**The Divine Paternity Test**

Based on [Matthew 10:34-42](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt10.34-42)

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In today’s Gospel, Jesus talks about peace, saying “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Not peace, but a sword. In peacetime, you do not need a weapon. The prophet Isaiah famously speaks of a time to come when nations will “beat their swords into plowshares” (Isaiah 2:4), because they won’t need them anymore. Weapons are unnecessary in the kingdom of God, because he reigns, he governs, he executes justice and righteousness. Yet Jesus is the Messiah who says, I have not come to bring peace, but a weapon of conflict. What does this mean?

Jesus did not come to bring a physical sword in order to take over the world by force. Force is the way of the world, of the devil and his brood. Jesus says elsewhere, “the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the violent take it by force ” (Matthew 11:12). He said this to show how the prophets of God have always been received by the world. They speak for God and when they do it, they are persecuted, attacked, even killed. They speak for God, and their speaking, causes conflict and division. Their speaking God’s word is a sword.

Muhammud, the prophet of Islam, he came to bring a physical sword. The Koran, the Holy book of Islam teaches, and I quote, “Kill [unbelievers] wherever you find them…and fight them until there is no more unbelief and worship is for Allah alone” (Quran 2:191-193). But the sword Jesus brings is not a physical sword of violence. When he was secretly arrested to be led away to an unjust trial, Jesus’ own disciple wanted to fight for him. Peter took out a sword and cut off a soldier’s ear. Then Jesus said to him, “**Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so**” (Matt. 26:51-54).

The sword Jesus is talking about is his Word. Ephesians says, “**Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**” (Eph 6:17). Hebrews says, “**For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart**” (Heb. 4:12). The word of God is a spiritual sword and Jesus tells his disciples to use it. And they are to use it, not like some clumsy butcher, but with precision and grace, as St. Paul says to Timothy, “**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly DIVIDING the word of truth**” (2 Timothy 2:15). The word of God is a sword because it divides truth from lies, honesty from hypocrisy, sheep from goats, and so too it will divide families.

Jesus says, “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come 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.”

Jesus didn’t come to make you fight with your family, as if he likes conflict and quarreling. That’s not his purpose. It is the devil who sews seeds of dissention, envy and division. It is the world, and its prince the devil whose *modus operandi* is extortion, the use of violence, intimidation, threats and leverage to get its own way. And apart from Christ, that’s all anyone can know, power, who has it and how to get it and how to keep it once you have it.

Jesus did not come because he wants you to be in conflict within your family. But if you have a father or a son who doesn’t believe in him, a mother or a daughter who refuses to hear His word, division and violence on their part will inevitably result. Jesus tells you this ahead of time, so you are prepared. Because you will be tempted to think, “surely God wouldn’t want me say anything that would lead to conflict within the family.” Yes he would; and in fact he insists on it as we see today.

Brothers and sisters, this gives great insight into our own situation. Despite however our Synod and District would like us to spin it, Resurrection Lutheran Church is not a “church plant” as if we twenty or so people decided in a vacuum that God wanted us to start a church in downtown Lethbridge. **We started this church because we were sent away from ours.** I preached a word of God at Immanuel Lutheran Church and *for that reason* they removed me from their “church family”. You saw that it was wrong, and learned that certain doctrines they were holding to was not in harmony with the word of Christ. So you called them to repentance until now, a year and a half later, without reaching out to you or even attempting to talk to you about the doctrine of Christ, you have been removed from their “Church family” also.

Many who know that what Immanuel Lutheran Church did to you and to me was wrong, but remain there to this day afraid to speak up like you have because, despite what they teach or do, it is their “church family”, the church they were born and baptized in, the church that the Synodical leaders encouraged them to hold their nose and stay put while they work their unbiblical “interim ministry” magic. Truly, truly Jesus says to you in this word today, beware of anyone who would appeal to your sense of “family,” while ignoring your appeals to hear God’s word and do it.

But it was Jesus himself who knew the real meaning of family. When he was teaching his word to the crowds, his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.”  But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it” (Luke 8:19-21).

A couple weeks ago at the dinner table, one of my children said he doesn’t like to eat meat. I turned to my wife and said: “I think I’m gonna need a paternity test.” Any son of mine would certainly eat meat! So too, Jesus word and teaching is a sort of paternity test. You are a disciple of Jesus Christ, not because you were born and baptized in a Lutheran church, it is because you hear the word of God and do it. That is what shows that your true father is the Heavenly Father.

Because of faith in the word of God, you are brothers and sisters of Christ and of one another. And that is the reason I preach to you regularly these words. So that when you hear them and believe them, you get the test results back that you are children of the heavenly father. If anyone says they believe in Christ, but refuses to believe any of Jesus words—even one jot or tittle—the test results are inconclusive, which is why I cannot be the pastor of anyone who holds to a different confession of faith. This is why you cannot come to the altar and commune with someone who doesn’t believe everything Christ has commanded. Maybe in their heart they really do believe in Christ and his word, but are confused by lies told them by false shepherds. Though they remain your brother or sister in heaven, on earth you know your true brothers and sisters only in those who hear the word of God and do it.

And those who hear the word of God and do it are like a sword, a violent offence to those who do not. And they will be persecuted by the world, that is a promise from Jesus. But Jesus also promises this, that his brothers and sisters, his disciples will recognize one another and will support and take care of one another until he comes again to put to rights all things. Jesus says, “**Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward**.” Jesus is not talking about mere philanthropy here. He is talking about brothers in the faith helping one another. “Because he is a disciple.”

James writes, “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:15-17). John writes, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:16-18).

We are saved not by our works, but by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for the remission of our sins. This is a gift, and you and I are no more deserving of it than a person who rejects it. But the type of faith that does not see Jesus suffering when his church suffers is not a saving faith. Saving faith sees Jesus himself in each and every one of his disciples. If someone does not have Christ or ignores his commands and promises, you need to preach his word and that will either save them or alienate them, the word is a sword and what it does is between the hearer and the Holy Spirit. But if they have Christ but lack what the world has, to help them *because they are your brother or sister in Christ*, even with just a cup of water, is proof that person’s treasure is in heaven. The world will not give them water, because the world hates Christ. So disciples share unrighteous mammon with other disciples in need, because they have faith in Christ.

Jesus words today began with his promise not to bring peace but a sword. That sword is his word, which will inevitably be met with hostility and rage by the world even within our own families. Yet he does give us a peace which the world cannot give, the knowledge that our treasure is in heaven and that nothing can separate us from his love, or from the love of our true brothers and sisters in this world. **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid (John 14:27).**