

Matthew 10:34-42

If a man came at you with a knife in his hand, would you run?...or perhaps choose to defend yourself? But if that man was a surgeon and his knife was a scalpel, and he was about to remove a cancerous tumor from your body, you would not be afraid of him for his goal would be to help you, not to hurt you. And so you and I should not be afraid as we hear Jesus' words in our text: *"I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."* The sword He holds is as sharp as a surgeon's scalpel. It is a sword, a knife aimed directly at you. But do not fear. Jesus wields His sword with perfect precision. Every cut He makes is meant only for your good.

"I bring a sword," He says, *"not peace."* These words may surprise us, for the way of our Lord is the way of peace. Scripture even calls Him the Prince of Peace. Yet without the shedding of blood there can be no peace. Every soldier knows this, as does every Christian. If you meet with your surgeon after he has done extensive tests on you, and he tells you that all is well; he will not cut you with his knife; no surgery is needed--but he is lying to you. He has found cancer in your body which must be removed. Yet he is unwilling to upset you. He wants only to bring peace to your troubled mind and heart and so he withholds the truth from you--if he does this, he is not your friend, but your enemy. To give you peace, real and lasting peace, he must first use his sword to cut into you.

It is for this very reason that we are here today. This church is a hospital and here Jesus wields His scalpel--the sword of the Word of God. If you came here today only to hear what you want to hear, you're in the wrong place. Go back home and turn on your television set. Find Joel Osteen preaching to you with a broad smile on his face. He will give you the words you want to hear. He, and others like him, will not cut you with the scalpel. They give peace without pain, without bloodshed, without first wielding the sword. But that is not the way of Christ, and it is not the peace of Christ. *"I came,"* He says, *"to bring a sword."* And that sword you feel here today. That sword we need for we are sick with sin. We are dying, all of us. *"The wages of sin is death."*

We need to feel the sword just as King David did. He needed the sword. He had sinned with Bathsheba, yet he was living in denial. 'There's nothing wrong with me,' was his attitude. So out of love God sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan came at him holding God's sword in his hand. He cut into David and exposed his sinful heart. And because he cut David open in this way David, by the working of God, repented of his sin and he was saved from eternal destruction.

That same sword is here today, but today it is here not for King David; it is here for you. In our text Jesus cuts us open with His words and exposes what really lies within our heart. *"I have come,"* He says, *"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 person's enemies will be those of his own household. 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. And whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me."*

Jesus, here, is not speaking against our families and loved ones. He is exposing the truth that we struggle with putting family and loved ones, and even ourselves, ahead of Him. *"You shall make no idol for yourself,"* says God. *"You shall put no other god before Me."* But look into your heart and you will see idols living there. The idols of spouse, children, parents, and ourselves. Day after day we put family ahead of Jesus. We love spouse and children more than we love God's Word. Do you doubt these words? Then consider where you spend both your time and your money. We spend such things on what we love the most. The truth is that God is not first in your life, nor in mine. We put

family ahead of our Lord. We put ourselves and our wants ahead of our loving God. We do not follow in His ways very well. We do not do well at carrying our cross in His steps.

And so are you and I worthy of Jesus? Do you want the truth?...or something else? The truth is that if you were worthy of Jesus, you would not need to be here. Hospitals are not for those who are healthy, but for those who are sick. Those who are healthy do not need a doctor. Jesus did not come for those who are healthy. But if you are sick with sin, He is here for you. If you need Jesus' sword to cut away and expose your wretched heart, then He is here for you. If you need the medicine of His Gospel, then that Gospel is here for you.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God," David cried. Through His prophet God showed David how sick he was; that his heart was not right before Him. *"I have sinned,"* he confessed. At that moment David saw that he was not worthy, but that he was full of sin and death. And here is an amazing thing...confessing that he was not worthy, David was declared worthy by the grace of God, and through His prophet God forgave his sin.

Anyone today also who thinks they are worthy of Jesus; worthy of God' love, and peace, and salvation, is not worthy. But listen to Dr. Luther: *"He is worthy...who has faith in these words, 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.'"* If you think that you are worthy, then you're not, and you need God's sword again to cut open your heart and show you your sinful condition. But if you are sick and that's why you are here in God's hospital. If you know that you are a worthless sinner with nothing but an unclean heart to offer God, then Jesus is here for you. His sword has done its work on you, and He invites you to believe His words, 'I forgive you...you are forgiven of all your sins.' He invites you to come to His Supper where He binds your wounds with His very body and blood--the same body and blood which is given here for the remission of your sins.

The truth is, friends, that not one of us is worthy of Jesus. Our lives are filled with disobedience. All of us are nothing but worthless servants. But trusting in He who died for you, God calls you worthy. He forgives you for Jesus' sake. And this is true no matter who you are, no matter how sinful your heart and life. God who cuts you here with His sword in order to give you real and lasting peace, turned that sword on Jesus for you. The soldiers cut into His head with sharp thorns. They cut into His back with whips. They cut into His hands and feet with nails. And they cut into His side with their spear. And now those wounds of Jesus, which God opened with His sword, are for your healing. His blood shed on the cross for you, is given here to you. And through that blood you have peace, real peace with God both now and forever. Amen.