

Grace Lutheran Community, 25 June 2023:

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost

The sermon text for today is based on the text

Matthew Chapter 10 verses 24 to 39

Today Jesus calls us together and says ok listen up. This is how it is. Just as he said to His audience when He was still on earth. Jesus comes to bring peace to those who are near and to those who are far off. He is peace and fills us with peace just as He promises. Peace I leave you peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

So we know that Jesus gives us peace. Peace because we have nothing to fear as He has made us right with His Father, with our Heavenly Father because of His suffering and death on the cross for our sin. We now live as children of God set free from sin, eternal death and the power of the devil. You see sin no longer holds us down, nor do we need to fear our future as by faith we have eternal life in Jesus. The devil tells us over and over that he has power over us, but that power was destroyed when Jesus died on the cross. The devil no longer has power over us. We have peace knowing that God loves us and gives us hope and a purpose. Hope because His promises are sure in Jesus and purpose as we are made Holy by God to do His work. To do the good works He has prepared for us in Jesus Christ for us to walk in. All this by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says to us listen up.

The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! 'So do not be afraid

of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Wow. Listen up. Let us hear this word. Jesus in all this says twice do not be afraid, do not be afraid. He spells out how it is but notice the focus? Be afraid of the one who has authority to judge the body and the soul.

What is this all about? Surely we know as followers of Jesus we do not need to be afraid of the one who will come to judge the living and the dead, Jesus is the judge. How will He judge you?

Today we witnessed the beautiful gift of baptism. Lacy and Holly. Today their names are written in the book of eternal life. Today they have been sealed by Gods' very own spirit. And today Lacy and Holly can live in peace knowing that God has claimed them as His children now and for eternity.

They are valuable because God made them in His image. Just as you are valuable. God made you and rescued you. He washed you clean in the waters of baptism and gives you His promise that He is your God and you are His children. So do not be afraid because you are loved and on the day of the Lord, the day the one who comes to judge the living and the dead Jesus you can stand in peace because it is your faith in Jesus that gives you eternal life. There is no hoop to jump through or to add a few more good things to your life to impress Jesus. Your account on the day of the lord is simply Jesus. My hope is in Jesus. My life is in Jesus and my peace is in Jesus.

Have a listen to this. Jesus continues, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your

Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.'

You are worth more than the sparrows yet God cares for them. So do not be afraid as you walk in Jesus Christ and by His word. Do not be afraid of Jesus who judges rightly our lives and our hearts because it is the very same Jesus who died for your sins. It is the very same Jesus who sets you free and gives you a new life in Him.

This text today is about whom you follow, whom you put your trust in. The word of God will divide. But there is unity in the Lord Jesus Christ as we follow Him.

We can get hung up on rules sometimes. Human made rules that seek to guide us and keep good order but when we take our eyes off Jesus to use the rules or the law to lord it over others or condemn someone that is no longer following Christ.

The COVID pandemic has brought out some very good things in the way God's love has been shared and lived and some division and hurt where selfish desires have pushed opinion onto others with no love of Jesus at all.

If you think of our own Lutheran church practices of mask wearing or not we might disagree where we are at. But what is more important is not the law or the rules rather it is Jesus. 'Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.'

Jesus reminds us to look to Him in all we do and say. To live by faith not by law. Let us not take our eyes off Jesus but see that Jesus is still the same if masks are worn or not, if people who are different to us have communion or sit among us. Let us no longer use our human rules as excuses to not join in or to exclude others, rather let us confess Jesus as our lord the one who heals us and forgives our sins.

Jesus wants our hearts. He wants us to love Him above all else. He wants us to serve Him more than to serve rules that we use to control others. Jesus wants us to follow Him.

He says again listen up. '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. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

So we no longer live for our self but for Jesus and as we lose our life, giving our selfish ways up to serve Jesus we will have eternal life. Amen