

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Matthew 10:34–42**

**Sermon: “True Eternal Peace”**

In the 1960s, the Peace Corps recruited Americans to serve needy communities around the world with the slogan, “The toughest job you’ll ever love.” The idea behind the Peace Corps was to foster goodwill toward America by bringing wise help in challenging situations around the world.

Today’s Gospel is the last section of Jesus’ sermon sending the apostles out on an even more challenging missionary journey: to bring eternal peace to dying souls. In this section, for the first time in the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus uses the word cross. He closes with a reminder of what the disciples will be up against and of the great blessing that they are not alone.

The Disciple’s Job Might Be Tough, but Jesus Goes with You.

Jesus prophesies that what he calls the “sword” is coming. ***“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword”*** (v 34).

To be sure, Jesus did come to bring peace. He taught, ***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”*** (Matthew 5:9). The angels announced it at Jesus’ birth: peace on earth. Jesus had told his apostles that in this journey on which he was sending them they were to bring his peace (10:13). He’s called the ***“Prince of Peace”*** (Isaiah 9:6). But Jesus’ teaching in John 14:27 makes clear the point he’s intending in today’s Gospel: ***“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.”***

The world’s peace is a fickle, fleeting, and failing thing. It will not help you when life gets tough. Twitter, Facebook, and popular opinions will not lay down their lives for you. In fact, the world will betray you in a flash, right when you need a friend the most. But Jesus delivers to us, his repentant believers, peace with God right now and forever. His peace never fails. Because Jesus has come to free us from Satan’s dominion, to cleanse us from our sins, to rescue us from death, and to restore us to our heavenly Father as his dear children, Satan rages. Jesus’ lasting peace is, of course, the last thing Satan wants you or anyone to have.

So, the evil one stirs up trouble especially within and against the Christian Church. He's a bully, a street fighter. Thus, he uses the world—sadly, even other eternal souls to attack faithful proclaimers of Christ's eternal kingdom and peace.

Jesus then is saying, in essence, that the expected reaction to his true peacemaking is the world's wrath. Don't be surprised. ***“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”*** (vs 34–36).

There is hardly a congregation or family that hasn't felt this sword. Since Cain and Abel, Lot and his sons-in-law, Joseph and his brothers, Naomi and Orpah, David and Absalom, it's always been this way. Even Adam turned on Eve after they both chomped down on death. You who have been cut deeply by this sword, notice this: Jesus knows. In fact, Jesus even experienced it. His own family tried to stop him (Mark 3:21). Judas, one of the very apostles to whom Jesus first spoke these words, betrayed him.

His heavenly Father turned from him at the cross because Jesus was my sin and yours. Jesus knows the pain, the sadness, and the heartbreak. He bears it with you.

Jesus also knows that we'll be really tempted to throw him away or weaken his truth to make peace with the world. But that won't work, at least for long.

***“Whoever finds his life will lose it”*** (v 39).

Finding an easy life, a life of peace with the world won't last. Death is coming. Judgment is coming. It is precisely then, when we need real peace and a real Savior, that the world's power, popularity, and pomp will vanish and abandon its worshipers. And between now and then, finding the world's idea of life is an exhausting, frustrating venture. Everything changes. Worldly acceptance will ask for more and more, for the world, like all false gods, consumes its worshipers.

Only the true God invites his worshipers to consume him. He gives forgiveness, strength, comfort, and a place of belonging with him as he gives us his Word, his Absolution, and his body and blood to save us. In Jesus, we receive a peace that the world can never take from you: ***“Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”*** (v 39).

We lose our life by repenting, dying to our own goodness, and we find it by trusting only in the saving work of Christ.

When the sword divides and dear ones absent themselves from the Lord's house, truth, and gifts, then pray to the true peacemaker. Cry out to Jesus for those who think they've found their lives but are losing them. Like the friends who carried their paralyzed friend to Jesus, opened the roof of the crowded house, and lowered their buddy before the Great Physician of body and soul, carry with you to Jesus the names of those who are not here; carry them with you when you meet Jesus in his body and blood at this altar. Drop these names at Jesus' feet. Call him, the very Son of God who died for them, to chase after them, restore them, and save them.

In the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life, there isn't a single case in which Jesus doesn't answer the plea for mercy of a parent or friend for another. Pity these lost souls. Invite them to come with you. But don't nag or manipulate them. Pray for them. Jesus hears our prayers. He knows what's needed. Trust him to hear and act as you stay close to him. Take up your cross and follow him. He's leading the way.

Jesus goes with us. Hear the great encouragement Jesus gives his proclaimers: no Christian missionary, pastor, or confessor goes it alone. Jesus and the Father go with them. Listen carefully to your Savior as he speaks words of abundant joy: *“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me”* (v 40). Jesus goes with his faithful confessors so that when they are welcomed because of Jesus, Jesus is received too. And more than that, even our heavenly Father is received as well. Even as we are hearing Jesus’ words today and as you are receiving me, your pastor, you are receiving Jesus and the Father.

Think of what would be lost if, instead of faithfully proclaiming Jesus, a pastor, a missionary, a confessor instead chooses to make peace with the unbelieving world and offer a worldly peace. Those who welcome that messenger have no chance in that interaction to receive Jesus, the Father, eternal life, or peace. But when pastors, missionaries, and confessors deliver Jesus’ blood-bought peace through the joyful confession of his name, then Jesus himself can be welcomed in and the Father of mercy is pleased to bring peace that will never fail.

Jesus' promise to accompany the Gospel is why we preach Christ crucified as the only salvation for sinners. Anything less, anything else is forfeiting the saving grace of our merciful Lord, who loves us and gave himself for us. This rich promise of Jesus is also why being a proclaimer of the Gospel of Christ is the most blessed calling. The good news of Jesus delivers Jesus and the Father to all who receive the messenger. Jesus and the Father stick with the messenger of the Gospel through thick and thin.

Our Lord gives one more stunning promise in today's Gospel: ***“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”*** (v 42). Jesus so values his disciples, that what happens to his followers happens to him. A cup of cold water given to a disciple of Jesus is rewarded as if it were given to Jesus himself. Think of what this means for our missionaries around the world and all faithful pastors: Jesus goes with them. And think of the encouragement here for us believers who support missionaries and pastors in just giving a cup of water or generously supporting them from the gifts the Lord has given us.

You will not lose your reward. Nobody may notice or say thank you for the support you give, but the Lord of eternal peace who has saved us solely by his being damned in our place and raised from the dead to give us life, he remembers.

You who have been named and claimed by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism, who trust in Jesus alone for your salvation, who take up your cross and follow him: there may be swords, division, heartbreak, and pain, but Jesus is with you, for you, and will never forsake you.

It might be tough, but Jesus goes with you! Which makes it a job you'll love!

Thanks be to God, in Jesus' name. Amen.