

4/26/26

Sermon Title: The Way of a Disciple: Self-Denial and Obedience

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 10:34-42

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵ For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

³⁷ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

⁴⁰ “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward.

⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

Jesus continues speaking to the disciples who are being sent out.

He declares the purpose for which He came.

He says that He did not come to bring peace to the world, but a sword.

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

It is truly a difficult word to accept.

After all, did Jesus not come as the Prince of Peace?

The prophet Isaiah prophesied about the coming Messiah as follows:

(Isa9:6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(Isa9:7) Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Even when Jesus was born, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, singing, "And on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

(Luke2:8) And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

(Luke2:9) An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

(Luke2:10) But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

(Luke2:11) Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

(Luke2:12) This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

(Luke2:13) Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

(Luke2:14) "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

But how can it be that He came not to bring peace to the world, but a sword?

To understand these words of Jesus, we must first understand the Jewish concept of "peace."

In Hebrew, it is *Shalom*, and in Greek, *Eirene*.

The Jews used this word when wishing for all kinds of blessings.

They believed that when the Messiah came, they would live in the peace they had long awaited—an external peace.

They expected Judah to become a political, economic, and military powerhouse, and envisioned themselves enjoying a life free from the worries of basic survival. However, contrary to their expectations, Jesus did not come to bring that kind of external peace.

Instead, He came to bring an essential and internal peace: the reconciliation between God and humanity.

Knowing the thoughts of the Jews, Jesus declared that He came to bring a sword instead.

By this, He implied that the purpose of His coming was to conquer unrighteousness and eliminate evil.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth, and that Kingdom was to be built upon the eradication of the sinful order of the world.

For this reason, the world would stubbornly reject the Messiah and His rule.

Until that Kingdom is fully realized, a fierce, life-and-death spiritual battle will continue.

The most intense battlefield of that war was the site of Jesus' cross.

Jesus is speaking about the consequences that the Gospel will produce.

He says that the purpose of His coming would even result in conflict within families.

³⁵ For I have come to turn
“a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—
³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

What could this possibly mean?

If these verses are misunderstood, it is easy to think of Christianity as an evil religion that disregards human ethics and morality.

However, such a view is a misunderstanding that arises from failing to fully grasp the meaning of Jesus' words.

These words are intended to remind the disciples that there will be severe conflict and division with many people—especially within their own families—on the path of believing in and following Him.

Up to this point, Jesus had been speaking to the disciples He was sending out about the persecutions they would face, telling them not to be afraid.

He followed those instructions with these words.

Therefore, in context, He is saying that those who will persecute them the most will not be Gentiles, but their fellow Jews, and among them, their own family members.

In fact, when the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel, those who persecuted him most fiercely were not the Romans or the Gentiles, but his own kinsmen, the Jews.

This happens not because the Gospel possesses a destructive nature, but because each person who encounters the Gospel has a corrupt nature and a rebellious disposition.

The word "come to turn" implies that in matters of faith, believers and unbelievers cannot be united.

Consequently, preaching the Gospel inevitably leads to serious conflict and division with many people.

Following this, Jesus speaks about the proper attitude required of a disciple.

First, He demands that we love Him above all else.

³⁷ "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

To love Christ is the fundamental duty and the primary obligation of those who have become His disciples.

Second, He demands that each person take up their own cross and follow Him.

³⁸ "Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

To "take up one's cross" is a call for self-denial.

The path of a disciple of Jesus is a rugged one.

Walking that path, one may face all kinds of hardships, suffering, and danger.

There may even be moments where one must lay down their very life.

Nevertheless, a true disciple of Jesus Christ must brave all these risks and follow the path He walked.

Just as Jesus bore His cross, we must bear our own and follow Him.

Of course, the cross that Jesus bore and the crosses that His disciples must bear are qualitatively different.

The cross Jesus carried was for the redemption of all humanity, whereas the crosses disciples carry are for the purpose of offering devotion and loyalty to Him. They also differ in their efficacy.

The cross Jesus bore was a one-time work with eternal effectiveness, while the crosses disciples must bear represent a continuous and ongoing ministry.

In any case, disciples must remain loyal to Jesus Christ in their respective situations, even to the point of not sparing their own lives.

Jesus says that those who lose their lives for His sake will, in fact, find eternal life.

³⁹Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Here, "life" refers to our temporary, time-limited existence in this world.

Therefore, these words mean that those who abandon spiritual and eternal values for the sake of the world's fleeting values will lose their eternal life.

To gain eternal life, one must be willing to give up even their life on this earth.

It is an exhortation to be prepared for even the most wretched martyrdom.

Indeed, those who deny themselves for Christ and the Gospel, sacrificing even their own lives, will receive life again, and receive it more abundantly.

Nothing we offer to the Lord is ever truly lost.

Life will be reborn in the Lord, and our wealth and time will return to us as blessings.

Finally, Jesus encourages the disciples He is sending out by mentioning the reward that awaits those who welcome them.

⁴⁰"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.

⁴²And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

Here, "prophet," "righteous person," and "disciple" all refer to the disciples.

The disciples are not sent out merely as agents of Jesus; rather, they go forth in the name of Jesus as members of His very body.

When the disciples go out with Christ's message to proclaim His Gospel, it is Christ Himself performing His work through them.

This operates on the same principle as God being in Christ and performing His work through Him.

Jesus states that welcoming the one who is sent is the same as welcoming the One who sent him.

He declares that He will bestow rewards upon those who accept the Gospel preached by the disciples and show them hospitality.

This serves as a source of comfort and encouragement for the disciples who are sent into the world to face persecution.

Beloved members of the Church of Godly Dreams,

Through today's passage, we have come to understand the true meaning of why Jesus, who came as the Prince of Peace, said that He came not to bring peace, but a sword.

Jesus came to cut away the false peace and sinful order that stand between God and us, in order to give us true peace.

As disciples of the Lord, when we follow Jesus in this work, we will face persecution from the world because of Jesus Christ—that is, because of the gospel.

We may even experience severe conflict with those closest to us, including our own families.

We may find ourselves in dangerous situations where even our lives are at stake. Yet all these things do not happen because there is something wrong with the gospel, but because a spiritual war is being fought on this earth between the kingdom of God and this sinful world.

Even so, Jesus clearly demands true discipleship from us.
He tells us to love Him more than anything else in this world.
He calls us to live a life of self-denial, taking up our cross daily and following Him.

And He also promises the glory that awaits at the end of that road.
Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for the Lord's sake will find it.

Even the one who gives a cup of cold water in the Lord's name will surely receive a reward.

The tears we shed because of the Lord will never be in vain.

Not even the smallest act of devotion offered for Him will be forgotten by God.

The time, possessions, and even life itself that we give up for the Lord will never be wasted.

In the Lord, they will return to us as eternal life and an even more abundant heavenly reward.

Though the road may be difficult and painful, let us hold firmly to the Lord's promises, quietly carry the cross given to us, and follow Him.

Let us love the Lord more than anything in this world.

The peace that the world cannot give is found in the place of obedience that passes through the cross.

At this time, let us quietly ask ourselves:

Do I love Jesus above all things in this world?

Am I taking up my cross and following the Lord?

May each of us receive the Lord's praise on the last day, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant," together with the crown of eternal life.

I bless you all in the name of Jesus Christ.