

THE FOLLOWING IS THE SCRIPT THAT PASTOR STEVE USED TO PREACH FROM. IT IS NOT WRITTEN FOR PUBLICATION, AND MAY CONTAIN TYPOS AND/OR GRAMMATICAL ERRORS. IT MAY ALSO DIFFER SLIGHTLY FROM THE RECORDED SERMON.

Sermon 9 August 2020

JSW 1: And Then Jesus Says WHAT About Peace?

Matthew 10:1 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness .

...

26 (Jesus said) 'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

32 'Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

34 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace (*eiréné*) to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword (*machaira*).

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 one's foes will be members of one's own household.

- AUDIO INTRO: (Announcer) *Recorded LIVE in beautiful downtown Largs, Ayrshire, it's time for Scotland's favourite Sunday morning series! You're invited to gather your friends and family, get out your Bibles and come along with us as we reveal the answer to the Biblical question on everybody's mind. .and then. . . Jesus says what?? Now entering the LargsNaz studios are your hosts, Pastor Tasha and Pastor Steve, let's join them.*

- All right, all right, settle down, settle down. It's pretty crowded in the LargsNaz studios this morning, but you'll be glad to know that we are all social distancing, and observing all the public health guidelines—which it turns out is pretty easy to do when your studio audience is imaginary.
- But you're not imaginary, and we're so glad that you have joined us this morning, we hope that you're blessed by what you hear.
- Now contrary to the impression that you might get from that introduction, this is not the beginning of a new TV game show, a new quiz show, this IS the beginning of a brand new sermon series that will run for the next 8 weeks, until the end of September, and the name of this sermon series is "And then, Jesus says what?"—or actually it sounds better when you hear it like this (audio "and then Jesus says what?" plays)
- And what we will be doing together is looking at the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—and examining, thinking together about, studying, some statements that Jesus makes, some direct quotes that the gospel writers ascribe to Jesus that might in some way make you or other people raise their eyebrows, some statements that might be surprising, or maybe a little bit confusing--- places in the gospel narrative where you might be listening to the story and things are happening, and Jesus is saying some things, but then you get to a certain spot and you pause and think, and then Jesus says WHAT?
- Pastor Tasha and I went back and forth in our planning this series about what the title should be—whether it should be "and then Jesus SAID what" or "and then Jesus SAYS what?"

- And on the one hand “Jesus SAID what” makes sense because the events described by the gospel writers happened a long time ago, they are in the past, they are history, and so it would be correct to say that Jesus “said” one thing or another,
- But on the other hand, when we read scripture today, right now, in our lived experience, we enter into those narratives, and they unfold as we read them, and so even though we are reading about or hearing about things that happened in the past, they are very much present to our hearts and minds as we interact with them—and what’s more the Holy Spirit speaks to us through scripture, and we are made aware of truths that are relevant to our lives right now, today—we’re not just reading ABOUT events that happened in the past, like reading an old newspaper or a history textbook, though we certainly CAN read the gospels that way—but we can also have open ears and open hearts and minds and be challenged and empowered and even transformed by the words of scripture—right here, right now—we can find meaning for our own lives, as the church, as a community, as people, and also as one-of-a-kind individuals—through scripture the Holy Spirit can speak into your unique situation—
- And so we’re calling this series “and then Jesus SAYS what” because we’re not just going to be looking for what Jesus SAID 2000 years ago, but also for what He SAYS to us today.
- And this morning we’re looking at Matthew chapter 10. You’ll remember that last week we looked at Matthew chapter 14 and the feeding of the 5000, so today we’re going to back up four chapters and look at a scene that happens before

that. And in Matthew chapter 10 we find Jesus speaking directly to his disciples—and Matthew tells us exactly who they are in verses 2,3, and 4—and Matthew tells us that Jesus called them together, he summoned them, and Jesus gives them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

- And after he gives his disciples authority, then he gives them some instructions about where they are to go, and what they are to do--cure the sick, cast out unclean spirits, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead-- and he tells them not to take payment, and who to stay with, and what to do if people in a town don't accept them—then he warns them that things are not going to be easy, but that they shouldn't be afraid
- And we get down to verse 34, and then Jesus says: 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.
- And then Jesus says WHAT?
- 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.
- That doesn't sound like something Jesus would say.
- Jesus is the Prince of Peace; Jesus said "blessed are the peacemakers;" Jesus' birth was heralded with tidings of peace and goodwill,
- Last September when we looked at Ephesians 2 we saw that Paul said of Jesus that "he is our peace, he has destroyed the dividing wall between us, making peace" Paul says Jesus' purpose was to make peace, that he came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near,"

- Elsewhere Paul tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, PEACE. . .
- But here Jesus says I have come not to bring peace, but a sword.
- This sounds like a call to arms—like maybe Jesus is going to lead an attack on his enemies—and I have heard people, I have heard Christians, try to justify beligerent and combative and antagonistic and militant and even downright hostile behaviour and attitudes by saying, “Well Jesus said I have come not to bring peace but a sword.”
- But that would seem to contradict the Jesus who said “love your enemies” and “lay down your life for others”
- So maybe this is a translation issue, and maybe reading verse 34 in another version of the Bible will clear things up for us.
- The ESV (English Standard version) says: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” So exactly the same.
- The NIV says: 34 “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Pretty much the same.
- The noble KJV says: 34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.---ok, a little more formal sounding, but basically the same.
- So maybe the original Greek will help. The Greek root that is translated “sword” is *machaira*—some say that’s where the word *machete* comes from-- and *machaira* can refer to a short sword or a big knife, the kind that **could** be used as a weapon, but a *machaira* is primarily used in slaughter and sacrifice, and it’s a

knife used not typically as a weapon but for cutting animals up—dividing them up into parts—*machaira*—so that’s the sword, what about the word “peace”?

- The Greek root for peace here in Matthew 10:34 is *eiréné*—the same word that’s used for peace all over the New Testament, and the same word we learned about when we looked at that passage from Ephesians. It literally means wholeness, unity—when parts are put together and not divided.
- Maybe the wheels in your minds are starting to turn a little bit at this point.
- One more thing we might do to help us better understand what Jesus is saying is to ask whether any of the other gospel writers describe the scene that Matthew depicts here, and it turns out that Luke does, in his gospel in Chapter 12, where beginning with verse 49 he writes that Jesus says:
 - 49 ‘I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! 51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! 52 From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; 53 they will be divided:
 - father against son
 - and son against father,
 - mother against daughter
 - and daughter against mother,
 - mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law
 - and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.’

- In Luke's version of the story, Jesus doesn't say "I have not come to bring peace but a sword," he says, "I have not come to bring peace but division." And then he tells us how households will be divided
- Well, you'll remember that in Matthew Jesus says the same---34 '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 one's foes will be members of one's own household.
- So Jesus here is not some hostile war-monger ready to march into battle with a weapon of violence against those he came to serve and to heal and to die for—but what He IS saying is just a little bit less disconcerting—what he's saying is that he hasn't come to bring unity—*eirene*--peace—but division—to wield the sword that cuts even families apart.
- Eugene Peterson's *The Message* translation of Matthew's gospel presents it very clearly. There Jesus says: "Don't think I've come to make life cozy. I've come to cut—make a sharp knife-cut between son and father, daughter and mother, bride and mother-in-law."
- And that's still a little confusing. How could Jesus, the very one Paul says erases division and brings unity and peace, here say that he comes not to unite and bring peace but to divide?
- To answer the question, "Jesus says WHAT about peace?" I think we need to remember that here Jesus is speaking PROPHETICALLY. He is speaking with a

prophetic voice, and telling his disciples what it will entail—what they can expect-- if **they** do the same.

- We've talked about what it means to be a prophet before, a prophet is one who calls for repentance and proclaims that judgement is coming, for better or worse.

Luke tells us in Chapter 4 of his gospel that Jesus, early on in his ministry, embraces the role of prophet, when he reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in his hometown of Nazareth, saying

- “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

- And immediately after that he refers to himself as a prophet.
- And here in Matthew 10 Jesus is echoing the words of another prophet, Micah (from Micah chapter 7:5-7)
- And it is clear throughout the gospels that one of Jesus' roles is that of prophet, a prophet who, like John the Baptist, proclaims “Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand,” one who calls upon his audience to turn from their wicked ways and seek forgiveness, to be cleansed from their sins

- But do you know, and this may come as a surprise to you, that people don't always want to hear what a prophet has to say to them, even when it's good news?
- When Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah in his hometown, the crowd turned against him and he barely escaped with his life.
- We were reminded last week about the way that John the Baptist rebuked the behaviour of Herod and Herodias and was imprisoned and beheaded.
- But not everybody responds in that way. The crowd that John the Baptist calls a "brood of vipers" in Matthew 3 and Luke 3, Luke also tells us that they ask John, what then should we do? And he tells them and baptises them and points them in the direction of Jesus.
- You know, nothing will create division more effectively than telling folks they need to repent—that they need to turn from their wicked ways and do right—that they are in need of repentance—some folks will accept that message, but some will reject it, they'll even kill the prophet—they'll shoot the messenger—certainly they will be divided in their responses.
- Speaking with the voice of the prophet will not bring peace, but a sword—speaking with the prophetic voice will set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36 and one's foes will be members of one's own household.
- Let me tell you a story. A true story.
 - When the Hungarian obstetrician Ignaz Semmelweiss arrived in Vienna in the mid-1800s, he could not help but notice the fact that when women

were about to give birth, they would be taken to one of two types of clinics—ones run by midwives or ones run by doctors. And women would beg not to be taken to a doctors' clinic, they would choose rather to give birth in the streets than have their child delivered by a doctor, because everyone knew that a woman who gave birth in a doctors' clinic was many times more likely to die a gruesome and painful death, succumbing to what was known as "childbed fever" within 24 hours of the birth of their child.

- In Vienna, and all across Europe and in America, a woman whose child was delivered by a doctor rather than a midwife was 10 to 30 times more likely to die of childbed fever.
- In April of 1847, about 1 of every 5 women who gave birth in the doctors' clinics died as a result, while a tiny fraction of that number died in the midwives clinics.
- Dr Semmelweiss was determined to figure out why, and it seemed to him that all the techniques used by the doctors and the midwives were the same—which they were. The only difference was that when a woman died of childbed fever, the doctors performed an autopsy, and they worked in the cadaver lab with medical students, while the midwives didn't.
- Now this was in the days before anyone knew what a "germ" was, and so the doctors would work, without gloves, without aseptic technique, on the corpses of women who had died of childbed fever, and then, without

washing up, would deliver a baby, whose mother would often die of childbed fever.

- Semmelweiss theorised that there must be something about those corpses—that something, some uncleanness, must contaminate the doctors' hands—some corpse particles that caused disease, that was a means of transmission of the illness
- And so Semmelweiss instituted a policy in his clinic that doctors and students would wash their hands with chlorinated water until the smell of death was removed, and they would do the same to the surgical instruments they used—and almost immediately the death rate fell from 20-30% to near or at zero. Lives were saved that would have certainly been lost.
- That ain't raising the dead, but it's not far from it.
- Semmelweiss knew the answer to the problem. Doctors just needed to wash their hands.
- When Semmelweiss shared this astounding discovery with his fellow physicians, the reaction in general was this—how dare Semmelweiss suggest that learned doctors and surgeons were “dirty,” that they were “unclean,” that they needed to wash their hands? His theories had no basis in science—since Pasteur and Lister would not confirm the germ theory of disease until decades later—but we now know that what was happening was that doctors transferred *Streptococcus pyogenes* bacteria from corpses to women in labor. It's as simple as that.

- But to the medical establishment at the time, this was insulting—these doctors were not going to admit that they were wrong, that their uncleanness needed to be made clean, that their diseases could be cured, that the number of dead could be reduced—they were not going to change their ways.
- Long story short—Semmelweis was driven mad—he knew how to save the lives of these women but those in power would not listen—and he became more and more adamant and insulting when he spoke of the situation--calling the medical establishment murderers—until finally at age 47 he was tricked into visiting an insane asylum where he was put in a straight jacket, beaten severely by guards, and so mistreated that in two weeks he was dead.
- Few listened to Semmelweiss at the time. But some did.
- And today hospitals and medical schools are united in their celebration of Semmelweiss Day, there's a Semmelweiss University and a Semmelweiss reflex that bear his name—his name is uttered with reverence by doctors, nurses and medical students because his observations and recommendations have saved countless lives—just because he suggested that doctors ought to wash their hands
- But he would never know those accolades during his life—
- Semmelweiss raised a prophetic voice and said “you’re doing this wrong, change your ways.” Semmelweiss could have cured their diseases,

removed their uncleanness and reduced the number of their dead. But he was rejected by almost everyone. Almost everyone

- Semmelweiss caused division.
- And just that sort of response, Jesus says to his disciples, is what they can expect as well if they speak with a prophetic voice, if they call people to repentance and forgiveness, even if they cure diseases and cast out unclean spirits and reduce the number of those who are dead.
- We see in Matthew 10 that Jesus gives his disciples authority, sends them out to proclaim the good news of repentance and forgiveness, to bring life and healing, and Jesus makes clear in verse 41 that his disciples are sent out as prophets in his name.
- And going forth in his name the disciples can expect to face a divided audience—those who have ears to hear and accept their teaching and preaching, and those who do not, who reject and persecute and even execute them. They can expect division. Jesus brings not peace but a sword to the earth.
- But Jesus tells his disciples here in verse 28, “Do not FEAR those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.” Do not be afraid.
- This doesn’t mean God will protect you from being killed—it means that even if you are killed, what have you lost? Don’t fear losing your body—fear losing your soul. Don’t fear losing what is temporary and earthly, fear losing what is spiritual and eternal. Have no fear—that sounds an awful lot like peace to me.
- And so Jesus can say to his disciples in John 16, you will face persecution on the outside, but you will have peace on the inside.

- Externally all may be chaos and division and persecution, but internally, the disciples can have no fear, and be filled with the peace that passes understanding. And that includes his disciples today.
- And even though nothing will create division like a prophetic voice calling to the masses for repentance, nothing creates peace like a group of people who are united in their acceptance of God's grace and forgiveness, so that there is a harmony among believers even as there is division outside of that circle, and that's what Paul is talking about in Ephesians when he says Jesus has destroyed the dividing wall between the Jewish and Gentile believers, and he is our peace.
- So in Matthew 10 we see that Jesus is not a prosperity preacher who tells his disciples that every external situation will be peaceful and harmonious and blissful, he is a prophet who proclaims the possibility of peace WITHIN even in the midst of turmoil and oppression and division without.
- And that promise is still true for his disciples today.
- Let's be disciples who have no fear, who speak prophetically and bring life and healing to a world full of division, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- We're so glad you joined us today, and we hope that you'll join us again next week, and we hope to see you at our prayer meeting on Wednesday at 10 am on Zoom if you're able.
- God bless you today and every day.