

War Or Peace

Matthew 10:34-42

Pentecost 9- July 16th

Veni, Vidi, Vici. I came, I saw, I conquered. Those are three latin words first attributed to Julius Caesar who in the first century won a battle and wrote a letter back to Rome containing that simple phrase.

Confidence. Pride. Maybe even a little bit of boasting. But the Roman army when they were powerful, who was going to stop them? They could show up, see a problem or an uprising or a foreign power and then just crush it. No apologies, no negotiations, just come see and conquer. And led by Caesar, a confident general who knows what he is there is do, To win, they had power. He is there for war not Peace.

Is Jesus here for War or Peace?

Our lesson today is from Matthew 10:34-42. And it begins with a statement that might sound a bit off message from Jesus. “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

36

a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’[c]

If that is what Jesus came to do, Did he do his job? Has he done it. Has he turned families against each other? Sons against fathers, daughters against mothers? It happens doesn’t it? Talking about faith within our family can be a cause for wars at the dinner table.

But why would he come to do that? I thought Jesus was all about peace. I thought when Jesus came to earth the angels in heaven said peace on earth good will to men. I thought Jesus was all about love. I thought Jesus wants us to love our family not be at war with them. I thought he wants us to love everyone even our enemies. Why would he come to turn families against each other, that doesn’t make any sense.

Jesus is actually quoting a part of the Old Testament here. He is quoting from the prophet Micah. Micah is talking to the children of Israel. And he is telling them what God has done for them. Micah goes through all of these stories of the history of Israel saying look what God has done for you, He reduced you from Egypt, he rescued you from this king and that king. He has done all of this great stuff for the nation of Israel which you would not have had a chance to do on your own, and then Micah says and this is all that he asked of you was to do this, "Act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Simple. Be good, forgive when others aren't good, and to walk with your God. It sounds so simple.

But if you anything about the Old Testament you know that the people didn't do that. Over and over again they rebelled against God. And over and over again God had to call them back. And in Micah he says because you didn't do what your God asked of you. Because you rebelled, because you have rejected God, all of these things are going to happen. Exile and war, and worse than that, even those closest to you are going to be your enemies. You won't be able to trust your neighbor. Children and Parents, husbands and wives, the closest family units will be at war with each other. Why? Because God wants that to happen. No. Because some choose to reject God.

Jesus isn't saying what will make me happy is if sons and fathers hate each other and daughters and mothers are always upset at each other. But he knows because there is sin in this world, because some reject him, it's going to be war.

I'd rather not be at war. I'd rather not fight. I'd rather get along with everyone. That seems better doesn't it. I think sometimes it's easy to forget that we don't really have a choice. The fact is that we are at war. In my life there have been a few wars. But the thing is, except for reading about them, or paying a few more cents per gallon for gas. They never have really affected my life. I never showed up to the gas station and they were out of gas because it was going to support the military. I never have gone to the grocery store and they were out of a certain type of food. I signed up for the draft, but I was never drafted. I've never gone through basic training. I've never been to the front lines of battle. Even if my country has been at war during

my lifetime, I've never really had to fight. Many have. Many have gone through those things so that many others wouldn't have to. Many have been on the front lines. Some of you have. For some war has had a huge effect on your life. Because you were a part of a war.

Don't be deceived. We are at war. Even if you don't sense it in these walls. We are at war. Christianity is under attack everywhere you turn. It's under attack all around the world. It's under attack from governments with 1/6th of the world's population. It's under attack from some of the world's leading intellectuals that scoff at anyone who would accept the Bible to be true. It's under attack from other churches that claim to be Christian but then teach a message that is contrary to what God's word says. But it's not just out there. It's in each of us. That war rages on inside all of us as we struggle to fight against the temptation of this world. As we strive to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. As we fight against our own doubts and fears and weaknesses. That's war. That takes effort. It effects our lives.

Jesus came to be at war. He had to be. Because the most evil force that has ever been on this planet had captured all of mankind. Sin and death. A part of all of us. So Jesus came to be at war against that. Against evil. And he doesn't apologize about it. He doesn't say, O sorry I'm at war against the greatest evil to ever oppress mankind I didn't mean bother you, but I just got to get through here. No he says I came to bear a sword. I came to fight evil. I came to fight sin. I came to fight doubt, and unbelief all of which cause pain and heartache, and death. I came to do that for you. He didn't come to sign a peace treaty with evil he came to destroy it.

And the hardest enemies to fight against. Are going to be the ones closest to you. These are not the enemies that Jesus wishes that you would have. But he wants to prepare you for how bad sin is. Sin destroys families. Sin tears us apart. Sin destroys that perfect peace. Sin starts wars. It separates us from God. It makes us hate God. It tries to get us to fight for the enemy and his agenda. Doing whatever we decide is right. Chasing after fleeting happiness and the insignificant things of this world. But we can not let it be victorious. We

can not accept that. That's the tension. That's what creates wars. Good v. Evil. Love of God v. hatred of God. New Self v. Old Self.

This is what leads Jesus to say

37 "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. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

The fact is that none of us are worthy of Jesus. None of us have done anything to earn God's favor. We can't even do simple things that God asks us to do, like stop falling into the same sins and traps, let alone big things like, love God more than your parents or your children. We can't do those by ourselves. We can't win those battles with our own strength or might. But we can do those things with the help of Jesus.

When he is fighting on our side we can do things that we never thought imaginable. Why? Because he is stronger than our enemies. Not just theoretically in some kind of simulated match, but no he actually came and already defeated sin. He came and destroyed death. He rose from the dead so that you will too. He died for all of us who are unworthy to have eternal life or the love of God. And he made us worthy. Not because we are good people. Not because we are good soldiers. Not because we hate evil and love good. But because he loves us. Because you were worth fighting for. Because you were worth dying for. Because he loves you with a more perfect and unconditional love than anyone else on this planet every could.

He did all that so that we could have peace. While the world attacks Christ from all sides it is in him that we receive peace. It is in him that we receive strength. It is through the messages that we hear in his word like "Come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest." War is tiring. Jesus gives you rest. Or cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. Yah we are at war. But he is the one on the front lines fighting with us. He is the one guiding us to safety. He is the

one supplying us with the weapon and the armor to stand up to the evil in this world, and all of that is found here in his word. Peace is not being on the run from all of your problems. It's conquering them. And putting an end to them. That's what Jesus does. That's what we do with Jesus.

40 "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

We are on the same team. God the Father the creator of the world. Jesus his son who lived a perfect life and died so that you wouldn't have to. Prophets who speak the word of God in the face of persecution. The righteous who are able to stand up against temptations. And then all of those who welcome them. You don't have to be a prophet, you don't have to be the most righteous person, but don't fight them. Don't fight against the people on your team. Don't fight your allies. These are the people sitting next to you. We are on the same team. We build each other up. We care for each other. We go the extra mile to give love and support to all. Care for them from the oldest to even the littlest children who believe in Jesus. The little feuds. The personality conflicts. Love mercy. Love forgiveness. They are on your side. The side of Christ. The victorious side. Resist those who fight against the Lord, Welcome those who fight for the Lord.

It's an oxymoron to say that we are fighting for peace. But that is what we do with Jesus. We fight against evil. We fight with the only weapon that has the power to change a heart. We fight with the only weapon that has the power to kill hatred and evil, and to give life. We fight with God's word. We preach his word. If Caesar had the confidence to boast *veni vidi vici* because he had the power of the Rome behind him, think of the power that you have. Think of the

power at your disposal. The God of the universe is on your side fighting with you and for you. May God give you strength to fight for him. Amen.