

## “Rainbows. C-9. What now?” Matthew 10:34-42.

“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.

“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And 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.”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

There have been a lot of rainbows recently. With surprising colours. Wherever you look. In shops. On TV. Online. Hanging in front of homes in our neighbourhoods. Perhaps, not as many as a few years ago. But then there is something else.

A much-debated new bill C-9 which many are concerned can be used to silence certain Biblical teachings. Last week we commemorated the proclamation of the Augsburg Confession, that amazing display of Christian faithfulness and God-given courage that gave birth to the Lutheran Church even when facing extreme adversity.

Today's Gospel reading reminds us of what our situation in this world is: **“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. [...] A person’s enemies will be those of his own household. [...] And whoever does not take his cross and follows me is not worthy of me.”** Heavy words.

Fearing, loving and trusting the Triune God comes with a price. With a cross. Even as Jesus brings peace and reconciliation with God and among us, if we want to remain faithful to our Lord, the truth of God exposes the falsehoods of this world and inevitably brings sword in relationships with those who fear, love and trust other gods. It is painful when it happens in our families. That is a cross we are invited to bear.

There is a quote which is often attributed to Dr Luther. **“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except *precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking*, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ.”**

During the Reformation time that point under attack was the Biblical teaching on salvation. Is it something that we need to work for never being certain whether we have attained it or not, or is our salvation God's gift, given to us freely and graciously because of what Jesus, the Son of God, did on our behalf.

Today, as many acknowledge the **"little point which the world and devil are attacking"** is God's good and wise design for His human creatures and for our most important relationships, marriage and family, the whole "rainbow" movement.

**What should we do? How should we act? How should we respond?** That is what we will meditate upon today. Some Christians embrace whatever happens in wider culture, cheer it in hopes that they will find a favour in the eyes of the world.

Others, trying to be faithful to the Lord are vocal in their critique and condemnation of where the culture is going. On the one hand, sure it takes some guts to do that. On the other hand, it is quite easy. Outsiders are easy targets. We can condemn them and thus feel good about our supposed moral superiority. They are bad, we are good.

Paul the apostle says something we may not like to hear: **"For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you."** [1 Cor 5:12-13] I propose that instead of judging those outside, we use this time to reflect on ourselves. Because, in fact, we are so much like those "rainbow" people. In which way? Let's see.

We all are created in God's Image and likeness. That is our first identity. For all of us. We all are created with God-given longings in our hearts. We all want to matter, to be recognized, accepted, to belong and be loved, appreciated and happy. We all do.

But then, we all are fallen creatures: **"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together we have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."** [Rom 3:10-12] That's all of us.

But then, we all are redeemed by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who desires **"all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,"** [1 Tim 2:4] so that we all could live and reign with Him in New Heavens and New Earth forever. This is what we all have in common. The most important things.

**But then, sure, there are differences. Let's look at two of them. One about who we trust, and the other about what we know.**

**First, who do we trust.** When God's Word creates in us new hearts and His Spirit indwell in us, we begin to trust, at least somewhat, that the longings of our hearts will be satisfied if we live in obedience of faith according to God's good design for our lives. Let's remember, that this trust is not our achievement; it too is God's gift to us.

But then there are those who still fear, love and trust something else. This is important to recognize and remember. When we are talking about the whole “rainbow” movement, the most helpful way to understand it is not as a cultural, but as a spiritual phenomenon. **“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”** [Eph 6:12]

Some African friends described this “rainbow” movement as the greatest spiritual warfare of our times, the deliberate attack on the only institution given by God in the beginning - marriage, and on the way how God created us as male and female.

And surely, those associated with that “rainbow” agenda are by no means a unified community. There are those who truly believe that marriage is the most oppressive institution and who work actively to dismantle it, who are open about their agenda.

There are those who believe that the perceived differences between male and female are oppressive social constructs and we should be free to decide what we want to be. Those people with such deep convictions are the brain, the engine, the visible agents who keep propelling this movement forward.

Then there are those who simply want to appear and feel virtuous. They go wherever the world goes, just to be on the “right side of history”, they cheer for what the most forceful voices cheer, they just want to fit in and feel good.

They fear and want to please people more than God. Perhaps, they are too lazy to reflect on what really is happening, or too cowardly to take a different stand. But it seems that with that group the tide may be slowly turning.

Then there are those who have believed that the “rainbow” lifestyle will give them what they long for deep in their hearts, that it will make them accepted, put them in the spotlight, give them significance and attention, and they will live happily ever after. Most of them have never experienced what a marriage of a family shaped by Christ’s love, forgiveness and faithfulness looks like. They just don’t know what it is.

But what fulfilment could be found there if someone deliberately reduces the wonderfully rich identity of what human creatures are to simply sexual preferences, to a letter in an ever-growing acronym. How can we expect that ignoring the Creator's good design for our lives and acting against it will give us more than the Lord of Creation would want to give us to bless us?!

For the one who often comes disguised as “an angel of light” doesn’t want to bless anyone. He only seeks to destroy everyone whom he could turn away from true God. We can see how destructive his lies are in official medical statistics on those who have believed his false promises.

Look at their shorter life expectancy. STDs. Addictions. Mental health issues. Levels of violence and suicides. Sadly, they tell tragic stories about the true intentions of the prince of this world. And it is not to bless anyone...

As citizens in our country, we should not be indifferent, we should use the avenues of democratic society, voting, engaging with politicians, promoting what is good for society, what measurably enables the flourishing of every human being, and resisting what may be harmful. But as Christians we need to recognize that the nature of what is happening is ultimately spiritual and it requires spiritual engagement. It is about who we fear, love and trust above all.

**The other difference is in what we know.** What do we know?

To us, to the Church, God has revealed His good, wise and beautiful design for our lives and for our relationships. Yes, He has! This wonderful wisdom is entrusted to us. To all of us. The world doesn't know it. The world cannot know it, unless they hear it from God's people. From you!

Now, the confronting question is – what have we done in this respect?

We can see how active those who promote the “rainbow” lifestyle are. They have filled the world with their advertisements. Movies. Literature. Art. System of education from kindergartens till universities. Culture. Global organization bringing their ideologies as a gospel to all nations. They are so well organized.

They promote their cause using both, carrot and stick. “You will be free, you will be happy, you will be special, the longings of your heart will be satisfied! But, if you disagree with us, we may go after you with all the force of the law!”

As a growing number of Christians around the world are learning it the hard way. One of the latest examples being Finnish Member of Parliament Päivi Räsänen and Lutheran Bishop Juhana Pohjola having spent 7 years in courts over a brochure on God's design for marriage published in 2004. In 2004! And the case is not over yet.

That's why there is so much concern about the C-9 Bill in Canada. And again, on the one hand, as citizens we should use all legitimate means working for good legislation, on the other hand, as Christians, we can see how the Lord can use such a bill to bless us. How would that be? Let's see.

What has the Church done with God's rich and beautiful wisdom entrusted to us?

If we put recent cultural developments in advertising terms, the “rainbow” movement has created a long-lasting and vigorous campaign promising happiness and fulfillment to those who embrace what they advertise. What has the Church done?

It seems not much more than an occasional critique of the “rainbow” movement. Why would it work? One sells and promises fulfilment of your heart’s desires, forcefully, and the other... acts as a killjoy, with critique and shaming. Why would that work?

Perhaps, initiatives like Bill C-9, by God’s grace, can help us to get our act together and consider what testimonies might be effective. Remember Jesus’ words: “**Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.**” [Matt 10:16] Let’s consider whether there may be a better way than simply critique and what have we done in that respect.

Imagine, if we all gladly learned what God’s beautiful design for our lives is! If we were keen to discover what God’s purpose and hope for our lives are, how rich and great responsibilities He has prepared for each one of us.

Imagine, if we cherished and celebrated the gift of marriage! If we rejoiced and delighted in the gift of children. As newly elected president of the Lutheran Church-Canada, Pastor David Haberstock reflected, we have closed our eyes to the first Great Commission “**be fruitful and multiply**”, we have pretended it doesn’t apply to us, and now we are wondering why our congregations are shrinking and closing their doors.

Imagine, if we appreciated and elevated the roles of husbands and wives, of fathers and mothers, if we embraced the gift of singleness and chaste life, if we as the Church were a community where these calling of God are gladly received, supported and lived out winsomely! Have we gladly inquired what the all-wise God teaches us? Have we learned it, have we taught it? In our congregations, in our families? Have we embraced it? Have we strived to live that way? Have we shared it with others?

Imagine, if our lives, our marriages, our Christian communities were so beautiful and attractive that others would look at us and exclaim: “I don’t care what this world promises me, I want what these people have! I want such loving, gracious, respectful, joyful, faithful, committed and fulfilling relationships that they have!”

Have we been the salt and the light of the world so that the world can look at our lives, relationships, marriages and crave them... for they are so beautiful, so desirable? As little islands of love, forgiveness and grace amid a broken and selfish world.

Have we passed on the treasures that our Creator and Redeemer has entrusted us? But this is what we all are called and privileged to do. And there is no legislation prohibiting us to do that! This should be our response! Have we lived this way?

This is the beauty and power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! As soon as the Spirit convicts us, and that stings, as soon as we recognize that we have failed, that we have sinned, and we all have, our gracious God is right there with us, running towards you as a loving father, to embrace you and to comfort you with His forgiveness.

June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026

"I forgive you for what you have done wrong, and I forgive you for the many good things you have failed to do, I forgive you!" He comes to restore you, to grant you good conscience so that your past doesn't rob you of peace. Jesus has taken care of it. Our Father comes to us to fill you with joy and fervent desire to do better, to be more faithful, to strive to lead a holy life, to learn what our God reveals to us.

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

We have failed, and we will continue to fail. Sure. We are not worthy. That is an inevitable reality of our sinful lives. But our gracious Lord came and will continue to come to us to help us to get up again, to keep us going, energized by His grace, filled with His joy, guided by His hope, caring for others, serving our neighbours, witnessing with our lives and words of wisdom.

I invite you, Brothers and Sisters, to use this next year wisely, learning every week at least a little bit about God's beautiful and wise design for our lives, so that we all can strive to live it out and to share it with others. I will help you as much as I can. We have no excuse not to do that. And learning God's wisdom is not the heaviest of crosses.

But what a wonderful testimony it could be to the world!

And as we reflected earlier, who we are as human beings and for what kind of relationships we are created and redeemed, that is **"the little point which the world and the devil are attacking"** today. That is what we need to teach and confess!

As we seek to follow our Lord Jesus, He uses us in this great spiritual battle. Our lives, our testimonies, our prayers. Whatever imperfect we are. And He keeps encouraging you: **"I say to you, [if you follow me] you will by no means lose your reward."**

I pray that the Lord Jesus helps us to pursue the treasures of wisdom in His Word, to joyfully learn, to strive to live accordingly, to witness, to pray, to engage with everyone. May His presence with us make our lives and our Christian community so beautiful that all the false ideologies with their empty promises become irrelevant.

May our Lord break every evil plan of the adversary so that everyone who is under his spell, everyone who is created in God's Image and likeness and is redeemed by Christ, can find true home, and love, and peace and fulfillment of the desires of their hearts in the gentle embrace of the Triune God and His family on earth, this Christian Church.

Amen.