

The 5th Sunday after Pentecost

“The high purpose of Christ’s militant church on earth” Matthew 10:34-39

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 5th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 10:34-39

“34 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; 36 and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ 37 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. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

So far our text:

Our text for today contains the final words of preparation of Jesus’ calling and sending out of His 12 apostles. We began two Sundays ago looking through the eyes of Jesus as He looked out on the multitudes. Jesus’ words began with compassion.

“36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

What’s needed? More laborers to proclaim God’s Word of Law and Gospel that the people see their need of a Savior, repent and believe in Jesus, the Shepherd of their souls - the Shepherd who lays down His life for the sins of the world.

So, what does Jesus do? He calls 12 apostles and sends them on this mission, the same mission that He had just showed them how to do-

“6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ 8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

The Messiah has come! The Kingdom of grace is here! Jesus gathers His army to go forth and wield His message of forgiveness and salvation.

What’s at stake? The lost souls of the people. Jesus’ purpose is to rescue and save. And He does so through the gift of the Gospel that He graciously puts into the hands of His Church – built on the foundation of the apostles – the household of God – you and me – laborers in His harvest, servants of the Master, also are part of His army – His Militant Church!

So we heard Jesus say, **“25 It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! 26 Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.”**

The compassionate mission for Jesus’ Militant Church begins with the saving of the lost sheep of Israel but continues to the lost Gentiles, to our time and generation. For Jesus died for all people and He wants all people, people of our time and place, to confess His name as we heard last week.

“Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

What an amazing promise Jesus gives to all people who believe and confess Him as their Lord and Savior...Jesus will confess the believer before His Father in heaven. Jesus will be their Mediator, the only Mediator to present His Church pure and holy without blame, spotless through His righteousness imputed to the believer through faith.

It is a battle for the soul in which Jesus’ Militant Church undertakes. And there are only two results. Some will hear and believe, and some will reject Jesus and be lost eternally in hell.

The time of compassion is now. The time of grace is now. When Jesus returns, the Militant Church will become the Church of Glory. And all those that have believed will enter into heaven. Sadly, not all will. **“Whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”**

And as we heard last week, then comes the real fear, the real agony for those who reject Jesus. **“28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”**

And that is what gives compassion and urgency to Jesus’ Militant Church. For we don’t want anyone to be lost eternally.

And this leads us to Jesus’ concluding instructions to His Militant laborers. **“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”**

The Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, did not come to bring a Utopian peace in this world for that is impossible where there is sin and death. But He came to bring the battle against the devil, and all who follow him and his false teaching. He came to bring the sword against all who believe that if you but kneel to the devil, you can have all the kingdoms of this world with all its riches and power. Jesus came to give life – eternal life, not the transient life of this sinful world.

“39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

What is the latest that this world is searching for? Gene therapies. Cellular Reprogramming: Some biotech firms are exploring partial reprogramming (using proteins to reset old cells to a younger state).

Preclinical research on aged mice has shown the ability to extend the lifespan. Scientists are predicting that 120 years old will eventually become the new normal lifespan.

And yet, life will still come to an end. And then those who do not believe in Jesus and trusted science will lose their life eternally.

What is the Militant Church of Jesus doing? Showing compassion and to the little ones.

41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

...God's people showing love and service to each other, who are righteous through faith in Christ...fellow soldiers of the cross, in the midst of battle. Showing love to the persecuted...showing love to each other...lifting each other up when the battle gets tough. And it will get tough.

It will be a struggle always with those closest to us...fathers, mothers, daughters, sons, family and friends. Some will seek to find life in this world and unfortunately lose their lives. One cannot make any false teachings of father or mother more important than Jesus. **"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."**

But with compassion, Jesus implores His Militant Church to proclaim where true worth is found and only can be found...in the loving relationship with Jesus. For trusting in Him, His worth is given to you. His righteousness is received by faith in the believer. And Jesus' worth is what counts before His Father in heaven when He confesses the believer's name as His servant, as His sheep.

So fight on, people of God with the Word of Truth and not get discouraged for it is the Lord's battle and His harvest and His eternal reward for all that are faithful to Him. "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life." Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)