

## THE PEACE OF GOD MEANS WAR ON EARTH!

Some will hate and reject you for Jesus' sake -- God will accept and reward you for Jesus' sake.

Matthew 10:34-40

**TEXT:** *Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

Fifteen years ago today, 9/11/2001, we were attacked by that ancient enemy of the Christian church on earth, when Islamic terrorists took down the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. While that event was a new experience for us, it was a threat even in the days of Martin Luther as Muslim armies continued to threaten Europe. Luther taught that German Lutherans should pray the Lord to protect the Christian Church from both the spiritual attacks of the Pope and the physical attacks of the Muslim, or Turk, as they were called in his day.

Last December we heard the Christmas angels sing: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.* Today, we began our study of the Book of Jeremiah. We will hear the Lord tell Jeremiah that his ministry would be despised by the Jews, and that the enemies of the Lord would be his enemies.

Today, Jesus continues this theme: THE PEACE OF GOD MEANS WAR ON EARTH with the words: *Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*

How does Jesus' birth announcement coincide with the words of the grown up Christ? This is the answer: **Some will hate and reject you for Jesus' sake; God will accept and reward you for Jesus' sake.**

Jesus describes the kind of hatred that will exist on the earth because of those who will reject him: *For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.* The world's first family experienced this sad fact. Adam and Eve's son, Cain, believed in the existence of God, but he did not believe in the Savior God had promised to send. Cain even worshipped God with his family, and brought him offerings, but the Bible says: *In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry...* Cain's anger at God's rejection was directed at God by murdering the one God had accepted: Abel. It was the beginning of the vast divide between the world of unbelief and the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.

Adam and Eve discovered, like Jesus warns, that God's Word will be met with hostility, sometimes in the most intimate of earthly associations: *For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.* When this happens, one of the heaviest of crosses is set before us! The temptation will be to refuse such a cross in order to grab on to the Christmas promise of "peace on earth" as an excuse to avoid the strife that follows with friends or relatives who really do not love Jesus our Lord and Savior but love a sinful life instead.

But Jesus gives us a sound warning: *Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.* Here the First Commandment is at stake: YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS! And this God would demand such a price? Who of us can confess never to have loved someone or something more than God and His Word? Young people leave the confession of their faith for the sake of romance. Grandparents and even parents accept their children's sinful behavior for fear of "losing them." Yet Jesus makes it clear: *anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*

Who of us is worthy of Him? Not one! Nevertheless, Jesus took up His cross for us! We would put it down for Him, but He took it up for us! We confess: Lord, we are NOT WORTHY! And still we plead your mercy. That is the PEACE that of which the Christmas angels sang: peace with God through Jesus. It is written: ***For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*** Ro 5 And Jesus lives!

There are those who will hate you for this faith and trust in Jesus. But don't lose heart! God will accept and reward you for Jesus' sake.

Jesus says: ***Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*** How did Abel find life when Cain brutally killed him? The New Testament explains (He 11): ***By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.*** There are three rewards of faith listed here:

One, by faith in the Promised Savior, Abel's sins are forgiven and Abel is viewed by God through the blood and righteousness of Christ. That is, faith in Jesus receives God's judgment and commendation that he is a "righteous man."

Secondly, whatever a righteous man does pleases God. Since Cain did not believe in the Savior to come, he is still seen by God as a sinner, and God does not want Cain's offerings, even if they amounted to a million dollars! But as Jesus declares: ***...whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.*** Abel, righteous through faith, gives an offering that God announces to the world as a God-pleasing gift.

Thirdly, Abel ***...still speaks, even though he is dead...*** That means that Abel is in heaven and already has spent the last several thousand years in God's paradise. Cain, however, having died in his impenitence, has already endured thousands of years in hell, with an eternity of agony ahead of him.

Each of us who dies in Christ will see this man one day soon. And this is the family unit each of us should learn to covet with a passion: the Peace of God that transcends all understanding! It is peace with God through the forgiveness of sins. It is the peace that turns from God in love toward our fellow man. To obey the First Commandment means that we are also able to obey the other 9 -- including the seven that speak about loving our neighbor.

There are religions that would preach a much happier message. Peace is emphasized as the goal. They look for happy churches and friendly congregations. But in searching for this peace, they take their eyes off the peace that was secured ONLY by the horrendous sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. That's why Jesus Himself spoke of His peace ONLY in reference to carrying the cross. That is what we must preach and believe at all costs, even if we are the only ones left in Saginaw preaching it!

Peace will be broken on earth, don't let it be broken with you and your Lord! There are many people, some of them very close to us in our hearts and minds, who secretly hate Jesus. But don't let them take you to hell with them! Amen