

Pentecost 5 – July 2, 2023
Text: Matt 10:34-42
Theme: Peace At Any Cost?

Everyone wants peace in their lives and peace in the Church. But do we want peace at any cost? Is that really what we want? And if so, how much are you willing to pay for peace because peace gets really expensive. I know people talk a lot about agreeing to disagree. That's cheap. That way we can both walk away from the table having saved face. One of us continues on in ignorance and error but we're both satisfied. Sadly, this is all too common in the Church. The reason I dropped out of the community clergy association was because some pastors wanted to include Jewish Rabbis and Muslim Imams in the association. The theory was that we would just agree to disagree on theology and focus on community betterment. But I argued then and I argue now, peace is intimately connected to truth, and there cannot be two opposing truths about Jesus.

"Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." There's the cost of peace with Jesus. Do you want your own life? Be able to define everything according to your own rules? Want to support LGBTQ+ as a wholesome lifestyle, argue that a fetus isn't a real life, steal from people by lying on your tax forms, and still go to church when it's convenient for you? You can do all of that. But at what cost? That's the thing. At what cost? You can make peace

within yourself over anything you want to do or believe, but doing or believing things that are contrary to God's Holy, inerrant Word will slowly push Jesus out of your life. See, the Holy Spirit will not dwell in squalor. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit and every time we do things that are contrary to God's Word, say things that are contrary to God's Word or believe things that are contrary to God's Word, it's like taking a big barrel of raw sewage and dumping it in the middle of the temple.

This part of the church year is one in which we talk about growth. Now that the Holy Spirit has come at Pentecost, we begin to talk about the repercussions of being his temple. You can note that the Gradual has changed and my chasable has changed this week as we enter this new part of Pentecost. When I was in college, I lived with three other guys in a condo. Brad's parents owned the condo and the other three of us rented from them. You should have seen us clean when Brad's parents were coming to visit. We could live in all manner of squalor until we heard that the landlord was coming for an inspection, and then, all of a sudden, all hands were on deck with brooms, mops, buckets, rags and comet cleanser. One of the conditions of lower rent was keeping his investment in good condition so we had a vested interest in making the condo look great!

In our case as Christians, our landlord lives with us, or actually, in us. Not only are we a temple but we are his temple and if we permit garbage to pile up in the temple, sooner or later, we will push him out. First, we might just hide our garbage in the closet. We used to pray that Brad's mother wouldn't open the hall closet. Sooner or later, however, if we don't address it, the garbage in our lives will move into all the rooms of the temple and push the Holy Spirit right out of his temple.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to find excuses not to come to worship when you are actively participating in a favorite sin? People who are enjoying a sin, usually find worship here at Trinity uncomfortable. They feel judged. Well, I say, go with that feeling! You're not being judged by us. We're all sinners too. You're being judged by God. He's the one speaking His Word. If you don't want to be judged, don't do whatever is drawing judgement. Sadly, many of our mainline churches never talk about the hard parts of the Bible. I recently heard a non-LCMS sermon online where the preacher said from the pulpit that his three biggest prayer concerns were global warming, gun violence and racism. He was finding his own life by defining the world according to his words. Jesus says that if you want to find your own life, you will lose it. But if you lose it for Jesus' sake, you will find eternal life. The point is, focusing your prayer life on global warming, gun violence and racism is like going to the beach and sweeping up sand so that it can't

get tracked into your house. When a church is focused on specific societal ills, she's missing the point. Focus on the cure for sin not the cure for the symptoms. Sin is what pushes the Holy Spirit out of the temple and sin is what causes all societal ills.

On the other hand, people who chose to live in the temple and care for the temple, grow to love the temple. Once you get that stench out of the temple, you cannot remember how you ever stood it. It's like having a skunk living under your deck. Eventually, your sensory system will quit noticing the smell but that does not mean the smell is gone. But once the smell is gone, you will wonder how you lived with it. The human mind is very adaptable but that does not mean that every adaptation is good.

When we find ourselves adapting to sins around us, that is when we need to do something drastic. The Bible talks about plucking out eyes and cutting off limbs but the point is, Hell is too high a cost to have peace. We do not want peace at any cost. We do not want to adapt to living with a skunk in the temple. Too high a price was paid for us to allow ourselves to adapt to sin for the sake of peace.