

He will by no means lose his reward

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fifth Sunday after Pentecost) is Matthew 10:34-42. In the first half of this reading Jesus once again reminds his disciples that where he is and is taught there will be strife. The second half deals with the rewards that come to his faithful servants.

When Jesus speaks of peace here it is reminiscent of the Hebrew shalom, so that we think of more than simply not being at war. Christ came to abolish the false peace of attempting to live in harmony with a sinful and broken world. Only when that false peace is shattered can we see peace between man and God. For the truth to be made plain, the lie must be laid bare. So Christ brings a sword. The sword is the Word. Hebrews 4:12 states it well when it 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.”*

Exposing those lies inevitably causes conflict. Nowhere does this come closer than when those fights begin at home. Though it causes conflict, we need to understand it is not love nor is it the Gospel simply to “live and let live.” Love for Christ and for one another compels us to speak the truth in love, even knowing that sometimes that can cause division. Honest division is better than false peace. Jesus wanted them to realize that His coming was like a sword that split families in two: some were for Him, some were against Him. This same division will be evident in the last judgment.

More important than loving parents and other family members is loyalty to Christ. To value family more than Jesus means that one is not fit to be a disciple.

The cross represented death; it was common for Romans to crucify criminals. Jesus expected His followers to be willing to die, if necessary, rather than to give up their commitment to Him. Being a Christian means already having died in Baptism and rising to new life in Christ.

Jesus concludes His sermon by promising a reward to those who support the Gospel message and fellow disciples. Yet no reward can match the blessings of grace given to those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus as their Savior. It is said well in Ephesians 2:8-10: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

He gives peace with God, patience in time of tribulation, confidence to pray, and finally eternal life. We deserve no reward for our words and actions. Yet the Lord promises rich blessings to those who receive the Gospel which he so freely gives.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for bearing my cross on Calvary and making me your highest priority. Amen. (TLSB)