

## “Peace and cross: take them!” Mat 10:34-39

**Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. 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. 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. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**

In our today's meditation we'll focus on the last few verses from today's Gospel reading. Beginning with “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth.” What a words?!

So, what do you think about today's Gospel reading? At first these words may seem strange, even scary and for sure contradictory to what Jesus is saying elsewhere. We'll take a look at these verses trying to understand what exactly Jesus is teaching us.

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” So which is it, has Jesus come to bring peace or a sword? Of course, He has come to bring us peace. Of course.

At Jesus birth this is what angels announced - ‘peace’ for those with whom the Lord is pleased. This is what He Himself promised on the last night: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” (John 14:27) After His resurrection He again said to His disciples: “Peace be with you”.

As apostle Paul describe Jesus mission.... “through him God reconciled to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making *peace* by the blood of his cross.” (Col 1:20) Peace it is. Sure, Jesus has come to bring us peace.

Yes, but then why would Jesus say that He has come to bring a sword? We could rephrase what He said this way. Of course, I have come to bring peace to the earth, peace with God and peace among you, however, as the result of my message there will be divisions, there will be a sword.

This is exactly what happens when the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed. Jesus came to bring us peace. He indeed does it. True peace, in the deepest sense of this word. Peace that comes from a good conscience, when you know that you are reconciled with God the Father, that you are accepted and cared for by true God.

But, so often people don't want to accept Jesus message and even don't want others to accept it. This is how the Bible portrays the effect of the Gospel.

“The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit ... and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12 )

Here we come to the root of the problem. Why is this so that the message of peace and reconciliation causes division? It is about the first commandment. Who is your God?

Let us reflect a little bit on the meaning of the first commandment. How do we perceive it? As something that is commanded, as something that prohibits. Right? As something that restricts our freedom.

But what is the first commandment? God simply wants to be your God. He comes to you and says that He wants to be your God. What does it mean? We, sinners, right away perceive it in a way that someone is coming to rule over us, to restrict us, to deny us of all good things that would bring us joy.

Does this sound familiar? It is terrifying how much our sinful nature resists God's love. We think right away that whatever God did, it would take away something from us. It would put us in worse situation. It will make our wonderful and rich lives poor and miserable.

In fact, we assume, even if unconsciously, that God doesn't want good for us, that He wants to take good things away. Dwell on this thought for a while. What kind of God we have in this picture? God who is against us. God who wants to oppress us, to deceive us.

This is exactly what the serpent did as described in Gen 3. He portrayed God as someone who is hiding good things from people, as someone who really doesn't care about us, but wants to deny us wonderful things we could have.

What did the serpent said? Don't trust this God. Do your own thing. Go against what He has told you and you will be like gods. And, yes, you will never die. We all still have this voice within us. Voice that keeps telling: “Don't trust God!”

That's why we are so much against Him. But let's try to put the first commandment in different words. It is as if God was saying to you: “I am your Creator, I gave life to you, I keep giving it every moment, I provide for you...

I give you everything you need, I want to protect you from all evil, I want to give you never ending joy and happiness, fulfillment of all your deepest desires, I want you to have peace, peace when you know that you are loved so much that you are so dear to me, I want to give you peace when you know that nothing can take my love away, nothing, I am faithful to you! I want to teach my wisdom. I forgive you all that you have done against me in your rebellious foolishness...

... I promise to restore back everything in this broken creation, I want to give you joy when you realize with your mind and heart, that I Creator of Heaven and Earth, I am your Father, your God, that I am with you, with you, my dear child.

How can I prove that I love you more than anything? Words are not enough. Fine. I give up my life for you. For you. For each of you. Yes, not someone else, each of you, whom I created in my own image, for whom I shed my blood.

Look at what I did for you, listen to what I keep telling you, accept my love and allow me to care for you, to give that love, that peace and joy that you are longing for.”

This is the essence of the first commandment. God’s self-sacrificial love to you. This is the Gospel. This is what Jesus brought us. Evidence, proof, assurance of God’s love to you. Message of peace.

This message is for everyone. For every one of you. It doesn’t matter what you have done, who you are, what others or you think about yourself, this is what God the Father says to you...

And so many don’t want to listen to this message. So many, despite of clear and unambiguous message don’t trust true God, instead trusting the serpent. “You will be like gods.” That’s where division comes in.

No one can have two gods. Either we will accept Jesus message and will put our trust on true God the Father, or we will keep trusting the message of serpent and will put our trust on ourselves. As foolish rebellious children turning our backs to the one who loves us more than anyone and continually cares for us.

This is the most important questions. Either we accept all God’s gifts and rejoice in them, or refuse to acknowledge what we are and live as if we are our own creators.

**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.**

This is how it happens. So many, if not all of us have experienced it in our own lives. Jesus message of peace makes our souls melt when we begin to realize how strong and passionate, how undeserved God’s love to us is.

But if people want to remain thinking that they are gods, they will inevitable be hostile to this message of peace. This message is so bright, its glorious light is so penetrating that it reveals the darkness of our hearts. Then people become hostile, and this is not their conscious decision. Sin and righteousness can’t coexist.

This is the darkness of sin raging against God’s love. It can’t endure it. If you accept God’s love – it is the source of joy and peace. If you reject it, it tortures you, it burns you and you can’t but be in anger.

Unfortunately it happens even in our closest relationships. The question of ultimate allegiance comes to fore. Whom do you love more? This your God or me? Even if this is not put in these words, that's the question that comes even into our family relationships and sets one loved one against other.

When this choice is demanded, we need to be clear about what actually is requested. Do you love more me, or this God? Put it otherwise, do you love more one of God's gifts, or the Giver Himself? The One from whom you have receive your entire existence, from whom you have received all good things in your life. Whom do you love more? Do you love more a gift, or the Giver?

**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.**

What does Jesus mean by it? It is quite simple. The only true God is the Giver of all good things. He is the One who continually provides for our daily needs. Yes, He gave us parents, yes, He gave us spouses, yes, He gives us children. Everything we have and everything we are we have receive from Him.

He gives us these wonderful and so important relationships so that we can enjoy them and rejoice in them. So that through them we can learn what true love is. Our Father gladly gives us all of this. But He is *the Giver*. He is the source of all these wonderful blessings.

If we begin to think that our peace, our joy will come from these relationships, and not from the One who gives them all, we essentially begin to think that gifts and not the Giver are the source of everything good.

Then, instead of enjoying these relationships, these gifts, we'll cling to them as our source of peace and joy. And there will be neither peace nor joy, just anxiety and fear of loss.

What is meant by 'worthy'? This is not some kind of condition we need to meet before God accepts us. We are unworthy of His love, but nevertheless He loves us. If we want to respond to His love, we need to allow Him to be our God, the source of all good.

If we expect that something among God's gifts will give and more that God Himself, we are acting as unworthy recipients of His grace. As simply idolaters.

**Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.**

This is our cross, to remain faithful to our Lord. To accept Him as our God, as the Giver of everything, as our rock and shield. Because it so often leads to divisions. To separation and alienation even with our the most closest.

How is this a cross, we may wonder? Just trust God and let others do whatever they want. No, this is not the way it works. When we are restored in relationships where we need to love our God more than anything, it doesn't mean that we are indulged to love others less. No, quite contrary to it.

As soon as we begin to realize and appreciate how much God loves us, He requires us to love Him. But we are not called to love Him somehow theoretically. No, we are called to love Him with all our mind and heart and strengths – how? - loving people in our lives.

Yes, when true God pours out over us His love, He expects that we'll do the same to all people in our lives. To all people in our lives. Especially to those who need it the most. That is those who have turned away from true God.

Those, who may be the most hostile against Jesus message and to us. This is our cross, when we love those who don't love us and true God. When we serve them sacrificially, praying that one day, they would stop resisting God's calling and would inherit His peace.

**Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**

This sounds like a paradox. But this is again the same question. Where is your ultimate allegiance? Who is your God? Do you trust the only true God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, or do you want to be gods yourself?

If someone wants to remain in lies and dream that they are in control of their lives, that they are their own creators, they chose to turn back to true God. But He is the source of life. The only source of true life, eternal life. As long as you remain with Him, you live. "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." (John 11:25)

If you accept God love, if you accept Jesus message of peace, if you don't reject the Holy Spirit when He brings you this assurance of God's grace and faithfulness, you have found life. True life.

Famous Christian writer C.S. Lewis wrote that there are basically only two kinds of people. One kind are those who lose their life and says to the Father 'let your will happen', other kind are those who want to be gods themselves and to whom God will say on the last day 'let your will happen'.

I pray that we all and our loved ones would not resist Jesus message of peace and would receive everything that the Father has prepared for us, here and in His eternal Kingdom.

Amen.