

Jesus brings reconciliation?
Part 3 “Jesus Brings” series

Sunday 19th October, 2014
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Matthew 10:34-39
John 15:18-16:1

- “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace...” (Matt 10:34)

With one statement, Jesus seems to say the OPPOSITE of what we heard last week. Isaiah 9, Ephesians 4 – passages that speak about Jesus being the one that will bring peace on earth. Jesus is the hope. Jesus is the only way for peace between us and God.

So what does it mean when he says: “I have NOT come to bring peace”?

- **Who, or what, do we love more than God?**

Is it money? Career? Power? Or even family? Do we love these things, these people, more than God?

Because **this** is how Jesus brings division. Jesus says:

- “Take up your cross and follow me.”

Easy to hard. But hard to follow. Because it means that God wants to be number **one** in our lives. And he will settle for nothing less. And when other people, or other things, become more important to us than God, it brings... division.

THIS is what Jesus expects from us. And nothing less. He expects to be number one. This is not a soft commitment. It needs careful thought. That’s why Jesus says:

- “Lose your life for me and you will find it.”

This is serious. **Lose** your life for Jesus. That means that our life is HIS. If we make a commitment to be a Christian, to be a follower of Jesus, we are committing to GIVING him our life.

But here’s the thing – our life was already his to begin with! When we give our life to Jesus, we are giving it back to the one who gave it to us!

When we give our time to serve, we are giving God the time that HE has given us. When we give financially to God’s work, we are giving to God out of what HE has given to us.

How can we love the things or the people in this world MORE than the God who has given us everything?! How can we love our family MORE than the one who GAVE us our family?

- **So what does it mean to love God the MOST?**

Let me talk about two common words we hear these days:

Tolerance and **Acceptance**.

Tolerance is when we learn to live with something or someone. Like the way you might tolerate bad service in a restaurant if the food is good. You put up with it. You're happy to live with it.

And we tolerate people. We tolerate people who annoy us, or people who are rude to us.

And we tolerate different beliefs. We live in a community with people who have many different beliefs to us about who God is. And as Christians, we don't tolerate with a sigh and a grunt...

We tolerate the way Jesus did – we tolerate with love, and humility and grace and care and understanding.

When people have different faith beliefs than us, tolerance means that we ***listen*** to them. We ***pray*** for them. We look for opportunities to share the true Gospel of Jesus with them. We show them compassion as people who are lost and need to know Jesus. And this is what we were talking about last week – we are people of peace. We seek to bring the peace of Jesus into people's lives. We want people to have peace with God. And so we tolerate with grace and love and patience.

But we do not ***accept*** what we do not believe. We do not ***accept*** that Islam is right. We do not ***accept*** that Hinduism can save. We do not accept that Jesus was JUST a prophet. We do not accept that any religion will get you to heaven. And that's the difference. If we love God MORE, if we love God the MOST, we will show ***tolerance*** with love and grace, but we will not ***accept***. We tolerate different beliefs on same sex marriage, but we will not accept ideas against what God says in the Bible. We tolerate different ideas on morality, but we do not accept things that are against the will of God.

III – For example, I usually tolerate bad drivers on the road. I work hard to be patient, to be courteous. When a driver goes through a red light, when someone speeds – I try to tolerate them, but I do not accept their behavior as OK.

So, for our faith in Jesus, we ***tolerate*** other beliefs about Jesus, but...

We do not ***accept*** that Jesus was just a prophet.

We do not accept that Jesus didn't die for our sins.

We do not accept that everyone goes to heaven.

We do not accept that every religion is the same.

We do not accept that life is all about riches and power and wealth.

We do not accept that this life on earth is all there is.

...because we have accepted the call of Jesus – to take up our cross and follow him. And that means we live a life of love and self-sacrifice, a life of serving and praising God, a life of humility and grace, a life of forgiveness and peace – that is the life of the cross.

And THAT is why the life of the Christian – the way of the cross – brings division... because the **world** cannot accept that this is our purpose on earth – to take up our cross and live for Jesus – to give up our life for Him and be **obedient** to Him. The world cannot accept this. If they did, they would be following Jesus! But they do not. And therefore **we** cannot accept the way of the world.

John 15:18 – Jesus says:

- “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.”

The world HATED Jesus. That is why they crucified him. They hated him because he did not accept the way of the world. Instead he chose the way of humility and laid down his life.

If the world hates you, remember it hated Jesus first.

When you are hated for being tolerant, but not **accepting** other people’s opinions, remember they hated Jesus first for the same thing.

When you are hated for sharing your opinion on same sex marriage, on government policies on refugees, on the way we help the poor and the homeless – when people laugh at you and hate you for just having an opinion that is against the thinking of the world – remember that they hated Jesus first.

They hated Jesus when he defended a prostitute.

They hated Jesus when he spent time with beggars and tax collectors.

They hated Jesus when he defended the widows and orphans.

They hated Jesus when he spoke up against the government, and against the religious church leaders of his own Church.

Yet Jesus loved them. His tolerance was beyond tolerance. It was self-sacrificial love and grace. And that is who **we** are to be.

Now it may be that you are not hated much. Perhaps we say: “Isn’t it great we live in a country where we’re not hated because of our faith!”

Let’s be honest with ourselves. Listen to verse 27. Jesus says: **“You also must testify”**

Do we testify? Do we speak the truth of Jesus in our day-to-day lives in this world? Do we speak about the things in our society that Jesus cares about - the homeless, the widow, the prostitute, the refugee, the poor? Do we testify about our faith when it comes to issues of morality, or when it comes to who Jesus is, or when it comes to heaven and hell? And do we do it in a way that is **tolerant**, but not **accepting** of the world’s ways?

Do we speak? Or do we remain silent?

When someone says: “All religions are the same as long as you believe” do we say: “actually, with respect, I don’t believe that.”

When someone says “Everyone goes to heaven” do we bear witness and share, respectfully and lovingly, our belief that only those who put their trust in Jesus will have eternal life in heaven?

No matter how tolerant, and respectful and loving we are in sharing our faith, there WILL be people who hate us for speaking – for witnessing – about our faith and our beliefs. Even our own family and friends.

However,

- People will probably NOT hate us if we say nothing. Or if we accept everything.

Here is the big picture Jesus wants to give us:

- ***We do not belong to the world. Therefore there will be times that the world will hate us.***

III – Let me finish with this story. A Christian visits a refugee Detention Centre in Sydney to share the gospel with people there. Many are of the Muslim faith. He speaks about Jesus as God on earth. That he died and rose from the dead. That he died for our sins. That he is the only way to find peace with God. And many people hate him. Many people want to hurt him. He comes to offer God’s peace. But he brings division. But **some** people listen. **Some** people ask questions. **Some** people believe, and find peace with God.

This is all we can do as people of peace. Testify to the truth and let the Holy Spirit testify through our work. The world will often hate us for suggesting that God is the only way to find real, eternal peace. But we keep testifying so that people might, one day, come to know true peace.

Prayer: Father, help us to be people of peace. Help us to be tolerant – loving, gracious, caring... but not accepting. Help us to testify to the truth of Jesus, even though people might hate us, so that others might come to know true peace with you. Amen.