you deserve for your sins when he died on the cross. He overcame death not only for himself but also for you when he rose from the dead. He changed your eternal destiny from hell to heaven. All this he did because he loves you with an undeserved love. Therefore, love him first and most.

And even be willing to sacrifice your life for him. Jesus said when we deny him to save our physical life, we lose out on eternal life. If we confess him and are killed for it, we will still have eternal life.

Tradition has it that all of the original apostles did except for Judas who took his own life and John who died of old age. But John spent his later years in life in exile because he wouldn't stop loving and proclaiming Jesus.

Jesus makes it plain that in following him we will have to make personal sacrifices – respect that gives way to ridicule at the hands of those who verbally persecute us, sinful things we give up to walk with the Lord, time we offer in worship and service, money that could go for possessions and pleasure that we give to the Lord to support local ministry or missions.

In our first reading he tells us not to love the world. The world has a lot to offer. But it can't give us a relationship with God and it can't give us eternal life. So God tells us to sacrifice a relationship with the world so that we don't forfeit life with God.

There's no fine print in following Jesus.

... There will be God's rewards to receive

The last thing that Jesus makes plain is there will be God's rewards to receive. ⁴⁰ **"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."**

Do Jesus' words make you pause and think? They did me.

Remember that Jesus has just laid it on the line that following and proclaiming him is no easy thing. To his disciples he is saying, "While there will be persecution and sacrifice to endure, there will be people who welcome you, who honor you as my prophets, who see you as righteous, and who will take care of you."

At the same time he is saying, "I will bless them for doing so. Through believing the message you bring to them, they will have forgiveness and eternal life. But I will also bless them in their daily lives, loving them as I love you, being with them as I am with you, and taking care of them as I take care of you."

There's no fine print in what Jesus is telling us. He's saying, "Welcome, honor and care for those who bring my word to you. Warmly welcome and love your fellow Christians, those righteous through faith in Jesus, those righteous through faith in Jesus, as we come into our fellowship. Take care of one another. As you do, I will honor, welcome and care for you in eternity and in time. I will reward you."

It's not that we earn or deserve God's rewards. They are purely products of his grace. When he gives them in time we may not even realize it. But Jesus tells his disciples and us about them to comfort and assure us.

In comments on Galatians 3:23, Dr. Martin Luther wrote, *"Scripture teaches that the good works of Christians receive a reward, yea, a very great reward (1 Cor. 3:8) ... We shall unhesitatingly teach, both publically and privately, that God rewards the good works of Christians here in time and particularly in eternity (1 Tim. 4:8; Luke 14:14)."*

This is what Jesus was saying.

While there may be fine print in advertising, credit card notices, insurance policies and contracts, there's no fine print in following Jesus.