

NOT PEACE, BUT A SWORD  
(MATTHEW 10.34-42)

IN THE NINTH CHAPTER OF ISAIAH, I THE PROPHET PROPHETICALLY CALLS JESUS THE **PRINCE OF PEACE** (9.6). CONSEQUENTLY. WE CHRISTIANS HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO WORSHIPPING HIM AS THE PRINCE OF PEACE. FURTHERMORE, IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE WE READ **GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE AMONG THOSE WITH WHOM HE IS PLEASED** (2.14). ONCE AGAIN WE HEAR OF HIS PEACE WHICH IS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO PLEASE HIM. MY FRIENDS, JESUS GIVES US HIS PEACE BECAUSE WE PLEASE HIM WITH OUR FAITH IN HIM. THUS WE HAVE HIS PEACE IN OUR MIDST. IT IS **THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING WHICH WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS** (PHILIPPIANS 4.7).

BUT IF WE HAVE HIS PROMISE OF THE GIFT OF HIS PEACE IN OUR LIVES,

WHY DOES HE BRING US STRIFE INSTEAD? HE IS QUITE OPEN ABOUT IT: **DO NOT THINK THAT I HAVE COME TO BRING PEACE TO THE EARTH. I HAVE NOT COME TO BRING PEACE BUT A SWORD.** SOMETIMES OUR LORD CATCHES US OFF OUR GUARD, DOESN'T HE? WE MUST REMEMBER THAT HE DOES NOT BREAK HIS PROMISES, AND NEITHER DOES HE CONTRADICT HIMSELF. WHEN JESUS SURPRISES AND PUZZLES US, WE HAVE TO LOOK DEEPER INTO SCRIPTURE TO UNDERSTAND HIM. "JESUS WANTED US TO REALIZE THAT HIS COMING WAS LIKE A SWORD THAT SPLIT FAMILIES IN TWO: SOME WERE FOR HIM, SOME WERE AGAINST HIM" (LSB). THE ENEMIES OF JESUS WHO HAVE NO PEACE IN THEIR HEARTS "WILL BRING EVERY POSSIBLE MISFORTUNE AND GRIEF UPON US. FOR WHERE GOD'S WORD IS PREACHED, ACCEPTED, OR BELIEVED AND PRODUCES FRUIT, THERE THE CROSS CANNOT BE MISSING" (LUTHERAN

CONFESSIONS). SO WE WHO HAVE HIS PEACE MUST PRAY FOR THAT PEACE TO BE WITH THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH US AS FRIENDS OR FAMILY MEMBERS. "PRESSURE, HARDSHIP AND OPPOSITION ARE TO BE EXPECTED BY GOD'S PEOPLE ON THEIR EARTHLY JOURNEY TOWARD THEIR FULL EXPERIENCE OF HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM" (LSB). "WE OUGHT TO SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR FRIENDS [AND FAMILY MEMBERS] WHOM WE SEE PLACED IN GRIEF" (BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX). JESUS HIMSELF, WE ARE TOLD IN JOHN'S GOSPEL, FELT THE DISCORD OF UNBELIEF IN HIS OWN FAMILY AS WE READ: **FOR NOT EVEN HIS BROTHERS BELIEVED IN HIM** (7.5). THEN CERTAINLY WE ARE GOING TO SUFFER THE SWORD OF DISAGREEMENT AND EVEN DOWNRIGHT DISCORD IN OUR OWN FAMILIES AT DIFFERENT TIMES.

THIS IS THE WAY IT IS. WE ARE AT PEACE WITH JESUS BECAUSE JESUS HAS GIVEN US HIS PEACE. THIS GIVING

TOOK PLACE ON THE CROSS WHEN HE SUFFERED AND DIED TO OBLITERATE FOREVER THE SIN OF ADAM AND ALL ITS AFTER EFFECTS: NAMELY OUR ACTUAL SIN. UNFORTUNATELY, THE LACK OF FAITH IN JESUS RESULTING IN IMPENITENT BEHAVIOR AND THE CURSE OF SIN LEADS TO WHAT JESUS CALLS THE **SWORD** WHICH IS THE LACK OF PEACE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY EVIDENT IN OUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS. JESUS PUTS IT THIS WAY: **SON AGAINST FATHER, DAUGHTER AGAINST MOTHER, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST MOTHER-IN-LAW** AND SO FORTH. I HAVE WITNESSED A MOTHER SOBBING FOR A SON WHO THREW JESUS BACK INTO HER FACE. I HAVE SEEN PARENTS SICK AT HEART OVER A DAUGHTER WHO WAS LIVING A SEXUALLY IMMORAL LIFE. I HAVE SEEN FAMILY MEMBERS SORROWING OVER THEIR BROTHER OR SISTER WHO HAS STOPPED ATTENDING CHURCH. WE READ IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN:

**HE CAME TO HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN PEOPLE DID NOT RECEIVE HIM (1.11).** JESUS, BY BEING JESUS, BY BRINGING SALVATION TO THE WORLD CAUSES UNPEACE, THE SWORD, TO CHRISTIAN FAMILIES WHO HAVE A MEMBER, BE IT A PARENT OR A CHILD, SOME RELATIVE OR EVEN SOME FRIEND OR ACQUAINTANCE, WHO HAS GONE ASTRAY FROM THE FAITH. THE PROPHET JEREMIAH FOUND OUT TO HIS DISMAY, I AM SURE, THAT HIS WORST ENEMIES WERE IN HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD. JESUS, NO DOUBT, REFLECTS THIS FACT, WHEN HE INFORMS US THAT THERE WILL NOT ALWAYS BE PEACE IN OUR FAMILIES: **A PERSON'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.**

EVEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ALREADY THE PROPHETS WARNED AGAINST THIS SIN. WE READ THE PROPHET MICAH: **FOR THE SON TREATS THE FATHER WITH CONTEMPT, THE DAUGHTER RISES UP AGAINST HER MOTHER, THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW**

**AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; A MAN'S ENEMIES ARE THE PEOPLE OF HIS OWN HOUSE (7.6)**

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT READING FOR TODAY WE READ ABOUT TWO PROPHETS, JEREMIAH HIMSELF AND ANOTHER NAMED HANANIAH. JEREMIAH WAS TRUE TO THE LORD, BUT HANANIAH WAS A FALSE PROPHET. JEREMIAH TOLD THE TRUTH THAT, UNLESS THERE WAS REPENTANCE WITH THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH, THE COUNTRY WOULD BE OVERCOME BY THE BABYLONIANS. HANANIAH, HOWEVER, CONTRADICTED JEREMIAH AND SAID THAT ALL THAT NASTY TALK ABOUT BABYLON WAS JUST FEAR MONGERING. WELL, HISTORY SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. THE BABYLONIANS TOOK OVER, PILLAGED AND DESTROYED THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM AND TOOK THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH INTO EXILE. WHAT JESUS WAS WARNING THE PEOPLE ABOUT IN HIS DAY HAD TAKEN PLACE PREVIOUSLY: THE SWORD OF STRIFE WHICH

WHICH IS NOT ONLY IN OUR HOMES AND TOWNS BUT THROUGHOUT SOCIETY TODAY.

SO WHAT ARE WE TO DO? WHAT DO WE DO WHEN THE ERRANT SON-IN-LAW TURNS AGAINST JESUS, WHEN THE DAD IN THE FAMILY PLAYS GOLF DURING CHURCH TIME ON SUNDAY, GIVING A WRETCHED EXAMPLE TO HIS CHILDREN? WHAT DO WE DO WHEN OUR FAMILY MEMBERS LOVE THEMSELVES MORE THAN JESUS BY FORGETTING THAT HE DIED FOR THEIR SINS ON THE HOLY CROSS? WE COUNSEL THEM AND PRAY FOR THEM, REMEMBERING THAT GOD REALLY DOES ANSWER OUR PRAYERS IN WAYS WE CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE. [OH, HOW MY MOTHER PRAYED FOR ME!].

SOMETIMES TOO THE PEACE IN OUR FAMILIES IS INTERRUPTED, OR EVEN DESTROYED, BY MISPLACED LOVE WHICH IS TANTAMOUNT TO IDOLATRY. JESUS SAYS IT WELL: **WHOEVER LOVES FATHER OR MOTHER**

**MORE THAN ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME, AND WHOEVER LOVES SON OR DAUGHTER MORE THAN ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME.** WHOEVER LOVES ANYONE MORE THAN JESUS IS UNWORTHY OF HIM. WHEN THIS HAPPENS THE SWORD IS PRESENT IN THE FAMILY AND THERE IS NOT THE PEACE OF JESUS PRESENT. BUT WE DO NOT GIVE UP: WE KEEP ON PRAYING THAT THE PEACE OF GOD MAY BE REALIZED, THAT ALL FAMILY MEMBERS WILL LOVE JESUS FIRST AND NOT THEMSELVES OR SOME OTHER PERSON INSTEAD. I KNOW OF A MOTHER WHO LOVED HER SON MORE THAN JESUS. THE OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS SUFFERED BECAUSE OF HER NEGLIGENCE OF THEM. THEN THE SON DIED. INSTEAD OF COMMENDING HIM TO JESUS, SHE MADE HIM INTO A GOD, CREATING A SHRINE FOR HIM IN HER VERY BEDROOM. DID SHE LOVE JESUS? NO, BUT SHE LOVED HER DEAD SON FIRST AND JESUS SECOND.

WHAT IT AMOUNTS TO IN THE END  
IS THAT THE PEACE OF JESUS, WHICH  
HE WON FOR US ON THE CROSS  
CANNOT COME TO US AND DWELL IN  
OUR MIDST WHEN WE ARE  
UNREPENTANT. THEN THERE IS ONLY  
THE SWORD. WE PRAY FOR PEACE.  
AMEN.