

INTRODUCTION:

Whenever we buy something, whether it is a house or a gallon of milk, I believe that most of us here this morning would almost always check the price.

- The question that comes to our minds is, **“Am I willing to pay this amount, or is the price too high?”**
- And so, if we stop by a convenience store on our way home from work and consider getting a gallon of milk, we might see the price of \$3.99, and we face a decision: Should we go to IGA or Wal-Mart and get a slightly better price, or do we value the convenience of getting it right there on the way home?
- On many occasions, I have made the choice (as you probably have as well) to go ahead and get the milk there at the gas station.
- However, if the price were raised to \$5 or \$10, most of us would probably wait and go to the grocery store.
- Even for those who have plenty of money, there are some price tags that are too high, and we refuse to pay the price.

Most of us have probably also had the experience of purchasing some item that we later regretting having purchased.

- We get home and think about it for a while, and we start to realize that the cost was more than we should have paid.
- In some of those situations, we may have serious regrets, so we actually go back to the store and get a refund.

This morning, I would like for us to consider a paragraph of Scripture where Jesus is brutally honest about the extremely high cost of being a Christian.

- Human wisdom tells us that Jesus was at a point in His ministry when he probably should have been building up His numbers—gaining more and more followers to the Christian faith.
- However, right at this point Jesus comes out and makes an incredibly blunt statement about the high cost involved in being a Christian.
- As I studied this paragraph of Scripture, I suddenly realized that (as far as I can tell) Jesus was NEVER impressed with the size of a crowd.
- Nowhere do we read about Jesus being amazed or making any positive comments about any large numbers of followers.

This morning, I would like for us to consider the paragraph of Scripture in **Matthew 10:34-39**.

- In this particular paragraph, Jesus is extremely clear about the divisions that the Christian faith would bring into families.
- I realize that many of you here this morning who are Christians have left the faith of your parents.
- With these thoughts in mind, then, let’s look together at **Matthew 10:34-39**. These are the words of Jesus:

34 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 “For I came 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 MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 *“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.*

39 *“He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.*

As we look back over these comments that Jesus made, we find a number of lessons that do apply to our Christian lives today.

I. First of all, we find that in many ways **THE CHRISTIAN FAITH WILL BRING CONFLICT INTO OUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

We notice the words in **verse 34**, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

- In so many ways, this appears to be a contradiction.
- We can think of a number of passages that seem to say something different about the personality of the Messiah.
- We can think back to the prophecy that was made in **Isaiah 9:6**, where the prophet Isaiah was predicting the birth of Christ, and he said, *“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”*
- We can also think about the words of Jesus Himself in the Sermon on the Mount, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”*
- We could consider Jesus’ words in **John 14:27**, where He said, *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”*
- We could even look ahead a little later in the New Testament, to **Ephesians 2:14**, where Paul described Jesus in this way, *“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.”*
- Jesus is certainly a very peaceful character in world history.

And yet we come back to **Matthew 10:34**, where Jesus said, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

- One commentary pointed out that Jesus came to be a **“peace-bringing trouble-maker,”** and in many ways that is an accurate statement.
- We understand that the sword Jesus referred to here was not to be a literal sword.
- You might remember the night when Jesus was betrayed when Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of one of the men who came to arrest Jesus.
- In **Matthew 26:52**, Jesus responded by saying, *“Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.”*
- Jesus did not have a reputation for being a violent man, and yet he certainly did bring division into the world.

The word of God is the sword, and God’s sword certainly does bring religious division.

- I am reminded of the words from **Hebrews 4:12-13**, *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”*

Back in **Matthew 10**, therefore, Jesus is referring to religious division.

- The division would be so bad that even close relationships would be affected.

- Jesus quotes a very interesting passage from **Micah 7:5-6**, where the prophet Micah was making the point that a time was coming when it would not be wise even to trust those who are closest to us in matters of faith.
- Certainly we are living in such times today.
- Micah said, *“Do not trust in a neighbor; do not have confidence in a friend. From her who lies in your bosom guard your lips. For son treats father contemptuously, daughter rises up against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own household.”*
- First of all, then, Jesus very clearly says that in many ways the Christian faith would bring conflict into our lives.

II. There is a second lesson that we can learn from these verses in **Matthew 10**, and that is, **SOMETIMES OUR OWN FAMILIES WILL BE THE ONES WHO PERSECUTE US THE MOST.**

In **verse 36**, we notice that Jesus repeats the prophecy from Micah as He says that, *“...A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.”*

- Certainly we do not want to think in those terms, and yet we can even look to the life of Christ, and we see that some of his strongest opposition early on came from within His own physical family.
- In **Mark 3:21**, we find a shocking passage.
- The Bible says, *“When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, ‘He has lost His senses.’”*
- I cannot imagine being institutionalized by my own family simply for preaching the gospel, and yet Jesus’ family attempted to do it.
- They tried to take him away by force because they thought he was not well.

I am so thankful that my own wife, and my parents, and my wife’s parents, and one of my brothers, and my wife’s brother are all faithful members of the Lord’s church.

- And yet all of us know how hard it can be when there is religious division within a family.
- It can be very difficult, and there are many families represented here this morning who are in that situation.
- I can think of division that has entered in outside of my own immediate family.
- Religious division always brings hurt and pain into the family.
- It brings tension, and grief, and awkward moments.

Why does God’s word bring division into a family?

- Doesn’t it ultimately go back to sin?
- Jesus came to preach the truth.
- When one member of a family accepts the truth, and others reject that same truth, disagreement will result.
- At that point, some very hard decisions need to be made.

When we think of sin bringing division, we only need to think of the world’s first family.

- Adam and Eve messed up.
- Along with sin, division also entered their family—even to the point where one son murdered the other.
- Noah and his family were also separated from the world around them.

What we need to understand is that when we reject sin and accept Jesus, those around us may see us as very arrogant as we leave their lifestyle behind.

- In **1 Peter 4**, Peter was writing to people who were in this situation—they had obeyed the gospel and were apparently taking heat from their friends in the world.
- Notice what Peter says in **1 Peter 4:3-5**...

3 *For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.*

4 *In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;*

5 *but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*

In other words, as we humbly turn our lives around, as we make the changes that need to be made, those who are closest to us see those changes and they are mad.

- They are surprised, and they lash out in anger with all kinds of false accusations against us.
- Even without “**lecturing**” our friends and family about how bad they are, they see a difference in our lives, and a division has suddenly entered into the family.
- They see that we have left a denominational church we were raised in, they see us enjoying simple New Testament Christianity, and they are surprised, and hurt, and angry at that decision.

Sometimes these hard feelings have a way of reaching beyond the grave.

- How many people have said, “**Well, I know I need to be baptized, but my dearly-departed grandparents were members of such-and-such a denomination, and they were never immersed as adults, and if I were to be baptized, I would be condemning them. I would be saying that they are lost. I would be creating division in my family.**”

Several years ago, I read a very good story on this subject.

- The story is told of a small general store located in a small country town.
- The store was as old as the town and was managed by the grandson of the store’s first owner.
- One day a government man from the state’s weights and measurement department came to inspect the store.
- He found that the yardstick being used to sell fabric was one inch too short.
- “**That’s impossible,**” said the owner, “**That yardstick was put there by my grandfather and was used by my dad. They never would have cheated anyone. They were honest, Christian men.**”
- The inspector paused for a second and then said, “**Sir, I am sure that your father and grandfather were completely honest. In fact, they were so honest what do you think they would have done if they had discovered the stick was too short?**”
- Without hesitation, the owner said: “**They would have made it right without delay...and that is exactly what I am going to do.**”

The truth is, there is a true account in the Bible of a man being lost and as he was in torment, his only concern was that his family not come to the place where he was.

- We hate to think in those terms, and yet we need to assume that our loved ones (wherever they are) want us to honestly follow the Scriptures in our lives.
- Our parents did not raise us to be robots, but in most cases they raised us to think for ourselves—making good decisions based on the evidence, and that is exactly what we are doing in obeying the gospel.

III. There is a third lesson we can learn from these verses in **Matthew 10**, and that is, **WHEN WE FOLLOW CHRIST, WE CHOOSE TO FOLLOW JESUS REGARDLESS OF THE COST.**

We notice in **verse 37**, *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”*

- In Luke’s account, in **Luke 14:26**, Jesus actually said, *“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”*
- The commentaries have pointed out that this was a common figure of speech among the Jewish people—as a way of showing preference, someone would refer to loving one thing and hating another—in order to emphasize the priority of the one.
- Jesus, then, is saying that we will need to make a choice in our lives—to follow the truth regardless of what our loved ones may say or do.

We can think back to Abraham, the **“Father of the Faithful,”** and we remember that Abraham was asked to make a similar choice.

- Abraham was actually told to sacrifice his own son on an altar to God.
- Abraham followed through with that request, trusting in God, and at the last moment God stopped him from following through with that sacrifice.
- But in a spiritual sense, God is asking us to do a similar thing today.
- We may need to choose between following God and following our parents, or mates, or children.
- It is a tough choice that few people have the courage to make.

Sometimes a parent will threaten to basically disown a child for leaving the family religion.

- From a human point of view, this is a very high price to pay.
- Some have given in to those threats and have refused to pay the price.
- But Jesus says that the price cannot be a factor in our decision.
- In Luke’s account, Jesus repeats it three times—unless you do these things *“you cannot be My disciple.”*
- It is impossible to truly follow Christ without paying the price.

In fact, Jesus goes on further in **Matthew 10**, and in **verses 38-39**, Jesus says, *“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”*

- Jesus refers here to taking up a cross.
- It would have been common in Jesus’ time to see people carrying their crosses through the city of Jerusalem.
- When you saw someone carrying a cross, you could know that it was a one-way trip.
- They were being marched from the Roman authorities straight outside the city, and anywhere along that route the soldiers could stop and that was it.

Jesus is saying that we must willingly take up His cross in our own lives—doing whatever it takes to follow the word of God.

SUMMARY:

This morning, then, we have learned that in many ways the Christian faith will bring conflict into our lives.

- Secondly, we learned that sometimes the Christian faith can cause our own families to be the ones who persecute us the most.
- And finally, because of our Christian faith, we should choose to follow Him regardless of the cost.

CONCLUSION:

As we think about what Jesus has said, I would like for us to remember that it is still possible to love our families and want what is best in their lives.

- I'm thinking about two passages in the book of Romans—in **Romans 9** and **Romans 10**.
- The first passage is found in **Romans 9:1-3**, as Paul thinks about his own family he left behind when he became a Christian. Paul says...

- 1 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,*
- 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.*
- 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,*

If it had been possible, Paul would have traded his own salvation so that they could be saved themselves.

And then we go over into the next chapter, to **Romans 10:1-3**, and we find Paul's explanation...

- 1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.*
- 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.*
- 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*

Thankfully, as we turn to follow Christ, if we are forced to leave our earthly families behind, we take comfort in the fact that Jesus has given us a promise—in **Luke 18:29-30**, *"Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."*

INVITATION:

This morning, we would like to invite anyone who is not a Christian to make the decision to follow the Lord right now.

- It is a serious decision.
- It is more serious than buying a gallon of milk at a convenience store.
- Unfortunately, this decision does not come with a free 30-day trial period.
- This decision does not come with a money-back guarantee.
- In **Luke 9:62**, Jesus himself said that, *"No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

The Bible says that we must make the decision to follow Christ, we must turn away from our sins, and we must then be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins.

- At that point we are added to the Lord's church, and our responsibility then is to live faithfully until we die.
- If you have considered the cost of making this decision, and you want to pay the price, you can let us know by coming to the front as we encourage you. Let's stand and sing...