

Matthew 10:34-42

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 27, 2026

Hope Lutheran Church and School of Idaho Falls, Idaho

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Having Christ Jesus as our Lord, we live by faith in Him and not by sight of Him, as we cannot see Him, yet we hear His Word to us, and by His Word we know Him and we know He is present with us. But because we cannot see Him, we tend to make mental images of Him based both upon what we KNOW of Him from His holy Word, and, unfortunately, due to our sinful nature within us, sometimes what we wish Him to be. Very often we imagine the Lord Jesus to always be a gentle man, and one who will do all things to ensure that we have an easy road to walk. Imaginings like this are disrupted when we hear His words like those which come to us today, as the Lord Jesus says, recorded in Matthew, chapter 10,

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matthew 10).

No one can properly say that about Himself unless He is God, true God. These words of Jesus are another instance where we are placed between two possibilities to ponder: that either Jesus of Nazareth is a deceiver and a megalomaniac, OR He is exactly Who He claims to be---almighty, eternal God in human flesh. He doesn't leave us any room to simply consider Him to be the greatest TEACHER and moral example of all time. He doesn't give us that option, and He doesn't intend to.¹

By His immaculate conception by the Holy Spirit of the virgin and His birth of His virgin mother, by His infallible miracles, by His life, His innocent sufferings and death by crucifixion, and by His bodily resurrection from the dead---all of

¹ See C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

which fulfilled the Hebrew prophets' prophecies about Him, Jesus has proven that He is almighty, eternal God in human flesh, the Son of God Most High, beside Whom there is no other.

Yet the life which He, the true God in human flesh, has birthed us into by holy baptism, this life is not an easy one that we have in Christ Jesus. As believers in Him, we will find ourselves receiving conflict from those whom we love but who do not believe in Jesus.

That is a painful division, one which the presence of the Lord Jesus brings. In pondering these words of Jesus, we wonder, is it that the Lord Jesus, by giving faith in Him to someone in a family, or group of friends, or colleagues, is inciting the un-believers in that group to reveal what has been in their hearts all along, a distaste for the invisible Lord Jesus but now expressed against a visible follower who has become a follower of Jesus? Yes, as His words clearly indicate.

When Robert Short, author of *The Gospel According to Peanuts* and *Parables of Peanuts*, spoke at Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska, he disclosed that as a high school student in Midland, Texas, he became an agnostic, although he had been raised in a Methodist home. He became president of the science club, whose activity caused such a stir that the high school principal complained to his parents about it. He remembered sitting across the table from his mother at his home as she spoke to her son. Tears were running down her cheeks as she said, "I thought we raised you right. I never thought it would come to this: our son an agnostic."

During his college years Robert Short, through contacts with a campus pastor, found a new relationship to Christ Jesus and later decided to become a minister. He went home to tell his mother about his decision. They were sitting at the same table. Again, tears rolled down his mother's cheeks as she said, "I never thought it would come to this: my son a religious fanatic."²

Division. The presence of Christ Jesus does sometimes bring division within a family or among friends, and His presence within a rescued sinner within that group sometimes brings to the surface what has been hidden in the hearts of the unbelieving members of that family or group.

Now, this painful, persecuting division within a family or among friends as a result of the presence of Jesus within one whom He has converted to His follower doesn't always happen in every place, but sometimes and in some places it certainly does. And when it *does* happen, it is a very painful division. With that said, we must always remember not to become haughty about the heavenly

² *Encyclopedia of Sermon Illustrations*, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1988, Illus., no. 781.

Father choosing us to believe in His Son, and working all things out to bring us to the new birth in holy baptism: All of that is purely a work of God's undeserved favor, His grace, to make the likes of us His children, the likes of us who have the very same sinful nature as every member of a non-Christian family has and that every member of the human race has. We have nothing of which to boast of ourselves.

But these words of Jesus put things into proper perspective: It is not only you whom your unbelieving loved ones or once-close friends are objecting against, but they are also and especially objecting against the One who loves them so much, namely, Jesus Christ, the Lord. He who was crucified for their sins and who has risen from the dead and lives to abide with you and strengthen you in that love which He has for them, HE is the flaming sword Whom they must face at every turn who stands between you and them. Do you wish to remove Him so that the division would not exist? It turns out, that this sword is Christ CRUCIFIED, that the sword of division is the cross of Christ, on which Christ Jesus purchased your redemption and their redemption back to God, the giver of life and love eternal. That is the sword between the believing and the unbelieving.

Do we grieve more, do we seethe in anger, over how they have wronged us, or do we grieve more over how they reject Christ, the Lord?

In His words, Jesus is talking about how in rejecting you because you belong to Christ Jesus, they are rejecting Him. They cannot see Jesus, but they can see you. So close a tie there is between you and the Lord Jesus brought about in holy baptism---and that tie between you and the Lord Jesus Christ is God, the Holy Spirit, Himself---so close is that bond between you and the Lord Jesus Christ that what one suffers the Other suffers, that what you suffer, He suffers, and that bond between you and the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be broken by anything that this unbelieving world throws at you. Nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, your Lord.

The words of our Lord Jesus Christ continue to teach and encourage us. He says,

⁴⁰ "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me [that is, the FATHER]. ⁴¹ The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet [one who is speaking rightly on behalf of Christ Jesus] will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person [who is righteous only because of Jesus---whose righteousness he receives in holy baptism and the gift of faith] will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴² And whoever gives

one of these little ones [who believes in me] even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple [of mine], truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

And why is this? This is so because in doing these things unto you who believe in the Lord Jesus, they are doing these good things of love to the Lord Jesus. But those of whom Jesus speaks are those who are believers in the same Lord and Savior who are doing these good things of love toward you and to Christ in you. This revelation reveals to us that which is true and everlasting family, and not even death can separate the members of that everlasting and true family.

Notice that our Lord makes clear that the loving things and the expressions of faith which they are doing which the Lord Jesus takes into account they are doing **because** you believe in Jesus, they are doing because you are faithfully speaking His Word, they are doing because they believe in the righteousness that you have from the **Lord Jesus** and **not** from you. You see, they believe in Him whom you bear and who bears you. They who know Christ by faith. Although they cannot see JESUS, they do see you who belong to Jesus.

Of course, these things neither **they**, your fellow believers, nor **you** are taking into account. How could we possibly do that? Rather, the Lord Jesus, whose eyes and ears catch everything, and He never forgets these things, and He knows and sees the divine gift of faith in Him which the Father and the Holy Spirit have imparted into their hearts, **HE** is remembering these things. In this salvation and life of walking by faith, this salvation and life which God has given us, it's all about Jesus, who loves us and gave Himself for us and for all. Knowing these things from His Word that we have heard this day should lead us to have compassion on those fellow sinners who have yet to trust in Christ Jesus. These things are at the heart of why the Lord Jesus says to us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us.

When Jesus returns in glory, and He raises the living and the dead from the weight of death and resurrects them to bodily life again, and He separates those who in their life in this world have believed in Him *from* those who in their life in this world did not believe in Him, He will say to those who have believed in Him, “Come, you blessed, inherit the kingdom of My Father prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave ME food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was naked, and you clothed ME. I was sick, and you ministered to ME. I was in prison, and you visited ME.”

And these believing will say, “Lord, when did we SEE you hungry, and give you food? When did we SEE you thirsty, and give you drink? When did we SEE

you naked, and clothe you? When did we SEE you sick, and minister to you? When did we SEE you in prison, and visit you?"

And He shall say to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it unto ME." God, by the blood, death, and glorious resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, has made us His family. The apostle John says, in 1 John 3,

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; [You see, we don't deserve any of this. Such is what the apostle John is expressing, that we *sinners* should be called children of God] and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall SEE him as he is (1 John 3:1-2).

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.